

The Way of the Cross



The Newsletter of *The Servants of the Sacred Cross*
Anglican ■ Roman Catholic ■ Orthodox

Volume 2, Issue 2

"The Cross is my Anchor"

Advent 2006

Mother's message!

Dear friends in Christ,

I recently visited Madonna House, Combermere, Ontario. Founded by Catherine Doherty (1896-1985), this apostolate is now established in many parts of the world. It was a deeply moving experience to spend time in prayer in Catherine's hermitage. I had a palpable sense of the holiness of the place. There is a cause now underway for her canonization as a saint. The words of this Servant of God seem a fitting meditation for us at this time: *"The donkey that carried Our Lady to Bethlehem took another form in my thoughts. For he carried the Word - a dumb animal, carrying a Virgin who carried God - and so he was the carrier of God too. His bells were the first church bells, for Mary was the first Church, the first tabernacle of Christ."* (Catherine Doherty) It was a great blessing that Mass at Madonna House was offered for the special intention of The Servants of the Sacred Cross on the day of my visit.

As we prepare for the coming of Him who is the Light and Hope of the world, I pray that you all have a most blessed and happy Christmas.

In Christ's Love, *Mother Wendy*

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SSC Chapter 2006

The Sisters and Postulants of SSC met, once again, in Chapter at Mount Carmel Spiritual Centre in Niagara Falls, Ontario, from September 17-22, in the Octave of Holy Cross, for their annual meetings and retreat. As always, this is a most precious time of gathering together from such dispersed locations around the world. Unfortunately, two Sisters were unable to attend.

The Community's Visitor, Bishop Donald Harvey, conducted a Quiet Day, focusing on the Mysteries of the Rosary, as his theme for the meditations. The Community was deeply enriched by the Bishop's prayerful and edifying remarks.

Angela Kroeger was received, as a Postulant, during Evening Prayer on Monday, September 18th, Feast of St. Catherine of Genoa in the Community's Calendar. Angela is a member of Mother Wendy's parish of St. Aidan's, within The Anglican Catholic Church of Canada (Traditional Anglican Communion) in Halifax, NS. She is the daughter of Phyllis Kroeger, who is an Associate of the Community. Angela is married and the mother of two daughters.



New Postulant, Angela Kroeger, with Mother Wendy at Chapter

At the Anglican Mass on the Quiet Day, Sister Lea and Sister Malinda renewed their Annual Vows which were received by Bishop Harvey. On the next day, Feast of St. Matthew, Sister Julia renewed her Vows and Sister Julie was Clothed in the habit of The Servants of the Sacred Cross, at the Roman Catholic Mass celebrated by Fr. Roger Bonneau, O.Carm., one of the Carmelite priests resident at Mount Carmel. Once again, the Community had the privilege of using the magnificent Shrine chapel for this occasion.

Always making sure that a day is set aside for an outing and time of relaxation, the Sisters enjoyed a visit to Horseshoe Falls, afternoon tea in a restaurant with a spectacular view of the Falls and then an evening of fun, talk and laughter. The evening ended with the viewing of a most interesting film about the founding and history of a Religious Order in Australia.

At the Chapter meeting, the Community voted to adopt two additional Patron Saints and the Superior appointed certain Professed Sisters to new positions in the Community. The bulk of the meeting involved further meticulous review of the proposed amendments to the Rule and Constitution as presented last year. Finally, these were voted upon and adopted and the documents are in the process of amendment now.

By the Grace of God, the establishment of a SSC house for Sisters to live in community moves very slowly into a reality. The property will become a Motherhouse and base for the Community and a contemplative, semi-enclosed, Religious House for those Sisters called, and free, to leave the world to live in a convent. Sisters who continue to live "in the world" will have a SSC "home" in which to stay for periods of time. Inquirers, retreatants and Associates will be able to visit. The Community believes Nova Scotia, where it is legally incorporated, will be the ideal location. Two Sisters are ready to begin as the first "in community". A fundraising campaign is about to begin. We trust in God to provide for our needs. Mother has been looking at suitable properties. The Community knows that the beginning of this work may well be very humble. But significant financial resources will ultimately be required. Donations, large and small, are needed and most gratefully received toward this important foundation. ■

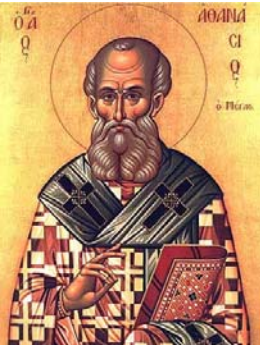
A call to further ministries of prayer under saintly patronage

The Sisters, meeting in Chapter in September, voted to adopt two additional patron saints in support of their ever-expanding call to ministries of prayer.

When SSC was founded, in the year 2000, it was formed under the patronage of The Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint John the Evangelist, remembering them in their place at the foot of the Cross. In their prayer to take up their own cross to follow Christ, it seemed fitting to uphold, as models, His Mother and the one whom he called “the beloved disciple”, the one to whom He entrusted the care of His own Mother. The Sisters

strive to find their own place at the Cross in their life of prayer and service, despite the obstacles and suffering they may encounter.

As the Community has evolved, there has been an increased urgency to pray for the Church and, particularly, for the Unity and orthodoxy of all parts of the Body of Christ, the Church. Thus, the Sisters have taken as their patron in this work, Saint Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria,



Saint Athanasius

that great Champion of orthodoxy and Doctor of the Church. He was present at the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325 and, until his death, championed the Faith as it was defined at that Council. He was subjected to persecution and exile for upholding the truth of the divinity of Christ against the Arian heresy.

Feast Day: May 2



St. John Mary Vianney

Saint John Mary Vianney was the son of a poor farmer in Dardilly, France. Known as the Curé d’Ars, he was ordained a priest in 1815 and made the parish priest of Ars, a remote French hamlet. His reputation as a saintly confessor and director of souls grew quickly. He was besieged by the devil and subjected to extreme austerities. Nevertheless, he heard confessions for up to sixteen hours a day. He lived a life of works of charity and love in the living image of Christ. He is the Patron Saint of parish priests. Under the patronage of this great saint, the Sisters of SSC have undertaken a committed ministry of prayer for priests.

Feast Day: August 4

Sister Julia’s visit to Nova Scotia

Sister Julia Ray, SSC’s Formation Director, who lives in Atlanta, Georgia, spent the month of May visiting in Nova Scotia. Making her base in Halifax, she and Mother Wendy, who lives about an hour’s drive from Halifax, spent many days of that time involved in various work projects relating to the Community.

However, all was not work, as Mother took Sister on several excursions around the Province which allowed her to become familiar with the history and beauty unique to this part of Canada. Outings included National Historic sites such as the Halifax Citadel, a point of fortification and defense of the city since the earliest days of its settlement in 1749 and Grand-Pré, site of the home of French Acadians from 1682 and from where they were deported in 1755. A stop also was made to visit the Port Royal Habitation, the location of the second oldest (1605) European settlement in North America. An exact replica of the original buildings stands on the site of the first fort.

In addition, Mother Wendy and Sister Julia enjoyed a very pleasant visit with the Anglican Sisters of The Society of Our Lady Saint Mary, near Digby, in the area where Mother was born and grew up. They also had tea and a brief visit with Mother Wendy’s parents.



Sister Julia at Port Royal Habitation in Nova Scotia

Ringling the bell for SSC in Detroit

Sister Malinda Madison, of Detroit, Michigan, came up with a novel idea to raise some funds toward the establishment of our proposed SSC convent. She designed a large banner and donation box. Standing out in a cold wind in mid-October, ringing a hand bell, Sister positioned herself in front of her church, St. John’s Episcopal, with the permission of her rector, Fr. Stephen Kelly. With a great sense of timing, Sister decided to set up her collection project during a Detroit Tigers baseball game, just before this year’s World Series.

The Tigers’ stadium is just behind the church and many spectators use the church parking lot when attending games. Thus, with hundreds of people passing by on their way to the game, Sister had a ready-made group of possible donors. But Sister found that the fans were very generous on their way back after the game - which the Tigers won! In fact, they were lined up to put their offerings in the box!!



Sister Malinda in front of St. John’s church

New Associate In Massachusetts

The Community is delighted, and deeply blessed, to have received another Associate. On the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, September 14, 2006, Sarah Nicholson was received during Mass at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Marlborough, MA. Not only did Sarah's admission take place on the sixth anniversary of the Founding of SSC, but she was received, on behalf of the Community, by her rector, Father Michael McKinnon. Father Michael is, himself, an Associate of SSC. Associates of the Community form an important mutual support network within the SSC family, upholding and assisting the Sisters in their work and prayer. In addition, Sisters remember all Associates in their daily prayer.

Correction: In our last newsletter, Fr. and Mrs. McKinnon were said to be parents of two children. In actual fact, Father and Christine are the proud parents of one young daughter, Sarah Michele.



Fr. Michael McKinnon and Sarah Nicholson

Meet Novice Sister Julie Walker

Blessings in Abundance : by Sister Julie

On September 21, 2006, I made the transition from Postulant to Novice in The Servants of the Sacred Cross and received the Holy Habit of this Community.

As I reflect on the spiritual journey that has brought me to this place, I am overcome with a sense of gratitude and heartfelt thanksgiving for the many ways in which God has blessed my life and has directed my path.

I was raised a Baptist, and my mother did her very best to instill in each of her four children a sincere love and respect for Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, as well the morals and values that are an essential and vital part of Christian living. However, Catholicism was a taboo subject in our home. The ancestors of my father had ties that went back to the Church of England but, somewhere in the succeeding generations, faith was abandoned. Yet, I had cousins and some childhood friends that were raised in the Catholic tradition and also had the privilege of attending Parochial Schools. It was through them that I was introduced to the Catholic Faith.

A conversion of faith is not an easy thing to accomplish. My journey to embrace the Catholic Church was not achieved with ease, and I faced many obstacles in this walk. But it led me, eventually, to the rectory door of Holy Rosary Parish. When I knocked, a kind elderly priest, Father Felix, responded. I had no idea where I was going to begin or what I was going to say. It all came out in a flood - my long desire to be baptized into the Church, and my desire to receive the Sacraments to which I was not then entitled. I completed my Catechism studies and, at last, received the first of many graces to follow, the sacrament of Confirmation, on the Feast of the Assumption.

It was Father Felix who planted the seeds of vocation. During our conversations, he mentioned Religious Life and suggested that I consider whether or not I was being called to serve God in this way. I knew I had always been attracted to this life. I had great admiration and respect for these remarkable women who dedicated their lives to teaching, nursing, and the poor. They had long been the backbone of the Church, serving quietly in the background, without any recognition for their tireless efforts and selfless devotion. Of course I was new to the Faith, and so I would have to wait and truly discern where God was leading me. It's quite amazing to me how God places people in our lives at the right moment. So I began a process of discernment which took me to several Communities in which I discovered a varying range of perspectives and viewpoints on the interpretation and values of Religious Life.

The winds of Vatican II swept significant changes throughout the Church, and many of the faith-inspiring traditions that had been a motivating force in my own conversion were now a thing of the past. I longed to find my place within a community that honored and respected Religious Life as it once was. Finding my place within this structure was not going to be a simple task,

yet I knew God had a plan that would be revealed to me at the time He chose and designated. I spoke with vocation directors and came away feeling disappointed, dejected, and seriously concerned about the future of Religious Life in general. It seemed so far removed from what it once was with active community life, community prayer, and the identification of a consecrated life through the visible witness of the Holy Habit. I believe that in Religious Life, the Sister strives to conform and mold herself to the spirit and charism of the Community. The Community and its Rule cannot be continually interpreted according to individual desires because it begins to disintegrate as each person is free to "do their own thing." Unfortunately, it appeared that this is exactly what was happening in some of the Orders I had investigated and the concept of vocation was slowly becoming an elusive dream.

Then I discovered The Servants of the Sacred Cross via the Community's web site.

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Sister Julie's habit rests on the altar prior to the Clothing Mass



Sister Julie after her Clothing Mass at Mount Carmel in Niagara Falls, Ontario

Are you called to be a Sister or Associate??

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SSC Sisters are in demand !!

In recent weeks the Mother Superior has received requests to supply SSC Sisters to a Catholic parish in the USA; Sisters to serve in missionary roles in the Congo; and Sisters to staff a proposed school within the Traditional Anglican Communion. Please pray for vocations so that we might meet these needs in our service to God and His people as He is calling us to do.

*SSC is a Registered Charity in Canada
and an Incorporated Non-Profit Society*

Excerpts from some recent letters to the Superior

SSC has been greatly blessed by the support it is receiving from many people and places. Here are a few brief excerpts from correspondence received by Mother Wendy.

"His Holiness (Pope Benedict XVI) will remember you and the Sisters in his prayers, and he invokes upon you the sustaining grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ...."

The Vatican, Secretariat of State. April 2006

"(We are) highly appreciative of the Community's commitment to prayer for the oneness of all Christ's disciples....such spiritual ecumenism is the heart of the search....."

The Vatican,

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. June 2006

".....actual movement for unity comes from within communities, and that seems to be exactly what is happening within your Community. I am moved by this knowledge..."

Most Rev. Wilton Gregory, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Atlanta; former President of the USCCB. March 2006

"This is a wonderful time to be a Religious....your witness as Servants of His eternal plan of love will point others to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in Heaven, but anticipated by His Presence here and now in the Sacrament of our salvation which He accomplished on the Sacred Cross."

The Rt. Rev. Peter D. Wilkinson, OSG, Bishop Ordinary, The Anglican Catholic Church of Canada. October 2006

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I was attracted by the fact that these women carried on active ministries while remaining in their own homes and parishes. What a wonderful way to serve God and, I thought, what a beautiful outreach they must have to live Religious Life in this way. I wasted no time in sending an email to the Foundress and Superior, Mother Wendy James. Her guidance, support and encouragement was so valuable to me during this time and the genuine love and interest she expressed as we discerned my vocation together is something I will never forget. She remains for me that rock of faith to whom I can turn when things look grim. With a deep abiding maternal love for her spiritual daughters, she always has words of wisdom that help me on my way. I found the ecumenical nature of this community to be both an inspiration and much needed in these times when there is so much division and contention among Christians concerning matters of faith, morality, truth, and Doctrine.

Attending my first Chapter meeting in September of 2005 was particularly meaningful for me because in meeting the rest of this spiritual family, I realized that I had finally "come home." I was lovingly received as a Postulant; I had at last reached the place to which I knew in my heart that God had been calling me. He has a divine purpose and plan for each of us and we must acquire the virtue of patience and endurance as it unfolds. It is clear to me that, despite all the trials and those dark moments of uncertainty, He was always with me. For He knew that my place was reserved and to be found among these women whom I am honored and privileged to call my Sisters. The journey of discernment is completed, but the great adventure now begins as I enter the Novitiate phase of my formation. As our little family of Sisters grows each year, we are continually blessed by new opportunities and possibilities. Although separated by distance, we are in constant contact with one another, thus keeping very much alive that thriving sense of community and family. I am both blessed and enriched as I learn how God has used their talents and abilities in His service. He plants us where we are most needed and where we can use the gifts we are given. I am active in my parish, St. Mary's, by serving as organist for Mass. What a profound blessing it is for me to use my musical talents as a means of praising the Father who has given the priceless gift of grace in so many facets of my life. I work extensively with animals also; His creatures never cease to instill in me a sense of wonder and awe at the magnificence of the world He created. Lastly, I maintain a large personal archive of historic Catholic memorabilia and, particularly, of women Religious which I hope to preserve for future generations. It is my fervent desire that these souvenirs of the past will someday provide a tangible link to our incredible Catholic history and the legacy of faith shared by all the faithful.

Sister Julie lives in Montesano, Washington State, USA. She is single and shares her home with four Standard Poodles and a variety of other pets. She is a professional dog groomer. Sister is a member of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Aberdeen, where she is organist. Her vast collection of nun dolls, dressed in historically authentic habits, as well as other artifacts of Religious Life, numbers in the hundreds.