



Willi's Word

The Newsletter of the Community of St. Willibrord Parish
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Summer 2009

Though we usually come to you in our issues of Willi's Word with a joyful spirit, this summer issue is tinged with a sense of sadness, because our dear pastor, priest and friend, Father Cameron is retiring and leaving us at the end of August. After thirty five years of his gift of self to Christ and to us, he is retiring in good health with a desire to continue his priestly ministry wherever he might be needed. Our thoughts, and especially our prayers, go with him. He has truly been a father to all of us.

-Dorothy Ormsby

Father Joseph Cameron Announces his Retirement

One doesn't work, plan, pray and occasionally conspire with a man for more than twenty-five years without gaining considerable insight into what motivates that person.

So, while, I, as most everyone else, was taken by surprise to hear of Father Cameron's decision to step down from the position he has held for more than thirty-five years as our Pastor and shepherd, the news certainly didn't come as a shock. In all our years together I have found among his many gifts an innate sense of timing. The many projects he initiated and on which we worked together, along with dozens of other parishioners over the years, always seemed to be the right path to be following at that particular time.

Whether it was, during the last ten or eleven years of our varied collaborations, when he was leading the renovation of the church building or when he was leading this writer back to his faith when we first met in 1983, his sense of when to do what has been uncanny. In all our years working together he has always been one step ahead of me on what we need to do next. Underneath all that folksy charm beats the heart of an engineer.



With that knowledge in mind I knew even before we enjoyed a recent talk together that he had his timing together before he made this decision.

Having recently celebrated his seventy-seventh birthday and still enjoying the grace of good health, Father said he didn't consult with anyone in his decision but simply prayed for the guidance that led him to decide it was "just time." He felt it would not benefit the parish, should his present robustness fail at some point, to have a Pastor who was in poor health. He was high in his praise of, and confidence in, the present parish support staff and expressed certainty that each of these people will be of great assistance to Father Stephen Otvos, who comes to us from St. Patrick's, and who will take over the reins as the

eighth Pastor in the ninety-six year history of St. Willibrord's following the celebration of Father Cameron's final Mass as Pastor on August 30th.

While Father Joseph may be retiring from his duties as St. Willibrord's Pastor he assures us that he has no intention of retiring from his vocation. His plans do not include a life of rural retirement at the farm. While he will certainly take rest by the vegetable patch it is his intention to maintain a residence here in the southwest borough. Inasmuch as his very being is rooted in ministry, Father will be freer to more involve himself in visiting the sick at home and in hospital, being present to the dying, and filling in for brother priests as a weekend replacement when called upon. He recalls from his own experience how difficult that has become in recent years with the shortage of priests.

Father's hope for St. Willibrord's is that parishioners and friends realize their great potential as members of the laity for shaping the St. Willibrord's of the future and accept the challenge and continue to be active in collaborating with Father Otvos in the many and varied ministries of the parish and never allow for the crushing of the St. Willibrord spirit.

This writer is woefully lacking the gifts necessary to express all that father Cameron has meant to St. Willibrord's over these past thirty-five years of tireless ministry. When he and Sister Clare came here in 1974 there was much to do to bring our parish into the era of Vatican II, and they, along with a committed laity made bold, positive changes in record time. Speaking personally, I have always had to run hard to keep up with the dynamic he brought to every project he initiated and undertook. And he undertook many, believe me.

While I will miss his evening phone calls, our meetings, and our quiet time together I hope I can honour him most - and this is probably the greatest gift any of us can give him - to not let up in our zeal for our parish and our desire to live in, and as, a community of believers living out our Baptism in the service of others. We pray for Father Cameron and for Father Otvos who replaces him. We shall all miss Father immensely but we should also be greatly relieved that the absence of the burden of the administration will allow to him to expand his priestly ministry.

Visionary, champion of the poor, gentle shepherd, faithful priest, wise leader and just a good person.

Godspeed, good and faithful servant.

-Paul Moreau

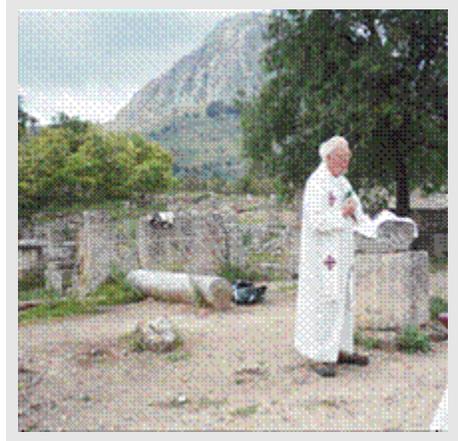
"Oh Shepherd of Israel, hear us, you who lead Joseph's flock, shine forth from your cherubim throne. [...] May your hand be on the man you have chosen, the man you have given your strength and we shall never forsake you again. Give us life that we may call upon your name. Let your face shine on us and we shall be saved."

Psalm 80

In the Footsteps of St. Paul in Greece and Rome - April 27 to May 9, 2009

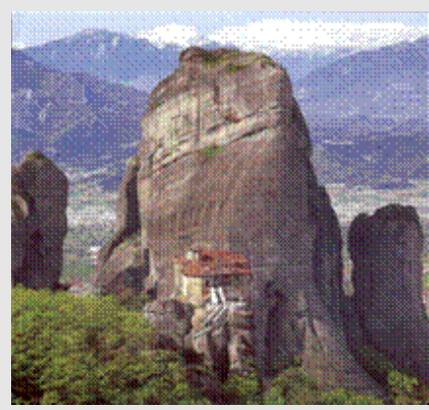
A group of sixteen "pilgrims" accompanied by Fr. Joseph Cameron set out on April 27th for Thessaloniki in Macedonia, to begin a tour which would encompass the major sites of St. Paul's missions to the Jews and Gentiles of Greece, and culminating with a visit to Rome, where he died. His letters or epistles provided the itinerary: first to Philippi - where Lydia was baptized. According to Greek tradition she was the first European to be converted. We ventured to the banks of that same stream, now, at the end of April, a rushing torrent, where Paul and his friends used to meet to "remember the Lord" - so did we.

The four millennia of Grecian history weren't overlooked – how could they be with magnificent architecture & sculpture, now mostly ruins, in view everywhere. While in Philippi we saw the fortress-palace of Philip of Macedonia and his more famous son, Alexander the Great. In the early Christian era, two basilicas were built upon the site – only broken columns and huge slabs remain – the result of a mighty earthquake. Still visible – the tiny jail cell where Paul, after being scourged, was shackled to the walls - only to be released by “an earthquake”. We left Philippi for the lovely town of Kavala, ancient Neapolis, on the Aegean Sea – for lunch & a good walk.



Situated on the Gulf of Salonika, Thessaloniki is the major city of northern Greece. It, too, is beautiful and filled with history – more ruins dating from pre-Christian times and many churches, all Greek Orthodox, in which the devotion of the Greeks, especially to the saints who brought Christianity to their shores or preserved it through difficult times, is a constant. They remember St. Paul especially, in their frescoes and icons.

We left Thessaloniki on April 30th, to begin our southward journey towards Athens - through snow-capped mountains and rich valleys, replete with olive groves. Space will not allow for a full description but two stops must be mentioned – the visit to the elaborately decorated monasteries high atop the bizarre peaks of Meteora, followed by a tour of an icon atelier; and secondly, Delphi, the home of the sanctuary and oracle of the god of light, Apollo, a spectacular and beautiful location at the base of Mount Parnassus. We had to climb!



Our journey to Greece was winding down. Sunday, May 3rd, saw us amongst the ruins of the magnificent temple of Apollo in Corinth where we were able to celebrate Mass. St. Paul would have been pleased. The Corinthians gave him a hard time. On a peak about 2000 feet above the city is the Acrocorinth. Situated on its highest hill had been the temple devoted to the goddess Aphrodite - always a source of intense irritation to the preacher of a holy life in Christ.

Monday was a bonus day – ad lib. Most of the group took a very pleasant cruise from Piraeus, the port of Athens, to three of the nearby islands.

Tuesday, May 5th, we left for Rome and everything associated with Rome – St. Peter's, Vatican Square, the Museum and recently restored Sistine Chapel, visits to the basilicas: St. Mary Major, St. John Lateran, and especially St. Paul outside the Walls. One of the highlights was a tour of the Catacombs of St. Callixtus adjacent to the Appian Way. In this refuge and later, “burial” site which housed the remains of some of the martyrs, but mostly those of the first Christians of Rome, we celebrated Mass - in their honour and in honour of St. Paul.

Friday night, we left Rome for Athens and the ten-hour flight to Montreal the following morning.

-Kathleen Toomey

Announcements

- ◆ We would like to thank the young people from the Gathered, Gifted and Giving program of the CND sisters who planted the exquisite garden in front of the rectory.
- ◆ With hearts full of gratitude, we think of Sr. Katherine Coltart and the fourteen years that she animated our Bible Camp with such an enthusiastic spirit. We regret we will be offering no Bible Camp this year, but we hope to resume it in the future. Our thanks are extended to all of the volunteers who have helped make this ministry possible throughout all these years. A special thank you to Dan Ormsby who served on staff at the first ever Bible Camp and faithfully continued to volunteer for thirteen summers.
- ◆ On June 28th at the Sunday Mass, we will have a special liturgy for the closing of the Year of Saint Paul. On June 19th, Pope Benedict will inaugurate the year of the priesthood with a special Vespers service at St. Peter's in which the relics of the Cure of Ars will be venerated.

Mass Schedule

5:00pm Saturday, 10:30am Sunday

Weekday Mass

8:00am Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

Sacrament of Penance

4:30pm Saturday, 7:00pm Wednesday

Marking the Moment and the Man

To pay tribute to a man who has given his heart and soul to the parishioners and friends of St. Willibrord's for over 35 years, a "retirement" party will be held following a special liturgy on Sunday, August 30th. We would like to provide an opportunity to somehow honour the gift and life of this man. However, as it is the desire of our Pastor to not receive gifts, donations to either the Building Restoration Fund or St. Willibrord's Helping Others Fund could be made. Doing so would allow these two important missions within the Parish to continue. Also, a special presentation in his honour would be made at this party. Below you will find an opportunity to indicate your desire to "come to the party" and/or send a gift in his honour.

I, _____, wish to attend the Mass and reception on August 30th.
Yes No

Please find enclosed my donation – as a tribute to Fr. Cameron for the :
St. Willibrord's Building Renovation Fund
St. Willibrord's Helping Others Fund

Please send your response to: St. Willibrord's Parish
351 Willibrord Avenue
Verdun, Qc H4G 2T7 Attn.: Ann

“There’s a young priest at St. Monica’s who will do anything for anyone. He’ll come.”

And come he did—to celebrate Mass for a brand new teacher’s YCS group. That was in 1967. Who could have imagined that 25 years later I would spend a decade of my life working closely at St. Willibrord’s with this same Father Joseph P. Cameron! How blessed I have been! May the graciousness of God which you reflect so well be your gift in abundance, Joseph.

With love and gratitude,

Anne McNally, CND

A Man - his God - his People - and his CAT.

To balance his profound love for all of Christ's creatures—there is no more humbling experience than to own a cat. To feed on demand, to ensure a clean and safe environment and to chase back into the fold a creature who is bound and determined to go outside - truly is an expression of love. Witnessing terms of endearment – “you’re a lovely cat”, “Rebecca-Cat”, “what-a-girl”- gives loving meaning to the term "A Man and his Cat".

It doesn't get better than that – a PURR – fect relationship.

Ann Daye, Secretary of the Parish

To:

Our pastor

Our coach

Our foreman at the farm

Our storyteller and BBQ chef at bible camp

Our sports booth leader

Our fellow consultant (subject cannot be mentioned in this leaflet)

Our great friend

Our sincere thanks for the years of dedicated service.

We're looking forward to many more consultant meetings,

Nick and Sascha Pinto

My Story

I came to Canada 21 years ago and was employed at St.

Willibrord's soon after. I was told by someone that I wouldn't last one week; and here I am, having worked for the past 20 years. It is because of the love, support and encouragement that Fr. Joe and St. Willibrord's have given to me. I just want to say thank you Fr. Joe, God bless.

Chris Ramdhanie, Parish Custodian.

I first met Father Cameron in Ottawa in 1972. Our paths have crossed over the years. With others, we laid the foundation of Montreal Directed Retreats that brought the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius into parish life. Then, from afar and from within, I have seen how his appreciation of parishioners' gifts has called forth life that wove the fabric of St. Willibrord's community into service of others.

Friend, confidant, thank you.

Marie Azzarello, CND



Some Words about Fr. Cameron...

Fr Joe has been a very special friend of our family for the last 18 years. He made us so welcome at St-Willibrord's to the extent that Lucy decided to be confirmed as a Catholic with Sr Anne McNally as her sponsor. He encouraged us to discover and use our talents. Michel thinks, for example, of the Children's Liturgy which Fr Joe asked him to run. He started by improvising Bible related drama sketches with the children during Mass and at Bible Camp. This has led him to later write 36 Bible Drama Sketches for use in Primary Schools and 40 for Prison Ministry. Thank you for the encouragement. We think of so many happy events at the Parish where Fr Joe would be there with a big smile on his face and usually a joke, the kids loved his jokes! Beautiful happy times at the farm, a wonderful visit with him when we had moved to England, phone calls and cards. Thank You Fr Joe for your love, generosity, care and friendship. We will always be united in prayer. May God richly Bless you and pour on you His Love and Hope as you start this new stage of your life.

**Michel and Lucy, François, Daniel,
Marie & Claire Côté**

The Hands of Father Joe

You clasp those hands within your own,
Ravaged by age
Or so tiny as to curl around your finger.
Each of you gaze into the other's eyes
Seeking there some sign of Christ.
Neither of you is deceived,
And in that holy moment between
Seeing and speaking,
Joy sprinkles as a blessing
Upon us who stand by.
Who, we ask, is really the Child,
Or the Elder who presents us,
Tenderly, to our New Life?

Thanks for doing this for us all.

Jim Ramsay

Unlike many parishioners, I don't remember the first time I met Fr. Cameron. However, I do know that from the time my parents brought me to St. Willibrord's as a newborn to be baptized, he became an important part of my life. Throughout the last 25 years, he has been my pastor, guiding me through the sacraments, teaching me about our faith and encouraging me to take an active role in the parish from a young age. He is a model of humility and the personification of "service of others". But beyond that, Fr. Cameron is my friend and I am thankful for his friendship. We often share jokes, poke fun at each other and talk about the latest sports scores. Fr. Cameron has wiped away many of my tears, shared in my joys and supported me in all my endeavours – especially the ones involving bagpipes and highland dancing!

The people of St. Willibrord's were truly blessed when Fr. Cameron was sent to be their pastor some 35 years ago and I am fortunate to call him my friend. Although I am sad to see him go, Fr. Cameron has certainly earned his retirement and I pray that he may have many fruitful years ahead.

Emily K Moreau

Thank you Fr. Joe for the honor and privilege of working with you at the office on Wednesdays or planning pilgrimages together. Your patience, gentle ways and dedication to old St. Will's have been an inspiration to me. You will be dearly missed; but I also know that on whatever path the spirit leads you, others will be blessed by you as we have been through these many years.

As I have said to you many times "Carry on Canada", well "Carry on Fr. Joe."

Beverly Fender

Joe Cameron and I were a year apart as student of Daniel O'Connell boys' school. Because we grew up in different parts of N.D.G. he never got to beat me up on the way to school. By the same token, he never got to save me from mean kids who were chasing me.

I remember Joe as the friendliest of my schoolmates at D.O.C. Though we went separate ways in high school and college, whenever Joe and I would meet, it was always as if we had seen each other just the day before. His warm, human qualities have served him well over the years. It is little wonder he formed such a strong attachment to the people of St. Willibrord.

Best wishes, Joe,
in your retirement.

Fr. Jim MacDonald,
Pastor of St. Gabriel's Parish

