



Theresa Rodgers, CSJ

A number of years ago, a visiting Australian Sister commented on how she was looking forward to celebrating Easter in Canada because, unlike Australia, here Easter corresponds to the Spring of the year. So we are remembering the Resurrection in nature as well as in the Liturgical Calendar.

I have been thinking about that this year in my role as a Companion to a newcomer to Canada. She has recently given birth to a healthy and beautiful baby girl. So these are days of new life in many ways for her:

- The approaching end of a long, cold winter
- The remembrance and celebration of Christ's Resurrection
- God's loving and faithful attention to her daily needs
- The delight that comes in caring for and enjoying the baby
- Adjusting to life in a new country with the support of the Romero House community



My prayer for her and her family is that the days ahead (she is now in Canada for just over a year) will be life-giving in a variety of ways: physically, psychologically, spirituality, emotionally. May God bless, richly and abundantly, her and all the newcomers that are part of the Becoming Neighbours Ministry. Their presence here in Toronto is a blessing for all of us because it gives us an opportunity to reflect on all the ways in which God blesses each of us daily. There are so many blessings which we take for granted.

For these Easter reflections, we invited each community member to respond to the question:

"In the spirit of Easter, how have you experienced new life?"

As you ponder these reflections, we invite you to stay with this same question and to give thanks to God for how in the spirit of Easter you, too, are experiencing new life.

Joy Sweet

I am trying to be stronger.
I am trying to look beautiful.
I am trying to have better moods.
I am trying to look fit.
I am trying to read my books.
I am trying to continue studying.
Even though it is difficult I am still trying.
If you never try you will never know

For me as a new immigrant, I do not have any educational background. Without education you are blind and it is like a sickness. God knows the reason why all things happen. I know that I cannot solve problems without God. Through God, I feel all will be okay, if I believe. Prayer is the key. I pray to God to give me strength, to bring good people to me. Life is so difficult, you must be patient. You can't rush solutions ... Talk to God when facing difficulties.

It is important to celebrate Easter –always putting God first. If we put God first –we cannot go backwards. Don't give up ... no matter what happens. God gives peace, happiness and confidence. God is ALWAYS beside us. This is the good news of Easter!



Jack Lynch, SFM



It is a privilege and a blessing for me to be a prayer partner with Taira. When I pray in the morning, I add Taira's name to those for whom I daily pray to God. I feel as if I am reaching out in solidarity to Taira encouraging her and supporting her that she may experience new life and hope. This is especially tangible for me during this Easter season for it is the Easter mystery that helps me makes sense of the whole year, of my life and of my work. If death is not the last word as we are promised, neither is war, poverty or oppression. With God all things are possible. Praying with and for Taira reminds me that no matter what I am experiencing in life, I, too, am not alone. God is with me!

Uyi Osadebamwen

When I came to Canada with my four kids in 2010, I was staying in a Motel on Kingston Road. Little did I know I would be meeting Mary Burns and Becoming Neighbours. Every Saturday I would take my kids with me to St. Joseph Catholic Church for food and clothing. In

one of our visits I met Mary Burns who, with God's Grace, dedicated her time in serving all newcomers. As I was leaving Mary gave me the phone number of Becoming Neighbours. Sister Rosemary Williamson was matched with my family in 2011. They have really helped my family. Rosemary believes in prayer and is such a beautiful person! I will remain grateful all the days of my life.



As well, so many things have happened since both Mary Burns and Mary-Lou Collins started the Nigerian Women's Conversation Circle. They always bring new information to help everyone. I thank God for His Grace and love over my family.

Osmar Sanchez

We all know that moving to Canada means leaving everything behind, our families, friends, those we love, our home. It is really tough. But we also get new opportunities and those opportunities give us a new life. New friendships, a new home, a new job, a chance for a better education that otherwise we would have never had, a new brighter future. Good things are always hard to get, but God won't close a door without opening a window for us.



Raymond Pierce, C.Ss.R.

The Year of 2015 began with one of the greatest, most blessed days of my life. I witnessed my friend, Jun Tang, and his young son, become Canadian citizens. It has been a long eight-year struggle filled with painful and disappointing events. Jun arrived in Canada unable to communicate in any language except his native tongue. I met Jun a year later through Becoming Neighbours.

Presence, prayer, friendship and solidarity are the underpinnings of Becoming Neighbours. Our first sign of hope was obtaining Permanent Residence cards for Jun and his son. Three years later, a letter inviting him to take a Citizenship Exam arrived. Jun passed the exam and was immediately given an oral exam. He passed!

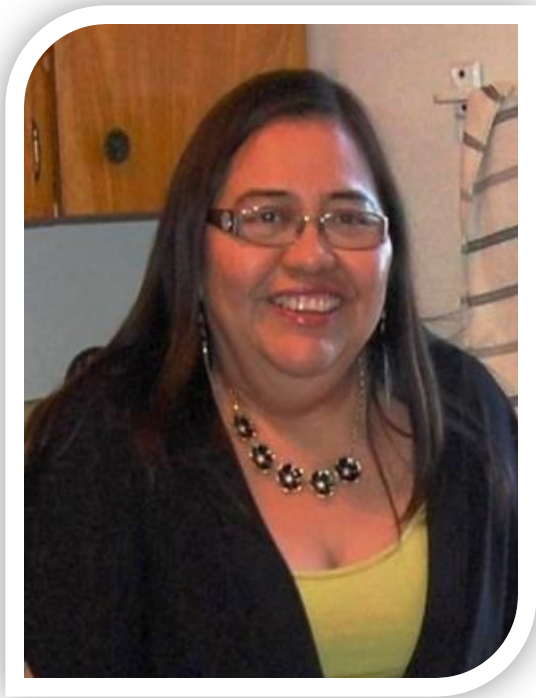
Congratulations were extended by the Immigration Officer, and Jun was given documents inviting him and his son to the Citizenship Ceremony. Family and friends joined 94 new Canadians at the ceremony and afterwards I joined Jun and his son for a celebratory supper, and how we celebrated!



Mary Burns

As I reflect this Easter on the refugee families who have touched my life, I realize what a blessing they have been to me.

Befriending a newcomer changes your life! You learn how important it is to listen, to give generously of your time and to pray frequently.



Rosie Garcia

Easter is a special time to celebrate and be grateful for my Christian faith. From our Ecuadorian tradition we gather as a family, go to mass and we enjoy making our traditional Easter soup, “Fanesca”. It is also a time when I am very grateful for living in Toronto where I can practice my faith in freedom and pass the faith on to my family, especially my grandson. For me, at Easter we remember a “living God”- who is very close to me as a friend with whom I have conversation that comes naturally from the soul. I want to share this friend with others and I want to be sure that in the busyness and routine of my life as a newcomer, I don’t neglect this friend who is at the heart of my faith.



Deep within, in the whispers of the heart is the surging call of the eternal Christ hidden within us all.
By an inner isthmus, we are connected with the mainland of eternal Love. (Quaker writer)