



Hunger Patrol Feeding the Homeless

For three consecutive winters, the Canadian members of the Order of Malta from the Toronto region participated in the Out of the Cold Program at St. Michael's Cathedral until that program ended due to the extensive renovations of the cathedral and its actual temporary closure. As with most things in life, a setback provides a wonderful opportunity for something even bigger, something even better.

We in Toronto are very pleased to report on the success of Hunger Patrol, a program that entails the making of homemade soup and its delivery each Saturday evening to the homeless and poor of the city in three separate locations: outside of an established temporary shelter, outside of a centre for native Canadians, and finally inside of a permanent low income housing complex. This homemade soup is distributed to dozens of men and women alongside bread and other assorted pastries donated each week by a neighbourhood bakery in Toronto's Bloor West Village, the home of Hunger Patrol. In addition to the soup and baked goods, four to eight dozen sandwiches are also distributed, made caringly by two separate groups of adults and teenagers with developmental disability. We also distributed dozens of brand new socks and underwear each week, purchased in bulk, in addition to donated pants, sweaters, hats, gloves, and jackets and anything that might be of use to this most deserving group of people in need.

Hunger Patrol itself has been in operation for over 20 years and is the creation of Fr. David Burrows of St. Olave's Anglican Church. Christian Elia, member of our Order and friend of Fr. Burrows, participated in the project and was able to admire its effectiveness on many levels. Fr. David's recent retirement along with his deep desire to have this important ministry continue provided the opportunity for the Order of Malta, Canada to effectively take over all aspects of Hunger Patrol.

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National Pilgrimage to Lourdes April 28 to May 3, 2016

Tuitio Fidei et
Obsequium Pauperum

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Message from the President

Lent 2016 is particularly relevant because it gives us the opportunity to deepen our understanding of God's mercy. It is through studying again the Word of God, more especially the Gospels, that we meet Jesus and we are transformed by his actions and his will to build a better society. This Lent is a great opportunity to rediscover God's goodness.

As Father Pierre Francœur CSV underlines in the Novalis 2016 Lent booklet (in French), Lent must be a period of childlike sense of wonderment. Our actions and our fasts during Lent must be oriented towards God in order to create a larger space for him in our lives.

My hope for you is that you live this Lent by leaving your comfort zone and that your actions are geared towards your neighbours in a merciful way. In this spirit, I want to share with you three important activities of the Association.

LOURDES PILGRIMAGE

This year, for the first time, your Association will be an official participant of the Order of Malta's pilgrimage to Lourdes. Our members have served devotedly during many years within several Associations that welcomed them with open arms and hearts. I thank them wholeheartedly. However, last year in Lourdes, the members of the Association decided to attempt the adventure with our very own pilgrimage. It is with enthusiasm that our Hospitaller, Dr. William Sullivan, our Principal Chaplain, Bishop Raymond Poisson and the members of a committee are working energetically on the preparations of our pilgrimage. Several malades will travel with us and there are already more than 25 Dames, Knights and volunteers who will take part in this pilgrimage. I thank them sincerely.

I invite the members of our Association who cannot travel to Lourdes to pray during Lent for the members and malades who will undertake this pilgrimage. Should you wish to support financially our malades who will be on this pilgrimage, please send your donation to the Association's head office in Ottawa.

YOUTH CAMP

The second activity is the Youth Camp organized each year by the Order of Malta. This year, the Camp will take place in Poland. For the past few years, members and volunteers of our Association participated in the Youth Camp with malades. If you know young people who would like to join this important activity of the Order, please inform your respective regional Vice-President.

SERVICE TO INMATES

The third activity is service to inmates in Canadian prisons. This activity, under the leadership of our National Vice-President, Roman Cieciewicz, is an integral part of our strategic plan. We work in conjunction with the North American Committee to share the Gospel and to bring solace to inmates. This activity by our Association is crucial because, very often, the detainees live in solitude and abandonment. This situation is especially critical in Quebec since the provincial government has recently closed the women's jail in the Montreal area. The inmates will be moved to the larger prison Leclerc Detention Centre, where men are also incarcerated. This situation will likely create problems.

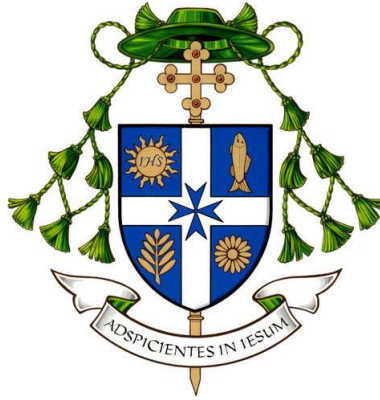
I can understand well that people are incarcerated due to the serious crime committed; moreover, a Court of law has evaluated the gravity of the offense and the possible dangerousness to society. Nevertheless, these inmates are people in need of our support just like the victims and their families. Our Grand Master has underlined the importance of our presence and assistance to inmates. My heartfelt thanks to our Vice President for his work on this important endeavour.

May this Lent help you bring comfort and joy to the people you will encounter, so you may be a witness of the Lord.

I wish you a good 2016 Lent!

André A. Morin, KMOB
President





Message from the Principal Chaplain



We are fully immersed in the Jubilee of Mercy, decreed by Pope Francis and launched on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8th. This choice by the Holy Father is not a mere coincidence, but rather a statement of his desire: to show us the magnitude of God's mercy towards each one of us, thanks to the model of sanctity of the Virgin Mary.

Accordingly, we are asked to reflect together on the meaning of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, which is relatively recent in the history of the Church. What does it mean? Many often believe that this designation of the Virgin Mary concerns the virginal conception of Jesus and her resulting status as Mother of God. This is not so. Immaculate Conception affirms that Mary herself, from her conception, could not be touched by any evil. In growing up to becoming an adult and the mother of Jesus, there could not be any distance in her, any difference between what she was, what she was doing and what she wanted. This internal distance is the space that is set-aside in each one of us for sin, evil and the absence of love. Contrary to Mary, there are within us, at different moments of our daily life, distances and differences between what we are called to be, that is God's children, and what we are and we wish for. Thus, we are sinners always in need of God's mercy.

I very much like to compare God's mercy to a type of love akin to the love showed by fathers and mothers in a family, although God's love is infinitely larger. Whatever their children might do, they remain their children, and as such, their parents love them and forgive them. They believe in them and hope for the best for them. This is God's way to make us understand his mercy: through his repeated forgiveness commensurate with his immense love, our Father in heaven always hopes for the best for his adoptive children.

Therefore, this Jubilee of Mercy is for all the Church. It is an occasion to become closer to God the Father and to welcome his forgiveness through the salvation offered by Jesus his son, so that we may live together in the Holy Spirit, the spirit of love in the family of God's children. Then the distance between what we are called to be and what we are will shrink.

†Raymond Poisson
Bishop of Joliette, Quebec, Canada
Principal Chaplain of the Canadian Association of the Order of Malta

**Bishop Poisson will be part of the Canadian
delegation to the 2016 Lourdes Pilgrimage.**



Misericordes Sicut Pater

by François Caron, KM, Quebec City



A retreat of the Order of Malta in the Quebec City region was held under the theme of Mercy last February 14th. Fr. Gérard Blais, a Marianist and a Chaplain of the Order of Malta, led the retreat. Twelve participants took part in this retreat, including Christian Samoisette, from the Montreal region, who came especially for the occasion.

You might ask yourself: “There are several retreats everywhere in Canada. Why is this one different from the others”? To which I would reply: “A retreat of the Order of Malta has not been held in the Quebec City region for years. Therefore, in many ways, we witnessed a resurrection.” The ageing of members and the absence of “new blood” caused membership in the Quebec City region to fall drastically over a considerable period of time.

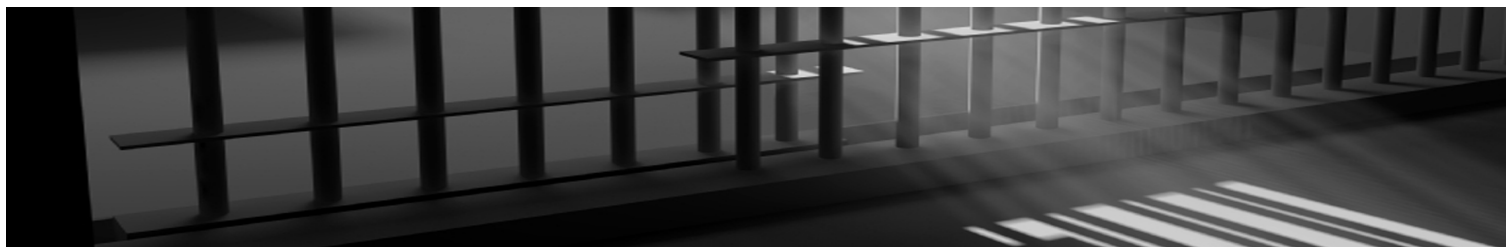


This near lethargic state has now ended since a year ago when we undertook a recruitment campaign to provide a second wind, as it were, to the Order of Malta in the Quebec City region. This campaign is structured around activities that allow people who have shown an interest in the Order of Malta to meet, to pray, to learn and, eventually if desired, to become candidates. The support of our President André A. Morin has been crucial during the last year, as was that of Fr. Gérard Blais. He did not hesitate to welcome meetings at his Marianist residence on the campus of Notre-Dame-de-Foy and to facilitate access to the Har’el Biblical Centre premises, of which he is the founder and the director.

This Mercy retreat began with a morning Eucharistic celebration in the chapel of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Cap-Rouge. The Mass was followed by a fraternal meal at the Marianist residence and, finally, by a group discussion in the chapel under the theme of Mercy and more specifically on the theme “*The most wonderful love gesture I witnessed in my life*” by sharing each other’s experiences. It allowed us to hear beautiful and impactful testimonies. This wonderful day was concluded with the recitation of the Jubilee of Mercy prayer calling us to feel real compassion for others.

Prison Ministry: Bringing Light to the Forgotten

by Roman Ciecwierz, KMOB



In November 2015, the North American Prison Ministry committee held its semi-annual meeting inside the walls of San Quentin prison. Fr. George Williams, the Catholic Chaplain for San Quentin, chaplain of the Order and editor of the *Serving Brother* newsletter, hosted the meeting inside the Catholic chapel. The committee's primary purpose was to develop a North American strategic plan for the apostolate. A good part of our ministry is the creation and distribution of a newsletter of spirituality for the incarcerated. You will be happy to know that we are now the largest publisher of a prison newsletter in the world, *The Serving Brother*. This Advent we will publish 50k copies distributed to over 40 States, 5 Provinces and throughout the Caribbean. A Spanish edition will be ten percent of the total Advent 2015 edition, and we have two members of the board who will be developing Central and South America in the coming year for further growth of this edition. I am hopeful that in due course we will also have a French edition sometime in 2016 for Canada.

The Strategic Plan was finalized and sent to the Presidents of the three American Associations and to the Canadian Association. The basis is centred around our mission statement: "Our mission is to promulgate the Gospel message that all of God's children matter and cannot be forgotten. We will compassionately demonstrate the hope that comes from our Catholic Christian faith and from God's love for those incarcerated. Through mercy we will demonstrate forgiveness and care for a better future for the formerly incarcerated. We will promote rehabilitation over punishment to those around us".

A program developed in a California prison ministry, entitled "Get on the bus" really resonates with me. This effort charters busses and takes families of inmates, who could not afford bus tickets and travel expenses, to visit incarcerated members of the family at various prisons. Research has found a marked improvement in the children who have participated in this program, not to mention the emotional benefit for the entire family. I have received a package that completely explains the program, with the organization structure, the necessary forms and procedure, along with contact information in California for questions.

It is my hope that we will be able to pilot a similar program in Canada. This ministry provides the busses for Mother's Day, Father's Day and Christmas; they are up to four full busses for each of these holidays.

One of the most common questions and comments we all hear is "why do we bother with criminals... they got what they deserved and they are not part of our mandate". If the Holy Father's message

and actions with regards to prisoners isn't convincing enough, the Grand Master, Fr. Matthew has made it clear this is an important work of the Order and both remind us of the Gospel of Matthew (25:35-36) when Jesus said "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you made me welcome, lacking clothes and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me."

We attended mass at the Catholic Chapel at San Quentin prison, and it was an outstanding event! The depth of love and religiosity was profound. Inmates have a choral group and band, and were a big part of the liturgy. It's amazing the initiatives and organizational ability inmates display as they move forward in a positive way, honouring God. The various intentions mentioned at mass were particularly moving. This prison houses 4,000 inmates of which 750 are on "death row". The inmates led us in praying for those on "death row". It was an amazing religious experience and one that none of us will ever forget. It was a blessing to witness this and to hear first hand the faith journey of some of the men and how their faith in God and the resurrection brings them some sliver of hope in a place that is completely devoid of hope.

Prison Ministry is formally a component of the Canadian Association's strategic plan and I ask that you consider volunteering with me to expand our current works.



Feeding the Homeless

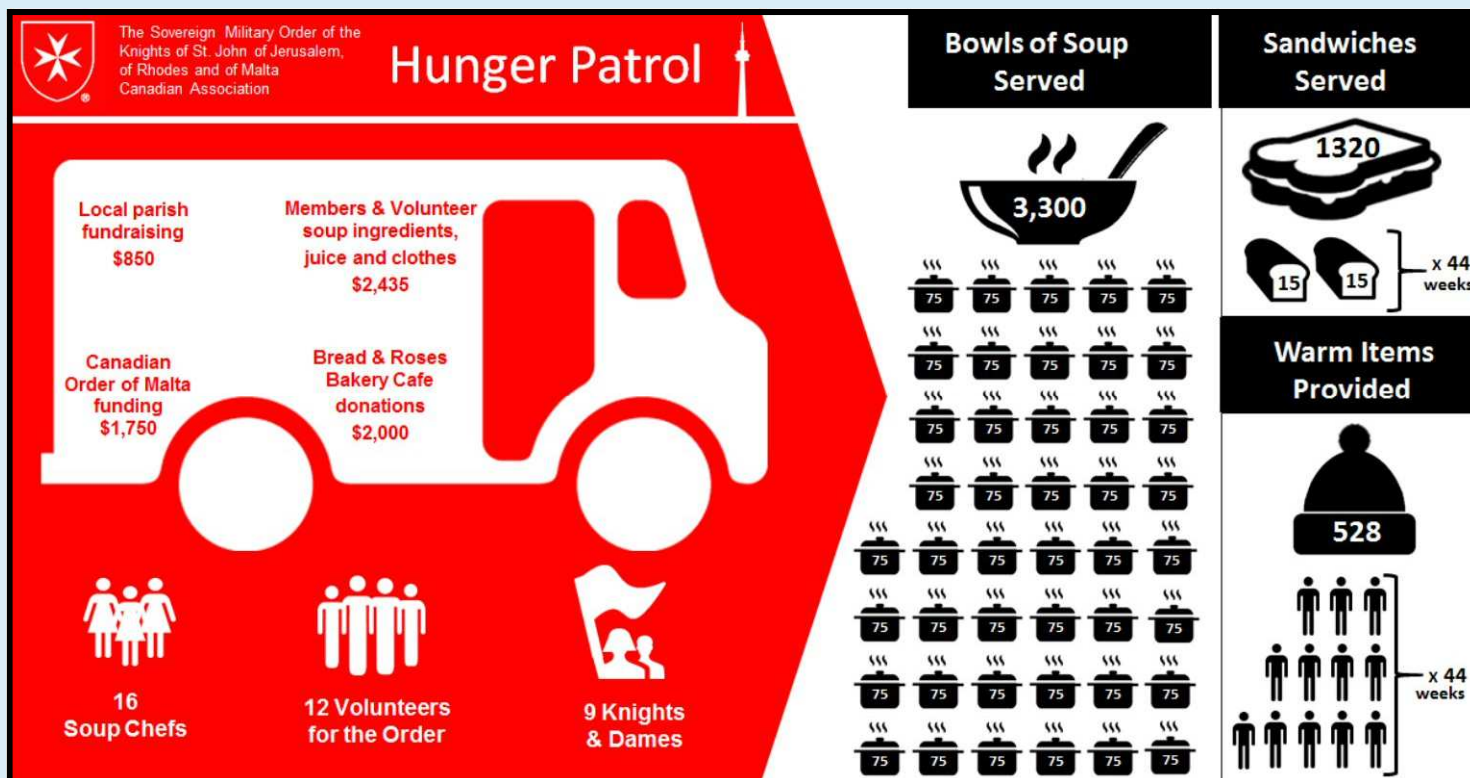
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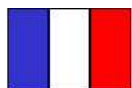
The Canadian Association of the Order of Malta is not simply supplying volunteers. Every aspect of Hunger Patrol is coordinated by Christian Elia with the help of his wife Linda as well as Bruce Adams, Patrick Portelli, Ian Kay, Roman Cieciewicz, Tony D'Avanzo, Jonathan Allen, Tanya Allen and Rory O'Neill. We have carried on the work with some of Fr. David's longstanding volunteers, and we have added many from our neighbouring Roman Catholic parish, St. Pius X, in addition to other men and women of good will who share our concern and our love for the sick and the poor. In fact, we hope to attract potential aspirants through this important ministry; moreover, current aspirants will learn more about our Order through service in Hunger Patrol.

Each week, after the truck is loaded and the soup is poured, we pray together to our loving Father, by the power of the Holy Spirit and through the intercession of Christ, our Lord. We ask for the most powerful intercession of Blessed Gerard, St. John the Baptist, and Our Lady of Philermos.

We are pleased that this work is completely carried out in the name of the Order, by members of the Order and our friends, funded in part by the Canadian Association and our own modest local fundraising and personal donations.

There is no mistake: this is true, hands-on, personal interaction with Toronto's sick and poor. If you would like to volunteer, or help in any way, on a regular or occasional basis, please do contact Christian Elia at 416 500-0755 or christiandelia@hotmail.com.



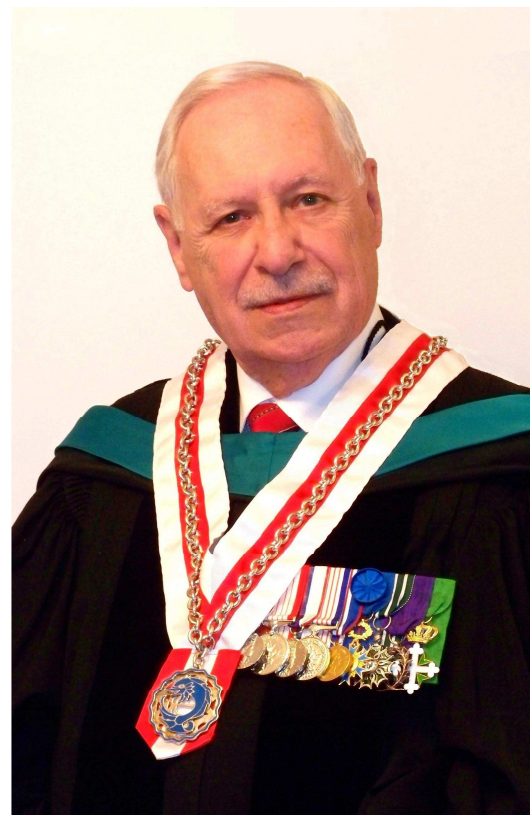


French Honour to Robert Pichette

On January 5, 2016, Dr. Robert Pichette was created, by decree of the President of the French Republic, an Officer of France's premier national Order, the Legion of Honour. Thus France decorates a foreigner for services rendered to that nation and for assisting France in its relations with Canada. However, this is not the first decoration France has bestowed on Dr. Pichette... A quick look at a long and eventful relationship between France and him.

It was first as Administrative Assistant to the then Premier of New Brunswick that Dr. Pichette put himself to the service of the Francophonie. In 1963, the French Ambassador, Raymond Bousquet, paid a courtesy call on Premier Robichaud who told the ambassador that Moncton being the heart of Acadia would be a better place for a French consulate than the current one in Halifax. To the pleased surprise of both the Premier and the Ambassador, General de Gaulle agreed and, as a result the following year the consulate was moved from Halifax to Moncton. Dr. Pichette played a leading role with the first three consuls as Administrative Assistant to the Premier and, later, as his Deputy Minister. Strong ties then were forged between France and New Brunswick. This special relationship is the theme developed in a book by Dr. Pichette: *50 ans d'amitié franco-acadienne. Le consulat de France à Moncton, 1964 – 2014*, published by the Université de Moncton. In addition, Doctor Pichette also represented the government of New Brunswick in Paris when the Canada-France Cultural Agreement was renewed.

Apart from his political and diplomatic activities, Dr. Pichette has been a prolific writer, a dedicated journalist and a contributor to several learned publications. His love of history and his mastery of the French language he attributes to an aunt who was a nun and who had studied in France. In his youth, she supplied him with books written in French.



What does the award of the Legion of Honour mean to Dr. Pichette? He mentions that, above all, he is flattered to have been singled out by France since few French citizens are awarded this top decoration and even less foreigners. Did the award surprise him? He says that the surprise was that he was awarded the higher rank of Officer instead of the entry level of Knight.

Q&A

Epistula: Has your love of the French language (and of history) influenced your commitment to the Order of Malta?

R. Pichette: The history of the Order of Malta has always fascinated me, even before I became a member. It was one of the reasons why I was admitted. At the time, I had regular official contacts with an Official of the Department of External Affairs who was also a member of the Order. He had become acquainted with a paper I had written on the Order's historical presence in Acadia. As a result he recommended I be admitted into the Order. So, in 1970, I became one of the youngest members of the Order of Malta in Canada.

Calendar of Events

March 12, 2016

Board of Directors Meeting (Montreal)

March 20, 2016

Eye Clinic, THE DOOR IS OPEN (Vancouver East Side)

March 23-26, 2016

Directed Easter Retreat (Vancouver Region)

April 16, 2016

Training Day: the Order of Malta (in French, Quebec City)

April 28 – May 3, 2016

First National Pilgrimage to Lourdes, France

March 25, 2016

Shepherds of Good Hope – Volunteering (Ottawa Region)

April 25, 2016

Mass and Meeting (Ottawa Region)

May 28, 2016

Executive Committee Meeting
Cultural Excursion (Montreal)

June 18, 2016

Board of Directors Meeting (Toronto)

June 19, 2016

Feast of St. John the Baptist (Montreal Region)

June 24, 2016

Feast of St. John the Baptist (Vancouver Region)
Feast of St. John the Baptist and Investiture (Toronto Region)
Feast of St. John of Baptist (Ottawa Region)

2016 Lourdes Pilgrimage

Our first Canadian Association pilgrimage (with 5 malades and approximately 23 volunteers) leaves for Lourdes in late April. The planning of this has been challenging, but under the guidance of Dr. Bill Sullivan, our Hospitaller, we expect to make this a pilgrimage that none of us will forget. The complete details of this first pilgrimage will be in the next Epistula. Please pray for the success of this event.



2015 Lourdes Pilgrimage

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