



CANOSSIAN COLLEGES ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



6071 Christina Road, Richmond, B.C. V7C 2P7

Website : www.canossialumnae.org

e-mail: Canossian.alumnae@gmail.com

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"Education is the moulding of the heart. In order to pursue such an aim, it is necessary to use kindness with one, firmness another, to reason with the third."

Address by Sister Cecilia Cham, Spiritual Director

Dear Alumnae,

This year, the world was struck with natural disasters, such as Katrina in New Orleans, earthquake in Pakistan. Many lives were lost, homes were ruined and businesses were put to a stand still.

We often wonder, in the comfort of our own homes, why would God allow such disasters to happen? If God is almighty and forgiving, why can't He stop them?

The BIG question is: DOES GOD LOVE US?

It is easy, of course, to be aware of God's love when all is well, when we feel richly blessed, when our lives are filled with happiness and joy.

The real test, however, comes in the painful and negative experiences; when the lights go out; when we feel lost and abandoned; when we look into a dark hole and see no way out and when we feel life is not worth living.

For some of us, the journey has been long and difficult. Maybe we have lost a loved one; maybe our dream could not be realized; maybe we are struck with serious illnesses. We felt so alone.

Jesus is closer to you than you have ever dreamed.

The tender loving God is always tapping at the door of our hearts, waiting to be invited in. "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you." "I will be with you always."

If we are to experience ourselves as God's beloved sons and daughters, then we need to open to God's presence in all our experiences, because only then are we able to embrace God and allow ourselves to be embraced by God in both our successes and failures of life. Mother Teresa once said, "We are called, not to succeed, but to faithfulness."

A great twentieth century theologian, Karl Rahner, wrote that faith itself has not changed but the world around it has changed

drastically. Bernad Lonergan, a Canadian theologian, held that there was not so much a crisis of faith as a crisis of culture.

What these learned men are saying is that faith is in trouble because our minds and attitudes are shaped by the everyday culture surrounding us. The everyday culture is like an ocean and we are like the fish in the ocean.

Faith helps us to know who we are. We are children of God. Once we have been raised to that dignity, there is no other way to live than to live as children of God.

Faith is a way of life. It is a commitment. It has to be lived.

Life is good, life is a joy, life is a gift. Life is to be embraced and celebrated. When Jesus said, "I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly." He was affirming life as a gift to be celebrated, cherished and embraced.

It is more important in these difficult times that we shall not lose our faith. That no matter what changes are happening around us, we shall always remember that God is always within us, the He loves us and cherishes us.

On a happier note, the pilgrimage trips we took in the spring this year were very successful. We were able to visit the burial ground of the late Pope and to see the new Pope. We brought back with us happy and treasured memories. I hope that similar trips may be organized again so that more members can participate. I can assure you that these memories will be treasured by you for a long time to come.

May I wish all of you, your family and your friends, a very happy and joyous Christmas and may the New Year bestow upon you and your family best wishes and happiness.

Sister Cecilia Cham,
Spiritual Director
CCAA
December 2005

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT
Teresa Au, SMCC

Dear Fellow Alumnae,

It has been 18 years since CCAA's inauguration and the association has thrived, with a steady rise of membership and attendance at various functions.

The year 2005 has not been without tragedies, with hurricanes and earthquakes killing thousands of people. We should all count our blessings and thank God for protecting us and our loved ones. In the midst of our good fortune, we should take some time to think about the less fortunate. This year we are raising fund for the needy Canossian Sisters in Europe. I sincerely hope that you will show your support to the Association and be generous towards this cause.

On another note, we are looking into means of getting new members, especially the younger ones. This is still in its infancy, but there is a plan of connecting with our Alma Mater, and offering mentorship to our young graduates who are planning to come to British Columbia to continue their education. These young graduates are none other than our potential members.

There has also been communications with our sister alumnae associations in Toronto. Each of the associations has offered hospitality to our members. If you are visiting Toronto, please contact any of our board members and we will get you connected.

Our Special Interest Groups are going strong. The Educational Group organised a seminar on Foot Health which was very well attended. The Recreational Group will be doing a demonstration on making Pork Jerky in early 2006. The Caring Group has been making visits to our members who are sick and unwell; and phoning the more senior members who are too fragile to attend our functions. The Spiritual Group has been holding its monthly meetings, exploring the ways to grow spiritually.

An association can only thrive with the full support of its members. Therefore, your support is imperative. Our Lenten Retreat will be held on March 4th, 2006, with Father Paul Curtin as the Spiritual Director. Please keep that day open and more information will be sent later.

Finally, on behalf of the Board members I would like to wish you all a merry Christmas and a prosperous new year.

CCAA 2005 - 2006

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A DAY OF RECOLLECTION

Linda Fung, SHCC Macau

As the deer pant for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. - Psalm 42:1



To quench our spiritual thirst, over 30 CCAA members, friends and families panted for streams of water, like the deer in Psalm 42, on March 19 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish. This traditional yearly retreat was conducted by Rev. Fr. Paul Curtin. Fr. Paul is a Redemptorist who lived in the desert in Arizona, directing a house of prayer. The emphasis of that apostolate was silence, contemplative prayer and solitude. His serene approach and occasional chanting made the day restful and refreshing.

The retreat was entitled “Sabbath and the Sanctification of Everyday Living”. Fr. Paul shared songs and writings with us by various saints, philosophers and thinkers, both ancient and modern. Roaming the world with these spiritual giants was a sheer joy. Father also emphasized the importance of Sabbath as a holy day to care for the soul, to encounter Christ, to rest and to take delight in the Lord.

As he said “the soul without Sabbath is an agitated soul”. Many of us found it challenging to observe Sabbath physically in the 21st Century the way Father described. Much of our shopping, dining out, socializing, house cleaning and laundry are carried out on Sundays. To imagine not having to do any of these is a treat in itself, if not impossible! According to Fr. Paul, another reason to observe the Sabbath is a societal obligation. If fewer consumers chose not to shop or dine out, those poor workers could stay home with the family and observe the Sabbath. One cannot stop wondering how economists and capitalists would think of this. But if we tried to organize our lives deliberately, it might be achievable, even just occasionally. I managed to have the luxury of being able to enjoy reading a few Scriptures, sipping my tea, quenching both my spiritual and physical thirst on some Sabbaths!

If you had missed this year’s retreat and would like to have your soul quenched, or if you wish to get ready for the next Lent and Passover, come join us on March 4, 9:00 am – 2:30 pm. What better way to spend a few hours than with old classmates and the Lord? Everyone is welcome and it is free. For more information please contact Amy Ngan at 604-338-4999.

2005 SUMMER GETAWAY Magdalene Cheng, SHCC

The sky was clear and the air crisp on August 13th when CCAA members went on our annual summer outing. Destination was Seattle with highlights at the Premium Outlet, a tour of St. James Cathedral, and the Hiram Chittenden Locks. No wonder the response was overwhelming and all 52 spaces were taken up in no time.

In the hubbub of saying hello and complementing each other’s outfit for the day, we found out that one member had gotten the time wrong and was still at home when Teresa Au phoned her 15 minutes before the bus was scheduled to arrive. Call it luck or the power of prayer, she came in the nick of time as Sister Cham finished saying grace and the bus was ready to pull out.

The seating arrangement on the bus deserves some mentioning. Even though those sitting at the very back have the convenience of nearer proximity to the bathroom, yet they also have the risk of closer exposure to its “aroma” when overused. It was therefore subtly suggested that it be used only on an emergency basis. However, as we were stuck at the border for 45 minutes, nature started to call and traffic towards the bathroom began to get heavy. Those sitting at the back, including myself were trying not to look too worried. Another thing is that due to the operation of the air conditioning system on the bus, it is much cooler at the back. In fact, it was like sitting in a refrigerator after a while. Meanwhile, the sun was shining bright and hot outside.



Several other fully packed tour buses were already ahead of us at the border and post 9/11 security procedure is supposed to have travelers leaving the bus and going into the office for individual clearance check. One look at our CCAA members and the US Immigration staff decided to come on board and give us a quick passport check instead. It is just common sense that no terrorist would make arrangement to visit a Cathedral on a day trip. It also saved us probably 45 minutes and the overflow of the toilet.

About 10 “shopaholics” were let loose at the Premium Outlet, while the rest continued on our trip, after making a quick stopover to answer the call of nature.

We were pressed for time the whole day. With traffic jam, and some difficulty in finding our way around the city, we had very little time to really appreciate the spectacular structure of St. James Cathedral, and the operation of the Locke. But we definitely took some very good pictures.

Time management was the essence back at the Premium Outlet. We had about an hour of shopping time, thanks to our tour guide and driver who had agreed to work overtime. Well, for the female species, there is never enough time to shop or window shop. Luckily everyone showed up on the bus, a few albeit a little late. Some vowed to return in the near future to shop till they drop.

It was a wonderful day despite some hiccups. Many thanks to our past President, Janny, and many others who helped to organize and make this trip a success.

PILGRIMAGE TO ITALY AND
FRANCE MAY, 2005
HIGHLIGHTS AND REFLECTIONS

RESELA WONG-SING, SMCC



The sun had already been shining on the early morning of May 2nd, 2005 when we gathered at the Vancouver International Airport. Sense of excitement and anticipation was palpable from all 39 of us. Our faces reflected the brightness of the sunshine outside. We acquainted with each other while lining up. There was much laughter and bantering. This forebodes the camaraderie of the group and the promise of a wonderful trip. After a short stopover in Toronto we landed in Rome the next morning. Our 40th member from Hong Kong joined us there.

Our first stop was Vatican City. We had a whirlwind tour of St. Peter's Basilica, the underground grotto and the Sistine Chapel. We were all in awe of the splendour of our Mother Church. It was breathtaking seeing the grandeur of the architecture, the paintings and the sculptures! We were speechless marvelling at the wonders of Catholic culture with her inspired sacred art. There seemed to be thousands of tourists jostling for the best vantage point. Sr. Cecilia led us to a souvenir shop on a side street where we shopped to frenzy. We all wanted to take home a piece of memento of the Vatican.

The much-anticipated highlight came the next day: audience with our new pontiff, Pope Benedict XVI. This was the second general audience since installation. Thanks to Msgr. Gregory Smith, our connection in Rome, we were able to secure tickets for the audience. Msgr. Smith also reserved a private chapel in the underground grotto of St. Peter's to celebrate Mass with us early in the same morning. It was indeed once in a lifetime experience! It was difficult to imagine St. Peter's as such a tranquil place without the tourists. Just as Msgr. Smith promised that the time to pray and enjoy the beauty of the Basilica was early in the morning before the

crowd arrived. Msgr. Smith sent us on our tour with a befitting homily of living our lives as Canossian girls. He also praised our singing as well taught by the sisters while we all sang our hearts out. After paying one more visit to the crypt of Pope John Paul II, we came out with a glow on our faces. It was an indescribable sense of joy and peace.

The crowd at St. Peter's Square was patiently waiting in the sun. The school children from all over Italy chanted, "Benedito! Benedito!" Clapping and cheering erupted when Pope Benedict XVI appeared. It was electrifying! The Holy Father continued the Catechesis on the Psalms and Canticles of Vespers, using the texts prepared by pope John Paul II. The text selected was Psalm 121 [120], one of the "songs of ascents" sung by pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. This Psalm shows God "as the ever vigilant, attentive and concerned guardian", who keeps watch over his people to protect them from every evil. Indeed He was ever vigilant and guarded us from evil on this trip.

Our excitement escalated with our next destination: Canossian Headquarters near Rome. Sr. Esme headed the welcoming party. It felt like homecoming, like married daughters returning to their parents' house. We also visited the Canossian Institute and the chapel where St. Bakhita was baptised in Venice. We then proceeded to the convent in Schio where St. Bakhita lived and worked for the rest of her life. We learned of St. Bakhita's life as a young girl in Sudan, was abducted and sold as slave to various households. She never despaired under torture and abuse. She came to know God when she was brought to Italy and fought to remain there. She took her vow with the Canossian sisters thus began her lifelong dedication to serve God.

(To be continued on page 5...)

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The primary purpose of this trip was to visit Verona where St. Magdalene of Canossa lived and worked. We attended Mass at the Mother House and had a tour of the castle where she grew up. St. Magdalene renounced her title of Contessa and worldly possessions and dedicated her life to serve God. She then founded the Canossian Order, which branches out globally. The Canossian sisters are renowned in their apostolic work: worldwide missionary work of educating the young and administering to the elderly, the sick and the homeless. We felt fortunate to be under their tutelage in our formative years; at the same time we felt a touch of sadness to see the present state of the convents.

These two Canossian saints inspire us. They came from vastly different background, were called by God and answered with dedication and humility. They achieved sainthood by being ordinary faithful servant of God, “to be set apart from the world, but not out of the world” (Bishop R. Gagnon, Retreat, 2004).

Our last but not least pilgrimage site was Lourdes. It was an experience of spiritual renewal attending the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, the Mass, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Way of the Cross - one and a half hour up the hill! the candlelight procession praying the Rosary in various languages, and bathing in the water from the stream which St. Bernadette dug up as instructed by Our Lady. It is beyond human comprehension that the water is wet but the body is dry when emerging from the water. Our Faith is certainly being tested there. There were pilgrims from all over the world.

We went there of one mind, to pray, make our devotions and ask for blessings. Our luggage was much heavier with the many bottles of holy water we acquired.

We visited St. Bernadette’s incorrupt body in Nevers, France. My heart leapt when I saw her lying there in peace and serenity, her face showing celestial beauty. She was the peasant girl chosen to bear the message because of her faith and simplicity.

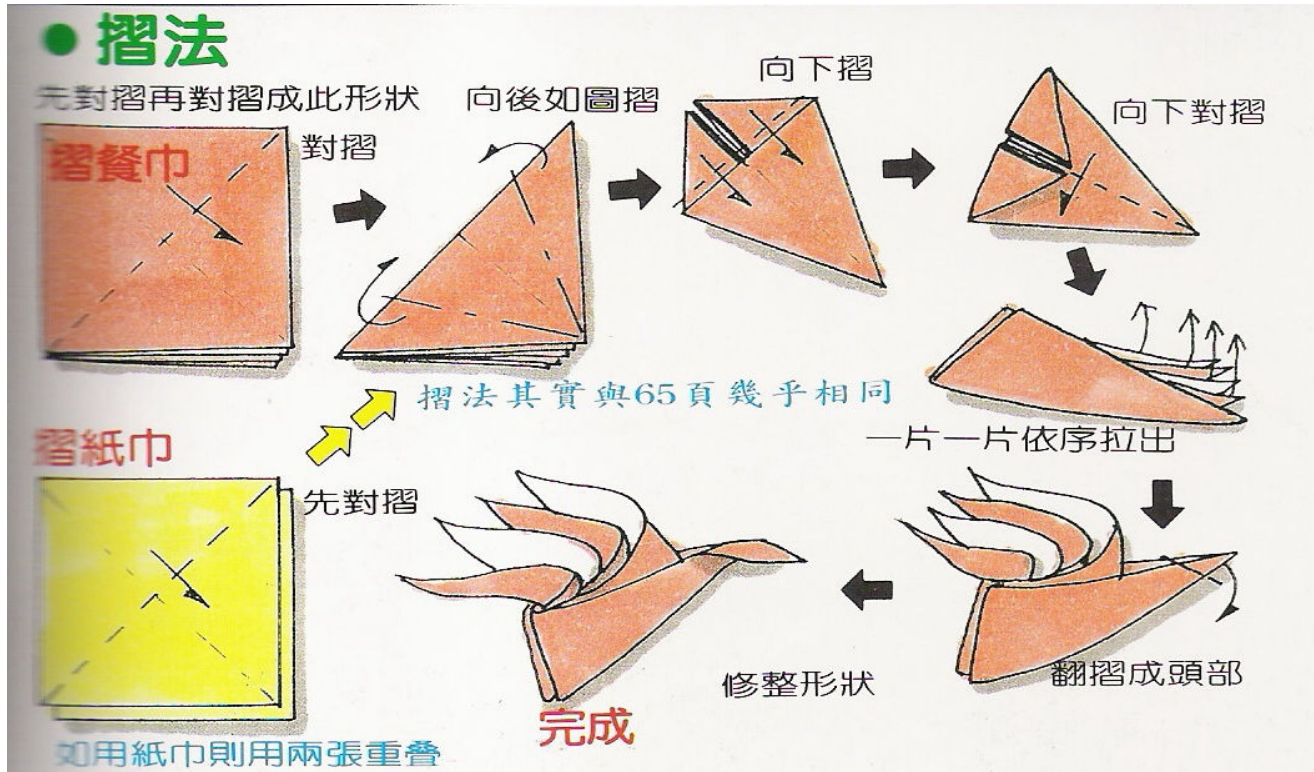
It was general consensus that we were truly blessed to have this awesome spiritual experience. Indeed God was ever vigilant in guarding us all the way. We were spared major calamity. Our faith was renewed and strengthened and friendship was developed. We came home filled with the Holy Spirit, ready to spread the Word.



Canossian Motherhouse Chape



INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE NAPKIN FOLDING GAME



A chance to bond with our little sisters is in the works!! By Gigi Lau, SFCC

Many of us have been out of school for a long time and have not been back for awhile. Do you wonder what the latest gossip in your school is? Do you ever want to talk to your little sisters who are still in high school?

An idea has been proposed for any interested members to mentor students who are still studying in Canossian schools. Mentoring is a fabulous way for students to gain insight on post-secondary choices, and to find out how to achieve their career goals. Mentor and mentee will be paired according to the mentee's field of interest, and the mentor's field of study and occupation. Mentee will therefore be given the latest news on what is going on in the field, so when they do enter that field of study, they are better prepared.

Since all our members are overseas, mentors can also provide mentees with information about studying abroad, and general information about Vancouver through e-mail or online messaging. This first-hand information is very valuable to those who are coming to Canada for the first time, and are not familiar with the environment here.

Speaking from personal experience, I finished F.5 in St. Francis' Canossian College and came to Canada to continue Grade 12. I was so overwhelmed with information about university admissions when I arrived, because I was unfamiliar with the education system and had trouble understanding what was going on. Chatting with a few other friends who had similar experience, they all agreed that if they had someone who prepared them for what was to come, it would have made their transition easier and smoother.

This would be a perfect chance to help our little sisters out and for us to find out what's new at our Alma Mater.

Currently this idea is still in the works, but we'll keep you posted!