



Anniversary of the Vancouver Eye Clinic – 15 years!

A Short History of the Order Of Malta's Eye Clinic in Vancouver

It was our confrere Dr. David Neima, a leading ophthalmologist in Vancouver, who first thought of the idea of the eye clinics. In British Columbia only children under 16 and adults over 65 are eligible for free eye examinations, and no one gets their glasses paid for by the Health Ministry. David wanted to provide these patients, particularly those from poorer parishes, with complete eye care, and we all enthusiastically agreed. Our first event was at the Cathedral where we had an instant and gratifying response. Our first patient was the lady who was no longer able to repair the Cathedral vestments because of her failing eyesight and would not be able to resume until she had appropriate eye glasses. We knew we were on to something worthwhile.

We soon developed a drill. Pastors would get in touch, seeking a clinic for their parishes – some were leery at first: free eye examination? free glasses when needed? Really?

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**National Pilgrimage to Lourdes,
from May 4 to May 8, 2017**

Tuitio Fidei et Obsequium Pauperum

Message from the President

A YEAR OF MERCY

A year ago, we were invited by the Holy Father to celebrate a Holy Year on the theme of Mercy. Mercy is an essential component of our life as Christians. Mercy demands a profound understanding of the other person in whom we see Christ's face. Saint Matthew clearly sets out in his Gospel that it is when we assist the poorest, those who are sick, alone, in prison, those who are hungry and thirsty, that it is to Christ himself that we bring our assistance and solace.

Mercy also invites us to forget about ourselves, to forgive in order to better follow Christ. This message will be the last for the year 2016. Advent is close at hand and the Year of Mercy has ended.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Lord for the blessings he has showered upon our Association that has been through great moments of peace, joy and sharing during this year. I want to underline the importance of the blessings we reap when we pray to the Lord. We currently have two members of the Association who are moving forward toward their religious profession to become Knights of Justice. Our confrère, Frà Mathieu Dupont, pronounced his temporary vows for the second time, and our confrère, Dr. John Kennedy, began his novitiate to become a Knight of Justice. It is a privilege to have two members of our Association who will, in time, become religious members of our Order. We must pray for them to bolster their vocation.

We are also privileged in having two Canadian Knights of Justice, Frà John MacPherson in Halifax and Frà John Dunlap in New York, a member of the Sovereign Council and of the Our Lady of Lourdes sub-priory. Let us pray for these religious who help us through their prayers to assist the poor and the sick. Knights of Justice are central to the life of the Order because, without them, the Order would cease to exist. I want to thank to our chaplains and the new chaplain who, under the leadership of our Principal Chaplain, Bishop Raymond Poisson, are at the service of our members as well as to the volunteers. They help us fulfil our commitment to serve the poor and the sick.

For our Association, the Year of Mercy was an occasion to embark for the first time on our pilgrimage to Lourdes with our malades. Thanks to the leadership of Pauline and Mark Dunphy, our Principal Chaplain and our Hospitaller, Dr. Bill Sullivan, we underwent a profound spiritual experience that we will continue in 2017. All these activities, and several others, demonstrate our Association's vitality, our will to put in practice the charisma of our Order, assistance to the poor and the sick and the defence of the Faith. On this subject I recommend the reading of the document relative to euthanasia written jointly by Bishop Poisson and myself.

We are pursuing our battle against false orders that, under false pretences, snare into their ranks devoted Catholics committed in their community and who, unwittingly, find themselves in these groups that have no links with the Order of Malta. I urge our chaplains to be especially vigilant on that score and not to encourage these organisations.

As the Holy Father emphasized in paragraph 16 of the Bull of indiction of the Year of Mercy:
Buttressed by this year of graces, let us go forward together proclaiming the Gospel with joy and with love because, as saint John of the Cross wrote: "At the twilight of our life we will be judged on love."

This Holy Year will bring to the fore the richness of Jesus' mission echoed in the words of the prophet: to bring a word and gesture of consolation to the poor, to proclaim liberty to those bound by new forms of slavery in modern society, to restore dignity to all those from whom it has been robbed. The preaching of Jesus is made visible once more in the response of faith, which Christians are called to offer by their witness.

*André A. Morin, President
Knight of Magistral Grace in Obedience*



Message from the Principal Chaplain

2016 Investiture: A Privileged Occasion with an International Dimension

The presence of the Prelate of the Order of Malta, H.E. Bishop Jean Laffitte, at the September 2016 investiture in Ottawa, was for each of us a privileged occasion to become aware of the Order's universality.

Whether through its nearly thousand-year history or by its presence in several countries throughout the world, the Order of Malta still carries Jesus' commitment for the poor and the sick. In bringing them succour and compassion, the members of the Order of Malta become efficient and committed witnesses as called by their baptism in Christ's death and resurrection. Pope Francis often explains this by reminding us that we are in fact missionary-disciples of Christ in the world.

Bishop Laffitte told me several times of his joy in discovering the vitality of the Canadian Association. The places of involvement are numerous in a country as vast as ours, but it is still the same spirit of the Order that motivates us. This spirit is communicative and generates new members who are equally committed to the poor and the sick.

Beyond the ritual and the formal unfolding of the investiture, we were able to feel a change within the members who took part in last May's pilgrimage to Lourdes. Our stay in this place of pilgrimage has generated mutual understanding and inspired bonds of friendship that have brought us closer to each other, thus making the investiture weekend a meeting where fraternity and the pleasure of being together again were manifest.

I want to personally thank all those who were involved in the investiture, at all levels, and most especially our President, H.E. Dr. André Albert Morin. I extend my gratitude to His Excellency Bishop Laffitte for his generous participation. All of us are stimulated and enthusiastic in the pursuit of our mission as members of the Order in Canada.

+ *Raymond Poisson, Bishop of Joliette*
Principal Chaplain of the Canadian Association of the Order of Malta



Anniversary of the Vancouver Eye Clinic



(continued from cover page)

An obvious location right from the beginning was The Door is Open (<http://www.thedoorisopen.ca>), a refuge facility in the famous – or infamous – Downtown Eastside run by the Archdiocese, at the time staffed by the Sisters of the Atonement and adjacent to St. Paul's Church and the Sisters' residence. The nuns had a sandwich line every day for the poor, somehow providing hundreds of sandwiches for the needy, mostly men. The lineup every day went right around the block. The Catholic high schools would provide students on weekends to help make the sandwiches and every pious Catholic household sent provisions to help the nuns when they could. As the years have gone by we have provided for a clinic at the Door is Open Almost every year.

We would stage our clinics on Saturdays at 1 p.m. and approximately 65 patients would be examined and listed for new glasses. Dr. Neima and his staff did the examinations, members of the Order would man the reception desk, noting for every patient their name and address (if they had one), their doctor who had ever seen them and why they might need glasses, organizing the lineups, providing soft drinks and snacks, and in the end paying the bills. The doctors were aided by optometry students from Douglas College, who also took the measurements for the new spectacles (many of which were donated). The Atonement Brother Tim, a BIG man of six and a half feet manned the entrance to The Door is Open. We coped with some high on drugs, some who threw the free medicine bottles at us, and some strange

happenings, but generally it was orderly and patients were deeply appreciative.

Over the years we had at least two clinics a year, sometimes three, to parishes all over the Lower Mainland, one even for the monks of Westminster Abbey in Mission, BC. When the Sisters of the Atonement were left with too few nuns available, the Archdiocese took over the facility, providing a larger and more convenient space around the corner, and now the Carmelite Sisters have taken over and provide three meals a day around the clock. It is a busy place.

We now have trained a dedicated team, and the Eye Clinics are the most recognized of our activities in British Columbia on behalf of Our Lords the Poor and Our Lords the Sick.

Maria Teresa McCullough

Dame Grand Cross of Honour and Devotion in Obedience



In the words of Robyn Livingstone, a grateful patient of the Eye Clinic – published in the *Carnegie Newsletter*, Downtown Eastside Youth Activities Society in 2007:

“About 80 people went through in four hours, which was really amazing considering the weather that day was blowing snow. And, as if magically, after being told to return in two weeks to be fitted with their glasses, every person actually did appear and left satisfied with their sparkling and shining brand-spanking-new eyewear! A humongously huge thanks must go to St. Paul’s Church, The Door is Open, the Franciscan Sisters [of the Atonement] and especially the Knights of Malta who donated so much of their time and resources towards making many residents’ lives much more thrilling, illuminating and visually and insightfully clearer. Add to all this the wonderful feeling of renewed importance and knowing that there are people in the world who genuinely care and are concerned for usually anonymous people like us, in Canada’s poorest postal code. They were interested in our personal lives, health and welfare.”



Eye Clinic: 15 Years of Memories

In 2001 Frank McCullough invited me to join the Order of Malta with a view to start outreach work for the poor and sick here in Vancouver. When Frank asked me to consider this project for the Order of Malta here in Vancouver I had recently been doing work in Tijuana, Mexico with the local optician's college in Vancouver. We did eyeglass refractions and dispensed free eyeglasses through the optician's program. While practicing in the greater Vancouver area, I recognized that there were many people with disabilities, on social assistance, or the working poor, who had a very difficult time getting glasses as social assistance will only provide glasses once every three years. And of course, there is no assistance for people who cannot afford to buy glasses due to their low work income. In addition, many of the mentally ill and drug addicted people who live on the streets don't have ready access to the glasses prescribed by social assistance and I thought this would be a good project to initiate.

I contacted Professor Tony Vianni at Douglas College. He arranged with the College to come once or twice a year to measure and provide eyeglasses for forty to fifty people. Mr. Frank McCullough organized our first clinic at Holy Rosary Cathedral. The church secretary and committee found people needing assistance and we performed our first clinic in 2001 over the Thanksgiving weekend. We saw approximately forty patients. Mr. Warren Whitford, ophthalmic technician and myself did all the eye exams. Frank and Teresa McCullough and a large group of volunteers from the local Order of Malta set up and ran the clinic which lasted about five hours. Coffee, tea and snacks were given to the patients as they waited for their exams. Tony Vianni together with the group of about seven students took measurements and fit the patients with eyeglasses. Over the next two weeks, the students made the eyeglasses for all the patients. Tony Vianni returned to deliver the eyeglasses to the patients upon completion.

Since the initial clinic fifteen years ago, we have done an average of two clinics per year, usually seeing about forty people. We donate generally about forty pairs of eyeglasses and the cost for the frames and lenses is covered by donations that Tony Vianni collects. Tony and the students do the work of making the lenses and fitting the frames as a donation. The remaining costs are covered by the members of the Order here in Vancouver. This fundraising has been done by Mr. Frank McCullough until a year ago, when it was taken over by Ms. Gabrielle Komorowska.

The clinics have taken place in churches, in outreach clinics for the poor such as The Door is Open, and outreach clinics for immigrant workers. The majority of patients that we serve are either mentally ill, drug addicted, immigrants on temporary work visas, or the working poor. An excellent example of the working poor is a young mother who came with four children, and all of them needed glasses. Her husband had a very low paying job and they were not able to afford the cost of glasses themselves. We fortunately were able to supply these for the family. We most frequently host the clinic at The Door is Open and have a regular clientele of mentally ill patients for whom we provide eye glasses.

In addition to prescribing the glasses, we also perform more detailed eye exams. Over the years, we have found many people with cataracts, glaucoma and occasionally with cardiac or neurologic disease. We arrange for them to have appropriate follow up. In the future, we hope to continue operating the clinic, particularly for people most disadvantaged, including immigrant workers and the mentally ill.

We wish to heartily thank Frank McCullough for his many years of organization and thank Gabrielle Komorowska for undertaking this project, as there is quite a bit of preparation prior to the clinic. Most of the actual work is done by Professor Tony Vianni and his students, who make forty plus pairs of eyeglasses every time we have a clinic. Warren Whitford, ophthalmic technician has been present at every clinic doing eye examinations and we wish to thank him for his many years of work as well. For the future, we plan to continue doing the same work as long as it is necessary and useful.

*David R.S. Neima, M.D.
Knight of Magistral Grace*

Dr. Neima is an ophthalmologist in Vancouver, and has also been active have been active in short term overseas missions, in teaching roles, prescribing eyeglasses and performing surgeries.

THE MALTA YOUTH CAMP 2016

The annual Malta camp has provided disabled youth with an inspiring, joyful, and spiritual experience since it was first held in 1984. This international event brings people from many different countries together in a spirit of Catholic charity as captured by the mission of the Order.

This past summer I was given the opportunity to organize and lead the Canadian team to the camp in Krakow, Poland in late August. 100 volunteers, 200 helpers, and 200 guests gathered in a beautiful school facility in the countryside surrounding the city to participate in a weeklong series of varied events and excursions that focused on friendship, culture, and faith.

Each guest was accompanied by a helper, and both participated in activities together in groups of about 20 others. Our team consisted of three guests, three helpers, and a team leader.

Aside from offering a wide range of activities for guests daily, larger group events included the opening and closing ceremonies, the mass in Krakow, an evening of Eucharistic adoration and silent prayer, and the nightly disco parties until 3am. I must confess, however, that the helpers and volunteers would continue on until about 6am. It was a true miracle that everyone could sustain their constant efforts throughout the week. Indeed, the overflow of joy and enthusiasm displayed by all was truly boundless and inspiring. It is in these moments that we realize the true beauty of human nature as formed by the gospels: an endless selflessness fueled by intense joy.

The Malta camp catalyses this disposition within us by providing an environment founded on catholic values, where these exist, not as abstractions, but as concrete realities that are lived in our hearts. It offers a vision of hope, a realized example of what we must strive to achieve in our life of faith. I have been blessed with this opportunity participate in this very important aspect of the Order's mission to serve the poor and the sick. It is often the case that we lose sight of the true joy of the gospels in this hostile and secular world. Therefore, it is of great importance, that we seek to be reminded of these realities.

By offering this opportunity, the Order of Malta provides disabled youth with a sense of community, friendship, and love within the context of our faith while offering other young people with the opportunity to participate in the mission of service that is central to our faith. The Malta camp unites all in purpose, friendship, and faith, strengthening an international community that continues to serve those in need.

Gaspare Castagna



The Advent Marathon

I would like to suggest an excessively eccentric journey: why not explore together Advent texts in order to reread last year's and discover new courses of action for the future? During this Advent, the Poor is king and he delivers the secrets of "strategic actions" that will enable us to respond more faithfully to the Order of Malta's mission.

I invite you to follow our journey with the assistance of Advent Sundays biblical texts: www.catholic.org/advent or in the *Living with Christ*.

First Sunday: Peace, soldiers!

The first Sunday offers the most militaristic Advent Sunday. Isaiah's Jerusalem, which will become Saint Paul's metaphor for the Church, is Judaism's sacred site that resonates with love for all Jews, including those of the diaspora. The Book of Isaiah belongs to a period that resembles our own: Jerusalem at peace? Without fighting? The recipients of the text, like you and I, had not known such a Jerusalem. Nevertheless, it was part and parcel of their hope. The promise of the biblical text is strong: even weapons are recycled to become daily objects, and the art of warfare is no longer taught. The ability to wage war will be lost forever.

At ease, soldier? As a matter of fact, no! The second reading and the gospel enlist us: Christ will return, perhaps tomorrow, perhaps the day after tomorrow. Therefore, we are invited to live as if we are already wearing "the armour of light". Peace, yes. Rest, no. Vigilance is a must.

In order to "live honourably as in the day" as Saint Paul suggests, I think of the all the chivalric and hospitaler values as they are outlined in the Order of Malta's Commentary. Hospitality in its largest sense, that is to say welcome, is one of the best strategy for peace. Hospitality stamped by respect and attentiveness affords an opportunity to cure serious conflicts and to develop new relationships.

Second Sunday: Chocolate or the Bible?

What is your daily comforter? Chocolate? Coffee? A child's drawing? A friendly laugh? What encourages you to carry on? A goal? A promise? A drive to be successful? For me, chocolate is a great comforter and

the secret of my perseverance is my niece and my nephew. Reassurance and the motivation to persevere can also be collective. As a National Association, we have had wonderful moments of reassurance and perseverance: the pilgrimage to Lourdes, the Feast of Saint John the Baptist in Toronto, the investiture weekend under the honorary chairmanship of the Prelate of the Order, and perhaps even Epistula.

Saint Paul, ever resourceful in marketing techniques — it is highly arguable but, please allow me to make this point —, offers us another recourse: "so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope" (Rm 15:4). Yes, scriptures provide reassurance and perseverance so that we can keep on hoping because we find in scriptures a reassuring and persevering God. In short, as a strategic action, turning towards the Word of God and, more broadly, towards the writings pertaining to the Order of Malta's mission, could be the "new chocolate": efficient and guaranteed to be more durable.

Third Sunday: Ambitioning poverty

Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he (Mt 11:11).

In his captivity, John the Baptist hears comments that make him uncertain that Jesus is the expected saviour. Jesus formulates no blame. He does not proffer a quickie course in theology to put him in his proper place as a prophet. Instead, he invites John to observe the fruits of his actions that unequivocally speak of God's promises as transmitted by the prophets.

I am particularly fond of this biblical text in which Jesus praises John and the unusual ending. If John is the greater, how can the least be the greater? The answer is through the preferred place for the poor in the Kingdom according to the proclamation of the Good News. In one of the biblical passages that is a hallmark of the Order of Malta, we learn why: the poor, the small one, demonstrate Christ's presence in a special manner (Mt 25:31-46, see Mt 18:3-5). In short, without the poor and our own poverties, we miss the presence of Christ in a unique way.

Fourth Sunday: Listening

We are invited by the Evangelist Matthew to reflect on the announcement of the birth of Jesus to Joseph. Mary finds herself in a very awkward situation, being pregnant through the intervention of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, as a righteous man and a good Jew, has decided to secretly repudiate Mary. To follow the Judaic law is then the “best practice” known to discern God’s will. The angel comes after Joseph has made his decision (seemingly a par excellence strategy on God’s part). But Joseph has remained available and willing to listen to God. He accepts God’s invitation through the angel.

The biblical text does not give us Joseph’s thoughts... only his extraordinary willingness to change direction in order to better answer God’s request.

During this Advent, I wish you some happy upheavals of your decisions, and celebrations that honour the poor in your close circle and your community. Merry Christmas and best wishes of happiness.

Julie Tanguay, B.Th., M.A. (Th)
Executive Director

Advent Retreat



From November 25 to 27, members of the Montreal and Ottawa regions gathered in the city of Joliette for the annual retreat. The discussions, prayers and Mass celebrations were held in the St. Charles Borromée Cathedral, home of Bishop Raymond Poisson. The special guest was Father Jean-Marc Barreau, a French priest who talked about the links between the Year of Mercy, Mercy in the vision of Pope Francis, and the place of the poor in God’s Mercy.

In the next issue:



The Order of Malta in Senegal

Two students in nursing from the University of Montreal spent 2 months in Senegal thanks to a grant from the Blessed Gerard's Scholarship, which is an initiative from our confrere Christian Samoisette. The students worked as interns in a leprosy, sharing their knowledge with local physicians and nurses, and learning in return skills to treat this terrible disease.

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