



JESUIT SPIRITUAL RENEWAL CENTRE IN PICKERING

AUGUST 2020

NEWS LETTER NO. 29

GREETINGS FROM THE DIRECTOR OF MANRESA



Dear friends,

The world has changed considerably over the past several months. Manresa may have suspended programs, because of the pandemic, but I am having a busier summer than I expected, partly because of significant changes at Rene Goupil House and the Pickering Jesuit community. As well, I, and others, have been involved in spiritual direction, either at a safe distance on the lawn or by video conference. I'm amazed at how often I look from my office window and witness a conversation, taking place on the lawn. There is something quite beautiful about it – two people sitting in the shade of a tree and having a spiritual conversation. Summer works, but I'm not sure what winter will bring.

Fiona has been busy all summer, getting us ready for a new retreat season, lining up retreat directors and trying to predict what the season could look like. Be assured that our priority at Manresa will be protecting the health and safety of our retreatants – both your spiritual and physical health. There will be a few changes. We are still working specific things out, but you can take for granted that physical/social distancing and personal protection will be essential. Buffet-style meals will no longer work. Our retreat offerings will have to be restricted to a lower numbers of participants, at least at first. Thus, early registration will be essential. I recently wrote to the Captains and Co-captains, raising some of these issues. I put the changes in the context of the uncertain road of our times. They will be crucial actors in our way forward.



Covid 19 - Chapel - chair setup 6' apart - 40 chairs

After much work by Fiona and others, the new Retreat Season Schedule for 2020/2021 has been posted on our website – manresa-canada.ca – and you can now register online, by e-mail or phone. But remember – numbers will be lower at first, so you will be wise to register early.

We have been fortunate to have the expert care of Mr. Cees Braamse with our grounds. His care for this sacred ground is in keeping with the best of our history on this land. He seems to have been a quick study in understanding our priorities.



Photo by Brother Bob

As usual, Fr. Philip Shano offers a piece to nourish your souls at this point. He offers a few reflections on listening to the gentle voice of God.

The Manresa community remains in my prayer each day. Stay safe and healthy. God bless! I look forward to welcoming you this fall.

Fr. Henk

UPCOMING RETREATS

All retreats are a suggested offering of \$ 225.00. You may now register online at: manresa-canada.ca or email: registration@manresa.ca or call us at 905-839-2864.

September 25 at 7:00 p.m. till September 27 at 1:00 p.m. “Let’s start at the very beginning.”
-- Facilitated by Fr. Michael Coutts, S.J.

MEN AND WOMEN IGNATIAN - The Church in the time of the Apostles was a community of believers who (1) met together to pray. (2) Broke bread together i.e. celebrated the Eucharist (3) Held things in common so that no one was in need. How could our church be described pre-Virus days and today? Remember, we are not out of the woods yet. The Church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ the Lord. How have we experienced this during the Lockdown?

October 2 at 7:00 p.m. till October 4 at 1:00 p.m. Spirituality of the 12 Step for those in Alcoholics Anonymous. -- Facilitated by Rev. John Whittall

MEN 12 STEP - Come and join us for a journey that will take you through the 12 Steps of recovery allowing you to strengthen a deeper spirituality within yourself. This retreat tends to be ecumenical with many non-Catholics in attendance. This is truly a spiritual approach for everyone.

October 5 at 7:00 p.m. till October 7 at 1:00 p.m. Spirituality of the 12 Step for those in Alcoholics Anonymous -- Facilitated by Fr. Bill Riegel

MEN 12 STEP (Midweek) - Come and join us for a journey that will take you through the 12 Steps of recovery allowing you to strengthen a deeper spirituality within yourself. This retreat tends to be ecumenical with many non-Catholics in attendance. This is truly a spiritual approach for everyone.

October 9 at 7:00 p.m. till October 11 at 1:00 p.m. Spirituality of the 12 Step for those in Alcoholics Anonymous -- Facilitated by Fr. Joe Redican

WOMEN 12 STEP - Spirituality of the 12 Step for those in Alcoholics Anonymous. Come and join us for a journey that will take you through the 12 Steps of recovery allowing you to strengthen a deeper spirituality within yourself. This retreat tends to be ecumenical with many non-Catholics in attendance. This is truly a spiritual approach for everyone.

October 16 at 7:00 p.m. till October 18 at 1:00 p.m. "Understanding and Praying with The Mystics." -- Facilitated by Fr. Henk van Meijel, S.J.

MEN IGNATIAN – The word mystic calls up images of someone whose prayer life is out of our reach, although there were mystics who could levitate, bilocate, or had some other unique God-given gift, most mystics however, were persons like you and me who just had a deep desire to grow in a closer union with God and were persons who gradually grow into a deep reflective life; a life of prayer and discernment in everyday life.

Initially we will remove some of the mystique from mysticism whereupon we focus on the life and writings of three well known mystical writers: Thomas Kempis, Theresa of Avila, and John Nicolas Grou who each were products of their own time and culture.

This retreat hopefully will lead the retreatants to a greater understanding of their own ever evolving prayer life and relationship with God along their individual earthly journey.

October 23 at 7:00 p.m. till October 25 at 1:00 p.m. "Witnessing the Beatitudes Around Us." -- Facilitated by Fr. Trevor Scott, S.J.

WOMEN IGNATIAN – With so much animosity and tension all around us perhaps it would be good to be reminded of the gentle spirit of the Beatitudes... that there are people like this still around us to prayerful learn and gain spiritual strength from. This would be a multi-sensual retreat... the Beatitudes through film, images, and imaginative writing.

FOOD FOR YOUR SOUL: SUMMER 2020

Who among us will forget the summer of 2020? And now we are planning for fall – whether in schools, parishes, or retreat houses. The scripture at last Sunday's (August 9) Mass are great for thinking of retreat.

The reading from 1 Kings includes the verse that is often offered to retreatants, as they move into the silence and solitude of a retreat. Elijah is in a cave on Horeb, the mountain of God. Those coming on retreat are in their own cave, though one hopes that it is a comfortable room in a retreat house. God was not in any of the dramatic or obvious places – wind, earthquake and fire. God was in the sound of sheer silence, or as some translations have it, the sound of a gentle breeze.

I don't necessarily have to be physically silent to hear that gentle sound of God, though that usually helps. I can hear that voice of God in a noisy situation – on a busy city street or a living room with the TV blaring or in a noisy coffee shop as people chatter and the music plays and the beans are ground and as the door opens and closes.



Belgian Impatience flowers -- Ramp Garden – Brother Paul

The Psalmist expresses an important aspect of hearing the Lord. *Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people.* It is because God's voice can be so silent and gentle that we need to be discerning. First of all, the most important issue to discern is whether it is

God's voice that is speaking. Or, is it the voice of what Ignatius Loyola so fondly refers to as *the enemy of my human nature*? Once I know that what I am hearing or intuiting is the voice of God, I need to ponder what the message to me is saying. That's where a spiritual director or a good listening friend comes in handy. The director or friend won't give the answer about what God is saying – or, at least, they shouldn't offer an answer. That is to interfere with the sacred relationship between the Creator and the creature. The hope is that your listener will help to raise clarifying questions, to help you to discern the voice of God in your own life situation.

Prayer is so important as a tool of that discernment. Jesus himself offers a good example. In today's Gospel from Matthew, the feeding of the crowd is followed by Jesus going up the mountain by himself to pray. Afterward, Jesus is present to the disciples in their fear on the sea. They had already been dealing with the high winds and now they saw Jesus walking towards them on the sea. They thought they were seeing things. Jesus says, *take heart, it is I; do not be afraid*. That is what he is saying to us in our prayer, even if a decision is required from us. Do not be afraid!

That message to resist fear is crucial. How often do we hear the voice of God and want to act on it, but we get cold feet. Peter offers a good illustration. He is fearful, and he falters – isn't he always fearful! – but Jesus keeps calling and calming him. That's our story. We are all Peter. We all know fear. But we also know that still and small and silent voice of God. Let's be attentive for it!

Fr. Philip Shano, S.J.