



Our Faith in the Mystery of Redemptive Suffering: As Root of Our Belonging to the Knights of Malta

By H.E. Bishop John A. Boissonneau

The Order has its proper liturgical calendar which highlights the celebration of Our Lady and the saints who are important patrons of our life and mission. The Knights of Malta are also called to give special attention to the annual celebration of the World Day of the Sick every February. Instituted on May 13, 1992 by Pope John Paul II and initially begun on February 11, 1993, the commemoration of Our Lady of Lourdes, it is a day to be "a special time of prayer and sharing, of offering one's suffering". Given the charism and call of our Order, it is indeed a singular day of our prayer and reflection. Each year there is a theme and a message prepared by the Holy Father.

For all the Church, then, February 11 is a day to confront the mystery of sickness and suffering. It is recorded that Pope John Paul II had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease as early as 1991, and thus throughout all the thirteen World Days of the Sick he was coping in an increasing manner with that mystery in a personal way.

As he states in his message for the first of these Days, it is "a special time of prayer and sharing, of offering one's suffering for the good of the Church and of reminding everyone to see in his sick brother or sister the face of Christ who, by suffering, dying and rising, achieved the salvation of mankind".

This year, his successor, chose as the theme "By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2.24), recalling that the Lord in the profoundest moments of his human life also met the mystery of suffering. Last May on pastoral visit to Turin, Pope Benedict reflected upon the mortal wounds of Jesus through the medium of the Shroud of Turin. In his ultimate triumph over suffering and death, the risen Lord shows his wounds - he does not hide the evidence of his encounter with pain. In fact, one might say that these wounds define who the risen Jesus is - God who loves us to the extent of taking upon him our wounds and our pain.

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The redemptive value of the wounds of Christ, including the piercing of His Sacred Heart, makes suffering, while not good in itself, an opportunity for growth in God. When Catholics receive the Sacrament of the Sick, they are sacramentally anointed to mark their enrolment in the blessed state of physical and spiritual care of all the Church. They are drawn closer to the Lord by sharing in his suffering and isolation which brought about our redemption and healing. It is little wonder that we reverently refer to them as "our lords the sick"!

What is our approach to the situation of illness and sickness in our own lives? The natural anxiety, fear and denial must be recognized but where, as believers, do we go from there? In our faith based upon the Cross and Resurrection, can we accept what is difficult to accept and to bear? As women and men dedicated to the care of the sick and the dying, we must constantly seek to conform our vision of their condition to the saving reality of Jesus' death and resurrection. When we, or our loved ones, are seriously ill how do we respond? The chivalry and the comradeship of the noble Orders of old supported courage in each

member as they faced fearful and insurmountable enemies. Our faith in the mystery of redemptive suffering is the root of our belonging to the Knights of Malta and the profoundly Christian way to face our own human fragility and weakness.

As Pope Benedict acknowledges in this year's Message for the World Day of the Sick, "Often the Passion, the Cross of Jesus, generate fear because they seem to be the negation of life. In reality, it is exactly the contrary! The Cross is God's 'yes' to mankind, the highest and most intense expression of his love and the source from which flows eternal life."

By His wounds, we are healed; in His suffering, we are restored; by His death, we live. These are paradoxes which, as disciples of Jesus we will never fully understand, but our surrender in faith to their truth will set us free to serve others and bring us to eternal life.

The World Day for the Sick this year reminds us that illness, isolation, pain and suffering in Jesus is redemptive, healing and life-giving. That is the paradox of faith that we are called to live and that motivates our service to those in such need. ♦

Canadian Association Website gets Update

By Roman J. Cieciewicz, KMOB, Delegate of Communications



As the saying goes, good things come to those who wait. In this age of electronic communications and social media the importance of having current information has never been greater.

In November, I met with our web designer and host to formulate a plan to get the Association's website up-to-date and relevant, mindful that we are in fact two sites, English & French. Content was reviewed, corporate standards and graphics guidelines studied, and changes implemented. Active links now take the reader to the associated pages of the Grand *Continued page 6*

The Canadian Association Tests the Waters of Prison Ministry

By Roman J. Cieciewicz, KMOB, Delegate of Communications

As Knights and Dames of the Order of Malta we devote ourselves to developing our spirituality, serving the faith and caring for the sick, poor and outcast. One year ago, I had a very good discussion with Mr. Steve Caron from the Boston area who had undertaken a very simple yet effective method of broadening the reach of the Order of Malta to those in need.

It became clear that we (the Canadian Association) could take advantage of the very successful efforts of their prison ministry team, which has an impact area that includes prisons in 25 states, to expand our work domestically and to improve awareness of the Order. The challenge was to connect first, through the Dioceses and/or provincial chaplains that are currently involved in prison ministry within areas where our members reside.

On March 1, 2011, with the help of Dr. Alex de Cosson, Regional Vice-President in British Columbia, this project became a reality as we distributed 1,400 copies of the Lenten issue of the 'Serving Brother' newsletter to Catholic inmates in Ontario and BC. A great advantage was achieved by coat-tailing on the efforts of our confreres south of the border and with small artwork adjustments to the masthead and interior description, a Canadian identity was created.

Steve Caron, Knight of Magistral Grace and chairman of the editorial board for the American Association says, "Individuals incarcerated in correctional facilities around the globe are, by definition, dispossessed;

among those in need we in the Order are obliged to help. In many cases, these persons for the first time in their lives find themselves crying out for God's mercy, forgiveness and love."

In 2009, they began publishing "The Serving Brother," a newsletter offering "Catholic Spirituality to the Incarcerated." Recognizing the disparate conditions that Catholic prisoners find themselves in, the

publication is intended to represent a "spiritual lifeline" to those readers finding themselves in conditions inhospitable to the Catholic faith.

Professional looking and in full colour, each issue is printed on quality paper, in order to express the same profound sense of respect that the Brothers of the Hospital showed to their guests. Common features include teaching from a prelate of the church, daily Mass readings that allow easy participation in the ongoing worship of Our Lord,

colorful reproductions of classic masterpieces of sacred art and spiritual counseling offered in a manner that breaks through to this special audience.

Additionally, a small "games" section provides a pretext for the spiritually immature to routinely pick up the publication, and hopefully find quiet moments to contemplate the call of Our Lord to holiness that is expressed in each edition.

This new foray certainly opens the door to future opportunities in the area of prison ministry and is an easy way to get a Knight/Dame or two involved in hands-on work by liaising with the

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Bolivia Projects Update

By Willem Langelaan, KM

"Hunger and poverty are disruptive agents in a community, negatively affecting physical health and social well being, such as resulting in migration to the city. Our motivation for the Altiplano Tapacarí project is to diminish the injustice of hunger and poverty of indigenous farmers in the Ayllu Aransaya."

Projects
Mission Statement

As we approach the first anniversary of the Altiplano Tapacarí project, I am pleased to provide a status report on our mission in this impoverished part of the world.

The project started on 2010 MAR 01 with our Bolivian consultant/partner AGRUCO holding meetings in the communities of the Ayllu Aransaya to discuss the program activities with the beneficiaries and the elders. The work in the field included an exchange visit to the communities that had participated in our recently successfully completed Chuño project.

Further to the recommendations that were made to us in a meeting with the Ministry of Agriculture in La Paz in 2009, we asked AGRUCO to include developing quinoa and cañahua culture in the project. During the first semester AGRUCO contacted local seed suppliers to provide a broad variety of potato, quinoa and cañahua seeds. Technical support was given during the planting of these varieties. A simple mechanical hand tool was developed to improve the seeding of quinoa and cañahua. To stimulate growth natural fertilizer made from a mixture of animal dung was added to the soil.

During the 2010 winter season (which runs there from June to August) the temperature



in most areas of the Altiplano was not low enough for making chuño. Lower temperatures arrived only very late in August.

Only about 50% of the normal yield of chuño was produced. The other 50% of production failed, due to the lack of low temperature. Families have to use the failed chuño for animal feed. The farmers will not sell their good chuño but keep it for feeding their family. As a result of the low supply level, the price of the chuño nearly doubled.

Due to the climate change, the farmers have to consider producing the chuño at a higher elevation. As the standard atmosphere decreases 0.8° C for every 100 m increase in altitude, thus making chuño will require a substantial increase in effort.

The national Bolivian TV channel, "Bolivia TV" spent many weeks in the Ayllu Majasaya Mujlli to document the community participation and the positive effect of the Chuño project. The program investigates the re-introduction of bio-diversity, endogenous agriculture methods, the constructing of a modernized version of the traditional "pirhua", adobe storage sheds, and the improved quantity and quality of the harvest. It will be broadcast on national TV and internationally as part of the TV series "Madre Tierra".

With funds received from the Canadian Association of the Order of Malta, as well as financial support from CIDA, AGRUCO helps the farming families to improve their cultivation methods of potatoes, quinoa and cañahua.

With help from AGRUCO farmers learn:

- to improve crop rotation and implement an 8 year fallow cycle to replenish the soil and reduce soil borne plagues,
- to improve the genetic quality of the seeds,
- to increase bio-diversity,
- better seeding, natural fertilizing and harvesting practices in the field,
- improved plague control with organic means,

In addition, the project provides building materials for the farmers to construct improved sheds for storing the produce and seeds.

The methods are endogenous and ecological to strengthen sustainability and soil conservation. All measures are developed in co-operation with the farming families.

As demonstrated by the success of the Chuño project, these improvements substantially



increase the quantity and the quality of the crops. There will be less hunger and poverty among the indigenous people of the Altiplano, leading to a better quality of life for these poorest of the poor, with less socially de-stabilizing migration to the city.

The Instituto De Educación Rural (IER)

In parallel with the Tapacari project the Canadian Association of the Order of Malta independently sponsors the education of 21 young women, ranging in ages from 17 to 24, from the project region.

The education is provided by the Instituto de Educación Rural (IER), a boarding school in Quillacollo near Cochabamba at the foot of the Altiplano. Women are important decision makers within the family. Their involvement in the project will encourage sustainability of the learned methods and will help them to assume a leadership role in the family and in their community. It is an important contribution to the quality of life in the communities.

The following letter, received in February 2011, shows the impact and gratitude for the Order:

"Dear friend Willem, receive my warm salutation. Here, in the I.E.R., we think a lot of you and all the members of Orden de Malta. December, January and February were months with big work. At this time, we have received 92 young women. All the beds are occupied!!! We had to ask a young woman to come with her bed and another

one is sleeping upon a special mattress we prepared with sheep wool. Really, it seems that the people of the country side is more conscious of the need of education and they think not only in their boys but also in their girls. It's a grace, a big grace!

What more can I tell you. Your young girls were "beautiful" and their enthusiasm was great. "Order of Malta" is doing something very important for them. This afternoon, I will tell you also about the new ones who are coming and we will see together how we can help them.

Forgive me if I don't have writed before. The time is going so fast. Please be with us in this new moment.

Your grateful Sister, Murielle"

As we start the year 2011, The Order is once again requesting your donations to help with this important ministry to the poorest of the poor in this very needy part of the world. Remember, you also now have the option of donating simply and safely online at www.orderofmaltacanada.org. Please add the words BOLIVIA PROJECTS to the special message box. ♦

Note: The annual budget for the Tapacari project is \$147,000 of which our obligation is to provide funding of \$37,000. We are most grateful for CIDA's contribution of 75%.

The annual budget for the IER is \$18,660 which translates to only \$890 per girl for room, board, and education! For this project we do not receive CIDA funding.





resident's message

By Peter Quail

This year, the Lourdes pilgrimage will run from Friday April 29 to Friday May 6. Members of the Canadian Association will go with the British, Irish and French Associations.

Lourdes is the very heart of what we are called to do - to help the sick and the poor. Virtually all the pilgrims (the malades) who go to Lourdes have health problems of some sort or the other. By the nature of things, many of the pilgrims who go to Lourdes are poor. Our work during the pilgrimage is a wonderfully fulfilling spiritual experience and is most satisfying, knowing that we are helping others less fortunate than ourselves.

Not only do we work with the sick, but we attend Mass each day and join with

thousands of others on the Sunday in the great underground church to attend the international Mass. We make the stations of the cross and on the Monday, we will have a Mass for members of the Canadian association who have come to Lourdes. We greet old friends from Canada and many other parts of the world.

I urge all of you who have not been to Lourdes so far, to look at the pilgrimage as an obligation of your membership of the Order. Your lives will be changed by the experience.

To those of you who are attending this year, I welcome you as members of our association and look forward to seeing you in Lourdes. ❖

*Confraternally Yours,
Peter Quail*

Continued from page 2 Magistr's site (in the appropriate language) and the look of the site is consistent with required standards. Perhaps the biggest addition is the integration of a secure, easy to use, on-line donation capability. It is hoped that this will lead to increased contributions, as well as provide an additional reason to direct potential members or donors to our website.

An additional feature that was added was the ability for us to be able to make content changes ourselves. This will mean timely updates and the most current information will be available. Please check it out for yourself. There are many new items of interest and your feedback would be most welcome. ❖

www.orderofmaltacanada.org

Continued from page 5 diocese and/or chaplains in their province, coordinating delivery, feedback and minor fundraising, and for a national coordinator who could also ensure a spiritual message from a Canadian bishop or priest involved in prison ministry from time to time.

Seems to me to be a great win-win-win; the work of the Order reaching out to another

group of individuals in need, developing a ministry "at home", and providing members with an opportunity to actively participate in hands-on work.

Many thanks go to our American confreres for their help, guidance and encouragement. Anyone interested in helping to develop and expand this important ministry can contact me directly. ❖

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