

SERVANTS OF THE CROSS †

THE NEW WINE

A Tribute to Fr. Bob

EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE

Sr. Anna Chan

The word 'evangelization' seems like such a big word in comparison to the simplicity of its meaning. And most of you probably already know what the word means, but as a refresher, here is how Fr. Bob Bedard words it,

Evangelization... is the process whereby a person hears the gospel, embraces it fully, makes Jesus Lord of his life and gets involved in a lively, intimate and ongoing relationship with him.

(Evangelization: A Challenge for the Catholic Church, by Fr. Bob Bedard, pg. 6)

At first glance, reading about this process may seem quite unassuming, quite ordinary. However, this one word 'evangelization' changed Fr. Bob's life. It is as if he threw in his lot with Jesus and embraced in his heart something very, very tangible, something very, very personal. The change was like turning 180 degrees. He knew his experience wasn't something that could be left hidden; in fact he knew everyone was meant to experience it too!

This word 'evangelization' has hit me too, like a ton of bricks. I've written my experience of evangelization out on paper, shared it with many people, and even hung it in an elaborate picture frame as a reminder. And I think a big part of our call to evangelization is to just go and share our story over and over to as many people as we can, creating opportunities for the Lord to move in His Spirit and power.

So, in the spirit of Fr. Bob, here is my story. It is a very simple experience that remains very, very tangible, and very, very personal.

June 1999. This was my first real encounter with Christ and His love for me. And when I write 'real', I mean it

in every sense of the word. The encounter was genuine, authentic, and indisputable. The encounter was as real as seeing it with my very own eyes. And though, I compare this experience as something I saw tangibly, I didn't. There was nothing tactile, concrete, or physical about the experience. There was no instrument that could measure the encounter as real. There was no supporting evidence that would prove it as valid. The 'real' I felt was something I knew in my heart. For the first time I knew, to the depths of my being, that God loved me personally. The encounter was simple. A group of us were singing a few songs of praise and the words began

to come alive in my heart. Then after the time of singing, I quietly and unassumingly walked over to the chapel. I didn't want anyone to notice what I was feeling. When I got to the chapel I was knocked off my feet in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Kneeling for hours, I had to ration the one piece of Kleenex I had in my pocket as the tears kept flowing. I was given a grace of experiencing His unconditional love for me. Regardless of what kind of relationship I

had with God prior to this experience, regardless of all my failures, something was new in me.

When I look back and try to make sense of the experience, I recall that there was no rehearsal for this moment. The invitation was put out by people I hardly knew. They challenged everyone to be open to receive whatever God wanted to give each of us. That was it. I accepted the invitation and the next thing I knew, a blessing of a friendship like no other came over me. You see, something in me believed. The belief was as easy as knowing the answer of adding one plus one. God loved me just as I was and He wanted to be a part of my life in a very personal way. From that point on, my life changed. I began to live for this friendship with Christ, *(Continued on next page...)*



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determined to follow Him wherever He led me. Little did I know what this prayer would mean.

This one experience, as simple as it was, changed my life. And it's not just me. My sisters and my brothers, the Companions of the Cross, they all have their own experience of God's personal love that changed their lives too. Some experiences may sound quite ordinary and modest while others more elaborate and awe-inspiring. But nonetheless, no matter the sensation, God works with willing hearts.

And as for Fr. Bob himself, his experience of God's love was simple, like mine. He called it 'very bland' or 'a quiet one'. There was nothing spectacular about it, but he also called it 'revolutionary'. That day, when he experienced the power of God's love, Fr. Bob never looked back, nor wasted any time. He was committed, determined, and deliberate in his service to the Church. His belief was so intense and extreme that he shelved his teaching plan only to give his students the same opportunity to experience God's love themselves.

Fr. Bob was clear as to who was in charge... Jesus. Fr. Bob knew he had to place the offer (the invitation of a relationship with Jesus), to allow the other person to respond and make the choice, and finally, to watch the Lord move. And remember, it took only one experience. Who among you right now are ready to make this same prayer he taught his students, "Lord, if you are real, show me"?

Thank you Fr. Bob. We are grateful for all that you have done for us. Thank you for having lived this mission of evangelization right to the end of your life. You have certainly left a legacy, a gift for each of your spiritual sons and daughters to continue to live out and share with the whole world, the power of God's personal love for each of us.

MY CROSS



Sr. Monique Bisson

The Lord is good! We dedicated this past year to our Charismatic pillar, learning more about how to be docile to His Spirit. We learned we can't box Him in or hold Him back. He simply wants us to give Him permission then He can move in power!

This year, we sensed in our hearts that the Lord wanted us to dedicate our time to learn more about His CROSS. Admittedly, we were nervous that it would be hard, a struggle, and painful. Then, unexpectedly one day, Fr. Mark Goring, CC was led to share a word on his heart with us. He said,

I want to assure you that God is near. Every action you take, He is ever present that even as He tests, it is only to build in you the capacity to do more for Him. Be assured that He is with you.

Wow! His words gave us the surety we needed; we did not need to be afraid.

What is the meaning of the Cross? Why do we value this symbol of suffering and death that we even wear it around our necks and put it on our walls? What I do know is that the Cross represents a contradiction. Jesus suffered and died on the Cross. Not for Himself but for you and me. And He did it for one reason alone, for us to experience what love really means. He wants us to serve, to give of ourselves, and to be available for

others like He did. It isn't about serving me. It is about giving to others with a selfless love.

There are lots of good things we can do for God, thousands of things. The problem is that they will be our ideas, run on our energy and resources, won't work very well, and we'll exhaust ourselves in the process. How many highly motivated people have burned out trying to make good things happen for God?

What we need, I am convinced, is not a whole bunch of good ideas, but God's idea. He has a plan. If we can find out what it is and do it, it will work, work for him and for his kingdom.

(We are called to be Companions of the Cross, Fr. Bob Bedard, pg. 30-31)

So how do we learn to love like Jesus did, to serve, and to give of ourselves to others? How can we know when we are doing God's idea? This year, Sr. Anna asked us to find an item that represented the cross for each of us. I had to ponder on this one. I really wanted to invest fully into this challenge. I chose a weakness of mine that holds me back from fully giving to others. I admit I am weak when it comes to distractions. I can easily lose focus. I end up frustrated with myself because I realize I get off track and lose sight of the present moment. For example, I get distracted easily during our scheduled time to clean the house. I start watering **my** plants, putting away **my** books, wiping down **my** shoes, etc... You get the point. It sounds like **my** plan and not **God's** plan. Next thing you know, I'm not serving the way I'm being called in the moment.

Learning to love like Jesus will be a challenge. I know how easily distractions can sneak up on me. But, I'm up for it. Why? Because I have the Cross to remind me of what it means to love like He did. So, how 'bout it? Dare to love like He did!

Servants of the Cross: Private Association of the Faithful

The Servants of the Cross Community, located in Ottawa, Ontario, is a community of women committed to living and ministering together as sisters in the Lord. Their purpose is to labour boldly for the renewal of the Church through a dynamic evangelization centred upon Christ crucified, who is God's power and wisdom. Prompted by the love of God, they desire all people to come into the fullness of life through a personal ongoing encounter with Jesus Christ... I (Archbishop Prendergast, S.J.) hereby decree the recognition of the Servants of the Cross Community as a private association of the faithful.



We are celebrating the great news



Archbishop Prendergast is sharing the decree



Archbishop Prendergast presents us the decree

On September 8th, 2011, Archbishop Terrence Prendergast, S.J. decreed the Servants of the Cross as a private association of the faithful. This is our initial step of canonical recognition. Shortly after, Sr. Anna and Sr. Monique went to visit Fr. Bob Bedard to share this great news. Fr. Bob's eyes were closed while they were sharing, but they could see he was intently listening. They asked Fr. Bob to give them a sign if he heard them. His right thumb moved slightly. Sr. Anna wanted to be sure so she asked, "Can you confirm that and give me another thumbs up?" Then they saw his thumb go up a lot more. We had Fr. Bob's blessing on our new status!



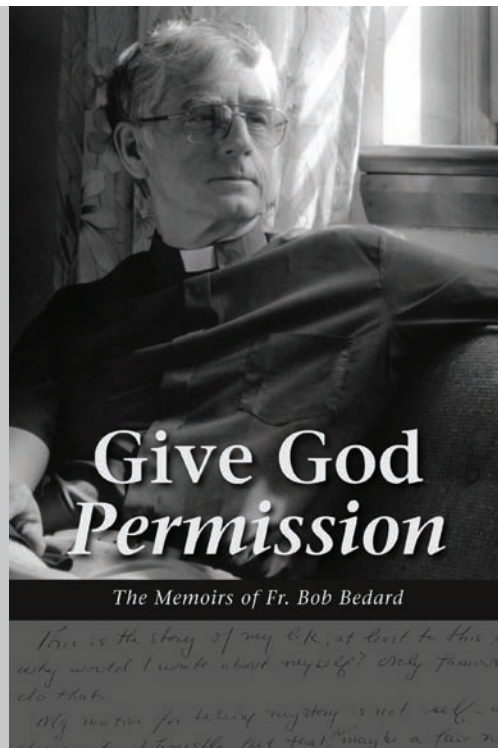
Archbishop Terrence Prendergast, S.J. with the Servants and Companions of the Cross at the renewal of the temporary promises of Srs. Melinda, Stephanie, Vicki, Anna, and Monique

PURPOSEFUL SUFFERING

We're called the Companions of the Cross. It wasn't the name I chose, I can tell you that. I would have liked something like "The Disciples of the Glorious Resurrection of the Triumphant God." Or something like that. But we got the Cross. The everyday Cross. The vicissitudes of life. We all experience them. These are things that we can add to the sufferings of Christ. But you know we suffer so many things without even thinking about it. So many things can happen to us, being attacked, being beaten, being shot at; being part of a tragedy. I know what pain is. I don't just talk about pain as something theoretical. I talk about it as something being very real. The Lord brought me through that, and I have to say, in a very miraculous way...

Suffering then, you see, is not necessarily all bad. Sure it's bad, but it's an opportunity to participate in the sufferings of Christ. Don't waste pain. Give it to God, he can do something with it. He adds it to the sufferings of Jesus and grace pours out upon other people. Don't waste pain, offer it to God.

(Give God Permission by Fr. Bob Bedard, pg. 251-252)



Sr. Vicki Wright

As I ponder Fr. Bob's words above, I recall the time we spent with him in the last 33 months of his life. Fr. Bob knew suffering. He saw what being part of a tragedy looks like. But he was able to pull through the pain, giving him the grace to see suffering as an opportunity. Though it isn't easy to see suffering as an opportunity, he has inspired me to try to do the same in my life.

Fr. Bob was well known among the charismatic circle to be very gifted in preaching. He brought St. Mary's parish back to life. He would be available to so many people in ministry. He was a very active man. He even exercised three times a week at the gym and was known to be competitive in squash. Then, he became ill and confined to his bed. As he declined, he lost more and more of his ability to communicate his thoughts and from my perspective as a speech-language pathologist, I found this to be the most devastating challenge of all, to be unable to ask for what he

needed. We can't really imagine the extent of what he went through. The most amazing thing was that Fr. Bob never complained. You can ask any of his caregivers. He never complained. Not once.

Even though we did not witness in the last 33 months of his life the Fr. Bob of the 80s and 90s, his ministry became quiet and unassuming, but very intentional. He chose to live this time of suffering with a purpose. As Fr. Scott McCaig, CC said in the homily of Fr. Bob's funeral, "He had offered the Lord all his suffering for this community and for its mission of evangelization; and it seems that the Lord in his love used Father Bob for souls right to the very end... he did live out in his own flesh a depth of love and surrender equal to any that I have ever seen." His suffering had purpose; it was not wasted.

Don't waste pain.

I saw with my own eyes how he participated in the sufferings of Christ. He didn't waste pain. He offered it for others, for his community. He gave it to God. During the last ten days of his life, we kept vigil at his bedside twenty-four hours a day as a community. It was an amazing gift to be present with him. As I was leaving one morning, I was overwhelmed with the magnitude of what I had been witnessing, the way he bore his pain, the way he allowed others to help him, the way that God was using him to touch the lives of others, and most of all that I was able to be at the deathbed of a very holy man. God allowed my sisters and I, his spiritual daughters, to learn from his example, right until the end. The lessons I have learned during that time will not be forgotten.

In the end, Fr. Bob lived his calling to be a Companion of the Cross. He may not have chosen the name, but he lived it.

Support Your Sisters

- I would like to support the sisters, Servants of the Cross, in their mission of evangelization. I have indicated below the option of my support.

Personal Information (please print)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Support Options

One Time Donation(s) Donation by Cheque(s)

Payable to the *Servants of the Cross*

Cheque in the amount of \$ _____
is enclosed.

Post-dated cheque(s) in the amount(s) of \$ _____
is/are enclosed.

Donation by Credit Card

Visa MC Amount: \$ _____

Card # _____

Expiry Date: _____

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Monthly Donations through Bank

\$25 \$50 \$100 Amount \$ _____

I have attached a VOID cheque.

I may revoke my authorization at any time, subject to providing notice of 30 days. I have certain recourse rights if any debit does not comply with this agreement. For example, I have the right to receive reimbursement for any debit that is not authorized or is not consistent with this Pre-Authorized Deposit agreement. To obtain more information on my recourse rights I may contact my financial institution or visit www.cdnpay.ca.

Monthly Donation by Credit Card

\$25 \$50 \$100 Amount \$ _____

Visa MC

Card # _____

Expiry date: _____

*Please Complete:

I hereby authorize the Servants of the Cross to arrange automatic withdrawals from my chequing account or credit card,
on the ____ (1st or 15th) day of each month for payment of my pledge. I understand that I may cancel this authorization at any time with advance written notice.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Thank you for your generous gift!

ARE YOU CONVINCED?

Sr. Melinda Schenher

After the death of a loved one, it naturally follows that I spend time thinking over our relationship. I consider what I've learned from that person, and decide if there is anything that I would have desired to turn out differently. Since Fr. Bob Bedard passed away at the beginning of October, I began to think back to my entrance into the community in 2008 and his leading of our Community Days that year. We were blessed to receive teachings on some of his favourite topics: evangelization, the Holy Spirit, and Our Blessed Mother Mary. But, in a lot of ways, I feel like I missed the boat. Here he was, the Founder of a Community of Priests, the man we consider the Spiritual Father of our Community, and I took the time for granted. I may have listened with my ears, but the message didn't completely connect with my heart.

Looking back at my notes from that retreat, I was struck by a question he asked us at the beginning of our time together. He challenged us, "Ask yourself, am I evangelized?" And I have to ask myself, am I? This is a message that Fr. Bob spoke again and again. But I don't always speak when the Holy Spirit prompts me to speak. And sometimes I try and go it alone



Fr. Bob speaking to the Servants



Fr. Bob celebrating Mass for us at Community Days

rather than rely on the Lord and His strength. I feel a bit sheepish to say that I don't think I've fully lived out all he challenged us to. I get caught in the struggles, and I forget that God is God, and I'm not!

But you know, I see it now, and I am convicted of the responsibility that I have. I have heard the message – Jesus' love for me and for you – and I have a mission entrusted to me. Fr. Bob may be gone, but his passionate love for people to know Jesus remains. Jesus longs to be one with his children – all of us.

In cultivating this desire for people to know Jesus' passionate love for them, I feel convicted that we ask ourselves the same question again today: "Am I evangelized?" Today, have we accepted that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that without Him we can do nothing? Have we turned to the Lord today, repented, and received His forgiveness? Have we moved from living our faith in a 'cultural' manner to being convicted of our faith? Have we had a personal, spiritual experience, strong enough to make us fervent in our faith? If not, just ask Him, "Lord, if you're real, show me." The Lord is willing to answer when we ask!

Time to get down to business. Jesus preached to the masses: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." Accept me for who I am. I am the one sent by the Father. Through me the world will have life. Without me you can do nothing. Come to me. That's the first step – coming to terms with Jesus.

Jesus offers salvation. Salvation is life to the full, both now and forever. Death becomes the gateway to eternal life. That's the Good News of the Kingdom of God, and Jesus is the one who makes it possible. He preaches to the crowds, he touches and heals the sick in order to catch their attention, and then he gives them the call: Repent. Turn away from what's wrong, turn away from sin, and come to God. Follow me. Come to the Lord. If you will simply do that, salvation will be yours. You will live. This is the Good News. (The Catholic Disciple by Fr. Bob Bedard, pg. 173-174).

Having read the articles in this newsletter, is there a change taking place inside of you? What message is the Lord trying to speak to your heart today? Are you convinced that He wants you to have a personal experience of His love? Ask him. Surrender. Then let Him take the lead.

CONSIDERING A VOCATION? COME ON A VACATION!

Your next opportunity is:
Saturday March 10, 2012
9 am to 10 pm

To join us, please contact
Sr. Anna Chan at 613-729-8710

The Dangerous Prayer:
Lord, whatever You want me to do, I will do.
- Fr. Bob Bedard



TALAGA?

(Filipino for "Oh Really? Did you know?")

FUN FACTS ABOUT FR. BOB

- Fr. Bob's mother was known for talking to no end on the phone, as is Sr. Anna's mother.
- Fr. Bob was a hockey fan, like Sr. Monique.
- Fr. Bob was a sought-after speaker and spoke at John Paul II Bible School, where he was heard by Sr. Stephanie and Sr. Melinda.



- Fr. Bob especially loved to exercise as does Sr. Melinda.
- Fr. Bob grew up in Ottawa, like Sr. Vicki.
- Fr. Bob had an affinity to warm weather, like Lizette (who grew up in Texas).

2011: A VAN ODYSSEY

We are so appreciative of all the support we receive from our benefactors in filling our needs. We have something larger on our wishlist in this newsletter.

We are hoping to purchase a van for our growing community and would like to enlist your help both through prayer and financial donations. The van we have our eye on is something like the *Honda Odyssey*. We want a van that will keep up with us on the roads we travel in our mission of evangelization. (The Odyssey was rated 2011 Van of the Year due to its fuel efficiency and safety.)



Mission Statement

The Servants of the Cross is a Roman Catholic community of women, committed to living and ministering together as sisters in the Lord. As Servants of the Cross, they are called to labour boldly for the renewal of the Church through a dynamic evangelization centred upon Christ crucified, who is God's power and wisdom. Prompted by the love of God, they desire all people to come into the fullness of life through a personal ongoing encounter with Jesus Christ.

Contact Info

Servants of the Cross, 1153 Wellington St. W, Ottawa, ON, K1Y 2Y9 613-729-8710 www.servantsofthecross.ca