



Willi's Word

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

From the joy of the Eucharistic Congress to the beginning of the Year of St. Paul and the start of St. Willibrord's Bible Camp, there has been much going on in June. To add even more to this excitement, along comes your summer issue of Willi's Word! Read on and enjoy all the news, history and biography from your Parish.

Fifty years of "Joie de Vivre"

Working at Sears in Toronto as one of the first woman managers, Marie Azzarello, at the age of twenty-one, began to feel a call. At that time she loved dancing and socializing and planned to become a wife and mother. She had been brought up with great respect for this vocation; because her mother often said, "There is nothing more holy than having a baby." Her father owned some fruit and vegetable stores in Toronto and became so highly respected for his contributions to his neighborhood that there is a little street in Toronto, today, known as Azzarello Lane.

The call that Marie began to feel when she was twenty-one took the form of the desire for a special relationship with God that involved setting aside many good things of the life she had originally planned. She felt she could do this best in the consecrated life and was drawn to the Congregation of Notre-Dame because of their "joie de vivre." Therefore in 1955 she entered the convent and recently celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of her Profession.

Concerning the changes in religious life over the years, she said that any vocation has its highs and lows and its dark and light sides and made the very apropos remark that one must commit one's changing self to the changing congregation. She commented that St. Marguerite Bourgeois was deeply immersed in the culture in which she lived and truly related to it and therefore the CND's today, as spiritual daughters of Marguerite, must try to do the same. But nevertheless, she added, her fundamental relationship with Jesus remains the same and that like all Christians her desire is for this relationship to grow ever closer.

Sr. Marie also has a very close relationship with Mary. We have already reviewed her first book about Mary which came out a few years ago, entitled Mary the First

*"One must commit one's
changing self to the
changing congregation,"
says Sr. Marie.*

Disciple. She is now working on a new book on Mary which she has tentatively entitled, Sacred Balance: Mother Church in a Fractured World. In this book she will attempt to describe how Mary exercised discipleship in a maternal way and how we are all called to be Church in the world in a loving, caring manner.

Inside This Issue

- Sunday Mass schedule to change for the summer - One mass at 10:30 a.m.
- Pope Benedict XVI proclaims: A year dedicated to St. Paul.
- A look at our\ dedicated pastors throughout the years.
- Improving our church's accessibility through railings and restroom - News about the Building Fund.
- The Hospitality Centre completes yet another successful year.

Thinking Ahead

- This year's **Fall Fair** will be held on October 17th and 18th. Mark your calendars!
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From a principal in Ottawa to a volunteer at Elizabeth House (which helps families in distress, especially pregnant teenagers) Sr. Marie's accomplishments have been many and diverse. She was the director of the Diocesan Renew project in the 80's, had a ministry at McGill Newman Centre, opened an office for the Associate CND members, taught in St. Augustine's, St. Anthony's and St. Paul's Academy. She has also been a very active member of our Parish Council, recently encouraging parishioners to become sacristans, greeters and Eucharistic ministers. In May she animated a retreat on Mary for the Anglican Bishop of Montreal, Bishop Barry Clarke, and his clergy.

We thank God for all Sr. Marie's contributions to the Church and we pray for many more of her service to God and neighbour.

-Dorothy Ormsby

The Apostle Paul – 2000 Years and Counting

This year will be the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Paul of Tarsus. Pope Benedict has proclaimed June 29th, the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, as the beginning of a jubilee year in honor of St. Paul.

The writings of St. Paul make up nearly half of the New Testament. His missionary work lasted eight to ten years, and during that time he traveled approximately ten thousand miles. There are thousands of books on St. Paul and his writings. After two thousand years St. Paul's writings continue to be a challenge to us.

Paul was a Greek-speaking Jew and a Roman citizen who lived in the first half of the first century A.D. He was a devout Jew and remained proud of his heritage all his life. He was a first generation Christian, but never personally met Jesus, except in a vision on the road to Damascus where St. Paul experienced a dramatic conversion and became a committed believer in Christ. Before his conversion Paul had been in violent opposition to Christianity and all his life remained remorseful about his persecution of the Christians.

Paul was a pastor who felt responsibility for and authority over his churches. He worked in close collaboration with a number of other Christian leaders and missionaries, such as Barnabas, Timothy and Luke. Paul was a letter-writer and his genuine thought is known from his letters.

This jubilee year of St. Paul is a great occasion to read and ponder the mighty writings of the Apostle to the

Gentiles. During the next twelve months there will be many opportunities within a parish-setting, a retreat or a pilgrimage, to focus on the various aspects of St. Paul's life, ministry, writings, example and theology. May this graced time, which is devoted to remembering and honoring the great Apostle to the nations, be an occasion of renewed faith and fervor for you and your loved ones.

- Fr. Joseph Cameron



Rembrandt's depiction of St. Paul with his writings from prison. C. 1627

The Pastors of St. Willibrord's

Most Willibrordians know that Father Patrick McDonald was the founding Pastor of St. Willibrord's but often missed is the fact that our third Pastor, Father Frederick Elliott, predated Father McDonald in priestly ministry to the English-speaking Catholics of Verdun. Prior to McDonald's arrival in 1913 Father Elliott was a curate assigned to the legendary Monsignor J.A. Richard at Notre-Dame-de-Sept Douleurs to serve the Anglophone Catholic community. Sunday Masses, however, were celebrated not in the church but in the school hall of Academie Richard on Galt Ave.

Father McDonald, a tireless worker for education, after building a new parish church in 1913, was faced with building another only a dozen years later. He died at age fifty-nine after eighteen years' service to St. Willibrord's and the Verdun community at large. It was Father Mac who brought both the CND sisters to Verdun and the Sacred Heart brothers as well.

Following Father McDonald's sudden passing in October of 1931 Father (later Msgr.) Martin P. Reid was appointed Parish priest. Father Reid, a gifted orator, intellectual and Irish raconteur, is still remembered for his mobilization of parish resources to shelter and feed those suffering most from the Great Depression during those dark years from 1931 to 1937. With NDG seemingly more in need of salvation than Verdun Father Reid moved that year to St. Augustine's where, coincidentally, he was Father Cameron's pastor during Father's elementary school years. Ordained in 1906, Msgr. Reid passed away in 1974 after sixty-eight years in the priesthood.

Father Elliott succeeded Father Reid and as Pastor not only during the waning years of the Great Depression but during the war years as well, he had a somewhat different ministry as so many parishioners served overseas and more than fifty were lost. While he had seen his flock out of the Depression he had also to console those who suffered from the loss of loved ones or those returning service people ravaged physically and mentally, by the brutality of war.

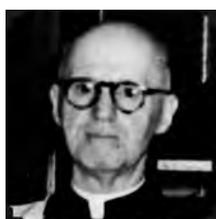
Father Elliott's time also saw the peak period of church attendance at St. Willibrord's. He had four curates assisting him with the six Sunday Masses. The church underwent changes to the interior under his leadership with the painting of the vault fresco of Christ the King and a refurbishing of the sanctuary including a new altar of Italian marble.



Father Patrick McDonald
(1913-1931)



Father Martin P. Reid
(1931-1937)



Father Frederick Elliott
(1937-1951)



Canon J. J. Stanford
(1951-1953)



Father William Byrd
(1953-1963)



Father George Thoms
(1963-1974)

A diabetic, Father Elliott passed away in 1951 and Canon Jasper Stanford arrived from St. Dominic's in the east-end of Montreal with many ideas to move St. Willibrord's ahead during the prosperous post-war years. He worked diligently to complete the interior renovation of the church begun by Father Elliott but through an untimely dispensation of Providence, Father Stanford, also diabetic, was taken ill not long after assuming his responsibilities and passed away in 1953. St. Willibrord's had lost two pastors within a period of two years.

St. Willibrord's fifth pastor was the erudite, soft-spoken, Father William Byrd. A brilliant student as a seminarian he was second in his graduating class of some 300 to one Paul-Emile Léger, the future Cardinal-Archbishop of Montréal. Father Byrd was also a champion of education and was instrumental in the conception and building of Verdun Catholic High School, which opened in 1961. After ten years of loyal service to St. Willibrord's, Father Byrd died in 1963.

While several of the priests who served at St. Willibrord's were men who had grown up in the parish and attended St. Willibrord's school, Father George Thoms was the first (and only) one to become Pastor. In 1937, he became the first St. Willibrord parishioner to be ordained to the priesthood. A gifted speaker with matinee-idol looks, he was the host of a popular radio show, "The Catholic Hour" during the late forties and early fifties. One present-day parishioner who grew up in the same era as Father Thoms recalls "many Verdun girls' hearts were broken when George Thoms decided to enter the seminary." Serious illness forced his resignation in 1973.

Our seventh, and longest serving Pastor, Father Joseph Cameron, arrived in February of 1974 and

along with a competent team of collaborators including Sister Clare O'Neill and the late Jean Rodgers who brought St. Willibrord's fully into the era of post-Vatican II. Thus began the era of the soup kitchen, monthly food distribution, ministry to families and numerous other projects designed to serve the entire Verdun community, regardless of color, creed or language. Under his far-sighted stewardship, St. Willibrord's, despite diminishing numbers, has continued to thrive.

As we celebrate our ninety-fifth anniversary we give thanks for these seven men who have meant so much in steering our parish through sometimes-troubled waters by their unfailing dedication to God and to their ministry.

-Paul Moreau

Summer Building Maintenance

While the major renovation work to the exterior of our church building has been completed work continues on smaller projects. Some mobility improvements since our last issue have been the addition of beautifully carved handrails on each side of the steps leading into the sanctuary, designed by our own Chuck Ormsby, who also supervised the installation.

We also now have a washroom on the church level. It is located in the anteroom near the entrance to the sacristy and saves stair climbing from the downstairs bathrooms.

Planned for the near future are additional handrails on the exterior stairs of the church to supplement the ones already in place.

This summer will see further work about the church such as eliminating a water infiltration problem around the small stairwell windows on the east and west facades of the church, the installation of a snow guard above the church entrance, door repairs, and an east façade window replacement, broken by a falling tree branch. Also on the schedule are some other adjustments to be made to prevent water infiltration caused by pooling on the roof of the vestibule.

None of this work can be accomplished however without support for our Building Fund which presently, for the most part, has been depleted. Please keep our St. Willibrord's church building healthy by donating to our Building Fund. We can't do it without your support.

-Paul Moreau

New Weekend Mass Schedule***

For some time now we have been considering having only one Mass on Sunday morning. As you know, the number of people attending the 9a.m. and 11a.m. Masses has diminished. Therefore, **starting on the first Sunday of July (July 6) the Sunday Mass will be celebrated at 10:30a.m.** The 5p.m. Mass on Saturday remains unchanged. In mid-September we can evaluate this change in order to see what is best for the Parish Community.

Called Home to the Father

We celebrate the entrance into eternal life of Faustina Ferreira, who died this past April. Faustina was a very active member of the Parish for many years, involved in the Flea Market, the Soup Kitchen and many other things. Above all, she was a woman of prayer. Two days before she died her doctor asked her to write a sentence to test her mental faculties. She wrote "God made us and told us to love each other." Faustina spent her last years with the family of her very loving niece Jackie Cere. Her family and friends will miss her very much.

-Dorothy Ormsby

Hospitality Centre

The Hospitality Centre and the Parish Food Bank have closed for the summer after a busy year of serving guests. The number of people in need is always growing and we appreciate your continued financial support so that this important ministry may continue. We thank Tess Allonar, director of the Hospitality Centre, and the many volunteers who enabled us to keep our Soup Kitchen open three days a week from September to June. We look forward to opening again next September.

Summer Bible Vacation Camp

This year's Bible Camp will be held at our church for one week from June 30th to July 4th. Children are invited to come and learn about their faith while having a blast playing, swimming and doing arts and crafts. Registration information may be obtained by calling the Parish rectory.

