

Evangelisation: Questioning The Church Itself

By Raymond Poisson, Auxiliary Bishop of Saint-Jérôme

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The Military and Sovereign Order of Malta has been in existence for several centuries. Its concern for the poorest and for the sick remains its first priority. It is hard not to notice that, in recent year, the recruitment of new members has become more difficult, a situation not unique to the Order, but fairly widespread within the various spheres of activities of the Catholic Church in the Western hemisphere.

Clearly, our contemporaneity brings new challenges for the transmission of the Christian message. We live in a world confronted by an unprecedented migratory phenomenon. This mobility inevitably reduces the space normally accorded to great traditions, particularly religious ones. Our basic culture distances itself constantly from God's Word; and in a Christian environment, since we can no longer speak of God without speaking of humanity, we are also moving away from a Christian discourse about the human person.



Deus Caritas Est

When God becomes absent or non-existent, the human person is dealt with within the framework of a sterile cult: lack of concern for the other, indifference towards inequalities and injustices, depersonalisation of a person's dignity in situations such as abortions or euthanasia. In the end, our relation to religion is perceived as a constraint on freedom while secularism, occupying all the space, public or private, has become an icon of freedom of expression and thought.

Not wishing to limit himself to explanations about our present state, while acutely aware of this reality, Pope Benedict XVI began his Pontificate by immediately daring to assert the primacy of God on the Church. Since it is God that dispenses light and truth on the dignity of the human person, we must infuse sense in humankind by proposing urgently a meeting with God, represented by Jesus Christ and present in the Holy Spirit." Faith tells us that God has given his Son for our

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Continued from page 1 sake and gives us the victorious certainty that it is really true: God is love! It thus transforms our impatience and our doubts into the sure hope that God holds the world in his hands. Faith, which sees the love of God, revealed in the pierced heart of Jesus on the Cross, gives rise to love. Love is the light, and in the end the only light, that can illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working... to experience love and in this way to cause the light of God to enter into the world. This is the invitation I would like to extend with the present Encyclical.”
Deus caritas est, no 39, December 25, 2005, First year of the Pontificate.

As if to hammer his message home, the Holy Father announced a Year of Faith through which he hopes we will be witnesses to the

joy of believing. Thus, Evangelisation becomes a hallmark of the existence of the Church; that is to say, each and every one of us, members of the Church. It is not a matter of setting up a special mechanism to transmit the Gospel, rather it is to live freely in the joy of the Gospel of Christ: Glad Tidings! Our joy in believing, of knowing that we are saved in Jesus Christ and loved by God, fulfils the Evangelisation of the world as if by osmosis. The world can only envy a Church full of light.

Our difficulty in transmitting the Gospel or in finding new members for the Order of Malta must, of necessity, bring us with courage and clear-mindedness to do a self-criticism of our personal and collective witnessing of our joy in believing; of the joy of helping our lords the poor and the sick.

Malta Camp for the Disabled (Budapest, Hungary)

By Lea and Hanna Janossy

163 guests from 21 countries, 180 helpers, 80 staff members, and 200 kg of melons. This past August, Hanna and Lea Janossy were privileged to be able to once more attend the XXIX International Summer Camp for Disabled Youth of the Order of Malta in Balatonfoldvar, Hungary. It was the second camp for the two sisters, who represented

Canada at the camp last summer in Lignano, Italy. The camp is hosted by a different country every year.

“Since we have Hungarian roots, the entire camp was a very different experience for us this year”, says Lea. “We were able to identify with the cultural experiences on a deeper level.”





Hanna and Lea were both staff members, as they had been in Lignano the year before. This year, Lea was the link to the Swedish team, and Hanna juggled the task of linking both the American and the British team with the central organization.

The first day is always filled with lots of enthusiasm, even though many teams travelled long and exhausting hours from around the world with their guests to finally arrive in Balatonfoldvar, Hungary. Lake Balaton is the biggest fresh water lake in Europe, and is the most popular vacation area for Hungarians as well as a big draw for tourists from around the world. The camp rented an entire hotel and its surrounding grounds for the week. We were very lucky that the hotel was right beside the lake front, and the water was only a couple feet deep for the first 100 meters, so wheelchair users could escape the heat and be pushed into the lake for a convenient dip at all hours of the day.

The excitement was so high the first night that despite the long travel times, the disco night was at full capacity. The discos held almost every night are definitely one of the highlights of the camp for guests and helpers alike. For us helpers, it is especially exquisite to dance with the guests in wheelchairs, something that we are not accustomed to, and see the joy on their faces as they twirled and whirled around the dance floor by helpers from around the world.

The opening ceremony on the second day gave every country an opportunity to show off their team amidst the applause of the camp. The second night showcased the famed International Evening. Every country decorated their table with their national colors, and served traditional food and drinks. Guests and helpers milled around sampling traditional delicacies, and making new friends from each country.

The next day, everyone piled into large buses, and accompanied by a complete

police escort, drove to the surprise trip whose nature the staff against all odds managed to keep secret. It was quite an experience for me (Lea) as I happened to be in the lead car, and thus was able to thread through downtown Budapest and watch as the police motorcycles stopped traffic in all directions to allow our convoy of some 40 buses to stay together.

The surprise trip ended up being to a Formula One race track wherein we got the opportunity to first race our coach buses around the track, and then get out and look around at the car "stables", etc.

Following the Formula One racetrack visit, we were taken to the famous Lazar equestrian horse park where everyone was wowed by an absolutely exquisite performance by the Lazar brothers, who are six time world



champions in various equestrian sports. The most impressive traditional Hungarian stunt was when one of the brothers galloped around the rink standing on the back of two horses, with three more harnessed in front of the two he was standing on. On the way back, we were given a tour of Budapest by night.

That evening there was no dancing. After all the excitement of the day, it was important to find peace, and the evening was spent with everyone together in a huge tent praying and singing Taize music. Just like last year, for Hanna, this was the most



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touching and beautiful evening of all. As I hugged one of the guests sitting beside me, he whispered in my ear how happy he was that God created him, and that he viewed all his pain and physical difficulties as an opportunity to offer some small sacrifice to God for the salvation of souls. He knew, really knew, that God had a wonderful plan for his life, and that he just had to trust day by day in God's love. I reflected on the small sacrifices that I fail to do daily in my own life, and was filled with awe at the strength and spirit of this young man whom our society calls disabled.

The next day was a quiet one to recover from the excursion the day before. Traditional artisans from around Hungary set up booths where guests and helpers alike could learn how to create their art different art forms themselves.

There was a booth where you could decorate the traditional Hungarian version of gingerbread, one where you could make all sorts of jewelry and another where you could make delicate Christmas tree ornaments out of twisted straw.

Intermittently, there were shows performed by various artists. Lea was in one of the acts and Hanna had been invited to perform a unicycle act with some friends from the camp.

The last day was the time for the final showdown between the countries with the much anticipated Olympic Games. Stations were set up around the grounds of the hotel, and all the teams had to walk around making sure they got a shot at each of the activities. The atmosphere was charged with friendly competition, with the red and white "Polska" chanting team ultimately winning the highest honor of the night as the most supportive cheering squad.

One final disco passed in a blur that night as goodbyes were said all round. It is always hard to say goodbye, but since Hanna and I will both be spending the second semester of this year studying in the heart of Europe, Zurich, Switzerland, many international after parties are planned with guests and helpers alike, easing the pain of parting. Another summer has come and gone, another Malteser week of serving and learning life lessons which cannot be learned in any other setting.

The Order's camp for the disabled will be held in Ireland in 2013. Both Hanna and Lea would like introduce a first ever 'official' Canadian team, guests and helpers included, and will be seeking financial support to see this dream become reality.



Vancouver Eye Clinic

*By Aline Countess Dobrzensky de Dobrzenicz,
Dame Grand Cross of Honour and Devotion in Obedience*



It is with a sense of duty and great pride that the members of the Canadian Association of the Order of Malta in the

Western region of the country, to devote themselves to helping our lords the poor and our lords the sick. With that spirit they fulfilled what has become an annual event in the Vancouver East side every early month of October.

For many years now, Dr. David Neima, KM, has led the Eye Clinic in the East Vancouver part of town where needy people are numerous. They always welcome the opportunity otherwise denied to them, to have a free check on their vision and receive the care and are provided with the remedy they require.

The Eye Clinic this year took place in the usual location called "The door is open". In the past, the support and assistance of the Sisters of Atonement has been instrumental for the success of the event. Unfortunately the Sisters closed their base in town and relocated to Edmonton. But Dr. Neima was not deterred. He carried on his usual action and recruited an even larger team of assistant. At his side was Dr. Warren Withford and Tony Vianna, of the School of Opticians of Douglas College in Vancouver. They and a number of other assistants have for years contributed to Dr. Neima's Clinics.

A team of volunteers from both UBC and Douglas College were at hand and provided the necessary technical assistance. Our devoted members from the local

Canadian Association of the Order of Malta, were led by Francis G.A. McCullough, KMOB and his wife Teresa McCullough, DMOB. With their usual contagious enthusiasm they were on site long before the agreed time and with exemplary dedication started to prepare the location to provide the ophthalmologist and the opticians with the best possible setting.

Other members of our Order were also on hand to help with registration duty, crowd control and to ensure the flow from the waiting hall to the actual optical inspection and to the glass wear fitting tables proceeded in a peaceful and expedient manner.

As in the past, over 75 patients lined up and received treatment. Some were fitted with free glasses on the spot, others requiring more specific glass wear, were to return after two weeks to collect the custom made items.

Several were checked for cataracts. While patiently waiting for their turn, the patients were offered soft drinks and biscuits. The treats were appreciated so much, that some who did not need an eye check up, simply lined up to receive the food and drink. It must be said that on any Saturday, the hall is used as a soup kitchen in the morning and that particular day was not any different. Undeniably, the hall is a multipurpose one with the Eye Clinic providing a badly needed service to those in need.





resident's message

By *André A. Morin, KMOB*

A year has gone by and, once again, Christmas beckons. During the year that is ending, your Board has met on several occasions in the interest of the good governance of the Association.

We have received the representatives of the Order's government on an official visit to meet the members of the Board, and to discuss our internal management, our challenges and our projects. We have received their report and I wish to share the results with you in order to enhance openness in our Association; this is a practice I value highly.

The Association is well managed and I can assure you that the moneys received from your annual contributions and donations are used to fulfil our mission, which is to serve the poor, the sick and to defend the Faith. We are developing projects aimed at recruitment and training. In November, your Board held a day of strategic planning in order to develop our plan for the coming years. This plan will be distributed to the members.

2013 will be an eventful year since our Association will celebrate its 60th anniversary, while the Order will mark the 900th anniversary of its official recognition by the Holy See. For this anniversary, I will travel to Rome to take part in the commemorations and meetings with my fellow Presidents of other national associations.

The year 2013 will also be important for the Universal Church because the Holy Father has decreed the year 2013 to be the Year of Faith. This special Year must be a unique opportunity for us to deepen our knowledge of the Word of God through the reading of Holy Scriptures. It will also be an occasion

for our chaplains to meet in order to reinforce our knowledge of the Bible, as well also to become familiar with the Commentaries published by our Grand Master on the Code and the Order's Charter, two prescriptive documents of great importance.

Allow me to return to the Year of Faith. We are urged by the Holy Father to intensify our knowledge of Holy Scriptures during this dedicated Year. The Vatican II Council places Scriptures at the centre of Christian life.

The Council Fathers were convinced that Scriptures ought to occupy a central place, inviting Catholics to enhance their Faith through becoming aware that the Bible delivers Christ's message and, moreover, that God speaks to his people through the Bible.

Reading the Bible and knowledge of the Faith are paramount for Dames and Knights of Malta in order that they are daily, in our society, the image of Christ's love, charity and attentiveness to our brothers and sisters. They are also essential if we wish to be witnesses of Christ's love. We are living in an era when several governments wish to confine religion to a private sphere, occasionally suggesting a radical secularism that aims at the removal of religious symbols from the public domain.

Our Faith must not be banished to a private field; we must be witnesses of the Gospel squarely in the world, and proclaim our love for Christ with charity, respect and compassion. Therefore, it is imperative that we should know our Faith in order to be able to defend it, and to cooperate in the building of a society in which faith and secularism can cohabit harmoniously. It is an ambitious program, but so tremendously important.

I would like to wish you, and your families, a Merry Christmas and a Happy Year of peace, health and happiness.

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1247 Kilborn, Ottawa, Ontario K1H 6K9
Tel: 613-731-8897 / Fax: 613-731-1312
Email: smomca@bellnet.ca

www.orderofmaltacanada.org

*President: André A. Morin, KMOB
Chief Chaplain: Fr. Andrea Spatafora*

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