 <p>ARCAN ATLANTIC RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS ASSOCIATE NETWORK</p>	<h2>The Leading Edge...</h2> <p>"Edge Thoughts" <i>Come to the edge. We might fall. Come to the edge. It's too high!</i> COME TO THE EDGE. <i>And they came; and he pushed; and they flew.</i> Christopher Logue From: <i>Ode to the Dodo - Poems from 1953 to 1978</i></p> <p>ARCAN Logo Designed by: Phyllis Gallant, CND</p>
--	---

**Winter Edition - Atlantic Religious Congregation Associate Network Newsletter
February 2021**

 <p>ARCAN MISSION STATEMENT Rooted in Gospel values and inspired by the charisms of each religious congregation the mission of ARCAN is to provide a supportive network committed to adult learning, inclusive actions, embracing diversity, along with an awareness of the new consciousness that all life is sacred and connected.</p>	 <p>ARCAN VISION STATEMENT The vision of ARCAN is to be a mutually supportive network of Associates and Sisters in Atlantic Canada living a new and dynamic expression of religious life and spirituality for the 21st century. We inspire to invite one another to a wider embrace of Gospel values and to live a commitment of love in relationship with all creation.</p>
---	--

RECAP OF ARCAN MEETING - Oct. 2-3, 2020



ARCAN Steering Committee

The ARCAN meeting took place over two days. The following 8 groups were represented by 22 participants:

- Congregation of Notre Dame (CND) – Theresa MacNeil and Dianne MacAskill
- Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception (SCIC) – Sr. Pat Poole, Sharon Jacquard and Denise Isaacs
- Society of the Sacred Heart (RSCJ) – Sr. Norma Heffernan and Peggy Gorman
- Sisters of Mercy – Sr. Maureen O’Keefe, Barbara Hawley, Tomi Cleal, Gerri Stapleton and Anne Bown
- Sisters of St. Martha of PEI – Sr. Gemma Dunne, Sheila MacDonald and Mary McLean
- Sisters of St. Martha of Antigonish – Sr. Claudette Gallant, Linda Longmire and Julia Townsend
- Charities of Halifax – Sr. Margie Gillis and Ronnie MacDonald
- Presentation Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary (PBVM)- Eileen Coombs and Jean O’Neill

The theme for the meetings was “being a transformative presence in the Church”. Linda Longmire provided some opening commentary on the theme. As usual, the first item of business was the ‘check in’. This is where we hear from each group on how they are doing, special events they have organized or attended. The ingenuity shown by Associate groups in these ‘Covid’ times was remarkable. Many are moving to more ‘virtual’ gatherings, or have found ‘physically distanced’ ways to meet.

The Financial Report and the use of the new ZOOM Pro Account was discussed. Linda closed out the formal sessions by reminding us of the qualities needed to be a transformative presence in the church:

- Be grounded in the love of God
- Be inspired to act out of that love for God and of the church
- Have the courage to speak up

The Saturday session was highlighted by a 2-hour presentation by Sister Elizabeth Davis (Sister of Mercy). She continued the theme and gave us a

powerpoint presentation we could share with others and continue our reflection. Sister's presentation was in 3 sections:

1. Our World and Our Church Today
2. Elements of Transformation
 - a. Cosmology and Integral Ecology
 - b. Globalization of Mercy, Justice and Peace
 - c. Inclusions, Collaboration and Contemplation
3. ARCAN – A Transformative Presence
 - a. Invitation
 - b. Relationship
 - c. Community

The group had a number of opportunities to share thoughts during the morning and all were sad when it ended.

The newsletter was discussed again and a decision was made to produce two a year to be published sometime after the semi-annual ARCAN meeting. The next ARCAN meeting will occur (by ZOOM) on Friday and Saturday, April 16-17, 2021. Hopefully our covid journey will be closer to ending.

ARCAN WELCOMES A SPECIAL GUEST



The ARCAN Steering Committee was delighted to welcome Sr. Elizabeth Davis RSM, Congregation leader of the Sisters of Mercy in Newfoundland, as a special guest during our ZOOM meetings held October 2 and 3, 2020. In her excellent presentation, Sr. Elizabeth highlighted some elements of transformation in our world and our Church today. One of these elements is the globalization of mercy, justice and peace.

"Mercy is the willingness to enter into the chaos of others"
(James Keenan, SJ)

Guided by the Parable of the "Good Samaritan" (Luke 10: 25 – 37), Sr. Elizabeth spoke about Five moments of mercy.

- First, *Contemplative Seeing*, looking beyond our own agenda to see the needs of another.
- Second, *a Heart moved with Compassion*. Unlike the priest and Levite in the scripture story, the Samaritan's heart was moved with

compassion when he saw the man lying on the road, and he stopped to help him.

- Third, *Mercying*, a term made familiar by Pope Francis. It is a way of describing what the Samaritan man does; how he cares for the victim. The Samaritan man uses the substance of the earth first to cleanse the man's wounds, and then he uses his donkey to bring the injured man to the Inn.
- Fourth, *Making a Circle of Mercy*. The Good Samaritan now brings the man to the inn and asks someone else to look after the man, creating a circle of mercy.
- Fifth, *Creating a Culture of Mercy*. The Good Samaritan assures the Innkeeper that he will return and pay him whatever else is owed. Allowing mercy to grow and be shared!

As Associates and members of ARCAN, Sr. Elizabeth reminded us that we must move beyond the story to make a difference in the world. We are all created by God, each with our own unique gifts to share with others as we help to build a culture of love, mercy, compassion, hospitality and kindness all around us! As Associates, we are called to share in the charism of a particular Congregation, remembering that the charism is the fruit of the Holy Spirit who is always at work within our Church and within each of us! *"Every time we do good in our lives, in our world, we strengthen the charism gifted within us."*

With the help of the Holy Spirit, may we continue to live our lives in faithfulness to our God; loving and serving God, loving and serving our Neighbor, joining together to grow the Kingdom of God in our world.

In this earth, In this soil, in this pure field,

*Let us not plant any seeds other than seeds of compassion and
love.....(Rumi)*

*Submitted by: Julia Townsend
Associate, Sisters of St. Martha, Antigonish, NS*

Thanksgiving / Friendsgiving

By Sheila MacDonald, PEI Martha Associate



As Ronald Rolheiser says in his book **Our One Great Act of Fidelity**, "The very word Eucharist means gratitude". He further states, "to give thanks and be properly grateful is the most primary of all religious attitudes". Proper gratitude is the ultimate virtue. Holy persons are people who are grateful people, who see and receive everything as gift. Gratitude for the opportunity to receive the Eucharist on a daily basis reminds us that Christ said "receive and give thanks". Before all else, we must first give thanks.

In GRATITUDE we recognize our own gifts and the gifts in others. Gratitude can take many forms, from a simple prayer to sitting with a sick and dying friend.

Gratitude reaches forward. For example: when my husband died, I was overwhelmed with gratitude for the outpouring of sympathy in the form of prayer, cards, calls, food, and offers of assistance about my home and property. Now is my time to pay it forward, in gratitude towards others experiencing some form of difficulty, or just because.

In our beautiful country of Canada we have a time-honoured tradition for expressing gratitude, that is the celebration of Thanksgiving, always celebrated on the second Monday of October. Thanksgiving is a time to "give thanks" for the bountiful harvest of land and sea. Families come together, usually for a meal, and to give thanks for one another. A time to thank God for all that is good in their lives, especially the freedoms we enjoy in Canada.

I am aware in recent years of the younger generation in my life who are celebrating "Friendsgiving". It is a gathering of friends, as opposed to family, usually around the time of our traditional Thanksgiving. This has become a standard part of the celebration for many young adults. Friendsgiving originated when young people found themselves far away from family, but near friends. It is another way for these friends to express gratitude for their friendships. Friendsgiving quotes: "Give thanks with friends"; "Friends who feast together, stay together"; "Good food, good meat, good friends, let's eat"; "Friends first, after seconds".

GRATITUDE



By Mary MacLean, PEI Martha Associate

(Grateful for my Grandchildren)

I dare to say that life is good, our gratitude expands,
As we think of the creative spirit that exists in space and lands.

Plant and animal life flourish, as space becomes quite small.
No human mind provides such order, we thank God for it all.

Our human world can be quite troubling, discerning actions that are best.
Yet we gather. laugh, celebrate the many ways that we are blessed.

God creates and gives us freedom, to be grateful or demanding,
In small ways we promote the world's greater understanding.

Unborn, baby, child and teen, loved and valued as they grow.
To responsible adulthood choosing the direction each will go.

We will support, and guide, and trust, the gift of freedom each enjoys.
Responding is as personal, as choosing favorite toys.

We all make many different choices what we think and do and say,
Being grateful for Creator's loving presence, each and every day!

ANNELLA'S STORY OF GRATITUDE



The impact of this pandemic on our lives has been devastating, the loss of human life, the economic and social disruption, the risk of poverty and health issues, some of which are not related to Covid-19.

The evening of the Associate Coordinator's zoom meeting, we all shared a grateful moment we had during these past months of Covid.

I shared that I was grateful for my nephew's health. In August, Landon, 36 years old, married, and has an eight year old daughter, had been under

medical treatment for a sore left eye. I received a text from him saying that the eye specialist thought “there might be something behind the eye, pushing the eye outward, a tumor or growth, something like that, need a quick CT scan”.

With the mind of a nurse, these are alarming words. I accompanied him to CT scan and to his follow-up appointment. He was diagnosed with Idiopathic Orbital Inflammation, a benign inflammatory condition of the eye. He was treated with high doses of Prednisone for a month then tapered the dose because he responded favorably to the treatment. No further treatment is required at this time.

There was such a feeling of thankfulness and appreciation from his parents and our family because the outcome could have been different and more serious, that it wasn’t cancer with impending removal of his eye or loss of vision.

We are very grateful that God answered our many prayers and Masses that our family had offered up for him.

I also felt a heart- felt gratitude when I received a text from him saying, “thank you”.

Yours in Martha,

Annella Wehlage

Martha Associate, Lethbridge, Alberta

(Photo l-r: Annella Wehlage, Kathy Gillis, Martha Associates, Lethbridge, Alberta
Submitted by: Julia Townsend).

A REFLECTION ON GRATEFULNESS AND THANKFULNESS

**By Barbara Hawley, Mercy Associate Coordinator,
Newfoundland & Labrador**

Is there a difference between being grateful and being thankful? Having pondered this question and explored some sources of wisdom on the question, I learned that in fact there is a difference.

My quest for information allowed me to find Brother David Steindl-Rast , OSB, on the website Gratefulness.org . I had not accessed this website before, and I was struck by how much it has to offer. I readily found the answer I was seeking in a paper written by Br. David in which he explored the question “Are You Grateful or Are You Thankful ?” Reading his four-page paper would be far more valuable than my attempt to tell what he shared. Asking one to recall a night outdoors gazing up to the heavens and seeing

the magnificence of the stars, he referenced the experience described by a colleague who, seeing the heavens, became lost in a moment so joyous he was set free and felt he belonged to something far greater than his own life, to life itself, to God!.

The moment or second following such an experience he says we may hear our heart call out "Thank you, Thank you", but he cautions us to steady our focus on that first moment, a moment of gratefulness before thankfulness. He helps us by explaining the first moment as, "full appreciation of something unearned, utterly gratuitous, life, existence ultimate belonging". He explains that, "This is the literal meaning of Gratefulness, fully accepting the whole of the given universe. In the next moment, gratitude overflows into Thanksgiving. We begin", Br. David says, "to think in terms of *giver, gift and receiver* and our Gratitude turns into Thankfulness. Further", he explains, "Grate-full-ness is full awareness, fully accepting the whole of this given universe, as we are fully one with the whole. Thankfulness is thoughtfulness and is an exchange in kindness".

To describe being grateful may be a personal matter. Individuals are grateful for a variety of reasons. Kristi Nelson, who is Executive Director of A Network for Grateful Living is a twenty-five-year survivor of stage 4 Cancer. She reminds us that gratefulness not only changes our lives, but gives rise to compassion, kindness, forgiveness, and empathy and informs us how we act and how we treat others. She attests that gratitude makes us happier and cites Br. David Stienl-Rast who points out, "The root of joy is gratefulness...for it is not joy that makes us grateful; it is gratitude that makes us joyful."

The Shimmer of the setting Sun on a still Ocean, Dolphins Frolicking behind a boat, Birds Singing in the early morning , Greeting the first Sun Flower of the season, Crisp cool Winter Air, Dazzling Sun diamonds on Frozen Snow, are but a few things for which I am grateful. The impact of this COVID-19 pandemic has led to opportunities not considered or imagined. I feel joyful, having learned to use new technology allowing us to find alternate ways to network and continue our Associate Ministries. I am grateful for the ability to learn. I am also thankful for an opportunity to learn about gratefulness and thankfulness and I feel inspired to continue to learn about living gratefully.

A TIMELY READ

By Ronnie MacDonald, Associate of Charities of Halifax

White Fragility by Robin DiAngelo is an excellent resource at this time in history when we are trying to face head on the scourge of racism, be it toward those of another culture, color or religion. The subtitle of the book is *Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. The author is an academic, a consultant and trainer on issues of racial and social injustice. For many years she has led workshops for businesses, boards, school groups, etc. who wish to bring the topic of racism to the fore in order to increase diversity within the group, or confront issues that may have arisen within the present diversity. At the end of the book, there is a marvelous list of books, articles, blogs and films for further study and continuing education.

Like any good teacher, DiAngelo starts at the beginning. She clearly explains how, from our very onset of life, we are influenced by all that is around us. Family, geography, genetic in- loading, experiences, good or not so good, all have a role in forming our feelings and thoughts around racism. Being a part of the white privileged group in society also has a major impact on, not only our experiences, but also on our willingness to change our status quo. It is no easy feat to alter a mindset, or to leave a cushioned existence for something totally life changing. In her workshops, DiAngelo attempts to gently, but clearly, show participants how, where and why they may unwittingly be racist. This can be a painful process for both the whites and people of color who are present.

The term of *white fragility* is a vital one. It refers to the state of the white person when they are confronted with their racial privilege and they become uncomfortable, openly discussing racism and their lack of tolerance for racial stress. It calls into question innocence in perpetuating the racial system. They have never openly expressed their possible fear and resentment of people of color. Why should they? They have always enjoyed the privilege of feeling superior to those who are non-white. An interesting syllogism that has supported the white status is termed by DiAngelo "good/bad binary". It goes like this: racism is bad, non- racism is good. I am good; therefore, I am not a racist. That can salve a lot of whites! It is a false truth. The shock of learning the fallacy of this renders the white person truly fragile, it upsets the balance of society as he/she has known it down through history to the present day. In a workshop setting, this can lead a white person to tears, to explaining what she really meant in what she said, etc. More often than not, it may lead to the white group member leaving the workshop. She

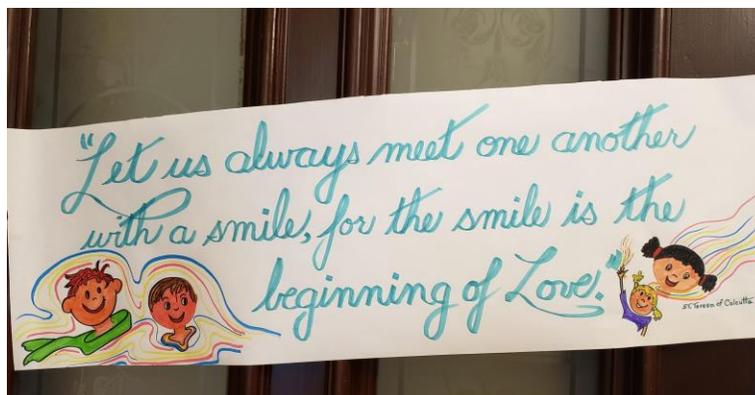
feels misunderstood. Her use of certain words or expressions or even just thoughts have never been critiqued before. Certainly not by her fellow white privileged. Needless to say, it is a tough position for the member of color to sit through.

We all have prejudices. It is part and parcel of being human. Painful interactions can be a teaching moment if we let them into our psyches and let them teach us. It is obvious we cannot comprehend another's pain if we have not experienced the same in our own lives. Becoming aware of our own fragility in the arena of racism has the potential of leading us to a compassion for those who suffered their whole lives simply for not being in the privileged group.

We cannot let our white fragility close off self-reflection re racism and our part in it. We must not assume the role of victims but rather keep the conversation on the table and keep it honest. We should not work at protecting our *privilege* because we may suffer fragility. In essence, we want to grow as individuals who choose NOT to perpetuate racism. Let us be responsible and take up our role in stopping it. In closing, DiAngelo warns us that, "Interrupting racism takes courage and intentionality; the interruption is by definition, not passive or complacent."

I am eternally grateful for the knowledge and insight this book granted. I do feel more empowered to ask myself the hard questions and to assess my sensitivity to all those around me. Like others, I am called *to align my professed values with my daily actions*.

POSTERS CREATED BY SR. MURIEL BUCKELY, SCIC SAINT JOHN



Sr. Muriel is so creative and creates posters and artwork for all occasions for their themes.



ARCAN Resources for Winter 2021 Newsletter

- **On Racism:**

- o *White Fragility* by Robin Diangelo (Non-fiction)
- o *We Are Not Yet Equal* by Tonya Bolden and Carol Anderson (Non-fiction)
- o *No Crystal Stair* by Mairuth Sarsfield (Fiction)
- o *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates (Non-fiction)
- o *Black Lives Matter and the Catholic Church* by Olga Marina Segura (Non-fiction)

- **On Spirituality**

- o *On Women* by Joan Chittister
- o *The Gift of Years* by Joan Chittister

- o *If Nuns Ruled the World* by Jo Piazza
- o *The Universal Christ* by Richard Rohr (book and study guide)

· **Workshops**

- o Sisters of Charity are using ZOOM as an educational resource and are providing programs on Earth Literacy. The website is www.earthliteracies.org
- o The BARAT Spirituality Centre offers a number of programs. Including one in December in which our own Linda Longmire participated. To learn more please check out www.baratspirituality.org

ARCAN COMMITTEES:

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE - WINTER EDITION - FEBRUARY, 2021:

Julia Townsend, Denise Isaacs, Sharon Jacquard

ARCAN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Ronnie (Eileen MacDonald), Linda Longmire,

Anne Bown

Published February 2021
