

WEEDS AND WHEAT

What are weeds? The dictionary defines weeds as any plants that are not desirable in particular circumstances. That leaves the definition pretty broad and vague. Any plant can be declared a weed if it is undesired.

Take dandelions, for instance. For most of us, dandelions are regarded as a weed—they grow all over the place, use up soil nutrients and moisture, mess up the pristine look of our lawns and parks, scatter their seed on the wind to the four corners of the earth and seem to serve no useful purpose.

No purpose, that is until you begin to consider some of the following: using the young spring shoots for early salad greens, the blossoms for dandelion wine and the roots dried and ground up to be used like chicory for a coffee substitute. Dandelions seem to survive anywhere and under any conditions, so could help stabilize the soil in arid conditions. Their taproots go deep (try digging up a big old dandelion!) and so they bring up nutrients from deep down in the soil closer to the surface.

Jesus tells a parable about weeds sown into a grain field. The farmer’s servants want to pull up the weeds, but the farmer tells them to wait for the harvest, and then the weeds will be separated out from the grain.

In his actions, Jesus reminds us that we are not to jump to conclusions about people—they may appear to be “weeds” but may in fact be healthy “plants”, or plants in need of assistance to become healthier. The Pharisees quickly categorize people as righteous and unrighteous, as being in relationship with God or cut off from God. Jesus reaches out to everyone, particularly the “weeds”: the tax collectors, sinners, prostitutes, lepers, blind, deaf, mute, and anyone else deemed to be outside the circle of God’s friendship. In this, he seemed to be going about gleefully blowing dandelion seeds on the Pharisees’ pristine lawns!

Who are the weeds in our society today? Who are the people that we examine and judge to be unworthy of God’s Kingdom, or who we admit to our company only with great reluctance? How are we being challenged to conversion in our attitudes and actions when confronted with those we, our society or our institutional church might deem to be “weeds”?

If we take Jesus at his word, it may be time for us to check out the value of dandelions and then go out and blow some dandelion seeds around! We are also called to look beyond the labels and look to the hearts of others.

JESUS THE STORYTELLER

Jesus often uses a particular genre of stories called parables. Jesus spoke to his first listeners, and continues to speak to us today, in simple images that invite us into the great mystery of the kingdom of heaven.

Parables were not meant to be children’s stories or moralistic fables. Instead, parables were used to prompt the listeners to see the world in a different way, to challenge and at times, to indict. Teaching through parables requires active participation on the part of the listener—we have to work for the answers and insights rather than having them spoon-fed to us.

To enter into a parable, one must be willing to let go of the security offered by answers and definitions and be open to the mystery of the kingdom of heaven.

ST. EUGENE’S VISION

From his earliest preaching Eugene constantly invited the poor to understand the transforming power of the resurrection in their lives. This vision inspires our parish’s social vision.

“Come now and learn from us what you are in the eyes of faith.

Poor of Jesus Christ, afflicted, wretched, suffering, sick, covered with sores, etc., all you whom misery oppresses, my dear respected brothers, listen to me.

You are God’s children, the brothers of Jesus Christ, heirs to his eternal kingdom, chosen portion of his inheritance; you are, in the words of St. Peter, a holy nation, you are kings, you are priests, you are in some way gods, So lift up your spirits, that your defeated souls may breathe, grovel no longer on the ground: You are gods, children of the Most High. (Ps. 81:6).

Lift yourselves towards heaven where your minds should be set, our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20), let your eyes see for once beneath the rags that cover you, there is within you an immortal soul made in the image of God whom it is destined to possess one day, a soul ransomed at the price of the blood of Jesus Christ, more precious in the eyes of God than all earth’s riches, than all the kingdoms of the earth, a soul of which he is more jealous than of the government of the entire universe.

Christians, know then your dignity, with St. Leo I will call you sharers in the divine nature,

*Notes for the first instruction in the Church of the Madeleine*

*A new heart I will give you, and a*

NEW SPIRIT

*I will put within you. Ez. 36:26a*

Check it out!

Have you checked out our website lately? There is a wealth of information, not only about the parish, but also about other communities and events. Not only can you access the weekly bulletin and New Spirit newsletter on the website, you can check out the new Pastoral Council Members, read PPC minutes, homilies and reflections and a whole variety of information about the parish. A new addition is a menu for the “Dialogue Circle for Renewed Relations”. In this section, you will find information for various events that are developed by our Dialogue Circle group or relate in some way to the aims of the Dialogue Circle. Our parish website is [www.st-josephs.ca](http://www.st-josephs.ca) - check it out soon!

CANOE PILGRIMAGE

In a few weeks at Galilee Centre, we are going to be blessed by a visit from a group of canoe pilgrims who are marking Canada’s 150<sup>th</sup> year in a unique way. You are welcome to join us on **August 8** for an afternoon with **Canoe Pilgrimage: A Journey of Reconciliation**. This intrepid group of 30 pilgrims, made up of Jesuits, Indigenous and others, will be making a stop at Galilee Centre where they will engage any visitors in an interactive presentation on the history of colonization, the need for reconciliation and in particular the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. The planned schedule for the afternoon is as follows:

1:00 arrival at the shores of Galilee Centre  
2:30 Blanket exercise (an

interactive presentation on the history of colonization)  
5:00 Mass presided by Fr. Ken Forster OMI

The next day, the paddlers will be greeted at the shores of Naataga (Peaceful Waters) Camp by elders of Kateri Native Ministries of Ottawa. More can be learned about the pilgrimage at <https://canoepilgrimage.com>

We at Galilee Centre are very grateful that the pilgrims will be with us and we hope that you can join us for this historic event. For those who cannot join us, your prayerful support would be greatly appreciated.

Gerry Kelly  
Manager of Spiritual Programs  
Galilee Centre  
(<http://galileecentre.com>)

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REFUGEE OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Greetings everyone!

Two years ago, in May of 2015, we, Robyne Warren and Louise Lalonde, volunteered to take on the leadership of ROC (Refugee Outreach Committee) as co-chairs.

Today ROC has a solid, well-trained membership with a diversity of skills and well-honed leadership capabilities. As announced at the January ROC meeting, elections for a new leadership team and secretary were to be held in June. These took place at ROC’s regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, June 20.

John Weir was elected chair and will continue in his role as treasurer. Margie Cain and Angela Murphy were elected to form a leadership team with John. Deborah Dorner was elected secretary.

John and Margie, in collaboration with a very capable immigration lawyer, were powerhouses in navigating D., a parishioner and protected person, through the long and complicated process from non-status person to permanent resident status. With the help of other ROC members, they also found housing for our Syrian family of five and got them through the many required settlement formalities in record time. Angela, a willing spirit who shows a lot of promise, is new on board. She is not fazed by challenges and is keeping pace with the experienced members.

Deborah and her husband, Peter, graciously provided D. with living accommodations in their home for a period of eight months. As educators, they supported D. and contributed greatly in his preparation for independent living, the labor market and integration into Canadian culture and life-style.

We thank Clare McEwan for her two years of services as secretary and look forward to seeing her take on other functions on the Committee.

Since its foundation in 1990, ROC has never been stronger, better trained and more competent than it is presently.

Robyne remains an on-going member of ROC. Louise will be retiring at the end of the year. We pass the torch on, proud of our new leadership and confident in the Committee’s future: ROC is in good hands.

As one of St. Joe’s outreach ministries ROC greatly appreciates the on-going support it has received from parish community over its 27-year history.

With heartfelt gratitude,  
Robyne and Louise

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY ON THE BLACK SEA COAST

Christopher Adam

Sometimes in Canada we have a tendency to see ourselves as exceptional when it comes to our model of multiculturalism and diversity. Yet societies throughout the world have found ways to handle diversity for centuries. In June, I spent a week travelling along the Black Sea Coast, visiting Romania and Bulgaria. I was fortunate to have a private guide in the town of Constanta, Romania. Ionut is a 36 year old teacher by training, but like so many in Eastern Europe, he takes on additional work to make ends meet. When Ionut discovered that I am from Canada, he immediately commented that he wanted to introduce me to the religious diversity that is at the centre of his hometown.

Within a mere 400 metres of each other, Constanta boasts three historic places of worship. We first visited the Grand Mosque of Constanta, dating back to 1910, built in an eclectic style, combining elements of Neo-Byzantine, Moorish and Neo-Romanesque style. Romania had been under Ottoman rule for hundreds of years and Constanta to this day is home to a Turkish minority numbering 7,000. It was after climbing the steps of the 47-meter high minaret that we got a breathtaking view of the old city, as well as the rich blue waters of the Black Sea.

After exploring the Grand Mosque, Ionut took me to the place of worship of another religious minority, namely the Roman Catholics. The Church of Saint Anthony is steps away from the mosque and was built in the thirties. Constructed in the Romanesque style, the church fell victim to the tumultuous history of the region, becoming a Soviet ammunition depot during World War II. During the communist period, authorities banned religious service here. On that June day, the church’s cool and dark interior was a welcome relief, as a solitary volunteer quietly dusted pews inside.

Our third stop took us to Romania’s most influential denomination. The Romanian Orthodox Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul is not only the most imposing, but the Greco-Roman style 19<sup>th</sup> century building was buzzing with activity. Women washed and peeled flowers outside the entrance, the darkly lit, but remarkably ornate interior had people quietly standing in prayer and members of religious orders milled around.

While the presence of Muslim, Roman Catholic and Romanian Orthodox communities within less than 500 metres from each other speaks to interreligious harmony, there was one striking reminder of a troubled past. On a quiet side street stood the abandoned Great Synagogue. As nature reclaims the spiritual home of a once vibrant Jewish community, a sturdy tree and hardy weeds now dominate the crumbling sanctuary.

OTTAWA CHURCHES ENGAGE IN NATIONAL FAITH COMMUTER CHALLENGE

By Joe Gunn

Do faith communities care about the environment?

In Ottawa, a growing number not only care, but they also act, as evidenced by their participation in the National Faith Commuter Challenge.

This initiative was sponsored by Faith and the Common Good <http://greeningsacredspaces.net/about-us/support-faith-the-common-good/> a national interfaith organization that undertakes environmental audits of church buildings and then helps to “green” sacred spaces. During two weekends in June, 60 churches across Canada asked their congregants to rideshare, take public transit, carpool, bike or walk to services. Over 600 persons participated, including members of St. Joseph’s Parish in Ottawa.

At St. Joe’s, many parishioners live beyond a short saunter over to the church building – some come downtown from Orleans and other more distant neighbourhoods. Fortunately, Ottawa and Gatineau close more than 50 kilometers of roads every Sunday morning, allowing easy and safe access for young families riding bikes or roller-blading together to and from church.

A couple of summers ago, once the parish’s bike rack was full, there was no place to secure a bicycle near our church in Sandy Hill. We wrote to City Hall, asking for bike racks to be provided, and they listened. Today, cyclists can also safely chain their cycles to the metal posts provided along the length of the Wilbrod Street sidewalk. Honestly, these actions only reduced carbon footprints by a minimal amount. We recognize that greening our personal habits is not enough to address the scale of the climate crisis. But greening practices can send market signals to the business community that consumer preferences are changing, as well as help inculcate psychological changes in how we perceive our relationship with nature. This can prepare us for the deep social and economic changes North Americans need to make in the carbon-constrained future.

At St. Joe’s, environmental concern did not begin with the National Faith Commuter Challenge. During Lent (the 40 days preceding Easter) parishioners decided to “Give It Up for The Earth!” This campaign, promoted by Citizens for Public Justice in 90 events across Canada, asked for



personal commitments to drive less, eliminate meat from our diets, divest from fossil fuel companies and even enjoy a spring break “staycation” rather than a flight South. As well, participants signed on to any number of six suggested demands of the federal government, such as raising Canada’s carbon price, eliminating fossil fuel subsidies, respecting Indigenous rights and supporting renewable energy. Thousands of signed pledges were received by Ottawa Centre MP and Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, Catherine McKenna, in mid-June.

Actions such as the National Faith Commuter Challenge serve a number of functions. Over 15,000 churchgoers were made aware that their faith communities value the environment and see respect for nature as a religious concern. While making a contribution to lowering greenhouse gas emissions, such activities also help to “mainstream” green practices, perhaps preparing communities for the next, deeper, steps. When tied to activities demanding more enlightened environmental policies of governments and businesses, we see faith communities working to change hearts and minds, personal practices, as well as current economic and political structures.

Sounds to me that this is exactly what faith communities should be doing!

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*Joe Gunn is the Ottawa-based executive director of Citizens for Public Justice, [www.cpj.ca](http://www.cpj.ca), a member-driven, faith-based public policy organization focused on ecological justice, refugee rights and poverty elimination. He attends St. Joseph’s Roman Catholic church in Sandy Hill.*)