



The Seed Keepers

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Réseau Catholique pour l'égalité des femmes

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The Seed Keepers, Fall 2020, is packed — I mean, full to the brim! And it would certainly take more space than I have to utter a deserved affirming word about each of the contributions. You will find really good information from two more Energy Circles, including invitations to join in. Do consider doing so because, as you know, 'tis our networking — our connecting with each other — holding our power.

I do want to extend gratitude and congratulations to each one of you who submitted a piece for this edition.

As well, I want to ask all of you again to keep your contributions coming. Short pieces, longer ones, English, French, memoir, fiction, poems, opinions, what you've noticed that's newsworthy — whatever! Let's keep on making *The Seed Keepers* a causeway of conversation.

Marie Bouclin poses survey questions in 'New Church Coming Out of Adversity' (p.8 & 9), including "Do you have a House Church?" Please, let us hear from you if you have (250-500 word limit but, as you may know, we are flexible :-)).

Has anyone an idea about surviving life constructively *and* happily during this Covid-19 pandemic? If so, please let us know. In our next edition, I'll be happy to include one or two practices of mine if others come forward.

Finally, congratulations to the NWG for an excellent Annual General Meeting. Your hard work in preparing and executing paid off!!!

We wish blessings for you and yours for 2020 as it continues.

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Jocelyn Rait on*

*CNWE'S 2020
Annual General Meeting
By Zoom*



CNWE members were no doubt a little concerned about having another virtual AGM, as the last one was very unsatisfactory. This year, however, many of us have learnt to use Zoom, which seems to be almost foolproof, and the AGM was quite successful. 38 of us gathered on a Saturday in September and it was interesting to have this glimpse into people's lives, as for most members their webcam caught a little of the background room in which their computer lives. There is no doubt about it, seeing the faces of your friends and fellow CNWE members, although not as good as actually being together, is much better than being on a conference call.

The AGM followed the usual format – Call to Order and Land Acknowledgement, followed by the Opening Prayer, adapted from one of Joyce Rupp's prayers and led by Susan Roll. We renewed our purpose and promised to listen deeply. We approved the updated agenda, the Minutes of the 2019 AGM and Janet Speth's Financial Statements. Then came the Regional Reports, with Kathy Cameron presenting the Western Region Report, Virginia Lafond the Ottawa Report, Becky Lee the Toronto Report and Katherine Adolph the Algoma Report. This year there was no report from the Eastern Region, but Paula MacQuarrie and Cathy Holtmann were present at the meeting. The Volunteer CNWE Support Reports were next, and thanks expressed to all the volunteers who keep CNWE going.

There was some discussion about how to honour deceased members, for example Mary Joy, a longtime Ottawa CNWE member, was not included in Christine Gebel's list because she had not kept up her membership. She was, however, actively involved up to a few weeks before her death.

Sylvia Verde presented the NWG Report and also advised that she was retiring after this meeting. Sylvia will be greatly missed and we deeply appreciate her leadership over the past year. Thank you, Sylvia, for all your hard work. Fortunately, Susan Roll is willing to serve on the NWG, and has been helping out this summer. Susan was voted in, as well as Katherine Cameron. Thanks go out as well to Janet Speth, who will continue as Treasurer for one more year, and April Weavell who has completed one year of her term.

The Transition Team have been very busy over the past year and presented a most detailed report. They have initiated the idea of Energy Circles and CNWE members are encouraged to join one of these, or to initiate a new one. The continuation of the Transition Team's work for another year was approved. Special thanks to Sylvia Verde, Mary Ellen Chown, Mary-ellen Morgenstern, Alexina Murphy and Jeanie McKibbin for all their hard work and inspired progress.

CNWE Western Region were prepared to host the CNWE Conference next year but then Covid-19 hit, so they are now offering to host a virtual Conference/AGM. This would seem to be eminently sensible as who knows how long this virus will be prevalent for? Thanks to the Western Region for stepping forward.

Members expressed our appreciation for the efforts that have been made by so many over the past year. CNWE is still in transition but is obviously very much alive, and, as we affirmed in our Closing Prayer, by the power of Jesus the Christ may we change the world!

*** Jocelyn Rait is a long-serving member of Ottawa CNWE**



*Anne Leonard*shares her insights:*

*INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF CANADA***



The racism in Canada against the Indigenous Peoples of Canada is long standing, systemic, often hidden or denied, but becoming better understood by more and more Canadians today.

Indigenous peoples have been in Canada for thousands of years. There are many different Native tribes across Canada and Inuit groups across the northern part of the country. Here is some of the background of the colonial history which has resulted in racism in Canada. When European Christian settlers began “discovering” the land we call Canada 400 years ago, they assumed a superiority which has influenced the relationship between Indigenous people and settlers (a group which now includes immigrants from around the world).

First England’s, and later, Canada’s government, had policies which tried to diminish and later assimilate Indigenous peoples. Their lands, spirituality and way of life were taken away especially as more settlers arrived. Our settler ancestors accepted these government policies and basically left matters to government agents to implement them. Indigenous peoples were moved to “Indian Reserves” and their children were sent away to “residential schools”. But the Native and Inuit peoples did not go away or become assimilated into the white culture. In spite of many problems and injustices they remain proud peoples. Today many are highly

educated, articulate and demanding to have their rights recognized.

One of the worst tragedies has been the high number of missing and murdered women among the Indigenous population. After much protesting and petitioning, a National Enquiry was held which documented and proved this reality. Sadly not very much – in fact almost nothing — has been done since the Enquiry. Being Indigenous and also a

woman is dangerous in Canada.

We had hopes that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) would be adopted and upheld by all levels of government in Canada. This would give Indigenous peoples free, prior and informed consent before any activity such as resource development, oil and gas pipelines, or hydro dams could be undertaken by government or corporate companies on their lands. Sadly this Declaration has not been adopted by the federal and most provincial governments so far.

The colonization process resulted earlier this year in a standoff between the Wet’suwet’en Indigenous Peoples and the Coastal GasLink company which is demanding access to Wet’suwet’en territory to place a pipeline on their **unceded** Indigenous territory. Many women also find that even the thought of building another pipeline is against our need to deal with the climate crisis. Other Indigenous groups and also many settlers were supporting the Wet’suwet’en by blocking roads and trains. What we are noticing is that more settlers are not only supportive of

*Being
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Indigenous initiatives but are demanding action on Indigenous rights. Unfortunately the construction on the pipeline is still happening.

There are of course, and unfortunately, other instances of racism in Canada against Blacks, Asians, Moslems and Jews, all of which are unacceptable. However, the racism that affects the Indigenous peoples of Canada is built right into the structure of our country and has been since it was founded. Many of us have learned and seen this racism for what it is here and now – systemic, causing poverty far below the national average, reserves with inadequate housing, boil water advisories, substandard education and health services.

Personally, for many years I have thought and felt that if we as settlers had

listened to and worked with Indigenous peoples in taking care of our land, we would not be having the climate crisis we are experiencing today. Some of us no longer picket or march, but we can and must pray for justice and peace for the Indigenous peoples of Canada.

* **Anne Leonard is a longstanding member of Toronto CNWE.**

* **As adapted from my earlier article published in an issue on Racism in International Grail Crossroads.**

♀ ♀ ♀



Want to know more about CNWE?

Go to: www.cnwe.ca

Visit us and 'like' us on Facebook:
Catholic
Network for Women's Equality -
Canada

Youtube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch? v=JeFIJpA7axo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JeFIJpA7axo)

Yahoo e-list: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/cnwe>

May we suggest you once again cast your eye on the iconic logo of *The Seed Keepers*. And, think about this: as we have said before, “Here you have *The Seed Keepers* – power in your hands.”

Please be generous and consider those who would benefit from knowing about us, about what we think about, how we act, what the CNWE mission and vision are.

**Do find that ‘forward’ arrow, and press send. (Or, find a stamp and envelope to forward your copy.)
Thanks!**

A Reflection

Bonnie O'Brien shares*

“I believe in God, only I spell it Nature.”

(Frank Lloyd Wright)



How the eyes of the world have been opened these past few months. How we have been brought to a standstill as Nature - God/de's Sacred Creation - has spoken to us.

“Enough, enough! You have not listened to me, to my creatures, to my waters, to the pure air you were given, to the prophets among you who told you this day was coming. I, Nature, am now speaking to you in ways you cannot ignore. This pandemic you are experiencing is a result of greed, power badly communicated, a thirst for endless exploitation of not only the earth, but of human beings, especially the most vulnerable among you.

“You will no longer be allowed to pollute the air, the waters, the earth without dire consequences. Listen to me! Keep watch, as your endless busyness, your unwavering search for more, based on greed and exploitation, comes to a grinding halt. Look! My waters are clearing, the sky is bluer, the stars more visible, the air fresher. Slow down! Be content with this second chance I am giving you to get it right - to rescue humanity and all of creation from oblivion.

“The young people are the prophets of today. Listen to them! Do it for them! Change the way you walk on the earth, the way you relate to one another and to my creatures, the way you use the resources that have been given to you as gifts. Be mindful of the long and short term effects of what you do. Begin now a slowing down of your endless pursuit of power and profit. Instead, develop ways you can enhance the lives of the

most marginalized among you and reverse the effects of the damage you have done to me - to your planet Earth, to Nature in all its glory.

“I need to heal if you are to survive. So give me a chance. You have it within your power to restore me to my natural beauty and fullness of life. When we work together, you and I, we can heal each other, transform each other, and be in harmony with each other once again. This will take a long time and require great determination and effort. So you need to start now. You know what you have to do. Listen to the prophets among you and to the young people protesting your wanton destructive ways and pleading with you to clean up your act and bring harmonious relationship once more to your interaction with me.

“Welcome Spring, Summer, and Fall with renewed vigour. Have you seen the buds bursting out on the trees, the glorious colours of flowers blooming in gardens, the bright light of the moon and Venus in the night sky? Have you listened to the cheerful birdsong filling the air or stood still in silence revelling in the absence of the noise that pollutes? Have you taken a deep breath of this pure air or smelled it after the rain? These are my gifts to you. These are signs of hope. Believe me! I love you more than you can know and want only what brings new birth to us all.”

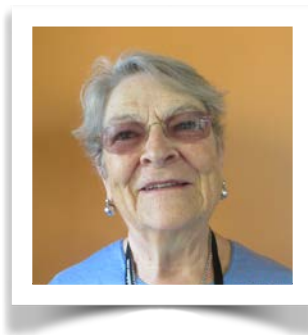
“Earth laughs in flowers.” (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

***Bonnie O'Brien is a long-serving member of Toronto CNWE**

*You have
it within
your
power to
restore me
to my
natural
beauty
and
fullness of
life.*

Alexina Murphy responds to the question,*

“Where does Jesus fit in CNWE?”



This question leapt out at me while I was reading the correspondence on page 12 of *TSK*, volume 32, Number 3, summer 2020.

This is a good question. How do we answer it? Do women answer it differently from men? As daughters, wives, mothers, simply as a human being, a person created in the image of God, redeemed in Christ, called in deepest being to follow Jesus, to witness to the Gospel, how do we women relate to Jesus?

I was born in a white skin. I was born a Brit when so much of the global map was coloured pink. I was a cradle Catholic, child of a “good Catholic family” raised in circles where patriarchy, hierarchy, clericalism, male-domination and female-subordination were accepted. But somehow I grew up to challenge these certainties and gradually find the means to throw them off. My paternal grandmother was an educated woman because, following the untimely death of her mother, she and her four sisters were raised by nuns who ran a normal school in Liverpool, UK. My maternal grandmother grew up on a tiny smallholding, in Scotland where primary school was available to all children. In that family education was prized, but money was tight, so only one child was able to go on to secondary school and teacher training. My grandmother migrated to London to find employment in service. Both these women, raising their families at the start of the Twentieth Century, made sure that their children would be educated so that my parents met at university in the Thirties. Post WWII, state provision opened up secondary schooling and access to university for all who qualified. My parents made sure that their children seized these opportunities, just as I and my husband did for our children and they have for our grandchildren in the opening years of this century.

I tell this story to point to an evolving consciousness in individuals and in society. In the context of a hundred years, across the span of these four generations, there was a change in

attitude both in how women perceived themselves as persons and how women were regarded in society. Almost imperceptibly, changes came about in how women and men relate to each other. Opportunities for women to share the education routinely offered to their brothers, access thereby to skills enabling them to join the workforce, and the chance to be economically self-sufficient, are just some of the shifts in the structures of society, of culture, of politics and economics, of health and wealth, from the end of the Victorian era to the final decade of the Second Elizabethan age. The human experience of war, technological invention, of new frontiers in knowledge on every side, has affected our understanding of who we are, of who and what we aspire to be, of how we conduct our lives and our relationships. Would we choose to live as hunter gatherers? Or be content with subsistence farming? Resigned to carrying another baby every second year? To live within a radius of how far you can walk or possibly bicycle?

Where does Jesus fit in our changed and changing world? Jesus is a real person, recorded in history, born of a woman, occupying his moment in time as we all do, dying as gruesome a death as any devised by human cruelty. In the Christian tradition, Jesus does not rest on the cross. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we believe he is the Son of God. The Gospels record the Resurrected Jesus’s appearances to his disciples, how he socialized with them, continuing to teach them, and explain to them that he must leave them so that his Spirit could come among them. The Spirit would empower them for the mission he entrusted to them. There was a gradual unfolding of awareness in the early communities of Christians that Jesus is the second person of the Godhead, of the Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit. The early Councils of the Church refined and defined these understandings as teaching for all believers. Paul

never socialized with the Jesus of history but knew enough about him to persecute his followers. Paul travelled, carrying letters of extradition to the synagogues of the diaspora so he could round up the followers of Jesus in order to bring them back to Jerusalem for trial and punishment. Famously, on the way to Damascus, Paul had a conversion experience which redirected his life. Jesus appeared to Paul in a dramatic incident and asked him a question: why do you persecute me? Jesus revealed himself to Paul and chose him to be the one who would evangelize the gentiles. Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit as were the apostles at

Pentecost. Thereafter, Paul lived his life as an apostle, travelling the Roman world, nurturing emerging 'churches' and leaving us a precious collection of his correspondence with those fledgling communities.

It is Paul who teaches that we who are baptized in Jesus Christ both die with him and rise with him to be filled in our turn with the Spirit of Jesus. This is great mystery of how it is that Jesus, a person of his time in history, continues to live and have his being in the Godhead and we who follow the Way of Jesus, live also in his Spirit and so in the Godhead. Followers of Jesus continue to stand in awe before this Mystery, the Mystical Body as it can be named. Our own understanding takes time and attention to mature, just as the collective understanding of Christians has grown in depth and breadth over two thousand centuries of reflection and practice.

To return to the question: where does Jesus fit in CNWE? And the answers of contemporary women? Are we ready to enter the arena of two Christian millennia that has



expressed and recorded the male experience of Jesus' humanity and divinity? Some women's voices have been heard and these days we have a significant library of women's published works on spirituality and theology, history and the Christian tradition, to document female experience. For many women of faith, their writings are in a feminist

perspective in that they challenge giving priority to the male and call for equal respect for the human dignity and rights of women alongside men, for every human being, for

every act of divine creation. Above all, in our present historical moment, in a time of evolving consciousness in our culture as well as in our churches, how do we understand and live the Gospel of Jesus? **The whole raison d'être of CNWE is surely to create a space where we can share our spiritual experience** and so collectively discover women's experience of our humanity as children of God, adding our voices to the voices of men, always open to divine revelation making all things new in our times. Our answers to the question are urgent.

Do please be in touch with the Energy Circle "Women and the Church" if you are inspired to collaborate on searching out some answers.

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<alexina.murphy@gmail.com>

* **Alexina Murphy is a founding member of CNWE.**

- **The woodcut, Resurrection, by David Jones (1924)**

Marie Bouclín reflects*

New Church Coming Out of Adversity



WE ARE THE CHURCH. Calls for change in our church have become even more urgent in the wake of the sexual abuse scandal enabled by a patriarchal and exclusive leadership structure. However, the Covid 19 pandemic affecting our world has confirmed that we can be the change we seek. Radical changes are needed. The first is to literally go back to our roots, namely the foundational message of the Gospel and life of Jesus the Christ.

Jesus dedicated his life and his teaching to the Great Commandment: love God with our whole heart, mind, and strength; love others and “do to them as we would want them to do to us”.

Therefore, we commit to being a new church

- Which nurtures a relationship with the Divine that is based on evolving knowledge and understanding, friendship and gratitude rather than fear and the requirement of violent atonement, and where inclusive language is used to communicate this new understanding;

- Which recognizes and respects the equal dignity of all persons whatever their gender, gender identity or sexual orientation, and whatever their race, colour or social circumstance;

- Where a discipleship of equals promotes healthy self-esteem and confidence that all are “temples of the Holy Spirit”;

- Where spiritual leaders, both women and men, emerge from within local communities because they manifest the ability to proclaim

the Gospel and not because they are invested with a “sacred power” that sets them apart and above others;

- Where victims of injustice are heard and cared for, and where all accusations of sexual or other crimes are promptly reported and investigated by civil authorities rather than adjudicated by canonical courts;

- Where chastity is considered the healthy and holy exercise of sexuality by all persons, and where celibacy, the choice not to marry, is no longer a requirement for church leadership, but a freely chosen and not necessarily permanent state in life;

- Which is a communion of communions, where small faith communities gather in person or over social media to pray, celebrate meaningful liturgies, most notably the Eucharist, to sustain one another in our relationship to the Divine and our commitment to heal the world;

- Where leaders honour the gifts of all members and empower the members to live their baptismal call as priests, prophets and beloved children of God;

- Where leaders are accountable to each other and to their various communities; and

- Where a new, collaborative ecclesial structure is culturally sensitive and supportive of an evolving consciousness open to the Holy Spirit working in us and all Creation.

We want to engage CNWE members and *The Seed Keepers* readers in discussion, and so we plan to raise a question in each issue. Our question this time is:

**DO YOU BELONG TO A HOUSECHURCH?
Write to us about it!**

- how many members do you have?
- how often do you meet (in person or on-line)?
- what’s your focus or mission?

Send your response to Alexina Murphy (alexinamurphy@gmail.com). Consider joining our Energy Circle!

*** Marie Bouclin, Sudbury, is a member of Ottawa CNWE, and stands as Bishop Emerita of RCWP, Canada.**

CNWE Energy Circles: Where is Your Energy?

An 'energy circle' is a circle of CNWE members who share a passion for a particular aspect of CNWE's mission.

Women in CNWE

If your heart seeks connection with other CNWE members, and new members, this circle is for you!

Women in Church and Community

If you seek further inclusion for women in the Catholic Church and would like to pursue this, this group is for you!

Women in the World

If you think it's vital that CNWE connect with international Catholic reform groups, this energy circle is for you!

Women in Creation

If you are passionate about the earth and the environment, this Energy Circle is for you!

May 2020

SUNRISE

Stop tiptoeing
around the closed door
of this locked room. It's the silhouette
of your old self
telling you not to go there.
Chopping off
the rungs of a ladder
you need to climb higher
To where the wheel
of our smaller self
spins you upward.
In this holy air
you can be yourself
your soul can be the matchbox
that sets your heart
on fire.
No longer stuck
in the wax
of a candle
you can glow now.

New Vision

Freedom
is the name
of my balloon
and I go sailing
through the sky
with her.
In times of turbulence
placing a life jacket
on me
creates havoc in the water.
Dependent
on air
to keep me afloat
sometimes
I miss seeing You
at the parameters
of my being.
Oh God
of a hundred thousand
different faces
Each time
You come close enough
to touch me
I get to name You one more time.

Poems by Eileen Curteis, ssa, from her book, *Exposed*. 2018. British Columbia: CCB Publishing.

*From Susan Roll**



Who's Your Shepherd? Or, Whom do you trust?

A participant in my weekly Lectionary study group told the following story. One day a visitor who knew nothing about sheep was visiting a sheepfold, chatting with the shepherd. The visitor asked, "Do you think that if I put on your clothes, with your smell, that the sheep would follow me as they do you?" The shepherd let the visitor try. And the sheep simply ignored the visitor.

The shepherd nodded and remarked, "But if the sheep are sick, they will follow anybody."

What a dreadfully perfect comment for our fearful times. If you are sick, of course you're not thinking straight. You're deeply upset. Perhaps incoherent with fever or pain or fear. You could be in quarantine at home for weeks, gasping for breath, or in the hospital isolated from family when you need them most. You might hope in anything. You might imagine that an old and dangerous malaria medication could cure a new virus. Or, God help us, injecting disinfectant.

The image of the shepherd, whether male or female – Rachel was a shepherd caring for her father Laban's flocks when Jacob met her – has served for generations as profoundly comforting, even in non-agrarian societies. Psalm 23 is still *the* funeral Psalm. The visual depiction of Jesus cradling a lamb in his arms as other sheep gather around provides a welcoming image of what the Church is, or should be.

And yet there are a few questionable implications. The shepherd belongs to a different biological species with, presumably, much higher intelligence and the ability to use strategy or direct aggression to fend off attackers, thus keeping the sheep safe. But Jesus was not of a different species. In Christian belief Jesus the Christ was incarnate in human flesh, no less divine but also no less human, and it is precisely in that humanity that the risen

Christ embodies God's presence in our world. The earliest Christian theologians claimed that what is not assumed is not redeemed. Christ must therefore be fully human. Thus, they refuted one of the splinter groups of their time that claimed that Jesus was really God but only *appeared* to be human, much as Zeus in ancient Greek mythology took on various human appearances.

Rosemary Radford Ruether took that principle one step further to argue that Christ is incarnate in human flesh without differentiating male and female, since "what is not assumed is not redeemed." Otherwise, why baptize women?

More practically, the image of the shepherd can be, and has been, used far too often to reinforce clericalism. If the ordained clergy can see themselves as a superior species, called and privileged directly by God, a line between the duty of care and direct psychological or spiritual intimidation and control is too easily crossed. The more we see revelations come to light concerning clergy sexual abuse in the Roman Catholic Church, the more the dangerous ideology of entitlement to domination of others in the name of Christ is laid bare.

Even the sheep in the story who knew better than to follow a pretend shepherd were exercising their intelligence. Lay persons are not sheep, nor are those who hold authority in the church a higher species entrusted with saving us from ourselves.

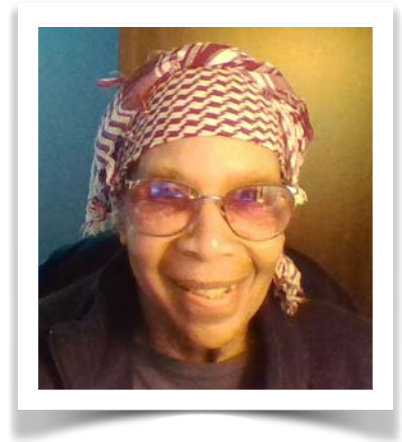
The issue may come down to trust – trust grounded in careful discernment and wisdom. What do we trust? Whom do we trust?

*** Susan Roll is a long serving member of Ottawa CNWE. She is also now a member of the CNWE NWG.**

Mary-Ellen Morgenstern introduces ...

Rev. Dr. Victoria Marie who
offers to us her poem,*

Raven Encounter



Our ancestors knew the lessons Nature can teach us

But we're too busy to even let one page reach us

Listen, give heed, to what Nature will relate I'm told.

Walk, listen, in a mindfulness state, behold.

What, where is that "krraa" coming from

In the distance, Raven beckons me, come

Atop a western red cedar tree, Raven sat crying Knowing, mourning Red Cedar, his friend, was dying

"For thousands of years we lived with the Squamish Nation In harmonious relationship, generation after generation Now we're losing our homes, food, our very being

Why do humans destroy without caring or seeing?"

Raven continues, "I hope you see we are all connected.

"Will you work to see Nature's community protected?"

I walk back, pondering Raven words, his community's needs prayerful allies, I decide, committed to love-caused deeds

Through the window, before leaving for home, we spy Raven atop a branch, looking in as if saying "goodbye"

I look at Raven with joy before I depart

Renewed, determined, a promise in my heart

It's rhymes like this that bring some relief

And prevent paralysis caused by climate grief

***Rev. Dr. Victoria (vikki) Marie is co-founder of the Vancouver Catholic Worker and priest/pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Tonantzin Community. She is an activist who supports racial and environmental justice issues and author of *Transforming Addiction: The role of spirituality in learning recovery from addiction* (Scholars Press, 2014).**

Lorraine Green asks ...*



What is a Catholic Woman?

What is a Catholic woman? That question popped into my head today as I was doing a very "womanly task" of sewing. I started to think about trying to define myself, especially now as we head into Holy Week. The stories of Holy Week according to the traditional church have a bunch of men gathering with Jesus for the events of his last week. No mention of women, though Mary Malone and others tell us their research shows that the women were there in significant roles.

Growing up as a kid in an Irish Catholic working class family in Toronto these ideas never occurred to me to wonder even though it was the women in the family who went to church. The men, not so much – not on my father's French side either. Mom was the backbone of the Catholic Women's League. That was what Catholic women did, along with the Altar Society and such. Right?

So Dad was determined his kids would go to university, girls included. And Mom got more than she bargained for. She got children who decided to think for themselves. She got one daughter who wondered why we needed God and decided to be an atheist. No Catholic woman, her. Dad understood – Mom didn't.

I, oldest daughter, was more inclined to toe the party line. Went to St. Michael's College, a good Catholic University. But whoops, began to be unsure about all the traditional stuff, despite myself. I wondered about all sorts of things, being inclined now to ask a little more about why we had to do it that way. Why couldn't we understand what the priest was saying at Mass in this foreign language (even though I was a Classics major who understood most of it)? Wasn't it rude to keep your back to everyone as you said Mass? Why did I have to put a hat on my head in Church when my brother didn't? (I think I was still smarting from the time Fr. Murphy ordered a bunch of us in the

school yard into the church for morning Mass and stuck a baseball cap from one of the boys on my head.) Why was Fr. Murphy always stinking drunk when we returned the church key to him on Saturday night after young people's club? If Catholicism was so great, why did he have to get plastered? And lots of other questions. Did I need all this out-of-date stuff? But you had to know "Mighty Mouse", my tiny Irish Mom, to know why I didn't question openly or stop going to church.

Then Gregory Baum came to St. Mike's to give talks about his experiences at Vatican II. Lots of us saw a whole different way of looking at Church. We got new hope for a better, more relevant future. There still wasn't much said about women in the Church, or new roles for us, but I wasn't really thinking about that yet. That came gradually and mostly much later. Maybe it started with working alongside women of the Congregation de Notre Dame as they changed their whole community structure and dress, moving instantly from the 17th to the 20th century. Another turning point might have been finding myself several years after, teaching in an all-boys high school with 900 boys and only 2 other female teachers on a staff of about 55.

So what is a Catholic woman? Not for me a membership in the Catholic Women's League (CWL). It has never appealed to me as a way to work for the Church. My mother's CWL pin is buried somewhere in the back of a drawer. It is, I think, a state of mind and the ways I take action. It includes going to church, but not slavishly, and not with Irish Catholic female guilt if I choose to stay away. It's more a case of celebrating a ritual because I believe in it, much like my CNWE sisters. That's why I joined and that's why I stay (and don't even feel guilty if I miss a lot of the meetings and events).

Traditional parishes don't speak to my soul much anymore. Our university's Catholic chaplaincy is more of a community that our family is drawn to.

I'm not very good at meditation and spiritual exercises – I'm more a person of action. So I feel at home in my faith community because all kinds are welcome. I can express my beliefs as a Catholic woman through CNWE, through social justice activities, training lectors, organizing projects, and most leadership roles, though not priestly yet. Luckily for me it's not a

role I feel I aspire to. But it is one that my priest friends believe should happen, though it's slow in coming.

So what is a Catholic woman? I don't know yet. I just started to ask the question. But at least I feel free to ask – regardless of what the Roman Curia says.

* **Lorraine Green of Kitchener is a member of Toronto CNWE. "By profession I'm a Family Life Educator, retired."**

Have you heard?

~ This word from The Wise:

"If you will allow, I recommend for your spiritual practice for the next four months that you impose a moratorium on exactly how much news you are subject to—hopefully not more than an hour a day of television, social media, internet news, magazine and newspaper commentary, and/or political discussions. It will only tear you apart and pull you into the dualistic world of opinion and counter-opinion, not Divine Truth, which is always found in a bigger place.

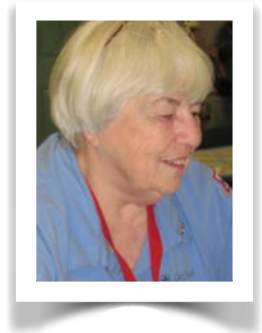
Instead, I suggest that you use this time for some form of public service, volunteerism, mystical reading from the masters, prayer—or, preferably, all of the above.

**You have much to gain now and nothing to lose. Nothing at all.
And the world—with you as a stable center—has nothing to lose.
And everything to gain."**

Richard Rohr, September 19, 2020

Center for Action and Contemplation <Meditations@cac.org>

Copied Oct. 1, 2020



Lorraine Green tells of her part so far —*

My Thoughts & A Hope

Back in May we were challenged to join a CNWE Energy Circle, with a choice of 4 themes. I set this request aside, not sure if I wanted to do so at all, or if so, which one. It took me several weeks to, as my dad used to say "get my rear in gear" and think about those two questions. I actually think Catholic female guilt is what got me moving -- guilt that I wasn't contributing when other members, especially our circle leaders were doing something.

Especially in this time of isolation it does seem important to have as many circles of safe contact as possible. The only drawback is that many or most of the circles involve being glued to one's computer screen — not the most satisfying of ways for human contact.

So on to my big decision. I'm already actively involved in environmental issues elsewhere. So should I get involved in more, or is enough enough? My second choice was Women in CNWE — not sure why.

Since then, Sylvia Verde, the circle co-ordinator, and I have had a long talk. What is our purpose in this circle? What do we want? What can we explore that's valuable to our place in CNWE. We seemed to revel in our uncertainty and its open-endedness. We've just started exploring these questions.

The more I think about it, the more excited I become about the possibilities here. Here's a circle where we can, as friends, old and new, be a support to one another and explore whatever's on our minds at the time.

Don't get me wrong. I'm glad there are these three other circles with more specific mandates -- environmental, international, our place in the church. I'm betting that more than one of these have drawn a bigger following than ours. Sylvia has indicated that our circle is very small -- maybe just Sylvia and me so far. But I think we can be small but mighty with this open-ended mandate we seem to have given ourselves.

I was once on the staff of a camp which had mega-organizational problems at the top. But our team leader was a former Salvation Army major with a backbone of steel and the heart of a soft stuffed pillow. Every morning at our team meeting as we tackled the problems of the day she would say, "Flexibility, ladies, flexibility" and her voice carried us through the day.

And that's what I think our circle has — flexibility. So I'm hoping a few more of our members will like this idea and join us.

Here's a circle where we can, as friends, old and new, be a support to one another and explore whatever's on our minds.

Lorraine Green

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***Lorraine Green of Kitchener is a member of Toronto CNWE.**



About your CNWE Membership:



~ If you are a CNWE member and can't remember if you renewed for the 2020/2021 year, please email or call Christine Gebel, our membership coordinator.

~ If you have received this copy of TSK from a friend and wish to join CNWE, please contact Christine and she will be happy to accommodate you.

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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**

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