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VICS: An Extended Canadian Family

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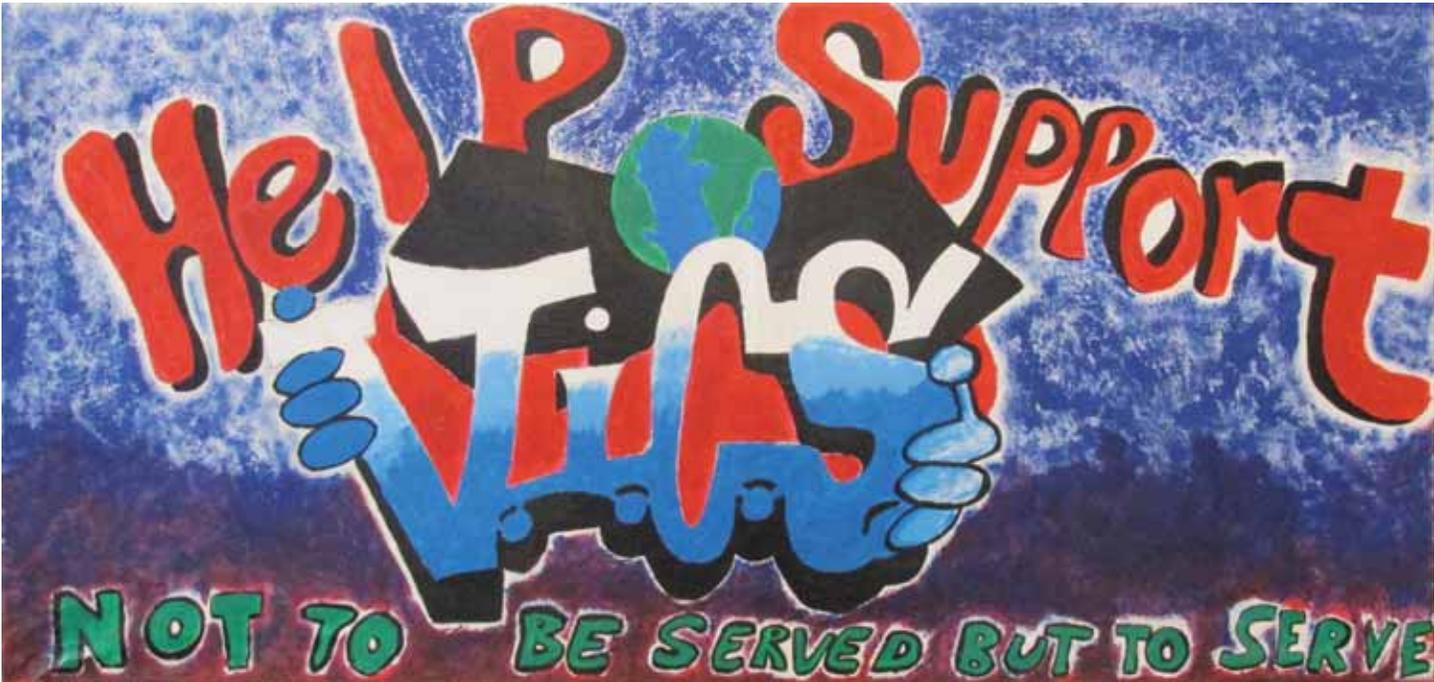
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An Extended Canadian Family

Joyce de Gooijer

VICS is family – a large family: not only volunteers in the field, but family members, spouses, and supporters. Holy Thursday and Good Friday are wonderful examples of the solidarity of our extended Canadian family.



Holy Thursday Fast

Catherine Pieroni has been the guiding force behind Brebeuf College School's Holy Thursday Fast. She learned about service from her mother, Sally Kerr, long-time VICS secretary. Catherine first raised money for VICS at a hotdog sale when she was in grade 6. Twenty-six years later, she continues to invite Brebeuf's young men to spend a day fasting, in solidarity with, and fundraising for VICS and its volunteers. This year about 100 students adopted the VICS motto, "Not to be served but to serve" and translated it into an art project displayed at the school entrance.



Catherine Pieroni



Good Friday Fast

Neil McNeil High School continues to be the gathering place for VICS Good Friday Fast. Former VICS volunteers, priests and sisters, lay Spiritans, principals of Catholic High Schools from 44 years ago, long-time supporters and special guests share a theme related to solidarity and justice.

This year we were blessed to have Myra Bates share her and Ellen Einterz's experiences in Cameroon. After 24 years of reading their stories, we finally met Myra in person! She spoke of their rocky beginnings in a "poor forgotten corner of Cameroon", where it took "a long time to be loved". After initially running an outreach program, they found an abandoned building, cleaned it up and sat on the veranda waiting for patients. From borrowed beds, training people to vaccinate and do wound care, planting hundreds of trees and fundraising, the hospital in Kolofata has grown into a facility with 5 buildings, 125 beds and 32 nurses.

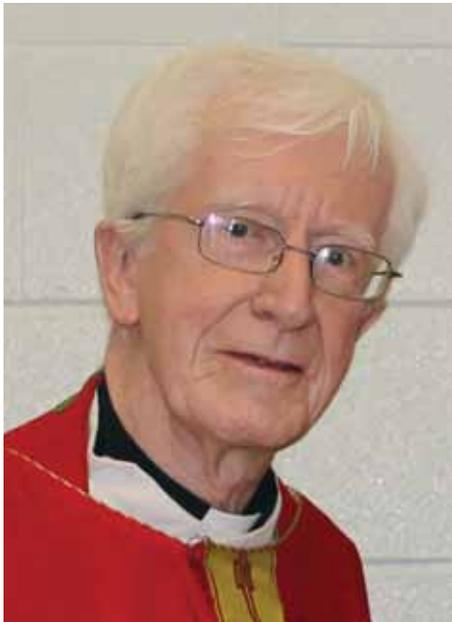
The Good Friday Fast is a wonderful example of VICS family collaboration. A team of volunteers work together to find a guest speaker. Joy Warner organizes the opening prayer and Good Friday service, Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick leads us in The Way of the Cross and the liturgy. Gary Warner, John Wall and the Lopez girls grace us with their music ministry. This extra special gathering brings together volunteers and supporters who continue to believe in VICS and the service we do. They have made the last 44 years possible. ■



Joe Kelly: looking forward to new retirement challenges

Phil Gravelle

Photo by Kellie Angeilli, principal at St. John Brebeuf Catholic School



Joe Kelly is not sure what he will do next, but he knows he will be working in the service of others – as he has done for the last 14 years as pastor at St. John Brebeuf Church in Erin.

He retired in June at the age of 80, returning to the Spiritan community in Toronto where he lived and worked after coming to Canada from Ireland in 1967.

“I’m happy to be able to move on to new things,” he said. “I’m going to look for a job. I’d like to minister to the abandoned and work for the disadvantaged.”

Moving to Erin in 2001 was a major transition, since his previous work had been as a teacher, guidance counselor and chaplain at Neil McNeil High School in Scarborough. Instead of retiring, he learned how to run a parish, live on his own and appreciate the benefits of a small town lifestyle.

“The wonderful thing about living in a small town is that you meet the same people over and over, and you get to know them,” he said.

Kelly grew up in Dublin and worked for the Bank of Ireland from 1953 to

1960. He felt called to a religious life, however, and eventually was ordained with the Spiritans.

A teacher – in Toronto and in Erin

In 1967, Kelly was expecting to go to Kenya, but ended up being assigned to the mission in English Canada, and studied to become a teacher in Toronto. With his banking background, he initially taught business and computer programming, but later moved into religious education and counseling.

“I learned how to engage with young people,” he said. “It takes patience, but kids want to engage and respond, and I am amazed at how perceptive they are.”

Students at St. John Brebeuf Catholic School (next door to the church) can certainly attest to Fr. Joe’s interest in their development. He visits the school constantly, knows all of their names and has given strong support to parish youth programs, including an annual retreat.

Adults in the parish and beyond also have many stories of how he has shared his time and energy to make personal connections. “Sometimes you have to make an extra effort,” he says.

For my own family, Fr. Joe was a great support when my son Thomas died, three years ago. We are grateful that he took the time to learn about the situation and find the right words to say at the funeral.

Working with him as a musician, I admire his singing ability and his dedication to the liturgical traditions of the church. And after hearing at least 650 of his homilies, I also appreciate his passion for the scriptures and social justice.

With many good memories of his time in Erin, he has particular praise for his colleagues in the Ministerial Association. “One thing that is special about this place is the way the churches work together and people cooperate,” he said. ■

Reprinted from *The Erin Advocate*.

Canadian Church Press Awards

Spiritan recently won five Canadian Church Press Awards of Merit:



First place

Personal Experience/First Person Account

“My beautiful, quiet, sleepy country parish”
by Peter Wayow CSSp (Summer 2014)

Third place

Feature Layout and Design
“Spiritan Spirituality” (Winter 2014)

