



Willi's Word

The Newsletter of the Community of St. Willibrord Parish
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Spring 2008

This year we were barely finished putting away our Christmas ornaments when Lent was already upon us. Easter arrives on March 23rd this year, which is extremely early. How much we are all looking forward to spring after a recordbreaking winter of snow, snow, and more snow; but as every Montrealer knows our spring does not come with the calendar season. It doesn't really matter though, because Easter is the springtime of our souls and during Lent we prepare the soil to produce beautiful flowers of virtue and goodness which the Resurrection of Our Lord causes to bloom anew every Easter. So remember that as you plod through the snow to the Easter Vigil and be full of joy that someday you too will rise again with the glorious Risen Lord.

In this issue, we honour and say goodbye to a very special lady, Mary Pietrykowski always known to parishioners as Mary P, Fr. Cameron's housekeeper and kitchen spiritual advisor to many parishioners. This issue includes two inspiring reflections on Mary P's life by her son Patrick and by Sr. Anne McNally.

We also have an interesting article by our Church historian Paul Moreau on the beautiful rendition of the Last Supper that lies beneath the paint on our current church ceiling. Also, we hear from long-time parishioner Jim Tremain who has news of the proposed St. Willibrord's Seniors Residence.

-Dorothy Ormsby

Reflections on a Dear Friend

As we journey through life we may have the good fortune to meet at least one other person with whom we feel instantly "at home": no preamble, no getting-to-knowyou time, is necessary; the glove fits! For me such a person was without a doubt my friend, Mary Pietrykowski.

Perhaps it was our Irish roots, or Mary's delightful sense of humour, her hearty laugh as she told tales of Ireland, her readiness to express her wisdom and "to tell it as it is". Or maybe it was her authenticity, or her warmth and great strength of character; possibly the witness of her generosity and kindness extended towards anyone who came to the rectory for food, advice or just a listening ear. Certainly it was all of the above and much more that endeared Mary to me. And underlying all of these qualities was Mary's deep faith in a God who was close and who, with the Mother of Jesus, had helped to carry her



Figure above: Mary P. enjoying a good laugh with Fr. Cameron and two of her children, Patrick and Winnie.

through what others would call “some difficult times”.

It must have been quite a challenge to have been a young widow bringing up three children in the city of Montreal in the fifties and sixties, an ocean away from her own family. Looking back, Mary would shake her head and say, “I couldn’t have done it alone; it had to have been God!” This same God would leave Mary here long enough to see her children grow into caring, compassionate adults and to see them offer her the same loving care and attention they had experienced in their younger years.

Over the years Mary and I had so many good conversations: at first, at the kitchen table in the rectory, then over a cup of tea in her Huntingdon home, and more recently across the country on the telephone, talking about life, family, Church, death. Always ready to share ideas on the deeper issues of life, Mary was also eager to speak with a quiet pride about her children and grandchildren.

As people come and go in our lives we meet some who touch us in the very depths of our being. Along with Father Cameron, Cathy Desautels, and the parishioners of St. Willibrord I have been touched in the depths of my being by the life and death of Mary P. And I am grateful!

May you be experiencing the fullness of joy, Mary, and laughing heartily with us “eejits” who are still en route.

-Sr. Anne McNally, C.N.D.

Progress on the Development of the St. Willibrord’s Seniors Residence

Some time ago, we asked our parishioners for approval in principle to explore the feasibility of building a residence for seniors on the church’s property. Progressively, we then obtained approval from the Diocese and proceeded to work with a number of experts. The City of Verdun, initially cautious, subsequently became a full supporter. Our architect that contributed so well to recent church renovations was retained. Their staff became fully engaged in the project and devoted many long hours to considering all possible aspects. These included optimizing the permissible height, an integrated design of the presbytery within the new construction, the most recent technology for heating and many features that would enhance living within the building.

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Figure below: Standing beside our church is the proposed Seniors Residence as rendered by our dedicated architects at DFS Inc.



During these studies, a variety of subsidy programs became available and we qualified for them all. With the aid of consultants who specialize in proposals for low rental housing, each was studied. However, within the required housing norms, we could not pull together the financial capability. In the final analysis, we determined that the project could only proceed with donations of about \$2 million. So, our Wardens have decided to defer this. However, the dossier is complete in every respect. Should the appropriate environment arise with suitable financing, the initial planning is all complete for such an eventuality.

-Jim Tremain

Remembering “the Last Supper”

When I enter our high, spacious church my eyes often are drawn to the vault above the sanctuary with its beautiful Nincheri fresco rendering of Christ the King. Then I look to the ceiling. There I'm reminded of the beautiful scene of the Last Supper, which once dominated the surface space above the center of the nave. Today, few can recall the beautiful artwork concealed beneath the blue series of 'heavenly circles' that have held it hidden from human eyes for almost sixty years. This writer has wondered ever since that time in 1952 when I was a St. Willibrord elementary schoolboy why it was painted over. Unfortunately, there is no explanation to be found in the parish archives.

Today, after fifty-six years the paint that covers other areas of the lofty ceiling is beginning to flake from the dryness of age, and while the problem is mainly one of aesthetics, it does detract from the interior appearance of the church and the truly excellent condition of the building.

What is positive and encouraging, however, in this, the 95th anniversary of the founding of St. Willibrord's parish, is what has been accomplished since the restoration and repair of our heritage church began in 1998. Without listing individually the sizeable number of projects that have been completed during these last ten years it can be said that, with the recent completion of the restoration of the hall windows, the entire exterior of St. Willibrord's church has been fully renovated, repaired and sealed.

The Building Fund continues to accept with gratitude (and a tax receipt) donations for the ongoing maintenance of our large church, as well as for special projects such as the repainting of the ceiling.

-Paul Moreau

If you would like to comment on this article, you may contact its author by e-mail at the following address: Paul.moreau1@sympatico.ca

Excerpts from Patrick's Eulogy for his Mother

When I was young my mother told me stories of Ireland and took me down to the St. Lawrence to watch the ships go down to the sea. In those early days she missed Ireland and her family so much. When I was ten years old I remember her opening a letter with news of her mother's death. She wept in sorrow; for it had been more than ten years since she had seen her mother. I ached with her for her loss and yearned for her happiness. I think Winnie and Johnny can also sympathize with these sentiments. We eventually got to meet our Irish relations in the U.S. They cemented a bond of love which bolstered Mom in times of loneliness.

Our days were busy as life went on and we grew as a family; but the yearning finally culminated in a family visit to Ireland. All three of us finally saw the land of Mom's stories and Mom's accent grew thicker. Thus was forged a bond that grew stronger with the years.

Some of Mom's happiest years were spent here at St. Willibrord's working with Fr. Joe and Sr. Clare and so many others whom I have met at celebrations held in her honour. I grew to know the warmth of this community and their inclusive regard for Mom.

Mom's passing was bitter sweet the other day, I made the Sign of the Cross on her forehead and asked her forgiveness and forgave her for every slight; for she did have a sharp tongue at times. I had promised to say goodbye for her to all her friends alive today if she would greet all of those who have gone before us on our behalf. After her death there was a subtle presence in the room. I can't describe it adequately. It felt like a total presence of "Mother" embracing me. Her grandchildren Tara, Adam and Linda arrived and we all felt consoled by her peaceful passing.

Thanks Mom for the gift of Love.

-Patrick Pietrykowski

Announcements

* The Parish is pleased to offer a "Scripture Study Day" which will take place here at St. Willibrord's Church on Saturday, April 19th from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. This "study day" will be lead by Sr. Barbara Reid, O.P., a teacher at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. For further information, please don't hesitate to contact the Parish and ask to speak with Father Cameron (514) 769-9678.

* We all mourned the rather sudden death and loss of another good Irish friend **Susan Young**. We will miss her Irish brogue and her ready wit. May God give her eternal joy in His presence.

* **Fr. Dermott O'Callaghan**, who often helped Fr. Joe administer the Sacrament of the sick at our healing Masses and to hear confessions at our penance services, is now a permanent resident at the Father Dowd Home on Hudson Road, Montreal. He especially enjoys visits from the St. Willibrord parishioners, the Parish where he was baptized.

St. Willibrord Parish Mass Schedule

Saturday5pm
Sunday9am, 11am
Mon, Tue, Thur, Fri8am
Wed7pm

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Friday8:30- 11am

Holy Week Schedule

Palm Sunday with Blessing of Palms ..Mar. 16, 11am
Mass of the Lord's SupperMar. 20, 8pm
Good Friday Liturgy.....Mar. 21, 3pm
Outdoor Way of the CrossMar. 21, 7pm
Easter VigilMar. 22, 8pm
Easter Sunday Mass.....Mar.23, 9am
and 11am