

Chapter 11: The Canadian Story in Our Province

The Story Thus Far

In Chapter 1's large-scale overview of the Province, we saw that by 1955 the number of tertiaries gathering in three different provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario) had sufficient numbers to begin creating Canadian Fellowships. By 1995, British Columbia and Ontario were among the top 5% concentrations of tertiaries in the whole Province.

In Chapter 4 on John Scott's era, there was the heroic story of Hugo Muller's work with the Inland Cree of Northern Quebec in their fight against the James Bay Hydroelectric Project, and the books of poems and essays that he wrote. Chapter 4 also observed that in 1975, the first Provincial Convocation was held in Racine, Wisconsin, and it focused on a discussion of three position papers by E. Will Drake, Judith Robinson, and Michael Hollingshead. E. Will Drake has been professed for 45 years, and is the longest professed member in Canada. His paper in 1975 may, in fact, be the first presentation by a Canadian at any TSSF meeting. When Drake wrote his paper, he was working as a social worker for the Canadian Government in the Northwest Territories. (See Chapter 4 for a complete presentation of his paper.)

Moreover, in the last chapter on the evolution of JPIC, we read of tertiary Bishop Mark MacDonald's appointment by the Anglican Church in Canada to be the bishop to all indigenous peoples of the country, and his participation in the 2013 Provincial Convocation.

In March of 2014, the Canadian House of Bishops called the first meeting of all monastic communities in Canada. Diane Jones, a member of Chapter, and Frank Jones, Vocations Coordinator for the Province, were invited to attend along with 11 other monastic communities, including:

- The Worker Sisters of the Holy Spirit
- Community of the Sisters of the Church
- The Jeremiah Community
- The Sisterhood of St. John the Divine
- The Order of the Holy Cross
- Oratory of the Good Shepherd
- The Emmaus Community
- Contemplative Fire
- Threshold Ministries
- The Society of Our Lady Saint Mary
- Holy Cross Priory.

Thus by 2014, TSSF in Canada was recognized as one of the 12 monastic communities of Canada by their House of Bishops.

Canadians on Chapter

In 1986, Ewan Macpherson, editor of *Caritas* (newsletter for Franciscans in Eastern Canada), a member of the Toronto Fellowship, and Area Chaplain, was elected as the first Canadian member of Chapter, but took a parish in the UK and left the Province before he could serve.

In 1989, the next round of Chapter elections, Ewan's successor as Convener of the Toronto Fellowship, Warren Beal, was elected to Chapter. However, before he took his place on Chapter, he asked to be released from vows.



Diana Finch

In 1990, Ruth Duncan of Ontario was appointed to join Chapter with voice and vote, and, subsequently, when another elected Chapter member resigned, Ruth was appointed to fill that member's term, becoming the first Canadian to be part of the elected Chapter. Previously, Muriel Adey, also a Canadian, was an ex-officio member of Chapter when she was Women's Formation Director at the end of John Scott's era and was later elected to Chapter in 1998.

In 2001 Diana Finch, Fellowship Convener of the Little Sparrow Fellowship (Eastern Canada), was elected to Chapter to be succeeded by Lyndon Hutchinson-Hounsell in 2004



Lyndon Hutchinson-Hounsell



Diane Jones



Frank Jones



Canadian House of Bishops invited all Canadian Christian Communities to come together for the first time—TSSF was well represented by Diane and Frank Jones of Vancouver (first row center).



Muriel Adey and Bro.

Geoffrey, Minister General
(see Chapter 4).

and Marilyn Mincey (British Columbia) in 2010. (Duncan, Finch and Hutchison-Hounsell were all from Ontario Province). In 2010, Marilyn Mincey was appointed to one of the most difficult and time-consuming roles in the Order as the Chair of the 2013 Convocation Committee. (The previous Chapter described the success of this endeavor.)



Marilynn Mincey

Canadian Identity as Tertiaries in the Province

There had always been nationalities other than those of the USA in the Province:

Guyanese, Jamiacians, Trinidadians, English, etc. However, none had ever attempted to create a national identity as a group of members in the Province. Newsletters from London to Trinidad and Jamaica had always focused on the life and consciousness of the Fellowships, and never on a separate national identity.

However, in the Spring of 2000, Lyndon Hutchison-Hounsell initiated the *Franciscans Canada (FC)* newsletter whose function he explained in the first issue:

Over the past couple of years, as I have been in the formation process for the Third Order, I have noticed that there are few scattered Franciscans in Canada. I was thinking that it would be helpful for us to know a little more about each other; that which nurtures our spirit, our ministries, and our dreams and passions. As I have used the Anglican Franciscans Email List I have also noticed that our numerous American sisters and brothers are often discussing national political issues and action that can be taken. For all these reasons, and with the encouragement of two of our sisters, Muriel Adey and Diana Finch, I thought it would be useful to start this newsletter.

Hutchison-Hounsell envisioned a four-fold focus for the newsletter:

First, "People of Francis!" will list key contact people in Canada....Second, "People with Spirit!" will include particularly inspirational prayers or poems or stories that may help to nurture our spirit. ...Thirdly, "People with Work" would include a short article about the work one of us is doing as ministers of Christ following in the footsteps of Francis and Clare. Finally, "People for Justice" would include a short article and information regarding justice issues here in Canada and how we can act and make a difference in our country and in the world.

His newsletter was only published from 2000-06, but it proved so important to the Canadian tertiaries of the Province that Harold MacDonald continued it as a monthly online-only newsletter, *THAW!*, from 2006 to 2008. (Both sets of newsletters have been posted and are downloadable on the TSSF Historical Documents webpage.)

Here are some of the stories collected in *Franciscans Canada*. First, an emigree from the European Province, Muriel Adey. Notice how she experienced the differences between our Province and the European Province:

My "formation" took place in England where we then lived, and where I'd been a Companion for over ten years. It was possible, there, to go to specifically Franciscan retreats, led by one or other of the friars. And for many, it was also possible to visit, or stay, at one or other of the Friaries and take part in the worship there.

"Here and in all your churches throughout the whole world we adore You O Christ, and we bless you, Because by your Cross and Passion You have redeemed the whole world."

These words got ingrained in my being as they were heard in the holy awe of the Friary, and the heightened spiritual awareness of being on retreat. I mourned, on coming to Canada and meeting with North American tertiaries because these words were absent from regular meetings here, even though they are printed on page 59 of our Devotional Companion. I guess because the meetings, or at least the worship part of the meetings, didn't take place in a church.

"May our blessed Lady pray for us, May St. Francis pray for us, May St. Clare pray for us... (and so on).

These words ended the Third Order Office, which also included the prayer above, wherever it was said, and especially when Professions, Renewals and Admissions were part of the Office. Here in North America this prayer is part of the Profession, Renewal and Admission ceremony, so I didn't lose touch with that, except that being an isolated tertiary there weren't many opportunities to be present except for my own Renewal. In those days Holy Communion was mostly in the early morning, even in the Friaries and on retreats, and the previous evening's Compline always ended with the words "Come in the dawning of the day and make thyself known in the breaking of the bread." Wonderful words to end one's day with—looking forward to the next morning's meeting with our Lord! I still say them even though the meeting is no longer at dawn.

When the edition of the Principles which we all now use in North America first came out, I was joyful beyond measure to see Community Obedience there at the front, and to hear that at the International Provincial Third Order Convocation (IPTOC) in 1996 there had been an agreement to use it in all provinces to help bind us all together. This was the first time that I really began to feel at home in the TSSF on this continent! And with the suggested reading from the Principles, Intercession from the Directory, other prayers from the Devotional Companion, it makes a very satisfactory Office in itself in those parts of the Third Order family which aren't

obligated to do an Office according to the Prayer Book. Just as the inclusion of the Community Obedience helped me to really feel at home in this branch of the TSSF after being in Canada for 29 years of profession and serving on Chapter and as Formation Director for part of that time, I hope that others who emigrate here will find it being used, for that would help them also to feel at home (FC, August 2000).

Later Muriel wrote about her experience as an elected member on Chapter:

For the past three years it has been my privilege to be an elected member of the Third Order Chapter - the only elected member from west of the Great Lakes as someone commented, and also the only Canadian to have ever been on Chapter. (I was Formation Director for women from 1974-81, then elected in 1998 for three years.) I was invited to be Celebrant at one of the Eucharists during Chapter—a humbling experience, an Awe-ful one, in the Chapel at Little Portion. Since Chapter had been talking about the variety of people God calls to explore the Third Order way, and how that very variety causes our structures to adapt and change, and since one subject comes up year after year in this regard, that of trying to discern whether a person is cut out to become a professed member of the Third Order SSF, or whether a person would thrive better in another context, I drew on the Theme of the Roses as I had experienced it myself, this time applying it to membership in TSSF, and in a Fellowship.

Supposing a person seems not to fit in with the members of the Fellowship, or with the Principles of the Order—what can the Fellowship, or the Counselor do? The gardener in the meditation first rejected the rose, but when she or he discovered the rose growing better than before, though in another place, cultivated that place and gradually extended the garden to include it, thereby improving the garden greatly. Using one's imagination, I'm sure there are other scenarios, which one can picture. As I continued to reflect, I thought of transplanting the rose back into the formal garden and building a trellis for it, thus increasing the variety there. However; I have to admit that this alternative doesn't appeal to me as much as the one of extending the garden to include it! Of course, we always have to appeal to the examples of Francis and Jesus when the need for discernment arises.

Finally, any professed member can stand for election to Chapter with other professed members proposing and seconding them. The nominating committee does its best to ensure that all areas are represented. For example, though I was the only one elected west of the Great Lakes, there were ex officio people from the Western US. I feel sure that if another Canadian stood for election that person would have a good chance of being elected (FC, Christmas, 2000)!

Ruth Duncan, on the other hand, experienced little spiritual differences between Canadian and American novices:

As a Novice Counselor for TSSF I deal mostly with Franciscans in the United States of America. It wasn't until TSSF Chapter ordered me to become Area Chaplain for Eastern Canada that I got to know more of us here in Canada. There really isn't much difference. They and we have exactly the same problems drawing up and keeping our Rule of Life. I am just like the rest of you with the same problems and no better answers. However, as I struggle to help TSSF novices sort out ways to keep their rule, I am forced to struggle with my own (FC, October 2000).

In June 2006, Harold MacDonald began THAW!, a follow-up to Lyndon Hutchison-Hounsell's *Franciscans Canada*. In *FC*, MacDonald wrote of his Franciscan awakening:

The beginning of my discovery of Francis happened when I was a schoolboy, aged 16. Brother Douglas came from England in 1944 to stay at our school for a time, hoping to find a base for a Franciscan community somewhere on Vancouver Island. His simplicity and refinement touched my being. I have never been far away from Francis since then. In 1975 Frances and I went to Assisi and saw the very places where much of Francis's life happened! We now live on the shore of Lake Winnipeg, overlooking 22 kilometres of water to the other side. Our yard is a sanctuary for birds and flowers in the summer. In the winter, there are birds, which tumble over our feeders, companions in the cold. Our winterized cottage is adorned with a sumptuous view of the lake through large windows, which enhances the simplicity of our home with an elegance not found in the richest residence in Winnipeg (FC, August 2001).

In *THAW!*, here's how MacDonald described his goals in the first issue:

Who we are. "Canadian" means that we will seek symbols, metaphors, for the Franciscan life that come from our experience in this great, northern land. The word "Thaw" is an example. It suggests the physical reality of our Canadian experience. It also suggests the effect of Franciscan life on the soul; or I should say, of the Risen Christ on the Franciscan soul ready and willing to accept Him. "Anglican" means that we will concern ourselves with experience in the Anglican Church of Canada. And "Franciscan" means, well... you know that already. I take "Living with the Principles of the Third Order" as a good basis (Thaw!, June 2006).

In his second issue MacDonald wrote about the isolation of Canadian tertiaries:

Isolation is a fact of life for Canadian Franciscans, too. In only two regions are we numerous enough to have fellowships. The rest of us are scattered singly over hundreds of miles.

What do we mean by "isolation"? What does it feel like? What causes it? How does one cope with isolation? These are both Franciscan and Canadian questions. Your thoughts would be welcome.

It may help to know that "isolation" and "solace" come from the same Latin root. Simply put, isolation is lack of solace, lack of consolation, lack of the normal kinds of kinship and friendship which bring comfort regularly. Even for inner-directed people, solace needs an actual presence, a flesh-and-blood reality. Yet people have endured the lack of normal relationships in the north and came to

value and find solace in the very loneliness of the life. Among those who to value and find solace in the very loneliness of the life in the north were the wives of clergy, Hudson's Bay Company employees and Northwest Mounted Policemen, the northern "Trinity" prior to WWII. They are studied by Barbara Kelcy in her book *Alone in Silence: European Women in the Canadian North before World War II*. We will not be surprised to read that faith carried the women through the trials of northern isolation. Kelcy writes:

"Along with transiency, religious faith was the most constant theme throughout the sources, for all these women, not just the missionaries. It is their Christian faith that stands out above all else. It was their faith that made the experience tolerable, even exciting. Those with a strong faith saw the good in the situation, no matter how difficult it all seemed. Those whose lives are controlled by more secular forces might find such faith incomprehensible, even alarming, and difficult to appreciate that like Inukshuk, this faith was solid and tangible and symbolic of optimism. For them, their God's presence was almost palpable in the northern emptiness. In *North to the Rime-Ringed Sun*, Isobel Hutchison echoed other Arctic writers when she declared:

We are alone in silence here

Here ample footsteps throng

The Peace of God breathes all around,

And fills this place with song.



Archdeacon Harold
Macdonald

I think these women were sustained also by their intellectual interests. They wrote journals and letters. Their minds were inhabited by descriptions, observations, and local knowledge. They kept busy, too, with the daily round. It took a lot of energy to keep up the standard of English social manners. In all their years of northern separation they never changed their recipes!

Those days have long gone. Isolation and the search for solace has taken on new and destructive power in modern times, when the emptiness of the north has been filled with images of consumer overabundance on the TV. One sees and learns to desire conveniences and distractions available in the south. One needs solace. One seeks comfort in commodities easily shipped by air cargo. One loses the ear to hear the peace of God in the land or in the chill night air, or in the shimmering northern lights. "Alone in silence" is a forgotten resource. Then where will we find solace (Thaw!, July 2006)?

Perhaps being a Canadian tertiary is railing about the U.S. president and his stupidities:

GEO-POLITICAL SICKNESS

I have discovered that a prime reason for not feeling well, for feeling a general nausea, is that I am reading the newspapers.

In particular, I have been reading about the President of the United States declaring unequivocally that he wants to initiate World War III.

He is going to bring this about by attacking Iran. My complexion is green.

Nobody else wants this to happen, except Israel. As to the Middle East, there is some doubt whether Israel is supporting the USA in further destruction of the Arab nations or the USA is supporting Israel. It is a moot point who is calling the shots in Washington as everybody knows.

Certainly God does not want this to happen: the bombing of Iran, that is. St. Francis doesn't want this to happen.

Let's take Francis first. Francis was into little things: things of today, things you could reach out and touch, things that were immediate. Like Jesus, Francis was not interested in things several removes away, such as "taking thought for the morrow, what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink and what ye shall put on." George W. Bush, however, and his neo-cons, disdain the present (which they can know) in favour of the future (which they cannot know). And so we read of great plans to destroy 134 (plus or minus) sites of nuclear production in Iran in the days to come; we do not read about conversations today between world leaders and the leaders of the next target of USA military power. That is what is so terribly un-Franciscan about geo-politics right now. It's "Shoot now, talk later."

It is as if the devil is not the once-great archangel, but a little boy, intent on mischief and wanting to do something memorable in the short time still available to him. Even if it's a thing of astonishing stupidity.

Francis would walk across the sand and start a conversation. Francis would speak peace. Unfortunately, George stays in the White House and speaks war.

That's what turns my stomach. It is the lack of common sense and decency in these affairs. One comes to recognize imbecility in one's enemies; it is sickening to find it among one's friends.

As for God, our nausea is nothing compared to God's rage. The Bible knows quite a bit about "wrath" when God is thwarted. Is that what we can expect: God's anger against the USA and Israel? Once the torch bearer for God, but now turned in disobedience?

Could we expect God, therefore, to destroy the USA over the horrors which have been perpetrated or contemplated publicly?

One might say, "Yes." We see that God is already undoing the USA. Think of the truths that were revealed by Katrina. Think of the debt of the world's richest nation. Think of the scorn expressed throughout the world towards a nation that could have been the herald of peace. Think of the persistent hypocrisy over the oft-promised justice for Palestine and the formation of a Palestinian state. Think of 9/11. Think of the fear which awakens many American citizens, think of porous borders and elements of lawlessness in the population. Think of the love of violence displayed from the President down.

But God is not predictable. God changes the divine mind. Nineveh is to be destroyed in the morning but by the evening it has repented and God is merciful. God consults widely. God listens to everyone: people and rulers, victims and criminals. For this reason God is slow to act as decisively as we think advisable, more slowly than, say, George W. Bush. George is a lot faster than God at deciding to drop bombs. When God decides for war, it is because the time for consultation is over and because the injustice of a given situation is unbearable in heaven, and because the toppling of a human warmonger is the only way towards peace and justice. So it was in 1939.

So God is slow to declare war on Iran (or Iraq) and slow to declare war on the USA. God gives both a multitude of signs and those who have eyes may see them and repent.

God cannot be taken for granted. There is no telling what God can and will do. God is sovereign. Therefore be careful, be prayerful; be slow to judge and quick to praise. And to make friends with one's enemies. (Thaw!, November 2007)

(However, if Harold had looked at the website and book, *Sorry, Everybody: An Apology to the World for the Re-Election of George W. Bush* by James Zetlen and Ted Rall (2005), he might find that the sentiment of many Americans was not too far different than that of the Canadians.)

Canadian Poets

Some of Hugo Muller's poems written in response to the plight of the Northern Cree appeared in Chapter 4 on John Scott's era. Harold Macdonald is probably the Canadian with the most poems appearing in the *Franciscan Times*. He retired to the family cottage on the shores of Lake Winnipeg, which he loved, and there his creativity burgeoned through writing, song and poetry. Harold's community continued to grow by way of the internet and included many correspondents, including Bishop Desmond Tutu. Macdonald's dozens of essays, hymns, sermons and poems can still be found on the *Highland Shepherd* website (http://www.msgr.ca/msgr-7/harold_macdonalds%20muse.htm). He died in 2009. Here are three of his poems that most directly focus on Francis.

Simple Francis

Simplicity's a soul undistracted;
all things it knows straight on, a well-coming.
It feels the roughness of the leaf, the humming
bee it hears; opens up if interacted

knows the smoothness of the water's flowing
the touch of wolf: the fur, the ears and eyes;
the call of birds, their lovely songs and cries.
Smell, sight and taste, alert the act of knowing.

Through the senses Francis life encountered,
received with joy that which the senses found
and poverty removed what would confound.
Intense his knowledge, no instant squandered.

With less, the Poverello learned the more
And nature sprang into the human mind
as it is. Itself! After it's own kind!
Discovered in the form that God out-poured.

Look at the creatures of the earth today
their beauty lost to a demonic creed;
no priest to cherish them as God decreed
their mystery, marvel, friendship in decay!

Francis come again! Recover what first you found
Free us from the bonds with which the earth is bound.

With the Leper's Kiss

With the leper's kiss Saint Francis left the world
 it was the wall's small gate to open field
 where sun and breeze see blossoms meekly yield
 and joy waves in the wind, a flag unfurled,
 and in the air the bleat of Christ the Lamb.
 Where death is spring, and all again begun
 the inmost life is bright with morning's Sun,
 where sound the living words, I am, I am!
 Not of the world yet one with all that is
 (more so, than those who wish to leave it not
 content with that which they themselves begot)
 possessing all yet knowing naught is his.
 It is God's goodness fills before and after
 the Poverello heard the sound of laughter.

A Monk at Heart

Watchful, I see the opportunities
 for praise and giving thanks more clearly now;
 to God obeisance, less to neighbours bow;
 more occupied with God's simplicities.
 The Godly vision at the core of me -
 long avoided or ignored - a monk's heart
 beats inside, flooding every other part.
 (Do not clean hearts produce morality?)
 But nothing's sure except for this small thing;
 the time is almost up, the life is past;
 few throws remain, the dice are almost cast
 no resplendent gift now to the party bring.
 I will enjoy the thought of God these final days
 and use what few remain in poetry of praise.