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and in Canada. Founded in Canada in 1918 by Fr.  
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and send missionary priests to China. Forced to leave  
China after the Second World War, Scarboro began  
working in the Caribbean, Asia, and Latin America.

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COVER: Shania is one of 30 children at the Sisters of Charity daycare in New Amsterdam, Guyana. The daycare is an area of volunteer ministry for Scarboro lay missionaries serving in Guyana. Credit: Paulina Gallego

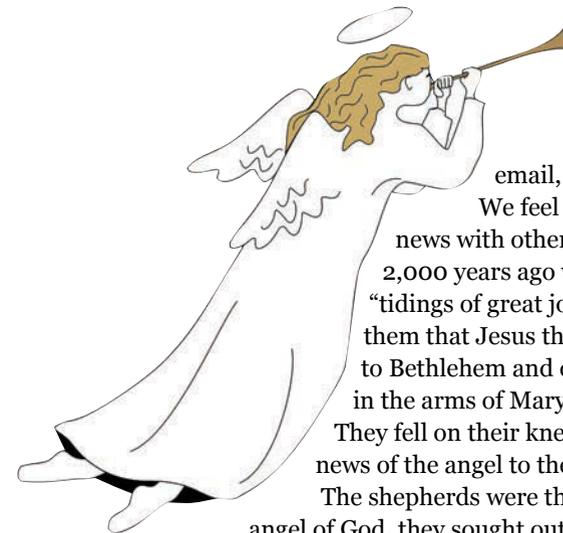


By Fr. Ron MacDonell, S.F.M.  
Vicar General

“...tidings of  
great joy”

*“The angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—  
I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the  
people: to you is born this day in the city of David  
a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord.’”*

(Luke 2:10-11)



We all like to get good news. When we answer the phone or read an email, joyful news makes us come alive. We feel uplifted and desire to share the news with others. This is what happened more than 2,000 years ago when the shepherds received the “tidings of great joy” from the angel of God who told them that Jesus the Christ was born. They hurried off to Bethlehem and discovered the child Jesus cradled in the arms of Mary, under the protection of Joseph. They fell on their knees in adoration and repeated the news of the angel to the astonishment of all. The shepherds were the first missionaries. Sent by the angel of God, they sought out Jesus. The newborn was the Son of God, proclaimed the message of God’s angel. We are called to be like the shepherds, first to listen to the angels who speak in our hearts of God’s presence, second to seek out Jesus, and third to announce to others this amazing Good News: God is in our midst through the person of Jesus.

Scarboro Missions is pleased to present this Vocations issue with stories of missionary witness. All are called to be missionaries in our own families, communities, and parishes. We are called to be missionaries here in Canada, announcing God’s invitation to create a just and peaceful society, to build interreligious dialogue, and to honour the diversity of cultures. Some of us are called to be missionaries overseas, learning from our sisters and brothers, especially those who suffer poverty and persecution, and standing beside them in projects of solidarity.

In this Advent season, we prepare ourselves for celebrating the birth of the Lord at Christmas by prayer and reflection. Let us remember the shepherds. Let us imitate them by bearing the “tidings of great joy” to those around us, announcing that Jesus was born to be our hope, our salvation, and our love.

*“They made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.” (Luke 2:17)∞*



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# Searching for Padre Juan

*A long awaited visit to Bani in the Dominican Republic leads to an encounter with the missionary life of a beloved cousin, Fr. John Robert (Buddy) Smith*

By Jo-Ann Ortega

The Fr. Buddy Smith that I knew was full of life. He would come to our home, often with international friends in tow, looking for a good cup of tea and some old fashioned hospitality. If we were lucky he would let us pile into the car and go on an adventure with him; and it was always an adventure. He would drive all over Antigonish County, Nova Scotia, stopping to visit Smith and MacDonald family members along the way. And maybe we would go strawberry picking too. You never knew where you might end up on a Fr. Buddy adventure.

Almost every summer he came home to Nova Scotia and his visits were often the highlight of the year for my brother Brian and me. As young kids, we found him fascinating. Brian wanted to grow up to become a missionary, traveling the world and helping people in the footsteps of Fr. Bud. I was more of a homebody but as equally awed by the stories—in particular the one about his shoes. The story goes that he arrived home one summer with holes in his shoes and his mother, my mother's Aunt Katherine, bought him a new pair. A year passed and Fr. Buddy returned home again, wearing the same holey shoes from the year before. When asked, he grinned and stated simply that he had met a man with no shoes, so the holes in his hardly seemed a problem.

Fr. Buddy died in 1997 after dedicating his life to Scarboro Missions and to the poor and vulnerable of the world. His last decades were spent in the Dominican Republic. My husband Joan (*pronounced Jo-WAN*) is Dominican



Joan and Jo-Ann Ortega at La Puerta De La Fe (The Door of Faith), a large outdoor church where Fr. Buddy Smith celebrated his final Mass. Bani, Dominican Republic.

from Gaspar Hernandez, a city on the country's north coast. I often told him that I wanted to go to the town of Bani near the south coast to see where Fr. Buddy had lived and worked. That excursion finally happened in the fall of 2013. Joan and I were married in Puerto Plata that October and after a week there we headed out on what we termed "a different kind of honeymoon."

Since Joan's brother-in-law, Freddy Pimentel, is from Bani, he agreed to be our tour guide. Eight of us piled into the car and set out on the 45 minute drive from Santo Domingo. The scen-

ery was incredible, lush with fruit trees, a stunning mountain range covered in tropical greenery, and temperatures that were more bearable than in the city. We stopped for dinner and a rousing game of dominoes at Freddy's mother's house, then on to Salinas Beach, and finally into the heart of Bani in search of Padre Juan Roberto Smith.

We didn't know exactly where we were going and I'm sure my husband and his family thought I was a little bit crazy to expect anyone there to still remember a priest who had passed away almost two decades before. Yet, they humoured me and we drove to the centre of town to the *Catedral Nuestra Senora De Regla* (Cathedral of Our Lady of Regla). Our plan was to talk to the priest at the cathedral to see if he knew of Padre Juan Roberto. We arrived just in time for Friday afternoon Mass and my husband approached a Sister as she hurried inside. She had never heard of Fr. Buddy. He approached a second person, also headed to Mass, and explained that Padre Juan Roberto was his wife's cousin from Canada and we were there visiting, hoping to see where he lived and worked. The man stopped in his tracks. Of course he remembered Padre Juan Roberto Smith!

After embracing both Joan and I, he placed a call on his cell phone and excitedly told the person on the other end that Padre Juan Roberto's cousins were here from Canada. When he ended his call, he asked where our car was parked. Now there were nine of us in the car, driving through winding streets to the Elizabeth Seton Center



Left: Fr. Buddy with members of the parish (circa late 1980s). His friend Victor remembers him as a visionary who was able to see what people needed and to find a way to help them make it happen.

Below: With construction soon to be completed, young people still enjoy the partial basketball court at the *Club Cultural y Deportivo Juan Roberto Smith*, a culture and sports club named for Fr. Buddy and founded in 1995.



Victor Rodriguez, president of the Club Cultural y Deportivo Juan Roberto Smith and a very good friend of Fr. Buddy, shared many stories about his friend.

founded by Sister Catherine McGowan, a Sister of Charity and a friend of Fr. Buddy's. Here we encountered another good friend of Buddy's, Victor Rodriguez, who was genuinely happy to meet us. Dropping everything, Victor regaled us with stories of his own adventures with Padre Juan Roberto. For me, it was quite an emotionally charged experience. All of us were overwhelmed to hear of the incredible work Buddy had done in the area, the effects of which are still being felt today.

Victor took us on a little tour, stopping first at a baseball stadium. He explained that Buddy often marvelled



Victor told us that Buddy's illness was so advanced by the time of his last Mass that it was difficult to understand him, but people came from everywhere just to celebrate with their beloved pastor and friend.

at the many Dominican baseball players making it big in the major leagues, yet there were so few coming from Bani. If the people of Bani had a baseball stadium and a place to practice, the major leagues would find them too. So Buddy managed to secure land and together with the help of already successful Dominican ball players, the stadium was built. Victor told us that many famous baseball players from the area directly credit Padre Juan Roberto with their careers.

Not far from the stadium, we made another stop at *La Puerta De La Fe* (The Door of Faith), a large outdoor

church where Buddy celebrated his final Mass. I wasn't prepared for the emotions I felt, picturing him there among the people he loved. Victor told us that Buddy's illness was so advanced by the time of his last Mass that it was difficult to understand him, but people came from everywhere just to celebrate with their beloved pastor and friend.

We then drove to a large school, the largest in the entire province of Peravia. The school cost more than five million dollars to build and Fr. Buddy had raised the vast majority of that money.

Our final stop was at the *Club*

# WITNESSES POSTERS — SET OF 32!



People in the community poured out of their homes to meet Fr. Buddy's family, sharing stories and photographs of him, even though it had been 16 years since his death. Bani, Dominican Republic.

*Cultural y Deportivo Juan Roberto Smith*, a culture and sports club named for Fr. Buddy and founded in 1995. Victor is the president of the board. The club has half of a basketball court. With monies for the second half now finally secured, construction was expected to get underway the following month. Children and teens were playing on the half court and the sound of laughter filled the air.

Victor continued to share story after story about Fr. Buddy. And then something very surreal happened. As word trickled out that some of Padre Juan Roberto's family were there, people began coming out of their homes, wanting to meet us and to share stories of him and of the positive impact he had on their lives. They also brought their photographs of Fr. Buddy, even

though it had been 16 years since his death.

Waving his hands towards all the houses as far as the eye could see, Victor explained that in 1979 Hurricane David wiped out all the homes in the region. Through Buddy's efforts, the people were able to rebuild.

This visit allowed me to encounter Padre Juan Roberto—the Buddy that we in Canada didn't get to see first hand. Our larger than life cousin was their larger than life hero who stood up to corruption and demanded better of government.

Victor described him as a visionary. He said that Buddy was able to see what people needed and to figure out a way to help them make it happen. He was someone they could count on when they had no one to turn to, some-

one who loved them and who became one of them. And his legacy lives on in the hearts and minds of all who were blessed to know him.

I set out to find the places where Fr. Buddy Smith lived and worked, but what I found was even more spectacular. I found Padre Juan Roberto and my life may never be the same. I know that some year on October 8, on the anniversary of his death, we will return to Bani to be part of the community's annual Mass, celebrating and giving thanks for the life of Scarboro missionary Padre Juan Roberto Smith. ☺

*Jo-Ann Ortega lives in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, the birthplace of Fr. John Robert (Buddy) Smith.*

Witness to determination

“The mission of Christ is worthy of a lifetime.”



Robert (Buddy) Smith, SFM 1933-1997

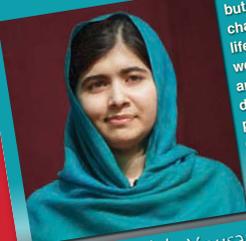
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Witness to education

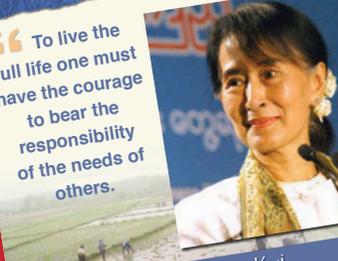
“The terrorists thought they would change my aims and stop my ambitions, but nothing changed in my life except this: weakness, fear, and hopelessness died. Strength, power, and courage was born...”



Malala Yousafzai

Witness to perseverance

“To live the full life one must have the courage to bear the responsibility of the needs of others.”



Aung San Suu Kyi

Witness to the poor

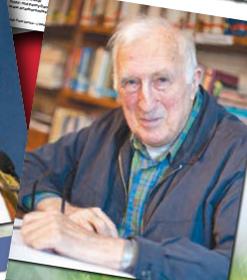
“Poverty in the world is a scandal... Where there is so much wealth, so many resources to feed everyone, it is unfathomable that there are so many hungry children...so many children without an education, so many poor persons.”



Pope Francis

Witness to community

“One of the marvelous things about community is that it enables us to welcome and help people in a way we couldn't as individuals.”



Jean Vanier

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Scarboro Missions is pleased to present its 32 poster set featuring women and men who have been outstanding witnesses to their beliefs and to the dignity of all creation. The set comes with a Teacher/Study Guide with suggested ways to utilize the posters in group settings. An ideal classroom and retreat resource.

### LIST OF WITNESSES:

- Aung San Suu Kyi, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, Rachel Carson, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Dorothy Day, Anne Frank, Mahatma Gandhi, Chief Dan George, Helen Keller, Craig and Marc Kielburger, Wangari Muta Maathai, Elaine MacInnes OLM, Nelson Mandela, Bishop George Marskell SFM, Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Blessed Mother Teresa, Pope Francis, Pope John XXIII, Pope John Paul II, Monsignor Leonidas Proaño and Bishop Samuel Ruiz, Louis Quinn SFM, Archbishop Oscar Romero, Oskar Schindler, Vandana Shiva, Robert (Buddy) Smith SFM, Dorothy Stang SNdeN, David Suzuki, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Jean Vanier, Betty Williams and Mairead Maguire, Malala Yousafzai



By Donna Joy Tai

# Colourful Guyana

*Giving thanks for the beauty and diversity that is Guyana*

After a year of living on the coast of Guyana and yet to visit the fabled interior regions, my experience of Guyana so far has been colourful. In fact, Guyana is a paradox of colourful oxymorons, mores, language, “call names” (nicknames), flora and fauna, geography, weather, houses, history, and religious festivals.

For example, would the nickname “Tiny” conjure up in your mind the very tall, strapping woman to whom it refers? Would you expect hot sunshine at the same time as a down-pour? Would you expect to see a brown muddy ocean (from river sediment) along the coastline of a Caribbean country? When strolling down a straight road without sidewalks, would you understand the warning “Walk in the corner!” to avoid being hit by a vehicle? Would you be surprised by the common sight of mixed marriages of Muslims, Christians, and Hindus? Would you wonder at seeing a mother faithfully going to Mass while her children are being schooled as Muslims like their father? Would you be perplexed at seeing people of all faith traditions celebrating Hindu festivals and holy days?

## Festivals and Feast Days

In March 2013 I arrived in Georgetown, the capital of Guyana,



Children joyfully celebrate Phagwah (Festival of Colours), an annual Hindu festival during which white-clad revellers, kids and adults alike, throw powdered dye or coloured water at each other to celebrate the triumph of good over evil and to welcome the new spring. All photos in this article by Donna Joy Tai and Fr. Michael Traher, SFM.

just before Easter but right on time for Phagwah. At this annual Hindu festival, white-clad revellers, kids and adults alike, throw powdered dye or coloured water at each other to celebrate the triumph of good over evil and to welcome the new spring. It is the Indo-Caribbean version of the very important Hindu Holi festival, the Festival of Colours.

I did not “play” Phagwah last year,

but I threw myself into the melee this year, starting with the boys at the St. John Bosco Orphanage where I volunteer and ending at a cricket field filled with Hindu families and a handful of wanton foreigners like my friend, Juan, a Mercy volunteer from Chicago, and myself. We were thoroughly and gleefully powder-bombed in blue, red, purple, and yellow, and caught up in the exuberance of the crowd.



Left: A Good Friday reenactment of the Passion of Christ.

Below: On Easter Monday Guyanese of all faiths flock outdoors to fly kites that are meant to symbolize Christ’s resurrection and ascension into Heaven. On this day, picnics abound. Scarborough missionary Bev Trach (left) and former lay missionary Miriam Wheeler with Melina and her family. Georgetown, Guyana.



Even President Donald Ramotar was there. Just as everyone is Irish on St. Patrick’s Day, everyone plays Phagwah. This year the festival fell on March 17, St. Patrick’s Day, so I painted green shamrocks on the cheeks of the boys at the orphanage as they threw powder at each other.

Around the same time as Phagwah, the Roman Catholics commemorate Good Friday with a re-enactment of the Passion of Christ through the streets of Georgetown. Last year was a production by the youth of Sacred Heart Parish in full costume with about a hundred faithful following behind the actors under a blazing midday sun.

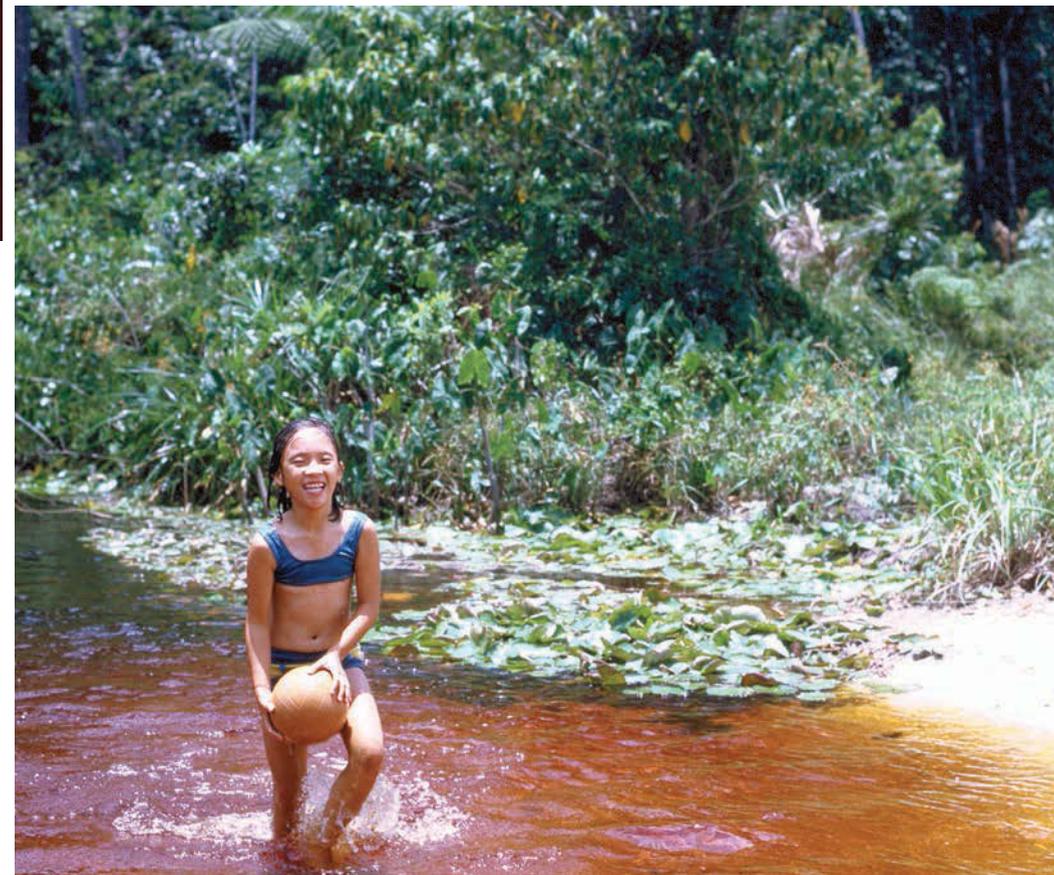
On Easter Monday, Guyanese of all faiths flock outdoors to fly kites of many sizes, colours, shapes, and types on the seawall or in neighbourhood parks. The kites symbolize Christ’s resurrection and ascension into Heaven. This holiday is a vibrant, fun event for the entire family. Every year, our friend, Melina, and her family load up the back of a pickup truck with Guyanese dishes such as cook-up rice, curry, dahl, roti, pholourie, and mithai, along with drinks, blankets, and hammocks, fully prepared to enjoy the activities at the National Park until



Dressed as the goddess Lakshmi on one of the many bright and colourful floats during Diwali, the Hindu Festival of Lights. Georgetown, Guyana.



Scarboro missionary Donna Joy Tai and students at John Bosco Academy don costumes for Mashramani ("Mash"), an annual carnival-style celebration usually held on February 23, the day in 1970 when Guyana became a Republic. Photos at right: Beautiful bougainvillea blossoms in the city of Georgetown. Enjoying the waters of a creek stained dark with tannins leached from the surrounding forests.



sundown.

Emancipation Day, August 1, brings out a proud display of African colours as the Afro-Guyanese commemorate the liberation of their ancestors from slavery. Their African heritage is showcased in drama, song and dance, art and literature, food and drink, and high fashion. Many African queens are seen about town with their kings, princes, and princesses.

One of the biggest splashes of colour comes in early November with the Hindu Festival of Lights, Diwali, featuring a nocturnal motorcade of ornate and brilliantly lit floats winding through Georgetown and up the coastal highway to several villages. Hindu homes and temples (mandirs) are similarly lit up with lights and candles at night.

Let me not forget Mashramani, a festival that coincides with Republic Day, February 23, and is celebrated Trinidad carnival-style with a big parade of elaborately constructed

floats and spectacularly costumed bands of revellers. Mashramani is an Amerindian word that means "the celebration of a job well done." The President, or a delegate, presides over a flag-raising ceremony in Georgetown and in each of the 10 regions of the country to commemorate the founding of the Republic on this date in 1970. This simple act, usually followed by a reception, has since been overshadowed by the grandiose parade and weeklong partying—the "frolic and fun," as described in a *Guyana Chronicle* newspaper article.

This year the theme for Mashramani (referred to as "Mash") was *Cultural Folklore: Celebrating 44* in recognition of the nation's 44th anniversary. The various bands and floats competed for best costume design, originality, and other criteria, while passing a number of judging stations en route to the National Park. Leading up to parade day, there were also country-wide cultural competitions for best

new festival song, dance choreography, drama, poetry, and steel pan orchestra. All facets of Guyanese culture were encouraged and showcased, especially among students in all the schools.

We held our own "mini-Mash" at John Bosco Academy for which the teachers and students designed and created costumes based on the cultural folklore theme. Moongazers, jumbies, Ole Higue, and Bacoo (spirits), as well

as pork knockers (gold diggers) and Itanami Indians are some of the popular legendary figures and folklore characters the boys portrayed. We took to the streets of the village of Plaisance, waving flags and dancing to the music of an ambulant DJ. On returning to our school grounds, the bands were judged on design, creativity, gyration (dancing), enthusiasm, and interpretation of the theme. Indeed we were all win-



Mr. Saadettin Ozcan, principal of Nile Academy, Plunkett Campus, is presented with Scarborough's Golden Rule poster by Tina Petrova, a member of the student ministry team at Scarborough's Mission Centre. Tina was invited to Nile Academy, a Muslim private boys school in Etobicoke, Ontario, to speak on the subject of tolerance. The entire school assembled in the gym for this special presentation. Tina utilized Scarborough's Golden Rule materials, showed clips from the Golden Rule movie, and handed out the 13 golden rule texts to every student and teacher. The texts were read aloud in both Turkish and English. Tina's presentation was part of the school's observance of Tolerance Week, which is intended to encourage acceptance and respect for each other's differences.

ners that day as we celebrated in solidarity, conviviality, and joy.

Not to be outdone by these colourful religious festivals are the beautiful painted homes of green, blue, yellow, pink, mauve, or red—all the colours of the rainbow—lining the streets of towns and villages throughout Guyana. Some businesses and churches also join the mosaic of colour.

### The colours of nature

After all these man-made colours, let us look now at the ever present, simple, yet beautiful colours of nature that I see here in the exquisite flowers, birds, and insects; the fruits and vegetables; the bauxite red dirt roads and the Coca-Cola coloured water of creeks framed by the green of a variety of plants. Guyana boasts lush tropical rainforests and broad savannahs, home to rare species such as Amazonica—the largest water lily in the world and Guyana's national flower, as well as jaguars, giant otters, and vividly colourful

grasshoppers, butterflies, and poison arrow frogs. The great biodiversity of the region attracts many natural scientists with good reason.

Now into my second year in Guyana, I continue to learn more colourful Creolese expressions. I smile when a burst of colour draws my gaze as I go about my day: purple morning glories or yellow buttercups, a double rainbow, schoolgirls in their distinctive uniforms, Hindu women in eye-catching saris. I look forward to this year's festivals and holidays and the continuing prism of colours on which to feast my eyes. And I give thanks to God, creator of all things, who seeks to permeate our souls and our senses with the vivid colours of Love—love for God, love for ourselves, love for others, and love for all Creation.∞

Scarboro lay missionary Donna Joy Tai, from Montreal, Quebec, completed the formation program and was missioned to Guyana in March 2013.

# Passing on the Light

*The light shone in the darkness  
And the darkness did not overcome it*

For the Light and Life of the world was destined to enter  
the darkest of darkness  
and it seemed for a while as if the darkness had won...

But in the darkest hours just before sunrise  
darkness gave way to a new dawn, an eternal dawn:  
eternal light shone upon the world

The Light of the World returned to God  
But passed the light on to his disciples,  
to Peter, to Mary, to the Twelve

And to the Three Thousand  
who saw the light of the Spirit's new coming  
and believed

And the light appeared to Saul  
and Saul became Paul  
and took the light to the nations, to Rome

And some took the light into desert places  
And some to the east  
And some to the south  
And some to the north

The light dwelt with Benedict and Scholastica  
The light went with Patrick, to Ireland  
And came from Ireland to Iona with Columba  
and was passed to Aidan, to Hilda  
to all the Celtic peoples

And the light lived in the darkness of the fall of Rome  
It passed to Gregory, to Augustine  
and small lights shone in the darkness of the Dark Ages

The light passed on to Hildegard  
to Dominic, to Thomas, to Eckhart

To Francis and to Clare  
whose lives glowed with the power of simplicity

To Julian and Margery  
whose lives were hidden until the world was ready

To Ignatius, to Teresa  
who found God in the power of imagination

But the light became divided and humans tried to possess it:  
to claim it as their own

Yet the light was not defeated:  
The light passed to those who loved God's Word  
who translated it and placed it into the hands of believers

The light passed to those who sought to understand God's creation  
and explored its wonders

The light passed to those who saw the dignity of human beings  
and fought to bring justice to the poor,  
freedom to those who were slaves

The light travelled to new continents  
and passed to new peoples  
to Rose and to Juan and to those who believe in the Americas  
to Paul Miki and to those who believe in the East  
to Charles Lwanga and to those who believe in Africa

The light passed to Bernadette and Therese  
to Charles de Foucauld  
to Dietrich and to Maximilian  
to Martin Luther King and to Dorothy Day  
to Brother Roger and to Mother Teresa  
to us

The light waits

Who will keep the light burning in our day?  
Who will take the light into the world?  
Who will carry the light into a new year, a new century,  
a new Millennium?

Who will carry the light, if we do not?

This is a part of a liturgical reflection produced by  
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# Finding God's fingerprint

Mission in Guyana has been about learning to recognize God in a different context

By Ashley Aperocho

**Z**ebbras with their black and white stripes all have a distinct unique pattern, sort of like a fingerprint that sets them apart from each other. When a baby zebra is born, it walks around its mother several times to imprint her pattern of stripes into its mind so as to recognize her from the herd. Thus, the longer the baby spends with its mother, the easier to recognize her in different circumstances.

Being in Guyana has made me feel like the baby zebra. My first month here has been taxing emotionally, spiritually, and physically. The weather is different. Their sense of time is different. Even the Our Father is different. My philosophies, my work ethic, and my personal autonomy have been challenged. It has felt like situations, people, and my conscience are forcing me to question my actions, thoughts, and behaviours.

The differences have helped me to become aware of my North American views. The last time I remember feeling this way was in first year university when I experienced independence for the first time. I am learning that the more independence I have, the more dependent I become on God. In the midst of moving to a new country, culture, and people, I am being challenged, like the baby zebra, to recognize the same God in a different context.

I am finding that missionary life so far is first and foremost about the inward journey to Jesus rather than ministering to others. In Paul's first letter to John it states, "We love because He first loved us." With the Gospel



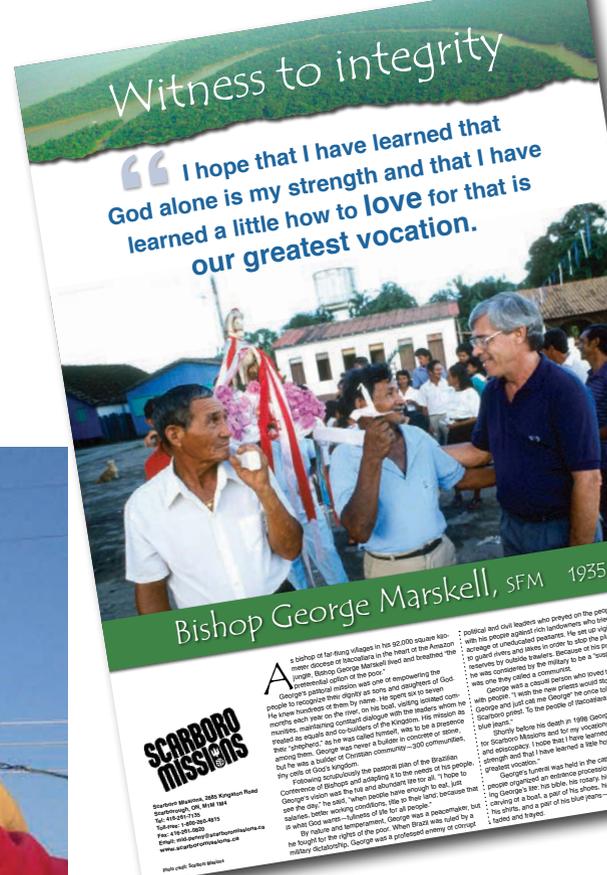
Ashley Aperocho with some of the children at the Sisters of Charity daycare where she volunteers. Georgetown, Guyana.

**In the past six weeks I have asked myself over and over again, why am I here? Why am I doing an overseas mission with Scarboro Missions? The answer, put simply: to serve God.**

incarnate in Guyanese culture, being immersed in the unfamiliar is bringing to surface my brokenness and this has been a hard reality to accept. Being able to see myself in contrast to Guyana has shown me that there is still so much to learn about myself and that I will continue to grow as long as I am open to change. It is through this experience

that I am being drawn closer to the heart of God.

In the past six weeks I have asked myself over and over again, why am I here? Why am I doing an overseas mission with Scarboro Missions? The answer, put simply: to serve God. Although the beginning of mission life has been difficult thus far, I believe



Above: One of 32 posters in Scarboro's new Witnesses poster set. (See ad on page 7.)

that it is necessary to be humbled and broken in order to be in a disposition to receive what Guyana has to teach me about God. Just as the baby zebra gets better at recognizing its mother, I hope that my time in Guyana will allow me to get better at recognizing God in all things.

I am going to end with a quote from Pedro Arrupe that explains why, at the age of 22, I have given my life to God. "Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in Love and stay in love, and it will decide everything."<sup>o</sup>



Scarboro lay missionary Paulina Gallego with a few of the 30 children at the Sisters of Charity daycare, which offers childcare to families in difficult circumstances. Paulina helps with naptime and meals, as well as with reading books and teaching them new words, praying, playing games, and singing songs.

**Learning how to be**  
By Paulina Gallego

**"L**eave the ordinary behind." It is interesting and at the same time absurd to think that for me, the ordinary was to have a job, to be busy, to be productive... to DO. This month in Guyana has taught me that the ordinary is to BE. And the first thing is to be able to be with myself, to understand and recognize my abilities and limitations, and to be able to accept that I need to relearn a language that I thought I knew, to be patient with myself, to move slowly, to let things go... to BE.

Before leaving Canada many people asked me if I was ready to serve in overseas mission, and my answer always was, "I don't know." I think one is never ready to serve in mission. Mission is something that takes many forms, something that changes constantly, something that is hard but at the same time extremely rewarding. I think if someone waits to be ready, they might end up waiting forever.

I am not an expert on missiology but I do know that God uses our vulnerability, our fragility, and our skills for great things once we let God take control, once we believe more in God's love for us than in our own weakness. In the end, true mission for me is leaving the ordinary behind in order to BE for God and for God's people.∞

# Vocation is a continuing journey

*Missionary life is a life of love*

By Deacon Luis Lopez

Vocation is a word that we assume we understand. A lot of thought, discernment, and even struggle may go into deciding on a vocation, whether it be to religious life, to marriage, to a single life, or to a particular career path. We may think that once we have found and chosen our vocation, the hard work is done. However, what I have discovered since I entered the seminary is that my vocation is a journey that keeps growing and evolving. It is a call to live life to the fullest every day, and this can be done in a variety of ways at different times in our lives. Vocation is a journey of learning and growing in love. Because my vocation is a continuous call from God, I may be asked to answer again and again with a yes or no.

Since I arrived in Guyana a little more than three months ago, I have been learning many things about the country, its people, and its culture. There have been so many learnings, some good, some challenging, but all have been a calling to grow in love—to grow in loving God, the other, and myself. An example of this growing in love happened at the annual parish fair, which is a fundraiser for the parish. I had been helping to get things ready for two weeks prior. On the day of the fair I found myself nailing signs to stalls, setting up chairs and tables, and taking care of an array of last minute details that seemed never-ending. I also sold sweets and drinks to the people attending the fair.

When I first thought of mission and my vocation I never expected it would



Scarboro Deacon Luis Lopez (centre) and members of the Maria Goretti youth group at Ascension parish, help out with the parish summer school program for children. New Amsterdam, Guyana.

involve these types of activities. As I live my vocation I realize that even though we think of vocation and of going to mission as an exotic adventure, most of the time we end up doing seemingly mundane things. Yet, no matter how small or unimportant these activities might seem, they never are. I have come to see that it is the little things that matter the most at the end of the day. It can be taking a moment to talk to someone, bringing a chair for a grandmother to sit on, or any other small act that might help to reveal God's love. By our presence, in friendship, we help others to see that God is all around us.

As I come closer to ordination to the priesthood, I have come to understand that my vocation is made up of many things—I am a human being, a son,

a brother, a priest (hopefully soon), a Scarboro missionary, a friend. My vocation is to share my life with everyone in a variety of ways and through small gestures done with love. Our actions remind us and others that God is love and we are all loved. We do not live our vocation on our own but always in communion with God and others. These are some of the learnings and blessings that I have received from the people of Guyana and as I continue to live my vocation journey.∞

*Scarboro missionary Deacon Luis Lopez is assisting alongside parish priest Fr. Mike Traher at Ascension Parish in New Amsterdam, Guyana.*



By Fr. Michael Traher

Supporting and encouraging our Catholic youth in discovering their vocation and developing their talents is vital to the future of the Church in Guyana. One of the traditions at Ascension parish in New Amsterdam during summer vacation has been to offer the children a week of summer school. Our Summer School Express is designed for fun, with craft making, Bible stories and verses to learn, songs and games, and a children's movie, and all from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm each day for one week in August.

The 40 or so children who attended this year loved their week of summer school and so did their parents. Had we been able to offer a second week, they would have signed up in probably even greater numbers.

In recent years there has not been a parish summer school. Traditionally this responsibility is carried out by the Sunday school catechists. However, for various reasons, especially family and work priorities, the catechists have not been free to organize and direct this beloved annual event.

As early as last Easter parishioners began asking if there was going to be a summer school for the children this year. We were finally able to say yes, thanks to the young people of our parish youth group. Sparked by the enthusiasm of 18-year-old Rebekah Jotis, several youth and young adults in the parish signed up to help.

An active member of the youth group, Rebekah has shown creative talent for choreographing dance presentations, singing, producing and act-

# Summer School Express

*Parish youth respond to Christ's call to love and serve others*



Rebekah Jotis, a member of the Maria Goretti youth group at Ascension parish, was one of several enthusiastic youth facilitators at the parish Summer School Express.

ing in skits, and doing crafts. She was determined to share these talents with the children of the parish and surrounding neighbourhood. Rebekah also managed to recruit one elementary school teacher to her organizing team, as well as Luis Lopez, our Scarboro deacon who is assigned here in the parish.

Less than two weeks after the team was struck, everything was ready: children signed up, parents on board, and parish centre prepared. It was truly God's dynamic Spirit at work. Throughout the week of summer school, the excited children had fun and grew in faith and learning.

On Friday, the final day, it was time to celebrate. The children's handiwork was displayed and a special lunch was prepared with ice cream for dessert. We also placed their artwork and photos of their activities at the back of the church on Sunday. As parents and parishioners viewed the children's

creations, they nodded and smiled with pride at what the Summer School Express had accomplished.

As pastor, I was amazed and delighted at the success, but I appreciated most the young people of our parish for their leadership and initiative. Our youth were affirmed in their talents and ability to work together, and in their generosity and eagerness to provide the children with a week of fun and learning. Their openness of heart and commitment to the task helped them to deepen their own faith and self-awareness, which is after all, an essential part of discerning a future vocation in life.∞

*After 10 years in leadership as Vicar General on Scarboro's General Council, Fr. Michael Traher has returned to overseas mission as pastor of Ascension Parish in New Amsterdam, Guyana.*

# Returning to Carabayllo

*Mission in Peru had been an affirming and transformative experience, and today the friendships still remain*

By Rosina Bisci

In 1980, I graduated from York University with a History degree. I'd been offered admission to the Faculty of Education, but didn't pursue it. Although I was interested in teaching, I wanted to be involved in education in a way that would advance social-economic development. Why, you ask?

At the Catholic high school I attended in Toronto, the FCJ (Faithful Companions of Jesus) sisters and most of the other teachers were terrific educators and role models. I came out of there fired up with questions about why there was such great inequality in our world, why such horrible poverty, and what could I do about it. Having grown up in an Italian Catholic family, active faith was in my DNA and I was

searching for a way to integrate my social concerns with my faith commitment.

In a sociology course at York University, I read about Liberation Theology, a theology articulated by Gustavo Gutierrez, a Peruvian diocesan priest and university professor. For me, Liberation Theology lit the path, describing an option for the poor and powerless, a way to stand in solidarity with those at the bottom of our social pyramids, and a way to confront the oppressive social, political, and economic systems that keep the pyramids of power in place.

I applied to Scarboro Missions and went to Lima, Peru, as a lay associate member. The four years that I lived in Carabayllo, on the outskirts of Lima, were both extremely affirming and

transformative. What can I tell you that you don't already know? The poverty was gut wrenching, injustices were callous and blatant, and there was ongoing violence on numerous levels.

The transformative part was the friendships that I made. Through those friends, I experienced some of the vulnerability, pain, and fear of those who had very few choices in life. I also experienced their incredible resilience... They went on under conditions that to me were impossible and overwhelming. They didn't give up. If one way didn't work, they tried something else. And they knew that the only real power that they could exercise was a collective one. In spite of great odds, they formed alliances, committees, and very large grassroots organizations that included neighbours, members of Christian communities, teenagers, teachers, health workers, politicians, mothers, fathers, and families.

And they met and found



On International Women's Day (*Día Internacional de la Mujer*) a group of friends gather (L-R): Sr. Sara, Grisel, Tirsa, Elena, Sr. Rose-Marie, Daniela, Rosina, Celeste, Luzmila, Elsa, and Ysabel. Facing page: Although living standards have improved in areas of Carabayllo, the outlining hillside neighbourhoods still lack many basic services. Peru.

Through those friends, I experienced some of the vulnerability, pain, and fear of those who had very few choices in life. I also experienced their incredible resilience...

ways to bring attention to the conditions of their neighbourhoods in Carabayllo.

In the 1980s, the district did not have potable running water. Water was delivered sporadically by tanker trucks and then sat in cylinders in the sun outside people's homes. Infant mortality was high and intestinal diseases were common. It took years of meeting, talking, making agreements, and keeping the organizations together, as well as pressuring federal politicians, international financing institutions like the World Bank, and construction companies to bring this basic human right to these communities. Finally, in 1988 the water project was inaugu-

ated in Carabayllo.

During the March break this year, I went back to Carabayllo with my husband. I've been back before, but this time it had been a little more than 30 years since I first arrived and I thought it would be a good time for some reflection. Many things have changed... Too many things have not changed enough. Yet, what remained throughout all this time was the friendships that we forged. More than once during my visit we said to each other, "Seeing you again feels like time has not passed." We've grown older, but we are still the same in the ways that matter most.

In our age of science and logic,

some people think that resurrection is impossible, along with miracles and creating God's reign of justice and peace. But our faith is all about believing in the impossible and living in community with others who share that belief.

My faith journey led me to Carabayllo—to experiences and friends who continue to inspire me and give me hope.∞

*Rosina Bisci teaches at St. Patrick Catholic Elementary School in Niagara Falls, Ontario. As a Scarboro lay missionary, she was the first person to head up Scarboro's Department of Lay Association in 1988.*



# Called to serve

## SCARBORO'S ONE-YEAR MISSION PROGRAM

Do you feel called to serve or be a presence, to help make the world a better place? Are you interested in gaining valuable experience for cross-cultural work? Scarborough's One-Year Mission Program is a way of introducing young adults to mission.

Application Deadline: February 13, 2015

Formation: July and August 2015

Overseas placement: September 2015 to May 2016

Debriefing: June 2016

### Program objectives:

- to provide the chance to deepen one's faith while encountering the Catholic Church in a cross-cultural context overseas;
- to provide the opportunity to work in social justice or humanitarian areas in solidarity with the poor and marginalized;
- to facilitate interfaith dialogue while in mission among people of other faiths;
- to challenge missionaries to live out their Christian vocation by witnessing to the love of Jesus Christ.

### Requirements for admission:

- Catholic, having expressed their faith in service to the marginalized through a social justice commitment or other outreach
- Canadian citizen or permanent resident
- Personal maturity and adaptability to changing and unfamiliar situations
- Good overall health (physical, emotional, etc.)
- Willing to make a one-year commitment without a home visit except when there is a family emergency (life threatening illness/death)
- At least 21 years of age
- Willingness to try and learn a foreign language if your mission work calls for it. Applicants are encouraged to learn the basics of the local language.
- College and/or university graduate or required skill

People who have experienced recent significant events in their lives (e.g. divorce, death, marriage, conversion to Catholicism, any psychological/physical/mental trauma, new Canadians) are asked to allow a period of two years to elapse before applying formally for admission.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### 1. What could I do in mission?

As a lay missionary, one would be a presence among the poor and offer your particular gifts and talents in response to people's needs. This can include health, education, project management, social work, youth programming, construction and more.

#### 2. Where can I serve?

Currently, one-year missionaries are in Guyana. However, we are exploring placement possibilities in other countries in South America, Asia, and Africa, where Scarborough has established relationships and where there are active lay missionaries and/or partners.

#### 3. Will I be supported financially?

While overseas, basic needs such as accommodation and food are covered by Scarborough Missions. During the two-month Formation Program in Canada, room and board is covered. Candidates should come with some funds to cover their personal expenses during this two-month period.

#### 4. How do I prepare for mission overseas?

Scarborough Missions provides a compulsory, two-month live-in Formation Program that begins in June 2015. Through courses and workshops, tools are taught for living and working with others in a new cultural reality. The ongoing process of adapting to a new culture continues in the mission country.

#### 5. What are the overseas living conditions like?

Accommodations will be basic but safe and clean. Volunteers will likely live with other one-year missionaries, or long-term lay missionaries, and/or with a local family.

#### 6. What immunizations are required?

Once a candidate is accepted into the One-Year Mission Program, Scarborough Missions requests that each person meets with a doctor at a travel clinic to ensure that all necessary vaccinations are up-to-date. Candidates may also need to take anti-malarial drugs.

Will you respond wholeheartedly to the call of the Spirit and the Church? Say "Yes!" to God's call and contact us. We invite you to walk with us...it may change your life!∞



- ▷ Do you feel called to help make the world a better place?
- ▷ Are you interested in gaining valuable cross-cultural experience for future career opportunities?

Scarborough Missions'

- ▶ **One-Year Mission Program** could be the opportunity for you!



Scarborough Missions, a Roman Catholic mission society involved in volunteer outreach both overseas and in Canada, has a one-year volunteer opportunity in Guyana for adults aged 21 and above.

Volunteers live a basic lifestyle but the costs of your experience are covered by Scarborough Missions.

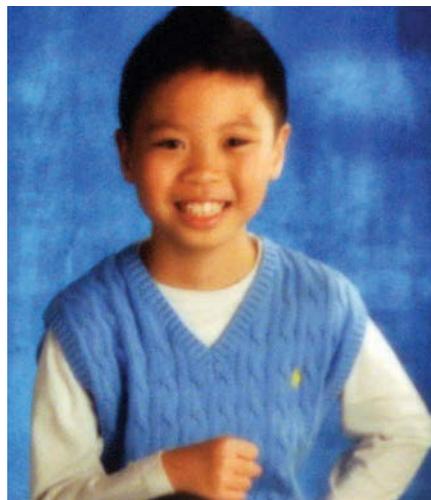
- ▶ Application deadline: **February 13, 2015**
- ▷ Formation/orientation: **July–August 2015** in Toronto
- ▷ Overseas placement: **September 2015–May 2016**

To learn more, visit our website and contact us at:

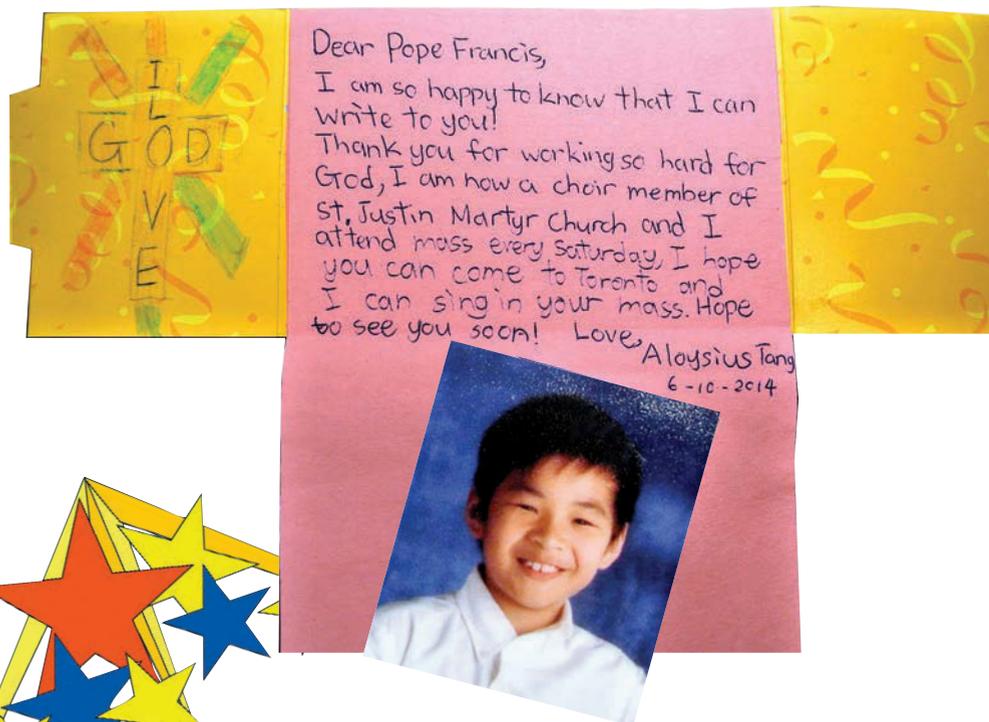
- ▷ E-mail: [oneyear@scarboromissions.ca](mailto:oneyear@scarboromissions.ca)
- ▷ Phone: **416-261-7135 ext 280**, or toll-free number: **1-800-260-4815**
- ▶ Website: [http://www.scarboromissions.ca/Lay\\_missioners/one-year.php](http://www.scarboromissions.ca/Lay_missioners/one-year.php)
- ▷ Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/scarboroforeignmissionsociety>

# Letters to Pope Francis

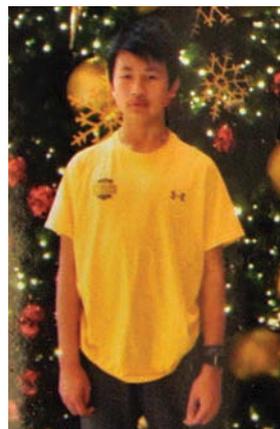
Benjamin Lam and Winnie Kam, friends of Scarboro missionaries Fathers John Walsh and Ray O'Toole, entertained a group of children at their home this summer. All of the children are schoolmates of their son Herman (below left) at St. Justin Martyr Catholic Elementary School in Markham, Ontario. The family has visited Fr. Ray who is missioned in Hong Kong. They also attended Fr. Ray's 50th anniversary of priesthood in Little Bras d'Or, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, in August 2013. When Herman found out that Fr. Ray was going to meet Pope Francis in Korea this past August for Asia Youth Day, he told his friends and they each decided to write a card to the Pope. Fr. Ray presented their cards during his visit. Herman's father, Benjamin, photographed the cards and kindly gave us permission to print the children's letters in *Scarboro Missions* magazine.



Dear Pope Francis,  
You are such a really good Pope. You always pray for the poor and sick. You made the canonization of Pope John Paul II and Pope John XXIII... You also made the world united in peace. Thank you so much for the hard work you did!  
Sincerely, Herman Lam



Hello, my name is Jaden. I am 10 years old and live in Markham, Ontario, Canada. I have an older brother and a loving Mom and Dad. I go to St. Justin Martyr Catholic School. Next year I will be in Grade 5. I am in Ms. Espe's class. My favourite part is hockey and my favourite subjects are Social Studies, Math, Music, and PE. I hope you have a good trip to Korea.  
Sincerely, Jaden Li



My name is Jeffrey Li. I am 12 years old and in Grade 6. I am from Canada and go to St. Justin Martyr CES in Markham, Ontario. And I also play hockey. I also have one question: What is it like being the Pope? I would greatly appreciate if you can answer.

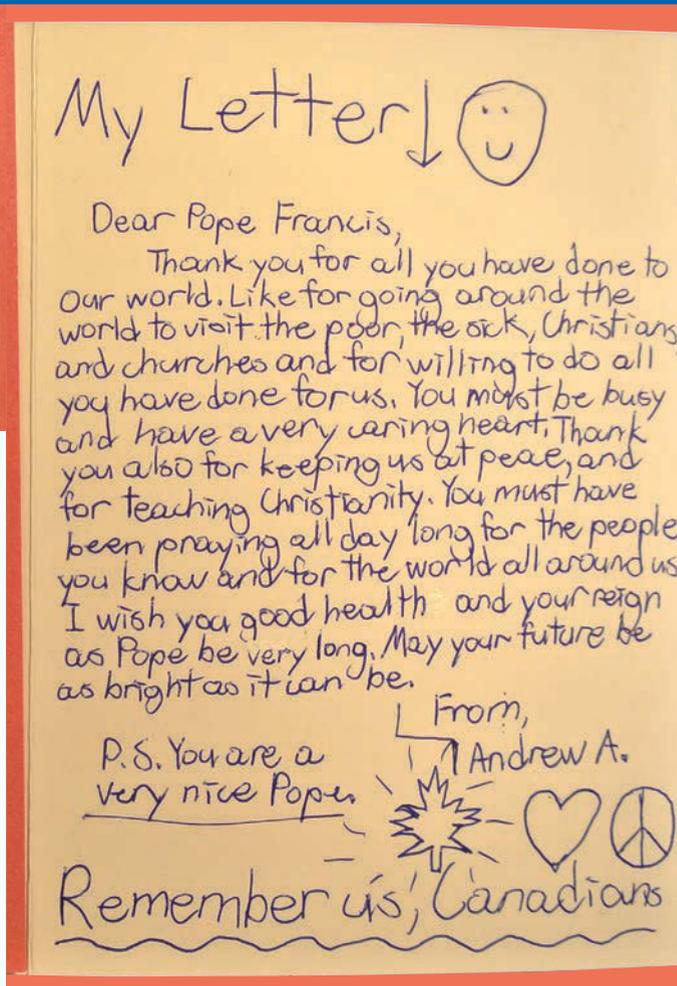
The Au brothers, Andrew (top), Brian (below left), and Christopher.



You are so nice and peaceful. You take care of lots of people in the world. I wish you can take care of more people. Please stay healthy and be happy!  
Love Brian Au



I am Christopher. I love you. You take care of us and the world. Thank you for everything you do. I wish you good health...



“Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.” *Matthew 5:9*



Dear Pope Francis,  
I am so happy that you became the new Pope! I would love to get to meet you someday and celebrate Mass with you. I hope that you will continue to be a nice and generous Pope, and if you could, it would be awesome if you would be able to come visit Canada!  
Love Sherry Shu



# WITNESSING TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IN TODAY'S WORLD

Through 12 videos and accompanying lesson plans, parishioners, students, educators, and others can learn about mission as it is defined and understood today. The videos follow the journey of Scarborough Missions, a Canadian missionary society, from 1918 to present, and the lived experience of Scarborough missionaries who have been witnessing to the Gospel overseas and in Canada.

*(Produced by Villagers Media Productions Inc.)*

## FREE VIEWING ON-LINE

at [www.scarboromissionstv.com](http://www.scarboromissionstv.com) or [www.youtube.com/ScarboroMissionsTV](http://www.youtube.com/ScarboroMissionsTV)

**PROGRAM ONE**  
Who Are We?



**PROGRAM TWO**  
Our History



**PROGRAM THREE**  
Changing Paradigm



**PROGRAM FOUR**  
The Golden Rule



**PROGRAM FIVE**  
Empowering the Poor



**PROGRAM SIX**  
Mission Centre



**PROGRAM SEVEN**  
Ways to Pray



**PROGRAM EIGHT**  
Evangelized by the Poor



**PROGRAM NINE**  
Social Justice / Eco Justice



**PROGRAM TEN**  
Mission by Dialogue



**PROGRAM ELEVEN**  
Option for the Poor



**PROGRAM TWELVE**  
Go for Life

