

THE KOLPING CANADA NEWSLETTER

Christmas 2014

A Blessed Kolping Christmas

There are two great events in the Christian calendar which open our hearts and minds to the wonders of a God who surprises us with a presence so gentle and subtle that even we who believe often miss the immediacy of God. The high feasts of the Church year are Christmas and Easter. The latter is the promise that our lives have a fullness of meaning which goes beyond the annihilation of death to a new life that we cannot even imagine. The Resurrection is God's promise that our humble, fragile human lives are of infinite worth in God's eyes and that one day we shall live together with God in a communion and community that, again, we can scarcely imagine.

Christmas, on the other hand, celebrates the God-who-becomes-human, the Incarnation, the *Ins-Fleisch-werden* of God. This is another promise—not only that our lives are worth while, but that God is willing, in all humility, to embrace this life of ours, walk the journey we walk, teach us about living the Kingdom of God, and share our suffering and even death itself that we might learn that God's gentleness, mercy, compassion and love conquer all that we fear.

One of the great insights of Fr. Adolf Kolping during his time was that the face of God, which was familiar in the world of the family farm and one's rural community, was becoming lost in the cities as men and women moved there to find work. First, he recognized the face of God in their confusion and poverty; and then they began to recognize the face of God in his care for and service to them. He lived, in the circumstances of his own time of upheaval, the Incarnation of Jesus.

As a thought for us Kolping members this Christmas, I invite you to look with the eyes of Fr. Kolping to see where poverty and up-rootedness eat away at the hope of many people today. I would ask you to pay particular attention to refugees and those who have been chased out of their home and lands. Archbishop Bashar Warda, for example, in Iraq is trying to assist well over 100,000 Christians displaced by war and hatred in his land. Many of these refugees have lost everything, but Bishop Warda is responding as Fr. Kolping did—with open arms, like Christ, that give these ordinary people hope.

This Christmas I pray that we will all see with Fr. Kolping's eyes (which are the eyes of Jesus) whether in Canada or in far-distant lands those people chased from their homes by hatred and violence. And may we be, in our own small way, part of the Incarnation of Jesus for them. In this way we can truly wish one another a Merry & Blessed Christmas!

Mark Miller
markmillelr@cssr.com

MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Suffering is the crucial test of the true Christian. - A. Kolping

Once again Christmas is near, and the winter has greeted us with full force. As we get older, and more of our members are dying, Christmas is a good time to remember them. In the last Kolping Magazine there is a picture of a tall tombstone in granite with the Kolping sign engraved in colour. I think I would like something like that.

It is time to give thanks to all the people who work for Kolping Canada. Father Miller, who is a very busy priest, Mrs. Regina Knoll who publishes our Newsletter, Mrs. Inge Baumstark, who keeps our money account in good order, Mrs. Sibylle Ganguin who keeps a Logbook. A heartfelt "Thank you" on behalf of all Canadian Kolping members.

We must also say thank you to Kolping Vancouver and their president Horst Zimmerman and wife Erika for all their work for their project in El Salvador. With the help of former parishioners, they supported and supplied a computer school, and Internet Cafe, and a baking class for students. So far six young people have found steady work. This is a perfect Kolping project, to give help so that they can help themselves. Erika and Horst took a trip to South America to see for themselves. The local priest is very much involved. Let's pray that this project will bear fruit for a long time.

For the International Kolping Society, a highlight in September was a meeting of the International Board of Directors in Cologne. Nearly 50 delegates, from those National Kolping societies that have 1000 members or more, were present and deliberated on the future of the Kolping Society.

May you be filled with the wonder of the birth of the Christchild, and may you be surrounded by the love of family and friends.

Yours in Kolping - Steve Salb

NEWS FROM KOLPING EDMONTON

Our meetings started in September and we still managed to fill all of our seats. Fr. Georg was ill, so no mass to celebrate World Day of Prayer. Instead, the members did the prepared readings and prayers. We are happy to report Fr. Georg's return in good health. We will spend some time researching the charities to which we will donate in the coming months.

In December Father will lead us in our annual Advent celebration. There will be readings, old traditional songs and good food as we prepare for Christmas as a family. And through Kolping we have all of you as our family! We wish you good health, in body and spirit. May the joy of Christmas be in your hearts.

Treu Kolping, Donna Novak

NEWS FROM KOLPING HAMILTON

Once again due to our dwindling membership no formal Kolping Meetings took place since our Summer Picnic, however, our Ladies' Craft Group held two meetings since the summer with another one scheduled for Dec. 1/14.

Our annual Kolping Christmas Party is scheduled for Saturday Nov. 29/14 along with our General Meeting. In addition we are planning to assist at our Parish's Christmas Party on Dec. 14/14.

In closing we wish everyone a Blessed Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Treu Kolping, Win Klaas

NEWS FROM KOLPING TORONTO

Our Kolping activities have again pretty much fallen into their usual pattern - 2 get-togethers per month. The first is Communion Breakfast on the second Sunday of the month and then another meeting on the last Wednesday of the month.

We did have our Breakfasts in October and November with about 25-30 in attendance. It is always sad when one or another of our regular members is no longer able to attend due to health reasons. This is becoming increasingly common. Another huge problem is the horrendous congestion downtown after travelling long distances to get there.

Wednesday, September 24th, saw a group of our seniors head to High Park for our last "out-door" outing of the year. Our "World Day of Prayer" was celebrated on October 29th following the 12 o'clock mass and a quick lunch. We selected from the readings for the day and then Werner Scheliga gave us a very personal account, along with a picture album, from his and Erika's trip to Chile. It was a pleasure to have Father Miller present at this meeting.

Many of our members helped out at St. Patrick's Annual Bazaar on November 12th. Henry Buss was in his element at the Wheel of Fortune. He made up his own rules so that the house always came out ahead. The Bazaar netted a hefty \$9300 for the missions!

Now, at the beginning of Advent, we wish you all a Blessed Christmas filled with joy, peace and LOVE.

Treu Kolping and Merry Christmas! Ann Salb

NEWS FROM KOLPING VANCOUVER

Since our last report just six weeks ago, we have had no functions in Vancouver. Our next get-together is planned for December 7, at which time we will observe Kolping Memorial Day. Our situation here is mirrored in Kolping Families across Canada: Our membership has decreased through a number of deaths in recent years, and more and more members are dealing with health issues, finding it difficult to attend our meetings—not a very encouraging sign for our future. However, we're doing our best to keep Kolping going as long as we can.

The Advent season is approaching, a time to reflect on and prepare for the birth of our Lord. Unfortunately, at this time we are also bombarded with the usual inescapable onslaught of consumer hype. Let us remember the sick, the lonely and the poor, and thus experience how the gift of our love can enrich our own lives.

Adolph Kolping was a hard-working man with many talents. Aside from his tireless work with young journeymen, he published a weekly newspaper, contributing many articles, citations and poems. I'd like to share my translation of one of his Christmas poems below. Translating poems is not easy, but here is my humble attempt:

The Little House in Nazareth *(By Adolph Kolping)*

Come with me to the little house in Nazareth,
See how poverty can enrich through virtue.
Nowadays we forget that even a poor man
Who is pious and god-fearing can live a happy life.

Here, through his arduous toil's reward, Saint Joseph
Meagrely nurtures the Son of God,
Yet, contentedness brightens his noble face.
His heart knows no bitterness, his mouth does not lament.

And sharing in his toil and pain like a lowly servant
From morning to night, the Blessed Virgin never grumbles or complains.
Her lovely face, already exalted on this earth,
Mirrors the peace that a pure heart imparts.

On behalf of Kolping Vancouver, I extend best wishes to all for a Blessed Christmas and a Peaceful, Happy New Year!

Rose Vetter

NEWS FROM KOLPING WINNIPEG

With just a few days to go until the first Sunday of Advent, and with a little snow finally falling, it is has begun: the first waves of Christmas stress are rolling in. Christmas carols have been playing in the stores for weeks already and certain people we need not mention have begun their Christmas baking; and those same people probably have all their gifts bought, or, if not, have the lists tucked neatly in their wallets, ready to go. It must be nice to be so organized.

Kolping Winnipeg will get together this coming Sunday for the Kolping Memorial Communion Breakfast, with 57 members expected. This will be followed two days later by our Adventsfeier. Just two weeks after that we'll have our Christmas Party, and in January our Annual General Meeting.

Those of us who still sing in choirs have been busy preparing for our Christmas concerts. The German Choir of Winnipeg, one third of which is made up of Kolping members, began practicing early this year because we have yet another new director, the third one in two years. (The gentleman - aged 86 - who took over in 2013 unfortunately passed away this summer.). We now have one of our choir members, a woman (a first for the choir!) putting us through our paces. Our first concert will be at the Christkindlmarkt in Fort Garry Place; a week later we'll sing at the German Society's Christmas party. Always 'feierlich'.

Christmas without music is unthinkable now, as are decorated trees and homes, huge and fancy dinners, presents, parties, smiling children, crazy traffic, frantic shoppers, icy roads, etc. etc. The real 'reason for the season' is no longer even thought of by most people these days. It's mostly greed and indulgence, unfortunately.

We wish everyone of you a happy and holy Christmas season. Make every minute count. Eat your favourite foods, drink what you like, enjoy your family get-togethers. Never forget, you are making memories for your kids; try to make them happy ones. And if there is one person missing from your dinner table this year, think of all the good Christmases you had with him, or her, instead of dwelling on the sadness. And, most of all, please do something for someone who is not going to have much of a holiday. To be alone at Christmas is so sad.

We wish you Christ's blessing, and Treu Kolping!

Editor's note: To add to Steve's list, I would like to thank the reporters from our local societies for their co-operation and their good reports. For this issue, for example, they had less than a week to get their reports written and sent in to me. It took them all of four day! I had been having some serious computer problems and was almost convinced that they could not be fixed. But, after I had paid nearly \$300 at Future Shop, and with the help of our older son, everything is working again. Better in fact. Computer viruses and crashes can really test your courage, much less knowledge. All young people today just smile when you try to describe your troubles, they have grown up with all this stuff and there is no mystery in it for them. But for us, who grew up in the Stone Age, when dinosaurs still roamed the earth, it is often a challenge. But we still love it!

REPORTERS to the KCNL: our next issue will be for Easter, the first Sunday in April. Pls keep notes of your activities, and don't forget to include your new slate of officers. You will get a reminder. rhknoll@Shaw.ca

PS: A couple Christmases stand out in my memory. In one, it is 1944 and we are in an old convent in Schlesien, together with hundreds of other refugees, bed bugs, lice and hunger. To celebrate the occasion our meal that day consisted of boiled potatoes with burned, fried onions (delicious!) instead of the usual turnips boiled, sometimes, with a little salt. There was even a concert in the music room that evening: some sort of 'prisoners', (Haeflinge) young people who sang Christmas carols so beautifully, like nothing any of us, certainly not I, had ever heard before. There was even a Christmas tree! Leave it to the Germans! In all the misery and horror they found the heart to decorate a Christmas tree and arranged a concert!

Christmases 1945 was spent in Eisenerz, in another refugee camp, where we were existing on 650 calories a day,

man, woman and child. There was nothing but hunger and despair. And filth. Anyone who was there at that time will tell you all about it. There was nothing, no Christmas tree, no songs, no hope of ever seeing our home again, and no news whatsoever of our Dad. In fact, my mother had received a notice that someone with his name had been declared missing in action, presumably killed.

On a third Christmas, in Bavaria in 1946, after we had been reunited with our Dad we children learned that it had been decided that our grandmother (whom we grew up with) was going to be sent to America to live with her 'other' children. She was leaving us, she knew, forever, inspite of all the promises. She had been our everything, our protectress, our conscience, our consolation. I don't know what we ate that evening, but I do remember a little decorated tree, and my grandmother's quiet tears. My mother insisted, as she did every Christmas until her death in 2002, that we children stand facing the tree, and sing every Christmas carol she could think of before we could open our presents (presents!) at last. One of her favourites was 'Suesser die Glocken nie klingen'. To this day I find myself grinding my teeth when I have to hear it or sing it. We were 'making memories', alright.

These days our family Christmases are spent with as many of our children and grandchildren as can make it, which means at least six cars that have to find parking in our complex. All four grandsons have girlfriends, everyone is happy, the food is always delicious, the gifts generous. Life is good. We have a lot of prolific 'talkers', but the topics are always pleasant. But behind the smiles and shining eyes there is the un-spoken knowledge that this is one of our last Christmases together. We put that off to think about some other time. This is Christmas, a time of joy and peace. May God continue to bless us all! rk

PPS: I realize that not everybody reading this newsletter is thrilled to read my personal little vignettes. When I have space left, I actually enjoy coming up with something from my past. Since my childhood, like that of most of the people reading this, was so fraught with suffering and fear, it's really hard to find something cheerful. Jokes? Poetry? Encouragement? OK, maybe I can do something with that. We all know that Kolping in Canada is diminishing, but only in numbers. Our solid, hard-core members are keeping up their determination to stay true to everything Kolping has meant to us in our lives. It has made us better people, parents, friends. Without Kolping our lives would have been vastly different. We can all be grateful, and proud! Treu Kolping!