

Time Is God's Gift To Us

By Reverend John A. Boissonneau

The cry of despondency arises throughout our society, "We don't have enough time". Demands of family life, professional life and our own needs seem all crowded into the limitations of time. We might be excused for thinking that time is the enemy.

In the eyes of faith, however, time is a gift, the first gift, of a loving and creating God. In the Book of Genesis God's first action outside of Himself is to separate light from darkness, thus creating night and day. (Gen 1: 3-5) Thus, the eternal God's first desire was to create time. Within God himself, there is no time – all is eternity and all is at the same.



As we go about our days which quickly becomes months and years, it is good for us to recall that time is God's gift to us. Being the premier creation all else is to be appreciated within that context. Time is for us and God has chosen to reveal Himself to us in time, in human history and fully in Jesus Christ. In the Incarnation, when He took on our human state, Jesus also accepted time. In his humanity, He accepted

the gift of hours, days, months and years. This can encourage our prayers for the strength and prudence to use wisely our time with all its exigencies.

Time inevitably ends. In these final weeks of the year as nature changes and falls asleep for the winter, the Church asks us to focus upon the fact of time. November with its memorials and Masses for the Holy Souls reminds us that each human life will eventually step out of time into eternity. What lies in eternity for us – heaven, hell and purgatory. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that those dying in God's grace and friendship and perfectly purified live for ever with Christ (CCC 1023). They join the communion of saints forever.

On the other hand, those who end their time in a state of mortal sin suffer the punishment of hell which is eternal separation from God (CCC 1035).

Both of these states of life in eternity are then set. In the middle place are all who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly

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"In the eyes of faith, however, time is a gift, the first gift, of a loving and creating God."

Continued from page 1 purified are indeed assured eternal salvation but as the Church teaches must be purified (CCC 1030). It is here that we who are still in time can make a difference.

By prayers, especially the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, almsgiving, indulgences and works of penance we assist the process of purification for those awaiting entrance to the eternity of heaven. So the gift of time can be used by us to achieve the holiness to enter the eternal joy of heaven. In this we share the mission of Christ who entered human time to open eternity for us.

Time inevitably ends. How we use our time is also a determination of our eternal state of life after death. Jesus teaches this in the powerful parable of the separation of those who used their lives to serve others from those who predominately ignored the needs of others (Matt 25:31-46). God's gift of time for each of us will end and then its fruitfulness will be judged.

These sobering and salvific thoughts are part of the cycle of our liturgical year and its reminder of that for all of us there will be an end of time. Let us thank God for His gift of time and return it to Him in faith, hope and love.

President's Message

By André A. Morin, KMOB

Another year is ending and, yet again, 2013 has been a busy year for the Canadian Association and for its Board Members whom I thank for their cooperation and support.

We celebrated properly our Association's 60th anniversary with several events of which I am very proud. For the Order, it is also the end of the celebrations of the 900th anniversary of the recognition by the Holy See. Finally, for the Church Universal, it is also the end of the Year of the Faith. The year 2013 has been rich in action and reflexion that allowed your Association to go forward with service to the poor and the sick. Nevertheless, much remains to be done in other fields.

I bring to your attention that we have come to the end of the year of transition for the Association to conform to the requirements of federal legislation as applied to non-profit corporations. While working on the transition with fellow Board Members, I reread our Association's letters patent. It is important to return to sources in order to recall our origins so that we understand our mission well. I read that our Association is centred on caring for the sick, to ambulance

services and the need to bring joy to our brothers and sisters. We must, indeed, be bringers of joy to our brothers and sisters in the Order and in the broader community.

We live in a society that is in profound mutation. Several provinces are thinking of setting up end of life programs for old and sick persons. Your Association will intervene with governments by reminding our elected officials that human life is sacred and must be respected at all stages of life. The advanced state of medicine has the ability to put into place ways and means to assist persons reaching the end of their life through the elimination of pain and the use of palliative care to help the patient and his family to end his or her life on earth with dignity.

There is another important debate going on in Quebec where the government wants to regulate the principle of secularism of the State through a parliamentary bill. This proposed law is fostering heated debates within the population and, if adopted, could preclude citizens from living their religious values within their workplace. Your Association, with the assistance of our members who have an advanced expertise *Continued page 6*



Improved Food Security For Smallholder Families On The Bolivian Altiplano

By Willem Langelaan, KMOB



"Men and women work the small alpine plots side by side to the best of their abilities."

In 2004 our Association became an accredited NGO with the Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA/ACDI. During the following years CIDA was our financial partner in two humanitarian projects to improve food security for smallholder families on the Bolivian Altiplano. The elevation of the Bolivian Altiplano averages 3,700 to 4,600 metres. The climate is cool and arid. The diurnal cycle of temperature has maxima of 12 to 24°C and minima of -20 to 10°C. The rainy season is from December to March, the rest of the year tends to be very dry, cool, windy and sunny. Snowfall is not very common. Climate, elevation, and poor soil limit the range of plants and food crops that can be cultivated. The Quechua and Aymara farmer families live in extreme poverty in small adobe huts - no water, no sewer, no electricity, no gas, negligible earnings and insufficient nutrition. The walls of the huts and their lungs are soot covered for lack of a chimney. Their staple is a few

potatoes for breakfast, lunch and dinner. No meat and no vegetables, as those do not grow in this severe climate. The average lifespan is 50 years. Of those aged 15 or over, 43% are illiterate. Their agricultural methods appear primitive. Plowing is done with a wooden stick and two oxen. It is a survival society.

Men and women work the small alpine plots side by side to the best of their abilities. Women are important decision makers within the family! While the Canadian Association was host NGO the projects were administered by Richard Brown P.Eng and Willem Langelaan OAA. In Bolivia the work was contracted to our excellent partner Agroecología Universidad Cochabamba, AGRUCO, an R&D institute that was founded by the Swiss foreign aid agency. Their staff and students are excellent and compassionate. Most speak Quechua or Aymara. AGRUCO is recognized in South America for their expertise in working with indigenous farmers and merging traditional



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methods with current scientific knowledge of organic farming.

Our objective for both Altiplano projects was to sustainably reduce hunger and poverty of the participating Quechua and Aymara smallholder families and to indirectly affect the non-participating families through example and knowledge transfer. The Chuño Project taught the farmers the use of organic endogenous methods to improve the genetic quality of the seed potatoes, make them disease free, produce organic fertilizer and organic pesticides. We assisted the farmers in building small storage sheds to replace the plastic bags for storing potatoes in their adobe huts. We also assisted 16 communities to build communal walk-in storage sheds for seed potatoes.

In 2008, at the end of the three year project the farmers saw a dramatic increase in the quality and the quantity of the potato harvest. We observed great enthusiasm and motivation in the communities. This was lacking when we started the project. Prior to a second project, I met with his Excellency Edgar Torrez Mosqueira, Bolivian Ambassador to Canada to be sure that it would conform to the policies of the Government of the

Plurinational State of Bolivia. With his introduction I traveled to Nuestra Señora De La Paz where I met with the Vice-Minister and the Director General of the Ministry of Rural Agricultural Development. They asked me to include Quinoa and Cañahua in our next crop improvement project. AGRUCO suggested to build larger walk-in storage sheds for the families for the combined storage of seeds and the harvest and I added a neologism to the Quechua language by naming the hybrid sheds "silhuas".

In early 2009, I applied again to CIDA to financially partner in the new project in the region of the Ayllu Aransaya. The Altiplano Tapacarí project began in March 2010. In March 2013, the project was completed on time and within budget. The final cost of the two projects was \$496,400. They benefited 664 families at a cost of \$748 per family. The increased food security and the improved economic circumstance of the families may reduce the socially destabilizing migration to the city of the younger generation. The results of the cooperation between the farming families and AGRUCO was





beyond expectation:

- the biodiversity of the seed potatoes increased 112%.
- the potato harvest increased 83%.
- the oca harvest increased 38%.
- the quinoa harvest increased 43%.
- the cañahua harvest increased 13%.
- with our support the farmers built 160 walk-in storage sheds for the combined storage of seeds and harvest.

Unlike the first project, this time CIDA allowed us to claim a 12% project overhead allowance with no matching fundraising conditions. As a result of the project, I was able to secure for the Canadian Association of the Order of Malta a CIDA overhead allowance of \$30,778. To ensure receiving these funds was not a trivial matter. CIDA requires complex and in-depth financial reporting. A penny out was not accepted.

Our CIDA project director was very pleased with the good results and encourages the Order of Malta to consider another project. He also hoped that we would reconsider the abandoned Chagas

Project. All beneficiaries are very grateful to Canada for the assistance that they received through these Canadian projects.

Where do we go from here? The obligation of Knighthood does not allow us to sit on our hands. For those of us who have the privilege of retiring in good health, the poor and needy in Bolivia are waiting for our supportive projects. Those with less time could financially help to invigorate the bond between Hospital Cuschieri and our Canadian Association.

Our late Chaplain Father Cuschieri told me numerous times that he was longing to see the cross of the Order of Malta attached to the Hospital. For now the aging X-ray machine must be replaced. The budget for a new digital machine is \$90,000. While I write this, I am in Cochabamba to invite proposals for the local supply, installation and maintenance of a new machine. A refurbished machine from Canada could be less expensive but is not a feasible alternative. Please visit Hospital Cuschieri's website (www.shfic.ca) and consider to help!

I thank God for the privilege to experience the positive impact of these agricultural projects.

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"We must place ourselves at the service of each other in joy and hope."

Continued from page 3 in theology and the law, are developing a brief that will be sent to the appropriate Minister in order to underline how important it is to respect religions. While affirming its secularism, the State must promote an open secularism.

I wish to inform you also that, on the international level, our Order, at the request of our Grand Master, will hold a seminar at Rhodes in January 2014 with the aim of establishing the Order's priorities for the next few years. I will attend this seminar along with other members of the Association and I invite you to submit to me your ideas so that I should be well prepared for this strategic meeting.

In closing, I want to remind you how important it is for members of our Order to be bearers of hope, the salt of the earth, the light of the world. In these often-difficult times, we, laypersons, must be witnesses of the Gospel in

our environment. We must be aware of the Church's magisterium. In this respect, I invite you to read Pope Francis' recent apostolic exhortation on the importance of the Gospel and the role of the Church in our world. This text by the Holy Father is an enormous treasure chest that can only fortify our faith, revive our hope and it will allow us to move forward to meet our brothers and sisters.

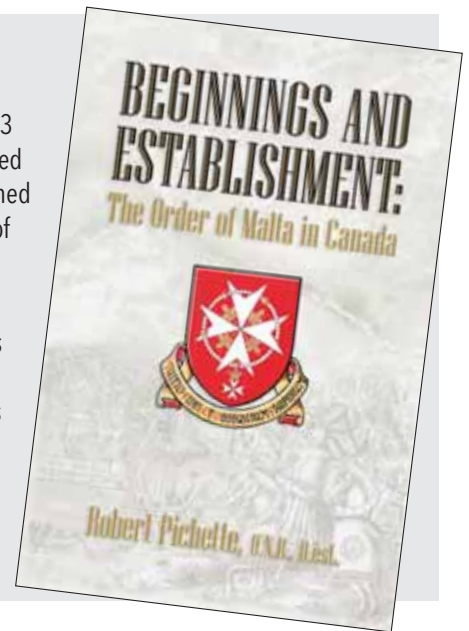
As highlighted by the Order's Cardinal Patronus, His Eminence Paolo Sardi: "To be understood, the proclamation of the Gospel must be reinforced by a concrete demonstration of a love that is concerned with the needs of others. We must place ourselves at the service of each other in joy and hope." Joy is the manifestation of the presence of God among us.

To each and everyone of you, and to your families, I offer my wishes for a very Merry Christmas in Peace and in Joy.

As part of the celebrations commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Canadian Association, a new book by Dr. Robert Pichette was launched at the September 2013 investiture dinner in Ottawa. The addition of an illustrated armorial section is included to augment the one published for the 50th anniversary, and is a fitting remembrance of the Order's honorable tradition in heraldry.

Copies are available for purchase at \$35, (shipping included), online via our website through the donations tab - reference "Beginnings and Establishment": www.orderofmaltacanada.org or at \$25 if arrangements for Ottawa pick-up can be made.

Email smomca@bellnet.ca for more information. (Hardcover with dust jacket, 297 pages, English and French).



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