



Mary, Mother of God School

25th Anniversary

2017-2018

Dear friends,

Mary, Mother of God School is 25 years old! To us who have watched it grow, then gently glow in its motley Toronto neighbourhood, it is a miracle. We should probably have expected this miracle all along, since this school is the product of selfless dedication to God's call, and God is known for operating in mysterious ways. Time after time, desperately needed help has come to Mary, Mother of God School at crucial moments, from financial support, to finding rental space, to filling staffing needs, to emergency help with the physical plant, etc., etc.

So, quixotic as the whole project might have seemed at first, this little oasis of faith, hope, and love has thrived for twenty five years in the midst of a world in turmoil. It stands visible and tangible, a small sacramental sign that, indeed, everything is possible with God; that He is among us when two or three assemble in His name. And there is more: people today increasingly thirst for community and seek for it feverishly in a virtual world where they can only reach its abstract shadow. Mary, Mother of God School is real, not virtual. Canada needs communities like ours to be tangibly present in its midst, not just for religious reasons, but for societal reasons as well: as a reminder that real communities can still be built today; that they provide young and old with the most fertile ground in which to become full persons. When the Roman empire collapsed, tiny monasteries multiplied and kept civilization alive in the West. As the familiar world order wobbles, it is our turn to create safe areas where new patterns of community can be built.

It does take a village to raise a child. Mary, Mother of God School is precisely such a village, and we need many more in North America. The imagination, cooperation, determination of this community have transformed its strange yet lovable building into the most attractive space for early child formation. Every time I have a chance to watch a group of primary kids at work or play there, I feel a pang of regret: I so wish my first great-grandchild could have been launched into life at this school, avoiding the bullying that

turned him too into a bully for a while, and learning from the start that one need not fight to 'belong', that one is wanted and loved by the group.

What is true of children applies equally to their parents: it takes active participation in communities to thrive. Outside of true communities, values evaporate. This school draws parents and teachers together, and this close interaction surrounds the children with a 'cloud of witnesses' who support implicitly the ideals their elders wish to inculcate. It works. Twice a week, after I teach, I watch these high school students argue fiercely about topics encountered previously in Literature class. Here, neither fear nor shame nor political correctness stops a kid from stating publicly his or her stand on life issues that matter. How vital this is for adolescents who must learn to grapple with difficult questions as they get ready to tackle the world!

This is why I am grateful to share in this hard-earned community; it is my small contribution to Canada's future; it makes me feel useful; it has been a source of warm friendships and exciting dialogue; and I truly enjoy helping launch our message-in-a-bottle on this stormy sea. Mother Teresa began by picking up one leper; let us hope that our small 'start-up' helps strengthen a new trend: finding partners with whom to tackle creatively a vital need that society no longer fills.

And let us not forget, as we commit again this year to this school—our common creation, our stake in the future—that while we give our good will and our money, there are those who are giving their whole lives—up to 25 years of it already, in fact. This has meant not just exhausting work, but the courage to take on tremendous risk: what will happen when they have to retire? This is not just their problem; we have somehow to make it ours, and address it. Even in this regard, your financial contributions, your time, and your prayers are a tangible reminder, a sign visible to one and all, both within and without, of what community is all about; of what it takes to foster it.

As we celebrate this 25th year, please consider how you can help sustain this little oasis and be part of the ongoing miracle that is Mary, Mother of God School.

Sincerely,

Janine Langan

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