

**SPEAKERS' FORUM
WELCOME TO JOHN PHILIP NEWELL**

**Elizabeth M. Davis, rsm
18 October 2019**

**(A Welcome on behalf of Betty Rae Lee, pbvm, as well,
together representing both our Congregations)**

We respectfully acknowledge the territory in which we gather, as the ancestral homelands of the Beothuk and the island of Newfoundland as the ancestral homelands of the Beothuk, the Meawewepukek Mi'kmaq and the Qalipu Mi'kmaq. We recognize the Inuit of Nunatsiavut and NunatuKavut and the Innu of Nitassinan, and their ancestors, as the original people of Labrador. We acknowledge with respect the diverse histories and cultures and spiritualities of all the original peoples of this province as we search for collective healing and true reconciliation and honour this beautiful land together.

Our best-known Newfoundland poet, E. J. Pratt, wrote in his epic poem, *Newfoundland*:

Here the tides flow, and here they ebb . . .
With a lusty stroke of life
Pounding at stubborn gates
That they might run
Within the sluices of our hearts,
Leap under throb of pulse and nerve,
And teach the sea's strong voice
To learn the harmonies of new floods . . .

John Philip, we welcome you among us as one who is teaching "the sea's strong voice to learn the harmonies of new floods." You have taken the ancient Celtic spirituality, you have named its essential elements and you are helping all of us adapt it in our time. In so doing, you are teaching us the harmonies of new floods through an engaged spirituality which finds its expression in contemplation and its completion in compassionate action.

You invite us, in poetry and in image and in reflection, to listen – to listen deep within ourselves, to listen to one another, to listen deep within Earth and to listen to every creature and life form. You invite us to see through the eyes of the Sacred. You invite us to be peacemakers in a world of violence and war, to be a contemplative presence in a world marked by frenetic activity, to be people of justice in a world fractured by injustice, to welcome the stranger in a world torn by exclusion. For this gift to us, we say thank you, and again thank you.

As you engage with us in contemplative listening and seeing over these two days, this is our blessing for you from the holy ones in this place we call Newfoundland and Labrador:

May yours be the vision of soaring seagulls
May yours be the energy of flying puffins, kittiwakes and gannets
May yours be the intensity of the red fox and the majestic caribou
May yours be the stillness of solitary moose

May yours be the surety of thick boreal forests
May yours be the beauty of rare orchids on sweeping barrens
May yours be the nourishment of blueberries, partridgeberries and bakeapples
May yours be the rootedness of ancient rock formations
May yours be the awe of dramatic coastlines
May yours be the calm of migrating icebergs
May yours be the adventure of sea caves, inlets, coves, bays, harbours and fjords
May yours be the persistence of swirling ocean waves
May yours be the mystery of 565 million-year-old fossils of Mistaken Point
May yours be the delight of colourful jellybean row houses
May yours be the every-day wonder of the first sunrise in North America
May yours be the shimmering of the dancing Northern Lights
May yours be the love of a warm and gently embracing Earth
May yours be the love, the courage and the wisdom of our God who brings us into the communion of all creation.

Thank you for accepting our invitation. You are most welcome among us, in this holy place which gathers so many people to reflect and dream, to this dynamic city of St. John's which we call home, to this province of Newfoundland and Labrador which holds fast our hearts. Thank you for teaching the sea's strong voice to learn the harmonies of new floods!

