



The Seed Keepers

A Publication of the Catholic Network for Women's Equality (CNWE)
Réseau Catholique pour l'égalité des femmes

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Want to join me as I search for fresh/freshened inspiration at the beginning of this new year? My search so far has blessedly yielded much. Just two examples:

Make Us Channels of Disturbance:

The "Reverse" of the Prayer of St. Francis

Holy One, make us channels of disturbance.
Where there is apathy, let us provoke;
Where there is compliance, let us bring questioning;
Where there is silence, may we be voices
Where there is too much comfort and too little action, grant disruption;
Where there are doors closed and hearts locked, grant the willingness to listen.
When laws dictate and pain is overlooked...
When tradition speaks louder than need...
Grant that we may seek rather to do justice than to talk about it.
Disturb us, Holy One
To be with, as well as for, the alienated;
To love the unlovable as well as the lovely;
Holy One, make us channels of disturbance.
(anon - adapted by Kathleen Gibbon Schuck, RCWP USA)

Tevor Noah in his memoir *Born A Crime*:

"I had to read Psalms every day. [My mother] would quiz me: ...'What does the passage mean? What does it mean to you? How do you apply it in your life?' ... She taught me how to think."

As a result of Noah's statement, I am now making an effort to read *all* the Psalms. Actually, I could have begun my search right here in this issue of *TSK*. As you'll soon see, CNWE members have contributed profound thought-provoking pieces. Please keep them coming! And, expect the *TSK* Spring edition before summer begins.

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Veronica Dunne,* suggests her previously published reflection (TSK: Vol. 16, #2) fitting during this time of Covid:

Work That Bears Our Name



At Jesus' last Passover meal, before his arrest and subsequent crucifixion, he makes what I find, a remarkable and guiding assertion: "I have finished the work you gave me to do". (Jn. 17:4). There were still many sick people that Jesus had not cured, still count-less poor, hungry and oppressed persons he had not restored to fullness and freedom. Yet, as he faced the ultimate meaning and value of his life, Jesus could say that he had finished the work God gave him to do. He had completed the deeply engaged and unique work entrusted to him, and that was "enough". As it was with Jesus, so it is for me, and for each of us.

I was brought back to this insight in the last issue (Vol. 16, # 1, p.2) of *The Seed Keepers* through Maude Barlow's vision that "ordinary Canadians and citizens from all over the world will see ourselves as seed keepers and organize accordingly to do the work that bears our name".

There is a joy and a sense of fulfillment in "doing the work that bears our/my name", to which the metaphor of "seed keeper" so aptly points. In the famous quote of Fredrich Buechner, it is realizing our vocation - "the place where your deep joy meets the world's deep hunger."

This vocational work is not frenetic or self-serving activism, but is action that issues out of a deep sense of who I am, and what I am called to do. The personal gifts this action calls forth may or may not be the gifts in which I have received training. They may be as simple (and profound) as a genuine interest in other persons, a particular propensity towards beauty and justice, a love of music, an ability to listen closely, a joy in the wonders of the natural world.

The point is that I put these gifts at the service of a world and church that seeks the full flourishing of all. In this mutually enhancing endeavour, my work for justice-love is not grinding me away, but is liberating in some deep and important way as I contribute to the

freedom and fulfillment of all creation. As Emilie Townes says, such faithful practice is "doing the work our souls must have".

There are ways of enhancing this work, ways of protecting and nourishing my soul/spirit, and ensuring that it remains vocational work. The following two components seem critical to me, as we carry out this work that bears our name.

One is a community – being part of a circle of trust and action. In face of the real and grievous injustices of our world and church, none of us can take on this transformative work alone. Our work towards equality and love-justice for all is large, and will not generally yield dramatic and/or immediately recognizable results. A discipleship community of equals is crucial for helping us keep faith and hope alive.

A second important aspect is that I strive to free myself of the results of my actions. As seed keepers and planters, we know that the flower is in the seed. We may not see the flower of the just future towards which we so earnestly work, and still we labour on, trusting the seed, trusting that our children and grandchildren will benefit because we kept planting through the difficulties/challenges

presented to us.

Then we can recognize that no matter what, our faithful work is creating us as just persons and communities. And that is ultimately the vocational work that has been given each of us to do, the work that bears our name, the work our souls must have.

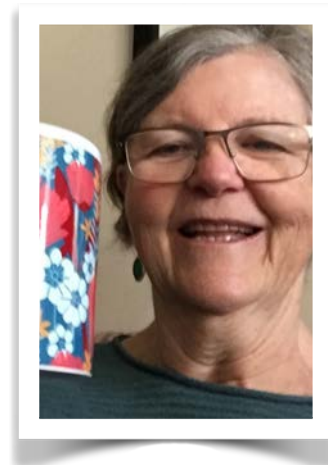
*Long-standing CNWE member, **Sister Veronica Dunne**, now of Winnipeg, explains: "I wrote this many years ago for TSK. ... As I reread it, I thought that this could be something to share again, in the present context - a context of pandemic and uncertainty on so many horizons. In the midst of that reality, I was struck at the CNWE meeting last November by how many of us are doing "the work our souls must have"; "the work that bears our name." Despite obstacles, despite a sense of so little progress towards women's equality (or even visibility) in the Church, we carry on."

This vocational work is ... action that issues out of a deep sense of who I am, and what I am called to do.

From Notes taken ...

Catherine Walther shares:*

Doing Theology Amid a Changing Climate: Crossing Divides



Catherine Walther took notes during a Webinar session put on by the Elliott Allen Institute of St. Michael's College School of Theology, University of Toronto. Nov. 11, 2021.

Ilia Delio is a theologian for our times. As the keynote speaker of the webinar, she followed in the footsteps of Teilhard de Chardin by combining her knowledge of science with her religious knowledge to lead us toward a new understanding of God and religion. As our comprehension of the world changes from the dualistic, hierarchical, consumeristic framework to a holistic, interconnected and relational framework, so too must our understanding of God and ourselves change, for all are related. She believes that our current climate crisis is related to these understandings, or misunderstandings.

Ilia goes on to list a number of scientific discoveries of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: life is unfolding; matter and energy are not two distinct things; we are energy at our root reality; the nature of the universe is one of undivided wholeness; consciousness can be described as evolving mind-in-matter; nature is incomplete; and, nothing is fixed. While we now know that all of our biological systems are open and new things can emerge, most of our institutions, including religions, are closed. And closed systems, so science tells us, will eventually increase in disorder and wear down. Like Thomas Berry, she asks, "What does Christianity offer to Ecology today?"

Ilia believes a new spirituality of unity is needed, a revolutionary Spirit coming from a new story, the evolutionary story of the Universe. We need Teilhard's 'cosmic vision' of the Omega Principle: the power of the universe. Religion and evolution are two dimensions of the same reality destined

to form one organism. We need a rebirth of religion. Religion's God is too small. The crisis of climate change is a religious crisis. If we believe that the most important thing is 'getting to heaven after we die' then we are less likely to emphasize caring for our earth while we live.

We need a living God of this world of change and complexity, like the Omega Principle, empowering us from within and calling us forward toward Godness (my word). She calls this 'Cosmotheantric Holism' – God rising up through evolution like consciousness and self-reflective consciousness. We need to see the world as sacramental, showing us and allowing us to experience God. Jesus, she says, is like the Big Bang of human evolution, showing us our capacity for personal transformation. If we want a different world we must become a different people.

While theology is very slow to change, technology is very fast. Technology appears to fulfill what religion only promises. Cyberspace has taken over mystery and fills a void in modern life. There are some wonderful advances in technology – new knees, etc. But there are some things that are not good – e.g. the speed at which false news can travel. Technology needs values, and religion can help with that. Teilhard said that technology, ecology and religion must be brought together. We need a new religion of the earth, a new faith in God, in and through the world. As Thomas Berry said we need to pray 'the great liturgy of the universe.'

*Catherine Walther is a long-standing and active member of Toronto CNWE.

Solicited by your editor ...

+Marie Bouclín,*

*Bishop Emeritus, Roman Catholic Women Priests Canada,
offers exceptional insights during her first homily in 2022*



Homily - Wedding at Cana

On a recent Sunday, the Comprehensive Catholic Lectionary proposes we drop the reading from Isaiah, read in most churches this Sunday. It focuses on the rebuilding of Jerusalem depicted as a woman / a bride, and God as the redeeming bridegroom. The Lectionary revisers have chosen instead to include seldom (if ever) read passages from the Song of Songs which poetically celebrates beauty, human love and the joy of a wedding. I often use the text from today's responsorial psalm at weddings, and accompany it with the well-known poem of Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

"How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, "(Sonnet 43)

I was inspired by this poem the first time I read it in high school. I still find it profound and inspiring, but now see how much it is permeated by the letters attributed to St. Paul. Both this poetic text and the Song of Songs have been used to describe not only spousal love, but the relationship of communion between the soul/spirit and the Divine. Sadly, so many passages never appear in our liturgies, and yet beautiful poetry can take us to a deeper reflection and understanding of relationship and communion at so many levels.

Turning to the wedding at Cana: the story is so layered I wonder sometimes if Jesus was married or single, if we should save the best wine for after dinner, was it really Mary who called Jesus to his mission, and what is the deeper meaning of turning water into wine?

Pondering the water turned into wine got me thinking "new wine" – the new wine of "convergences", for instance, as opposed to "doctrine", the coming together of everyday things (like water for washing) and transforming them into something wonderful — like looking at things that have been around for a long time but maybe we just didn't see them. Take for instance aboriginal spiritualities. Protection of the environment is something aboriginal peoples are taught (if they haven't been assimilated). It is part and parcel of living in communion with the Creator (the Holy Mystery) and with Creation. I wonder what they would have to teach us about the beauty and joy of human spousal relationships that put the lie to the Augustinian idea that sexual activity is intended for only making babies, and that enjoying our bodies and sex, even in marriage, is a venial sin. Thankfully, the generations after mine are free of this badly skewed understanding of sexuality but they still struggle with body image (think of all those who suffer from anorexia and bulimia) or their sexual identity (where they fit on the male - LGBTQ? - female spectrum).

I do want to emphasize once again that the more we read our sacred Scripture, especially its most poetic texts, particularly those that have been cut out of our traditional Lectionary either because they don't support current church teaching about women and sex notably, we miss an invitation to a deeper freedom of spirit and intimacy with the Divine. We need the "new wine" of inclusive language of our traditional rites to have a new appreciation for Divine Mystery. We might want to take time in our Eucharistic prayer, for instance, to reflect our gratitude for the water and sunshine and all the processes that go into producing the food that keeps us alive and renews our spirit. Language and layers of meaning are so important when we use phrases like Body and

Blood of Christ, and words like covenant and communion.

For many of us, this time of social distancing and isolation has brought new awareness. Today perhaps we can think about the intended joy of the Creator when human beings deeply love one another and build communion – even through Zoom.

So as we explore the many layers of meaning of John's story of the wedding at Cana and the Song of Songs, hopefully these reworded texts will give us a thirst for "new wine", the really good

stuff. Hopefully we'll let ourselves be taken in, transformed, enlightened – indeed, surprised by the Divine Other, the Holy One who calls us to a more meaningful relationship with Divine Mystery and with one another. Maybe this increased isolation can be a time of reconnecting with our deeper selves to find hope, inner peace and profound joy. I don't think we can build a better world without them.

*Marie Evans Bouclin, Sudbury ON, is now a member of CNWE Ottawa. Reluctant at first, in the end she whole-heartedly agreed to the publication of this homily.

Among the Tributes for Sister Marie Tremblay RIP October 29, 2021



Nov 2, 2021 I want to acknowledge Marie Tremblay's life and commitments, and offer my condolences to Janet, Mary Mettler, other Sisters of St. Joseph who may be on this list, and all the SSJs of Toronto.

I got to know Marie a bit when I lived in Toronto, and we both participated in CNWE Toronto meetings. She certainly was a devoted and knowledgeable member, and she "played by the book". She knew the history and evolution of CNWE, and was thus a great resource to someone like myself who knew little about CNWE before Christina Cathro and I walked into a meeting one stormy January evening in 1999.

To the Sisters of St. Joseph: while Marie had lived a long and full life, the loss of a Sister is still a loss. I am with you in your sorrow, and in solidarity with you as you mark Marie's life and passage. May Marie bless us all, and strengthen us in our efforts for social and gender justice.

Kind regards,
Veronica Dunne

Nov. 2, 2021 With deep sadness, the volunteers and staff at Daily Bread Food Bank mourn the passing of the organization's founder, Sister Marie Tremblay. Sister Marie was a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph (CSJ) order and died peacefully on October 29, 2021.

Sister Marie Tremblay had a long passion for social justice issues. In 1983, she worked with community members to found the Daily Bread Food Bank to alleviate hunger for the city's most vulnerable and advocate for systemic change. With a deep concern about escalating poverty and food scarcity in the city, Sister Marie set out to collect and distribute food to small, community-based food banks across Toronto. ...

Almost thirty years later, Daily Bread remains committed to fulfilling Sister Marie's legacy by meeting the emergency food needs of tens of thousands of individuals experiencing hunger, while at the same time advocating for long-term solutions to end the root cause of hunger – poverty.

Mary-Ellen Morgenstern shares her views:



Hope: what is it; where can we find it?

Saturday November 6, 2021, at the time of the climate talks in Glasgow, several Toronto CNWE members gathered with many others in front of Queen's Park. We sang as part of the Climate Choir. Rita Patenaude even danced! She was filmed by Global TV and tweeted to Glasgow by the youth climate activists present who were appreciating the youthful enthusiasm of our Rita! Our action with love and a sense of community gives us hope. Protests are hopeful acts. Hope is circular: it inspires action and action inspires hope.

We in the Circle of Creation have been examining hope in our monthly meetings and have determined that we do live in hope. It is not idealism, naivety or wishful thinking. It is our way of life, indeed our way of life as CNWE. It is a verb, fueled by community, love and action. It often comes out of a place of deepest despair, where one surrenders to come to hope. It comes out of letting go of outcomes. People have often associated hope with uninformed optimism. Hope is profound, informed and able to hold the paradox of the climate crisis with a vision of possibility. Greta Thunberg has evolved from forecasting doom to acknowledging the power of community and the potential to choose to act now.

We rightly experience many emotions when it comes to climate change (or Covid, lack of justice for women in the Church/the world...) We need to acknowledge our grief, fear and anger. What best motivates us? Media feeds the negativity. We can be overwhelmed by denial, anger, and depression. The fear that is the result of the ongoing news around climate change has created a much greater awareness of the issue. Why does hope matter? Without hope, there is despair and an inability to act. With hope we find the courage to act.

Eco-theologian Michael Dowd argues against hope. Dowd claims that it is grief that is required to proceed, not hope. He cites Joanna Macy who says: "The depth of your grief is the measure of your love". Dowd proposes a version of the serenity prayer: acceptance of the reality of climate change, the courage to proceed in action with love and the wisdom to act with mind and heart. As we listened to his explanation, we came to the awareness that we both trust in the power of hope and are also in agreement with Dowd. His proposal is our definition of hope. If we in fact accept the worse case scenario, yet continue to act in love, this is hope. Here is where we experience the deepest gratitude and most profound love of life. Love in action is our definition of hope.

Many of us have studied 'Hope Matters: Why Changing the Way We Think is Critical to Solving the Environmental Crisis' by Elin Kelsey and "Braiding Sweetgrass" by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Kelsey argues that hope is essential, particularly in the face of the constant doom and gloom fed by the media. Hope is mobilizing and contagious.. She argues that by embracing hope we can find the strength and courage to engage in climate action. Kelsey refers to 'solastalgia', a term by which she means a longing for the world we knew before the changes that we are witnessing. She suggests visioning that world to find the determination to act or to lose nothing more. Indigenous author, professor and environmentalist, Robin Wall Kimmerer, suggests we look to heal the earth as the earth heals us. The indigenous wisdom is RRRR: respect, responsibility, reciprocity and reverence. We also listened to Canadian scientist and professor Kathryn Hayhoe who similarly argues passionately for hope and love.

Hope is contagious. I am inspired by many communities including CNWE, The Circle of Creation and Ruah. I am inspired by so many individuals including CNWE members but also others too numerous to mention. In response to resistance to Highway 413, environmental organizations filled a full page of signatories in the Toronto Star. I am hopeful in hearing the Pope speak out. Religious organizations like the Loyola Centre, Joint Ecological Ministry (JEM) and parishes like Holy Name in Toronto are talking, gathering and taking action. There is much to be hopeful for: the climate conference with 196 committed nations, an agreement to revisit the goals next year, Greta Thunberg and the many youth activists, indigenous participation, funds for developing countries, trillions of dollars divested from fossil fuels... There is huge potential to solve and indeed improve the quality of life with green technologies. Many people are committed to living



more simply and to making the necessary changes for our planet. The planet itself is regenerative.

Hope gives us courage in the face of seeming hopelessness. Despite the lack of action from the Vatican, we in CNWE continue to stand for equality for women, many of us for decades. Our Circles have renewed my energy and hope. As we gather monthly, we in the Circle of Creation often say "This is Church!"

In the same way, our increased sense of connection to Earth prompts us to feel and declare "We are nature". We need to move our vision from human centred to earth centred. We have a choice. We need to act now!. Hope is what sustains us to keep fighting for social and ecological justice. At Queen's Park, Rita danced to the song: "One foot in front of the other". Let's do it!

* Mary-Ellen Morgenstern of Toronto CNWE and enthusiastically coordinates CNWE's Circle of Creation.



“Thirty-one poems and illustrations that reflect on the healing beauty of the natural world and moments of wonder, joy, loss and love in the mystery of life.”

CNWE member, Mary Ellen Chown, and friend of CNWE, artist and professional illustrator Andrea Nairn (who designed two CNWE national conference logos) have published *Grace Drifts In*, a collection of art and poetry. The book is \$25 (no tax – please add \$5 for shipping) with half of the proceeds going to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of Canada and the Alzheimer Society of Canada. Copies may be purchased by emailing Mary Ellen at gracedriftsin@gmail.com. Please include your name, address, number of copies and method of payment (e-transfer or cheque).

A letter to a Synod Official ...

Rosemary Ganley asks:

“Any hope for the Synod?”

I am in my ninth decade, a journalist and a faithful Canadian Catholic, Christian, lay woman. I mailed the following letter to Sr. Nathalie Becquart, Rome, on Nov. 30 2021.



Sister Becquart,

I read about your appointment as an undersecretary to the Synod of Bishops with happiness. I wish you well in this important post.

I am deeply troubled by the institutional state of affairs. I will describe a few of my difficulties with the church of my birth and refer you to two lively and, I think, helpful pieces, one from wise American theologian Mary E. Hunt of WATER (Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual) and the other, a summary of the critique of church offered by Bishop Wilmer of Germany. They express my views and the views of my small faith community and of everyone I know.

The church as structured will continue to shrink because the next generation will not accept the exclusion of women and LGBT people from full membership, including leadership roles. The lack of democratic norms is offensive. We must be able to take part in electing our leaders. Decentralization is key. The celibacy rule excludes many potential leaders of both genders, and has had a role in the worldwide sex abuse of children. The birth control encyclical must be withdrawn.

In Canada, reparations must be paid as promised to indigenous people for the grievous wounds of the 100-year-long residential school system.

I am a praying, positive person. In truth, this church has done much damage to so many good people, and has left much good undone in the process. By God’s grace, it must change radically and humbly, in image and in reality.

Our hope is tested when we see that reforms will have to come from the very men who benefit from the *status quo*. This is the territory of miracles!

May you be granted the strength and wisdom to help hasten the day they occur.

Rosemary A Ganley, Newspaper columnist, Canada

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Editor’s Note: As we go to press in mid February 2022, Rosemary attests that she has received no reply. This is certainly reminiscent of the lack of response to the twenty letters written by CNWE members and sent (actually sent twice over) to Pope Francis in 2019.

Special Notes ...

Were you or anyone you know unjustly terminated by a priest or bishop?

If you or someone you know has had the experience of being unjustly terminated from a paid position in a Roman Catholic parish or Diocese in Canada, I would be interested in speaking with you/them. I am interested in learning if there are untold stories from women whose work as parish ministers/pastoral assistants, catechists, secretaries, cleaning staff ... was terminated unjustly or without recourse to an appeal (perhaps when a new priest or bishop was appointed). I would also be interested in stories where women have felt that their job/ministry in the Catholic Church might have been threatened if their Catholic feminist activism/views had become known to their Catholic employer. Anything shared would be sensitively listened to, kept confidential and only referred to in any subsequent article/report in a way that ensures anonymity. As a member of the Catholic Network for Women's Equality, I am wondering if this systemic injustice of the church is more common than currently recognized and has yet to be fully brought to light. The goal of this work is that current survivors of such abuse would not feel that they are alone, and that if there are multiple cases of this injustice across Canada, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church can be called to account by changing employment practices and establishing just mechanisms for independent review and appeal of terminations. Please email Mary Ellen Chown at: cnwe59@gmail.com if you wish to contribute to this research. Thank you in advance.

About your CNWE Membership...

If you received this issue of TSK directly from CNWE, your membership is most probably up-to-date! However, if you're not sure, or if a friend forwarded TSK to you and you're interested in becoming a member, please contact Christine Gebel at christinemgebel@gmail.com or call her at 437-345-5197.

CNWE membership expires March 31st of each year. We were reminded by the membership coordinator in January that it's time to renew!

CNWE'S NWG has asked us to save some time on March 5th - this to develop a response to Pope Francis's call for all of us, even protesters, to join in the latest Synod so do





CNWE'S VISION:

Justice and equality for all persons manifested in word and action in the Catholic church and throughout the world.

CNWE'S MISSION:

As a Canadian organization, we connect, support and represent people who seek justice for all the baptized within the Catholic church, for women throughout the world, and for all of creation.

CNWE'S CORE VALUES:

Inclusivity

Creativity

Celebration

Compassion

Solidarity

Collaboration

Dialogue



The Seed Keepers

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