

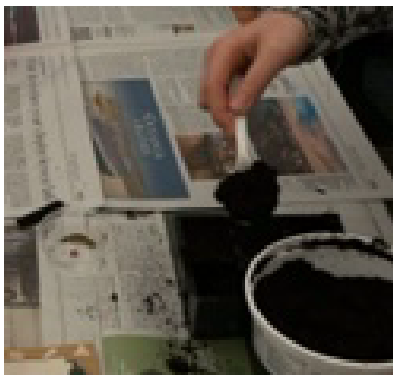


About Our Garden Ministry

It is impossible to separate the garden from the people who care for it. We are intertwined. We work the garden, and the garden works on our behalf. We care for it and it cares for us. How? It feeds us and others; it fills our souls with beauty, peace and joy; it makes us feel alive and gives us a sense of belonging. That's a start. Here are some of the people who care for St. Gabriel's Garden.

This spring, St. Gabriel's hired Jim McCann on a short-term contract to help prepare the garden for the growing season. We are grateful for all his work, in particular, the removal of invasive trees from the west side of the property near the church building. The sumacs there now have much more light and are already showing signs of improved vigour.

For the third year, St. Gabriel's has received a Canada Summer Jobs grant to hire a Gardening Helper and we are pleased to welcome Dylan Ngan into that role. Dylan is a student in the Environmental Landscape Management Program at Seneca College.



After 2 years, we were delighted to welcome members of the Children's Liturgy back to the indoor seed planting event in March, and to an outdoor garden care event of weeding and watering later this month.

We have also been blessed with student volunteers who come in after school and /or on Saturday afternoons to help out in the garden. Many of them chose to earn their Confirmation service hours with us, and others, to earn their high school community service volunteer hours.

Lest you think the garden doesn't need more help, let me say, "the harvest is abundant but the labourers are few"!

Spotlight on the Garden



On this last day of May as I write, aside from the fruit tree blossoms, the first colour has appeared in the garden: purple lupin spears in the south garden, Baptisia's purple pea-like flowers in the north garden and comfrey's droopy, pink, bell-like blossoms in both. More will shortly follow. St. Gabriel's Garden also boasts several beds of large ferns, best seen in spring before the summer heat.





One can't help but be awed by the prodigious growth that the month of May brings: comfrey leaves over a foot long, red clover and thistle thigh-high, and miscanthus grass up to my chin. Rather than a blanket of white snow, out of earth, sun and water has emerged a puffy, textured duvet of green in a myriad of shades, the exception being the dark copper leaves of the beech tree. Though we accept the mechanics and chemistry of this profound transformation, it remains a mystery, and a miracle.



Unfortunately, our lavender has suffered substantial winter kill this year, so much of it will need to be replanted. As well, our peach and pear trees are suffering pest/fungus infestations for which we are seeking the advice of a tree expert.

In order to offer more produce to the Good Shepherd Ministries, we expanded our community garden by two 4' by 6' boxes, bringing the total to twelve. A first harvest of vegetables—radish, lettuce, kale, chives and thyme—was delivered at the end of May to the Good Shepherd Ministries, followed 2 weeks later by a first harvest of fruit: haskap berries.

The garden is yours to enjoy any time. Stroll on your own or with a guide from the guide house near the community garden.

— HB

Spotlight on Lupins

Lupinus spp.

One of the many success stories of the St. Gabriel's Garden has been with our lupins. This wildflower has become a popular inclusion in many home gardens. Its display of showy springtime spires of colourful flowers are mostly from the original planting, with an extra stand that self-seeded. We hope to add to them in future seasons, with seeds collected from our existing plants.



Bees love lupins, and even after the flowering is done, the foliage is striking, resembling palm leaves with seven to ten leaflets each. Our plants are perennials, but there are also annual varieties, and the many colours available are the result of bee friends cross-pollinating plants. Though beautiful, it is important to remember that although some varieties have edible seeds (once a favourite food for travelling troops in ancient Europe), these plants are not for eating, being toxic to both humans and animals. But they are totally safe and joyous to look at, announcing that spring is truly here!

— MBK

Invitation to Prayer

Look up at the sky —
 The heavens so blue, the sun so radiant,
 The clouds so playful, the soaring raptors,
 The meadows in bloom, the woodland creatures,
 The rivers singing their way to the sea,
 Wolf song on the land, whale song in the sea,
 Celebration everywhere, wild, riotous,
 Immense as a monsoon lifting an ocean of joy,
 Spilling it down over the landscape,
 Drenching us all with a deluge of delight
 As we open our arms and rush toward each other,
 You and I and all of us,
 Moved by that vast compassionate Presence
 That brings all things together in intimate
 Celebration,
 Celebration that is the universe itself.

— *adapted from "Every Being Has Rights"*
 by Fr. Thomas Berry, CP

Quoted from "Earth Day Prayer Service"
 by the Sisters of the Holy Cross



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In Conversation with Fr. Brando...



Having just celebrated Fr. Brando Recana's 25th Anniversary in the Priesthood, the Garden Ministry decided this issue would provide a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the man who has guided our parish since becoming Pastor, before he embarks on his sabbatical. Caroline Liggayu-Martin interviewed Fr. Brando, and we are privileged to share his fascinating story with you.

We began with asking Fr. Brando what led him to choose the priesthood, and how he came to be a Passionist. Father was very forthright in his answer, telling publicly for the first time, his profound vocation story.

"I did not choose to be a priest, let alone join the Passionist order. It was more like what is written in sacred Scripture, in John 15:16: *You did not choose me, I chose you. I appointed you to be my disciples.* I had always wanted a family of my own, to have children..., but when I was in 3rd year university, a group of friends and I in our dormitory decided to organize a Catholic group of young people.

"Calling ourselves the 'Morning Praise Group', we would meet every day, in the very early morning at 4 AM, to sing praises. and pray the Rosary. As we continued, our numbers grew to the point where, since none of us had any experience with managing a large group, we knew we needed help.

"So, we consulted a priest, who happened to be a Passionist priest named Fr. Hilarion Walters, one of the original 8 to 10 Passionist missionaries working at that time in the Philippines. That was my first encounter with the Passionists; I had no idea who they were, where they worked, or what their mission was. However, this group was the beginning of my vocation story, and grew from there.

"Moments of inspiration would happen day-to-day, and I began to experience religious dreams. My first happened in September, 1986, ten months after our group started. In my dream, I saw a big image of the Crucified Christ. I was praying the Lord's Prayer before this image, and when I said, 'Amen', I woke up. It was 3 AM.

"I continued to have daily dreams. My friends started calling me 'Joseph the Dreamer', and one young woman who knew scripture very well said that I was either going to be a priest..., or I was going to die!

"At one point, a Filipino Passionist priest came to celebrate the Eucharist with our group, and he invited those young men who were interested to take the Passionist entrance exam. Ten of us responded. When I went to take the exam, I recognized the image of the Crucified Christ in the church as the same one I had seen in my first dream.

"Then, after the exam, we went to visit the Passionist monastery, and were greeted by a 'foreigner priest', named Fr. Henry Free, whom I did not know. But I also recognized him from another dream I'd had before ever meeting him. I began to realize I was being called; I was 20 years old.

"All ten of us passed the entrance exam; two of us decided to join the Passionists, and two of us became priests. I later learned how many different congregations of priests there are, and that, as well, there are diocesan priests who do not belong to a specific order. But I never questioned my decision, and one priest said to me, before I committed to them, 'You are really meant to be a Passionist.'

"I learned through my experience that dreams are very powerful—encounters with the Trinity are complicated—but are definitely a Divine experience, and all Divine experiences convert us, like St. Paul was, making us a better person."





Beyond his actual Ordination, Fr. Brando finds it impossible to focus on “highlights” of his 25 years as a priest, there being too many to mention. Certainly, his Ordination stands out, because he recognizes his priesthood as a gift, the opportunity to serve people as his life’s calling—even though he admitted that tendency existed even as one of eight siblings growing up in an economically challenged family. He had intended to become a successful businessman to make that happen. As a priest, his “business” of helping others has grown far beyond what he once imagined, for he realizes he has learned—SO much!—from the people he serves.



He worked with indigenous people, the B’laan, in the southern part of the Philippines (an area called Praan), and had to walk *eight hours* to reach them. In learning their language and culture, he marvelled at how happy they were in the simplicity of their lives. His work in his home country, where there is limited diversity, has made the multiculturalism of St. Gabriel’s community all the more remarkable. Fr. Brando appreciates how our different backgrounds add dimension to our human experience and understanding, and he sees how an attitude of caring, concern, and love develops among “pew neighbours” at each Mass. Church fosters relationships, and relationships build community, both within and outside the building.

Fr. Brando has been impressed, here at St. Gabriel’s, by the significant number of people who have given of their time and talent to the community. His hope is that more people will respond to the call to become involved in the various ministries, like the Garden Ministry, which he feels is really a celebration of what is in scripture, a hopeful, positive experience in caring for God’s creation. He appreciates the leadership of the Garden Ministry, particularly, as great examples of dedication to service. He recognizes the uniqueness of St. Gabriel’s Garden, and has regularly observed how it attracts

young people and families, who use it as a teaching tool, highlighting the wonder and beauty of God’s creation.

As Christians, Fr. Brando agrees we have a responsibility to take care of God’s gift of creation, believing it not only unjust, but also sinful to destroy it, because to hurt Creation is to hurt God. When we hurt the manifestation of God in Mother Nature, we hurt ourselves. The garden allows us to teach people, even in small ways, how beautiful and meaningful it is to have a relationship with the land.

For the next 25 years of his priesthood, Fr. Brando firmly believes in living life day by day, paying attention to life’s “teaching moments”, always willing to serve. Though the life of a priest is full of many challenges and is often difficult, he remembers what Jesus promised his disciples: be faithful to me, and I will take care of you. He has learned to expect the unexpected, to be willing to learn, and to accept and listen to people. Fr. Brando always hearkens back to the Cross, the source of his own strength, wisdom, energy, and life.

As for his sabbatical plans, he will ultimately travel to Iloilo, Philippines, after spending some time in Rome, in retreat with either the Trappists or the Benedictines. Then, Fr. Brando is looking forward to having *no schedule!* He will enjoy time in nature, and with his family, spending personal time with his six remaining siblings. He is especially grateful to be able to be physically present for his mother, who will be turning 82 in December, taking care of her while he can, and while she can appreciate his presence.

Fr. Brando will miss greeting and welcoming his parishioners here, talking and having fun with them. But he knows it is best to leave everything to God and to simply enjoy his life as it comes. We hope he will experience joy and fulfillment in his sabbatical. St. Gabriel’s will miss Fr. Brando, but pray God will continue to bless him, until we meet again.

— MBK



Pictured: Fr. Brando & Bishop Robert Kasun

