

2003 to 2023 | 20 Years at St. Michael's Multicultural

From failing church to thriving church

THE ST. MICHAEL'S MULTICULTURAL SERVANT LEADERSHIP TEAM

In 2023, St. Michael's, Vancouver aka St. Michael's Multicultural (SMM) will celebrate the parish's 134th anniversary with Bishop John's episcopal visit on St. Michael's Day, this coming September 24. In anticipation of this visit, the parish has been reflecting on its evolution over the last 20 years, and on the miracle of the journey from failing church to thriving church.

The primary proxy for this reflection was James Baldo, ODNW, who came to Canada in 2003. As has been the case with many Filipino-Canadian families, James followed his wife Sandra and daughter Christine, who led the way six years earlier. This is an example that mirrors the continuing lived experience of many others, including Bishop Alex Wandag, the parish's Honorary Associate, who came to Canada following his retirement in the Philippines, to join his wife Grace, a member of SMM since 2006.

James is a proxy for the many new Canadians at SMM who have transformed it from the failing church it was at the turn of the millennium, to the thriving church that it is today. In James's case, he was People's Warden for over 15 years. James was there when the idea for St. Michael's Multicultural identity flashed into being when driving past the signage of the Multicultural United Church on Grandview. As People's Warden, James has been a leading champion of the multicultural focus within the Filipino-Canadian community at SMM. In that vein, he recently organized a 20-year celebration on June 10. Also on that day, building on that theme, James made the following presentation regarding the second of three 20-year reflections:

"Michiko and Greg's 20 years, from 2003 to 2023, closely tracks with St. Michael's Multicultural over the last 20 years. The best example of this has been their 20-year involvement with the Meal Ministry program.



Left to right: Bishop Alex and Grace Wandag, Greg and Michiko Tatchell, Terry and Marg Cutforth, James and Sandra Baldo, and the Rev. Wilmer Toyoken. PHOTO Betha Kollin (Betha was also MC for the June 10 event)

A 40-line prayer prophesied the partnership of Michiko and Greg, and how the 20 years would be as servant leaders at St. Mike's:

*'Hito is a perfect sign
It's all we need to know our place
Together, yes, but, more, for Him
Only for Him, to grow in Him.'*

The Hito sign is like two praying hands. Michiko and Greg designed their wedding rings to be a circle of Hito's. Ask them to see it. And how have they fulfilled that servanthood prophecy? Can you think of the ways you have seen them fulfil this prophecy?

Could I suggest three ways that I have discerned?

1. MEAL MINISTRY | *How many of you have seen the Tatchell's involvement with Meal Ministry over the last 20 years?*

2. MULTICULTURALISM | *Being married in Jerusalem by a Palestinian Priest and Bishop, and then renewing their vows with a Filipino-Canadian Priest and Bishop, is a*

most appropriate symbol of their multicultural foundation, grounded in their faith. 'Teaming together for his great works Out of ourselves, one for his Grace.'

3. FAMILY | *In the 40-line Hito Prayer, Michiko and Greg used the language of 'This Great Gift,' referring to their love and life together as servant leaders. 20 years later, 'This Great Gift' could now equally refer to their love and life together with their other family, their greater family, their SMM family. How many times have you heard them express that love for their SMM family? How many times have you felt that same love?*

Is this last point, this love of church family, the most important point of all?

All we have achieved over the last 20 years at St. Michael's, all we have achieved in becoming recognized as the Resurrection Multicultural church, is it not because of the trinity of our love that we have for our church and families, for one another, and for the love that we have for Him?

Do these words from the Hito Prayer of 20 years ago capture this?

'Teaming together for his great works Out of ourselves, one for his Grace.'

For the third 20-year reflection, James wanted to ensure acknowledgement of the contribution of another couple, who returned to the church 20 years ago. This couple was married in the church 62 years ago (and will celebrate their 63rd Anniversary the day before Bishop John makes his episcopal visit). They have been instrumental in the physical resurrection of the church building. Terry and Marg Cutforth (both members of the Order of the Diocese of New Westminster) originally built the Day Care facility in the basement of the church hall, 50 years ago. In this third 20-year story, the condition of the SMM complex 20 years ago reflected the failing church of 2003. Eleanor Jones (SMM's first ODNW recipient in 2009) invited the Cutforth's back, and through Terry's organization and hard work, anyone looking at SMM today could quickly tell from the building that it is now a loved church, a thriving church. To Terry, and his supportive wife Marg, goes the glory.

As authors, in preparing for Bishop John's visit, the trustees were aware of the downside of highlighting just three stories from the 20-year resurrection history of St. Michael's, and the injustice of leaving out so much that was just as important. But it is hoped that these three 20-year focused SMM proxy reflections, about the Baldo's, the Cutforth's, and the Tatchell's, will give the greater church, and the congregation, a small sense for how the miracle at SMM has been wrought over the last 20 years. And the discernment that if we do our part, then the Good Lord will do his. To the last 20 years, and the next, *Soli Deo Gloria!* ✠

But First, Coffee!

LEAH POSTMAN
St. James, Vancouver

I am not a morning person. I was on retreat in March with the Canons of the Order of St. Benedict, at the beautiful Bethlehem Centre in Nanaimo, and was concerned not so much with being godly as with staying awake. Vigils (the first prayer time, or office, of the morning) wasn't even especially early, 7:30am, but I was long out of practice. As a postulant (meaning one seeking admission to a religious order), I was afraid my character would be found wanting, and I would be sent packing. Fortunately, the Canons are not so ruthless, or petty. One of our members, Sister Jayne, sent a message around that she had brought her coffee maker for those of us who needed a little boost before breakfast. My people! My monastic path was assured, at least for the duration of the retreat.

As Canons, we structure our lives around the Rule of St. Benedict. The Rule was written over 1,500 years ago and is a guide to praying and living in monastic community. The Canon Communities of St. Benedict (OSBCn) is relatively new, providing a contemporary Anglican framework for the living out of Benedictine Christianity. The OSBCn is a dispersed order, that is, rather than living together, members maintain their own homes and livelihoods. Members come from various walks of life, men and women, married and single. The Benedictine values of prayer, work, study, and vows are emphasized, and we seek to live simply and modestly, a balanced life



Left to right: Sr. Jeannie Lynne Fontaine; Deacon Juanita Clark; Mtr. Amanda Ruston; Sr. Jayne Postuk; Fr. Martin Brokenleg; Sr. Leah Postman; Fr. Jack Rose; Br. Gene Sederstrom; and Mtr. Susan Hermanson. PHOTO Submitted

of hospitality and love of neighbour. We are required to be active members of a local parish.

The OSBCn has groups active in Canada and the US. The Canon community in BC is the Community of St. Aidan, centred in Victoria, BC in the diocese of Islands and Inlets under Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee. The Prior of St. Aidan is Fr. Martin Brokenleg. A number of our members live in Vancouver, BC. We meet on Zoom twice a week for community discussion and prayer, and once a month in a larger conference

of members and other interested persons. Twice a year we meet in-person on retreat. And we are committed to praying the daily offices as completely as our daily lives allow.

On this retreat, another postulant and I were being clothed, making us novices. The clothing is literal: in the ceremony at St. Paul's, Nanaimo, other members assisted in dressing the new novices in the habit of the community, a black tunic and hooded scapular. Another member took vows for her second year in the novitiate, and one other member took life vows. As

Benedictines, we are called to make vows of obedience, stability, and conversion of life. The process can take years. Always, there is much time for discernment, to experience God's leading in this life of prayer.

Over the three days of the retreat, we sat long over delicious meals and shared details of our lives, stories of the myriad journeys that had brought us to this place, to be among these people. We prayed the offices together and reflected on topics our members brought for discussion. Many people have expressed to me how arduous such a life must be, as if monastics are some sort of ascetic mountain climbers or marathon runners. But St. Benedict tells us that the monastic life he lays out in his rule is "nothing harsh, nothing burdensome." The spiritual life is, in reality, just ordinary people living ordinary lives in a way that reveals the living God in every moment. It is not about being a morning person or doing without coffee, let alone scaling mountains. It is about being available for an ongoing, deepening relationship with God and with others. ✠

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For further information about the OSBCn go online to <https://osbcn.org> or email martinbrokenleg@gmail.com.

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