

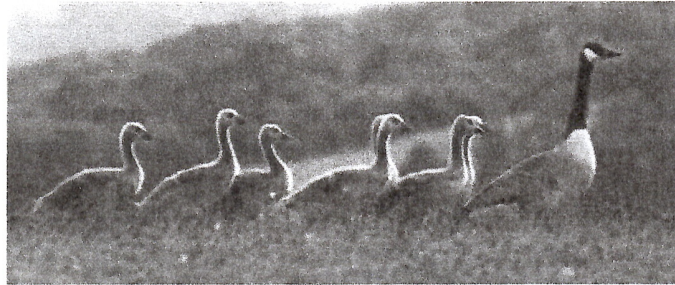


The Little Sisters of Joy

*'The harvest of righteousness shall be sown in peace
By those who make peace' (Letter of St. James)*

Friends of the Little Sisters of Joy

An ecumenical foundation of Prayer, Peace and Reconciliation .



News letter no 22
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My dear Friends

Eight years ago, just before I was due to make another trip to Toronto, I went with a friend to the University Centre in Cambridge, where we sat on the third floor, high above the river Cam. I confided to my friend how much I liked Canada geese. "One day you will be surrounded by them," my friend remarked.

And so it was. In the middle of June I made an unexpected trip to Toronto, my favourite city, where I stayed part of the time with friends to the west of the city, near the Humber River. In the heat of the day I embarked along the trail; I could see the river, with its high banks, just like a river in the north of Scotland, but had to ask a Canadian man how to get closer to the edge. *And then I saw them:* whole families of geese coming up from the river bank, where they had formed a colony on the cool shore. Babies, young, teenage and adults all together, coming up to graze on the grass next to the low stone wall against which I had tucked myself to get a better view of this amazing sight. They were quite oblivious to my presence, as they happily surrounded me and I was able to observe the humans on the path just above us, cycling or running in the blazing heat.



The *Alliance Française*, the international centre for French language and culture (this branch is the largest in North America), has built a small and intimate theatre on Walmer Road, near the corner of Spadina Road-it is called *The Spadina Theatre*. If all goes well, I plan to launch the French version of my second memoir, *Where the Woods meet the Water*, in this theatre in about two years' time -Francoise, the translator, already had it in the pipeline. As grace would have it, the theatre is minutes away from the little park in the centre of Walmer Road, where Margaret Atwood and other Canadian writers placed the sculpted head of the late *Gwendolyn MacEwan*, who wrote the immortal lines (engraved on the plinth):

"Under the silver trees, we are still dancing, dancing."

This spot, in the vibrant and colourful area of Toronto known as *The Annex*, is the global and spiritual heart of *The Little Sisters of Joy*.

This was not the first trip I made this year. I had the JOY of returning to Paris and the little neighbourhood in the 12th arrondissement known as Picpus. With its wonderful bakeries, flower shops and delicatessens, it is a 'quartier' I know well and where I also have a sense of homecoming. In the wake of the further terrorist attacks, Parisian friends advised me to stay away from the well-known places. So - I just immersed myself in the streets around the Gare du Nord, which served as a landmark, and had many adventures, meeting many wonderful local people in cafes, bookshops and the "*Pharmacie des Deux Lions*," -

a 150 year-old pharmacy with two carved lions on the lintel. The assistant gave me a discount: "*pour la Paix*," for peace.

I spent Easter Sunday morning in the beautiful church in Picpus, the Church of the Immaculate Conception, where one of the priests, Pere Olivier, had shown an interest in *The Little Sisters of Joy*. I spent the rest of the day over a special meal with Alexia, my friend whom I had met in Cambridge in 2006, in our favourite Marco Polo restaurant.

The night before we had gone to the *Opera Garnier*: there was the thrill, apart from being in the magnificent Opera House, of driving through Paris at night, with everything lit up and the Seine glistening. I returned to my little hotel at a quarter to midnight, ready to go to bed, when the bells from the Church rang on the stroke of midnight to celebrate the Resurrection, symbolic and profound at the same time.

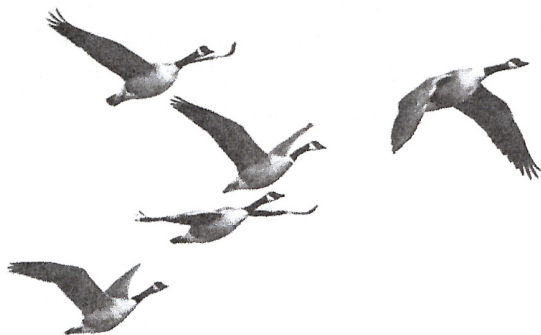


Following on from the event in Toronto 2015, I gave a concert in the familiar Michaelhouse Centre, entitled '*Songs from my Canadian Book Launch*' last February. There was a good crowd, nearly 50 people, from all walks of life and cultures. I sang *Donna Donna* in the late Mrs Gee's memory, not realising until afterwards that her son Philip was in the audience. And later I had a card to say that a relative of one of the founders of *Neve Shalom* was also present. This was the community of Jews and Palestinians living together in the

Ayalon valley near Jerusalem that I had visited in 1989 and had been so inspired by.

Amazing times! And we must live through them well!

Courage, my friends!
Shalom, and always shalom,
Gila



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