



JESUIT SPIRITUAL RENEWAL CENTRE IN PICKERING

February 2021

News Letter No. 31

## Greetings From The Director Of Manresa



Dear friends,

It's been a while since you last heard from Manresa. We continue to stay safe during this latest phase of the pandemic. We live in great hope that we will once again be able to open our doors to those who long to benefit from the peace of our retreats and the beauty of the grounds. If you have visited Manresa in the winter, you know that the property has a special beauty after a fresh snowfall. We are in the midst of such a snowfall as I write you. I wish that you could be here to enjoy it, while sitting by a fireplace with a cup of tea.

Let me use this letter to give you a sense of what is happening right now. We start by letting you know about a group of seminarians who were able to transfer their *bubble* from St. Augustine's Seminary to Manresa. We explain that we will be resuming in-person retreats as soon as we are allowed. We are including a note from Mike Hyland, the Chair of our Building Committee. He explains that the committee is working on plans for the new building and the stakeholders committee is laying the groundwork for a capital campaign. Finally, we include a spiritual reflection for the Season of Lent.

The Manresa community remains in my prayer each day, especially at the celebration of the Eucharist. Stay safe and healthy. God bless you and your loved ones! I look forward to welcoming you quite soon.

Fr. Henk



Manresa Labyrinth

## Spiritual Year of St. Augustine's Seminary

We have previously welcomed seminarians from St. Augustine's Seminary, for shorter retreats and parts of their formation program. Despite the obstacles of this extraordinary year, we have enjoyed the presence of six young seminarians from January 17 to February 21, 2021.



They are participants in the Spiritual Year, which is a nine-month spiritual formation period before philosophy or theology studies resume for their preparation for ordained ministry. The period they were able to stay at Manresa Manor included the 30-day Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius. Fr. Philip Shano, of our staff, is a seasoned spiritual direction of young people in formation. Five seminarians were from the Archdiocese of Toronto and one from Kingston.

They had two complementary sets of safety measures, those from the Seminary and those from Manresa. Most of the six were in their early 20s. So, despite the new protocols, there was plenty of energy on the grounds. They even build an ice rink down on the creek.



## Retreats Coming Soon

### **EIGHT-DAY INDIVIDUALLY DIRECTED RETREATS**

**July 22 - 30, 2021      and      August 3 - 11, 2021**

The pandemic has limited the possibilities for in-person retreats. Most have been virtual.

Click the following link for a Virtual retreat: <https://manresa-canada.ca/virtual/>

Manresa is pleased to offer two in-person eight-day directed retreats this summer. We ensure a safe environment with a limited number of participants.

An individually directed retreat offers participants a silent and peaceful environment for eight days. You will benefit from all the usual Manresa amenities: silence, a private room, three meals a day, daily celebration of the Eucharist, and access to the grounds at their summer best. This retreat offers you a daily interview with an experienced spiritual director. That person serves as a guide, helping you and God to engage with each other. Otherwise, there are no group activities. Space is very limited, so you would be wise to sign up early.

For more information, please visit our website at: <https://manresa-canada.ca/>

For the immediate future though, we will resume retreats as soon as restrictions are eased a little. Meanwhile, we have some virtual retreats available on our website.

We assure you that our limited experience this past year is showing us that our safety measures are working. The retreats have gone well and show that the hard work of our staff paid off. People occasionally tell us that they come here with safety worries, but they end up feeling safe and cared for. You will receive the complete list of measures when you come for a retreat. You can find them on our website if you prefer to check them out ahead of time.

## Planning for a New Building

Good news! Despite Covid 19 restrictions, plans to replace our aging facility continue! Dedicated and hard-working members of the Building Committee meet regularly on Zoom to discuss strategies, explore new ideas and make concrete plans. Leaders of our construction sub-committee continue to engage with the City of Pickering, conservation authorities and various consultants. Our Stakeholders and Capital Campaign sub-committee is busily creating strategies to make fundraising both successful and fun. And finally, we are creating a new website to share the plans and progress of our new building. We are hoping that this new website will be “live” sometime this summer.

At this time we ask for your prayers. May God bless our work, and indeed all of you who are connected to this wonderful, spiritual home we call Manresa.

Mike Hyland

## Food for your Soul: Ash Wednesday and the Start of Lent

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday liturgies are among the most attended celebrations in the Church calendar. That shows how much Catholics gravitate to both days, with their stark and simple beauty and the ashes on our foreheads and Good Friday's veneration of the cross. Both days remind us of our mortality and the reality of suffering in every human life. The ashes that are placed on our foreheads are a celebration and reminder of our finality, and a sign of mourning and repentance to God. One of the formulae that the priest may use as he places the ashes on our foreheads is from the Book of Genesis: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Our human mortality is the great equalizer for all of us, regardless of talent or looks or possessions or superiority. It doesn't matter who you are or how much wealth, intelligence or power you have, death will eventually come to all of us. What is to be gained by having a building named after you? Does that impressive tombstone help you to stay alive for a few more years? Will that Order of Canada pin extend your life?

I have had two assignments to our Jesuit community here in Pickering. I'm in a house just a stone's throw from the infirmary, where permanent residents will eventually die. I've watched simple Brothers who did physical labour all their active life and I have watched astoundingly intellectual Jesuits whose bookshelves included the books they authored or edited or translated. I've watched *company men* and misfits. All died! There was no escape. The ashes on our foreheads remind us of that.

There are people who do all they can to prolong their lives, to look younger, or even try to avoid death. It hasn't worked yet! Elon Musk (currently the richest person on the planet) will die. He may try to find a way to *cure* death. It won't work! Given that we will eventually die, it becomes important to ask how we will live. There are people who try to live each day as if it will be their final day on earth. There are even monks who sleep each night in a coffin, to serve precisely as a reminder of the reality of death. Yes, some vampires sleep in coffins as well, but that's a different story.

We don't have to do that, but it's not a bad idea to live each day as if it's our final day. What would I choose to do? What would my attitude be? How would I treat my family, friends, co-workers and strangers? Would my priorities be different than usual? What fights would I choose to avoid? I'd say that it's not a bad practice to use this Lent to live each day as if it's the last day we have on earth. Let's draw strength from this reminder from Dorothy Day. "We must live this life now. Death changes nothing. If we do not learn to enjoy God now we never will. If we do not learn to praise Him and rejoice in Him now, we never will."

Philip Shano, S.J.