



## Fears for priest

Jesuit Father Ismael Moreno Conto is in fear



for his life after being targeted by supporters of Honduran President Juan Orlando

Hernandez for speaking out against widespread irregularities in the Central American country's recent presidential election.

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## Flying Fathers

The Flying Fathers were a Canadian Catholic tradition for 45 years, dating back to 1963, until they disbanded in 2009. Now the team is making a comeback.

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## The other Christmas

Jan. 6 was Christmas Eve for Ukrainian Catholics who celebrate the feast according to the Julian calendar. Barbara Dedi of Regina says the "other Christmas" is about giving presents "Ours is more spiritual."

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## Imported anti-Semitism

Germany is rethinking its approach to combating anti-Semitism as waves of immigrants with anti-Semitic beliefs flood the country.

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## 'Religious' film

The story depicted in the film *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*, is one of the most religious tales you will see on the silver screen, and for this alone, it merits your attention," writes Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin.

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## Documentary excellence

The Armenian genocide, the devastation of climate change on coral reefs, innovative solutions to the environmental challenges and the challenges of everyday people are some of the topics of documentaries in a field that has never been stronger.

— page 9

# Belgium's euthanasia law being abused

By Jonathan Luxmoore

OXFORD, England (CNS) — Catholics in Belgium are concerned the country's euthanasia law is being abused to kill patients without legal checks and safeguards.

Auxiliary Bishop Jean Kockerols of Mechelen-Brussels said "not just the church's hierarchy, but doctors and medical professionals as well" were concerned.

On Jan. 9, the Belgian church's Cathobel news agency published an article saying the Federal Euthanasia Control and Evaluation Commission violated its statutes by failing to refer suspected legal abuses for investigation.

"It's shocking that, 15 years since its creation, this commission has not referred a single file to prosecutors or condemned a single doctor," the Catholic report said.

"It is acting as judge and jury, and not fulfilling its role. It isn't broadening application of the law, but violating it."

Kockerols told Catholic News Service Jan. 11 that the church had long been aware the commission was "not working as it should." He said the bishops would support any investigation into its activities or "any steps to ensure it functions as it's supposed to."

"We're against euthanasia in every form, and the church's official position is well-known," he said.

Euthanasia and assisted dying were legalized in traditionally Catholic Belgium in 2002, and euthanasia deaths are increasing

by 27 per cent annually, according to Health Ministry data.

The federal euthanasia commission, headed by Dr. Wim Distelmans, a euthanasia practitioner, is required to verify that

euthanasia deaths follow procedures written into the law, referring suspected violations within two months to a state prosecutor.

— AUTISM, page 15



Gerald Schmitz

**CANADA 150 RINK** — The Canada 150 Rink in front of Centre Block on Parliament Hill has been bustling since December, offering free skating, special guests, as well as a variety of events. It will be open until Feb. 25, 2018.

# Canada Summer Jobs policy under fire from groups

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Faith-based groups and pro-life groups are mobilizing to fight the government's new Canada Summer Jobs policy both in the political arena and before the courts.

The Toronto Right to Life Association has sued the federal government over the new policy announced just before Christmas requiring all applicants to the government program to sign a statement attesting support for "safe and legal" abortion and gender identity theory.

"Our conscience compels us to not sign that attestation," said Blaise Alleyne, president of Toronto Right to Life. "It is a violation of our freedom of conscience and freedom of expression for the government to compel speech or else punish us by withholding an unrelated benefit."

The pro-life educational group filed a request for a judicial review Jan. 4, asking that the "attestation be declared unconstitutional," based on Charter rights to freedom of conscience and religious freedom; freedom of expression and equality rights, Alleyne said. "It's not illegal to disagree with the

government on a social issue."

The Toronto Right to Life Association had sued the government last year, along with the Canadian Centre for Bioethical Reform and Guelph Right to Life, after these groups were denied funding under the program. "We were successful in that the government was forced to settle and gave us the money we had been denied," Alleyne said. However, because the government settled, there is no court ruling on the matter.

The application deadline for the program is Feb. 2. "We're trying to deal with this urgently, but we have no idea how quickly this will proceed through the court," Alleyne said. While Toronto Right to Life is working with other groups, Alleyne said Canadians in general should be concerned about this issue, no matter where they stand on abortion.

"We're very pleased that this educational pro-life group is suing the government and taking that action," said Jack Fonseca, a spokesperson for Campaign Life Coalition, the political arm of the pro-life movement. "It's important when all else fails we go to court."

Meanwhile, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) and

the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) have both responded to the policy changes and are urging people to write to the Minister of Employment and their local MP. The Canadian Council of Christian Charities is also mobilizing its members at [www.cccc.org](http://www.cccc.org)

"A literal reading of this policy would prevent churches, summer camps, soup kitchens, and many other Christian and religious charities from having access to the Canada Summer Jobs program," said the CCC at its website [www.councilofchurches.ca](http://www.councilofchurches.ca)

David Guretzki, the EFC's vice-president and resident theologian, said they hope to rally an interfaith coalition to respond to the change in policy.

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) has also released a statement (see related story, page 3).

The EFC has received responses from at least 120 organizations and businesses that will be affected by the change in policy, Guretzki said. They provide a wide range of services, from youth programming, to work with indigenous populations and the homeless. "Without that help, they are not going to be able to

offer these services and the communities will suffer."

"This is an employment grant," he said. "We're trying to understand how this doesn't open the door to all kinds of places where the government could say unless you pass an ideological test we don't have to give you services."

The timing is "a big concern of ours," Guretzki said. "It came the week before Christmas and so all of this has taken place in the last two weeks over the Christmas break. The MPs are in their ridings; Parliament is not sitting."

In some communities, Christian organizations are the only ones running programs such as summer youth programs. Without the grant, these programs may not be run and the "whole community suffers," he said.

The EFC has produced resources for people to learn about the changes to the Canada Summer Jobs program as well as sample letters to MPs at <https://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/Topics/Religious-Freedom-in-Canada/Canada-Summer-Jobs-Grants-Policy-Change>. The EFC is urging people to meet with their MP while they are in their ridings before Parliament returns Jan. 29.



# Pope begins visit to Chile by asking for forgiveness

By Junno Arocho Esteves

SANTIAGO, Chile (CNS) — Pope Francis arrived in Santiago Jan. 15, the first stop on a seven-day, six-city visit to Peru and Chile, where he will take his message of hope to people on the margins of society.

Arriving in Santiago after more than 15 hours in the air, Pope Francis was greeted by Chilean President Michelle Bachelet and a young Chilean girl. He told the crowd he was happy to be in Chile, and he blessed the workers at the airport before being transported to the papal nunciature, where he will stay the three nights he is in Chile.

In his first formal speech in Chile, Pope Francis asked forgiveness from those who were sexually abused by priests.

Addressing government authorities and members of the country’s diplomatic corps Jan. 16, the pope expressed his “pain and shame at the irreparable damage caused to children by some ministers of the church.”

“I am one with my brother bishops, for it is right to ask for forgiveness and make every effort to support the victims, even as we commit ourselves to ensure that such things do not happen again,” he said.

Preparations for Pope Francis’ visit to Chile Jan. 15 - 18 were overshadowed by continuing controversy over the pope’s decision in 2015 to give a diocese to a bishop accused of turning a blind eye to the abuse perpetrated by a notorious priest.

Survivors of abuse and their supporters planned a conference and protests around the pope’s arrival.

But Pope Francis made his way to *La Moneda*, the presidential palace, and was welcomed by Bachelet. Thousands were gathered in the square outside the palace, chanting “*Francisco, amigo, Chile*

*esta contigo*” (“Francis, friend, Chile is with you”).

Despite the jovial atmosphere outside *La Moneda*, there were serious signs of protest in Santiago.

Chilean media reported vandalism at Divine Providence Parish, not far from O’Higgins Park, where the pope was to celebrate mass later in the morning. Vandals spray painted the words “*complice*” (“accomplice”) and “*papa arde*” (“burn, pope”) on the facade of the church below a banner welcoming Pope Francis.

Three days earlier, several Chilean churches were fire-bombed, and police found other, unexploded devices at two other churches in Santiago. Some of the pamphlets included the phrase, “The next bombs will be in your cassock” and spoke of the cause of the Mapuche indigenous group.

“How are you? Where you able to rest?” Bachelet asked the pope when he arrived at the palace. “Perfectly,” he responded. The two leaders stood as the national anthems of Chile and Vatican City State were played before entering the courtyard of the palace where about 700 members of the country’s government authorities and of the diplomatic corps welcomed the pope with a standing ovation.

In his speech to the country’s political leaders, Pope Francis emphasized the need for officials to listen to the people and to value their experiences, cultures, sufferings and hopes.

Included in the pope’s list were “children who look out on the world with eyes full of amazement and innocence and expect from us concrete answers for a dignified future.”

At that point he told the officials, “I feel bound to express my pain and shame at the irreparable damage caused to children by some ministers of the church.”

The pope’s acknowledgment



CNS/Paul Haring

**POPE VISITS CHILE — Pope Francis walks with Chilean President Michelle Bachelet after arriving for a meeting with government authorities, members of civil society and the diplomatic corps Jan. 16 at *La Moneda* presidential palace in Santiago.**

of the crimes of sexual abuse committed by members of the clergy was met with a loud applause from the government authorities present.

Looking at the country’s social and political life, Pope Francis congratulated the nation for its steady growth in democracy since 1990 when the rule of Gen. Augusto Pinochet ended.

The recent presidential elections in November, he said, “were a demonstration of the solidity and civic maturity that you have achieved.”

“That was a particularly important moment, for it shaped your destiny as a people founded on freedom and law, one that has faced moments of turmoil, at times painful, yet succeeded in surmounting them. In this way, you have been able to consoli-

date and confirm the dream of your founding fathers,” the pope said.

Bachelet is scheduled to hand the office over to President-elect Sebastian Pinera in March.

Chile’s future, Pope Francis said, depends on the ability of its people and leaders to listen to those in need and “replace narrow ideologies with a healthy concern for the common good.”

The unemployed, native peoples, migrants, the elderly, young people and children all deserve to be listened to while also giving

“preferential attention to our common home.”

The wisdom of the country’s indigenous population, he added, can help Chilean society “transcend a merely consumerist view of life and to adopt a sage attitude to the future.”

“The wisdom of the native peoples can contribute greatly to this,” Pope Francis said. “From them we can learn that a people that turns its back on the land, and everything and everyone on it, will never experience real development.”

## Don’t rush through silence at mass, pope tells audience

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The silence that precedes the opening prayer at mass is an opportunity for Christians to commend to God the fate of the church and the world, Pope Francis said.

Departing from his prepared text at his weekly general audience Jan. 10, the pope urged priests “to observe this brief silence and not hurry.”

“I recommend this to the priests. Without this silence, we risk neglecting the reflection of the soul,” he said.

Continuing his series of audience talks on the mass, Pope Francis spoke about the Gloria and the opening prayer.

After the encounter between “human misery and divine mercy” experienced in the penitential rite, the faithful are invited to sing the ancient hymn of praise that was sung by the angels after Christ’s birth, the pope said.

“The feelings of praise that run through the hymn,” he said, “are intertwined with the confident pleading of divine benevolence” that characterizes the entire liturgy and “establishes an opening of earth to heaven.”

After the hymn, the priest invites the assembly to pray and observes a moment of silence so that the faithful may be conscious

of the fact that they are in God’s presence and formulate their petitions, the pope explained.

This silence, he said, is not just an absence of words but a time to listen “to other voices: that of our heart and, above all, the voice of the Holy Spirit.”

“Perhaps we come from days of toil, of joy, of sorrow and we want to tell the Lord, to invoke his help, to ask that he be near us; we have family members and friends who are ill or who are going through difficult trials,” the pope said.

The priest’s posture — with hands outstretched in supplication — is also an important sign as it is an imitation of Christ with his arms open on the cross, the pope said.

“In the crucifix, we recognize the priest who offers pleasing worship to God; that is, filial obedience,” he said.

Pope Francis said that pondering the prayers and gestures, which are “rich in meaning,” Christians can make “many beautiful meditations” that can benefit their spiritual lives.

“To go back and meditate on the texts, even outside of mass, can help us to learn how to turn to God, what to ask, which words to use,” the pope said. “May the liturgy become for all of us a true school of prayer.”

## Amoris Laetitia needs new approach

By Carol Glatz

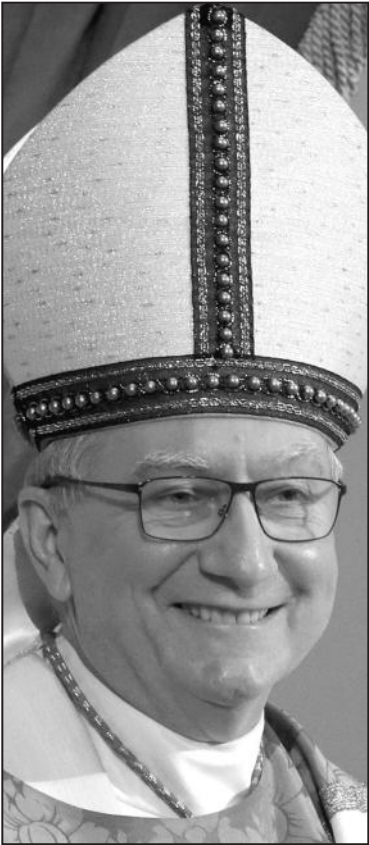
VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Difficulties in embracing “*Amoris Laetitia*,” Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation on the family, probably are tied to difficulties in accepting its new attitude and approach to providing pastoral care, said Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

“*Amoris Laetitia* flowed from a new paradigm that Pope Francis is pursuing with wisdom, with prudence and with patience,” the Vatican secretary of state said in an interview with Vatican News Jan. 11.

“Probably the difficulties that arose and still exist in the church, beyond some points of view on the content, are due to precisely this change in attitude that the pope is asking of us — a change in paradigm, inherent in the text, that is asked of us, this new spirit, this new approach,” he said.

“So, clearly, every change always entails difficulties, but these difficulties are to be prepared for and are to be faced with dedication in order to find responses that may become oppor-

tunities for further growth, greater study,” he said.



CNS/Bob Roller

Cardinal Pietro Parolin



# Fears for priest rise following Honduran vote

By Michael Swan  
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — Canada’s Jesuits have written their second letter in five months to Canadian government officials asking Ottawa to speak out in defence of a Honduran Jesuit whose life is in danger.

Rev. Ismael Moreno, famous throughout the region as “Padre Melo,” has been targeted by allies of President Juan Orlando Hernandez after calling for a vote recount and national dialogue following the president’s re-election. The attacks on the widely respected pastor and human rights defender, who is the director of *Radio Progreso*, include an anonymous poster circulating on social media that makes him a target by linking him with organized crime.

The Jesuits are also asking Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland to join with the Organization of American States in calling for an independent, international

investigation into electoral fraud in the Nov. 26 national vote.

On New Year’s Eve, Moreno tweeted, “I’m receiving accusations that put my life at risk.”

Jesuits and friends hope to join an observer delegation in Honduras at the end of January when Hernandez is to be sworn in for a second term as president.

The Jesuits of Central America have compared threats to Moreno and his *Radio Progreso* team to a 1977 graffiti campaign that spray painted “Be a patriot — kill a priest” on public buildings throughout El Salvador. The result was the murder of Jesuit martyr Rev. Rutilio Grande and escalating violence that eventually took the life of Archbishop Oscar Romero.

The Jesuit concern goes beyond the danger to Moreno, said English Canada’s Jesuit superior, Rev. Peter Bisson. “We are certainly more aware now of the involvement of Canadian mining companies in human rights and ecological abuses in

Central America,” Bisson said in an email.

Canada has a free trade agreement with Honduras, and major Canadian investors in Honduras include TSX-listed GoldCorp. Inc. and Gildan Activewear Inc.

With a murder rate above 60 per 100,000, combined with few and random arrests in a deeply divided nation, a social media campaign is enough to get somebody killed in Honduras, said Canadian Jesuits International director Jenny Cafiso.

“They are setting the stage for discrediting them (*Radio Progreso* staffers) in a way that if somebody wants to do something to them, there won’t be a popular protest. So it’s very, very dangerous right now,” Cafiso said.

Cafiso also emphasized that the Jesuit concern is for more than just the life of one Jesuit, or even the broadcasters he works with.

“It’s more serious now in the sense that he (Hernandez) has taken control of power through

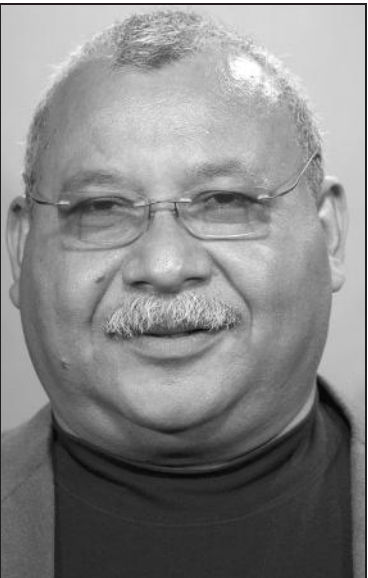
fraud, there is protest, and there’s violence against people.”

Moreno has tweeted that he fears Honduras will become ungovernable if a fraudulent election is allowed to stand.

“The issue is simple. This is not about ideologies or feelings. Here we have unacceptable electoral results. And this is a matter for the country. The government to be established will face a factor of maximum conflict. Find a political solution that avoids ungovernability,” Moreno tweeted in Spanish on New Year’s Day.

Hernandez was declared the winner and recognized by the Trump administration despite a 36-hour delay in vote counting when opposition candidate Salvador Nasralla opened up a lead, followed by news of an unexplained computer glitch, and then an astonishing turn in the vote favouring Hernandez.

The Organization of American States listed a number of irregularities, including “Deliberate human intrusions in the computer system,” as reasons for doubting the final tally that gave Hernandez 42.95 per cent of the vote versus 41.42 per cent for Nasralla.



CNS/Tyler Orsburn

**FEARS FOR PRIEST — Jesuit Father Ismael Moreno Coto, better known as “Padre Melo,” poses for a 2014 photo in Washington. The Society of Jesus has denounced threats made against the outspoken Honduran priest, who has highlighted accusations of widespread irregularities in the Central American country’s recent presidential election.**

Canada can’t just go along with such an iffy election, Cafiso said. “It makes us complicit.”

# Doctors set to fight global abortion policy

By Michael Swan  
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — An ethics policy that demands doctors refer for abortion, even against their conscience, could become a global policy at the next general assembly of the World Medical Association in October.



Catholic Register

Moira McQueen

Catholic and Evangelical doctors in Canada are organizing to oppose the draft policy before it goes to the WMA council meetings in Latvia April 26 - 28.

“We have asked our members in the Christian Medical and Dental Society to write to the Canadian Medical Society to ask them to lobby on our behalf, to ensure that that change does not get passed,” said Christian Medical and Dental Society of Canada executive director Deacon Larry Worthen.

While a WMA ethics policy would have no legal effect in Canada, the organization’s policies are often a template for future legislation and regulation of the medical profession around the world, said Worthen. WMA policies are also influential in medical schools.

The World Medical Asso-

ciation was set up by British doctors after the Second World War, largely in response to participation in Nazi atrocities by some German doctors. The organization works on human rights and medical ethics in consultation with United Nations bodies such as the World Health Organization.

The new policy requiring doctors to refer seems to echo the must-refer policy of the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics, known by its French acronym FIGO, Worthen said. The FIGO policy was used by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario to develop its forced-referral policy, which applies to all morally controversial procedures, including abortion and assisted suicide.

The CPSO says it has not been consulted on the proposed WMA abortion policy.

“The change to their policy seems consistent with our current policy on referral,” said CPSO spokesperson Jill Hefley.

The CPSO policy has been challenged in court by the Christian Medical and Dental Society in Ontario Superior Court. The court has promised a decision by Jan. 31.

Hefley confirms that the CPSO refers to international policies, such as those of the WMA, when developing its own regulations.

The WMA policy was due for a 10-year review in 2016. WMA staff recommendations left the 2006 policy on abortion largely unchanged. It required that doctors ensure continuity of care for patients who would choose abortion, but not that doctors refer for the procedure.

The working group of committee members has put the WMA secretariat’s approach to one side and proposes to limit the scope of ethical objections to abortion.

“Individual doctors have a right to conscientious objection to providing abortion, but that right does

not entitle them to impede or deny access to lawful abortion services because it delays care for women, putting their health and life at risk,” reads the proposed policy. “In such cases, the physician must refer the woman to a willing and trained health professional in the same, or another easily accessible health care facility, in accordance with national law. Where referral is not possible, the physician who objects must provide safe abortion or perform whatever procedure is necessary to save the woman’s life and to prevent serious injury to her health.”

The working group’s proposal would also delete a sentence that reads, “The WMA requires the physician to maintain respect for human life.”

Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute executive director Moira McQueen has brought the proposed guidelines to the attention of both the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Pontifical Academy for Life, but is not hopeful the Vatican will be able to move quickly enough to influence the process.

“The Vatican is a member of the WMA and will oppose any such move,” she said.

McQueen also worries about the influence the WMA can have on legislation and national policies around the globe.

“I don’t think the WMA does anything other than reflect current trends in these areas, but I think that’s important because of the influence it may have on other countries,” she said.

The WMA refused to answer questions about its draft policy.

Canadian Physicians for Life has alerted its members about the proposed change, but would not go on the record at this time.

The members’ “gut sense seems to be that it’s best not to draw media attention to this and to keep this within the medical community for strategic purposes,” said Physicians for Life executive director Faye Sonier.

# Bishops issue statement on summer jobs policy

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Canada’s Catholic bishops say the government’s new Canada Summer Jobs policy infringes on freedom of religion and freedom of conscience (see related story, page 1).

On Jan. 11, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops published a statement decrying the new policy that requires applicants to attest to both the job and the organization’s “core mandate” support the “right to access to safe and legal abortions,” and the governments interpretation of rights



CCN/D. Gyapong

CCCB President  
Bishop Lionel Gendron

pertaining to sexual orientation and gender identity.

The CCCB said the policy represents an attempt to restrict the voices of faith communities in Canadian democracy and limit their participation in the public square.

“Faith communities consider abortion, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression as

major questions with ethical, moral, social, and personal bearing which determine our understanding of human dignity and thus appreciation for the meaning and significance of each and every human life,” the CCCB said. “This new policy conflicts directly with the right to freedom of religion and conscience which too are enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as well as in associated case law.

“It seriously undermines the right to religious freedom since the Government of Canada is directly limiting the right of religious traditions to hold, teach and practise their principles and values in public,” it said. “In addition to the obvious and regrettable infringement of freedom of conscience and religion in such matters as are raised by the new policy, there will be unfortunate consequences on the ground: summer camps will be forced to close; the services of numerous non-profit organizations will be reduced; valuable opportunities for apprenticeship will be lost. These effects, to name but a few, will be felt in Catholic dioceses and organizations as well as in many other faith communities across Canada.”

The CCCB also pointed out how the new policy “runs counter” to recommendations made last March by the Consultation Panel on the Political Activities of Charities. “These recommendations include that charities be allowed to provide information for the purpose of informing and swaying public opinion, and to advocate to keep or change law or policy, either in Canada (any level of government) or outside of Canada,” the bishops said.



# Next generation of hockey priests ready to hit the ice

By Meggie Hoegler  
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — It does not get more Canadian, or Catholic, than a hockey team made up of priests. Throw in a good comeback story and you have the makings of a Canadian classic.

The Flying Fathers were a Canadian Catholic tradition for 45 years, dating back to 1963. What began as 12 priests playing a fundraiser game for local CYO causes turned into a national showcase, sometimes being compared to the Harlem Globetrotters of basketball fame.

After being forced to disband in 2009 owing to a lack of players, the team is making a comeback this month, thanks to a chance encounter between two hockey-loving Catholics, Rev. John Perdue and former Flying Fathers general manager Frank Quinn.

The original cast of the Flying Fathers first took shape when Rev. Brian McKee, a newly ordained priest in North Bay, met a young boy whose teeth had been knocked out while playing hockey.

"It was just him and his single mother, and funds were tight," said Frank Cosentino, a former CFL quarterback. "He (McKee) was a noted athlete before going into the seminary, so he decided to get a group of priests together to play a fundraiser game to help this little boy."

The rest is history. McKee, along with former Toronto Maple Leafs player-turned-priest, Rev. Les Costello, formed the Flying Fathers, dedicated to raising money for charity and keeping their fans laughing with as many outrageous stunts as they could get away with on the ice. They played over 900 games across Canada and the United States and raised upwards of \$4 million for various causes, including \$240,000 for cancer research from one game at Maple Leaf Gardens. At their height, they even signed a contract with a Hollywood film stu-



Catholic Register file photo

**FLYING FATHERS ARE BACK —** The high-flying antics of the Flying Fathers will soon be resurrected in Canadian arenas.

dio to develop their story.

The story took a tragic turn in 2002 when Costello — whose hockey career included a Stanley Cup with the Leafs in 1948 — died at age 74, a week after hitting his head on the ice during a game. Slowly, the team began to fizzle out. Most of the original players were in their 70s and were too old to play. In March 2009, they played their last game . . . until Perdue came along.

A Peterborough native, Perdue began playing hockey at age six. When he entered St. Augustine's Seminary, he played every Friday night on a team sponsored by the St. Augustine's Alumni Association.

"I'd heard about the Flying Fathers so I asked my fellow seminarians how to go about joining the team once I graduated," said Perdue, 32. "Then I found out they had gone defunct because there were no young priests left to play."

He put his hockey dreams on the back burner until fate intervened.

"I met Frank Quinn while I was working at St. Peter in Chains (Cathedral) in Peterborough. He was one of the ushers there, and one day we got to talking about the Flying Fathers. He told me he had been their general manager. He still had the copyrights to the name, the old jerseys and flyers. Basically, he was what was left of them."

Perdue and Quinn were eager to resurrect the team. Perdue started calling around to his seminary friends. Before long he had put together a team of 12 priests from dioceses across Ontario, including Rev. Matthew McCarthy, an associate pastor at Holy Family Parish in Whitby, Ont. Like Perdue, McCarthy grew up playing competitive hockey and cheering for the Toronto Maple Leafs.

"I'm always looking for any opportunity to play hockey, and this is such a great one," said McCarthy, 30. "Growing up, I never met a hockey-playing priest. Who knows, if I had I might have joined the seminary a lot sooner."

When it comes to the Flying

Fathers, it's not just hockey, it's a real show, from slapstick pies in the face to penalizing an opponent two minutes for being Protestant.

"The Flying Fathers were known for their on-ice antics. They once brought out a horse in goalie pads. He played net while the other team tried to score on him," said Perdue.

Perdue says the team is still planning the entertainment portion of the game. "We're going to bring some things back, but we're also going to try some new antics. Right now, we're just trying to get everyone together for a practice before the game. It's been tricky to co-ordinate with some of the priests living hours away."

The Flying Fathers will play against the winners of the Father Les Costello Classic, a hockey tournament in Warsaw, Ont., made up of teams from local high schools, parishes and St. Augustine's Seminary.

The idea of priests playing hockey is uncommon, to say the least. This was especially so when the Flying Fathers started.

"Back then, it was unheard of," said Cosentino. "They had a parish to look after, along with many other duties. But they managed to convince Bishop Alexander Carter who dropped the ceremonial puck at the first game. They attracted a crowd of 3,500 people and raised money for both the Catholic Youth Organization and a charity for children with disabilities."

It was the kind of success no one could argue with. The Flying Fathers played another game the following year in North Bay, attracting a crowd 5,000. In 1964, it was the largest crowd Memorial Gardens had ever hosted.

Perdue says the uncommonness is what makes it so interesting — and crucial for priests to get involved.

"Hockey is a major part of Canadian culture, especially here in Peterborough. For young people here to see that priests can play hockey, too, bridges the gap between us and them. It helps young people see priests as relatable. It's patriotic absolutely, but it's also human."

"As priests, we do a lot of sitting," said McCarthy. "This is a great way for us to get exercise."

The Flying Fathers will play the Father Les Costello Classic champions on Jan. 29 at the Robert E. Young Recreation Complex in Ennismore, Ont.

## Bubble zone law set to come into effect

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Pro-life groups and individual demonstrators are making contingency plans as the Ontario bubble zone around abortion facilities is set to come into effect Feb. 1.

Cyril Winter, an individual who protests outside the door of the Morgentaler abortion clinic in Ottawa, says Ottawa police tried to order him to move from his spot not long after the bill was passed in late October.

Police "told me to get away from 65 Bank Street and obey the law, otherwise they were going to arrest me," Winter said in an interview.

Winter, who wears a sandwich board featuring graphic pictures of aborted babies, said he "stood his ground," and even videotaped an Ottawa police officer yelling and threatening him. He put the tape on YouTube and it has received over

20,000 views, he said.

News reports in Ottawa of individuals — plural — "wearing sandwich boards" harassing and spitting on women entering the clinic prompted the bubble zone legislation, which was supported by all MPPs except one, Jack McLaren of the Trillium Party. However, Winter is the only protester who wears a sandwich board, and he says he has never spit on or harassed a woman entering the clinic.

Sgt. Martin Groulx of the Ottawa police's special events team said the treatment of Winter was the result of a "miscommunication" based on news reports that the "Safe Access Zone" legislation had passed in late October. "This created confusion" among some officers, he said. "We've corrected that."

He said all officers will receive an information packet to guide them in enforcing the legislation.

The bill will create a 50-metre zone preventing protests around eight abortion facilities in Ontario, as well as a 150-metre zone around the private homes of doctors and others involved in providing the service. After Feb. 1, hospitals and pharmacies may also apply for zones around their premises.

The National March for Life has traditionally gone past the Morgentaler facility, the only location that affects the march. Violators of the law could be subject to fines of \$5,000 and six months in jail for first offences. While Groulx anticipates an educational period, those groups that have been informed can expect the police to enforce the law.

"We're waiting for Feb. 1," said Chris Murawsky, Campaign Life Coalition's manager of the Ottawa office, who obtains the licence for the annual march.

— AS USUAL, page 5

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# Cross on Mount Royal commemorated in ceremony

By Eric Durocher

MONTREAL (CCN) — It’s doubtful that Montreal would be celebrating 375 years of history Jan. 6 had floodwaters not receded in December 1642. Jeanne Mance and Paul de Chomedey, Sieur de Maisonneuve — the city’s co-founders — knew as much and sought heaven’s intervention to ward off a certain death blow with the onset of their first winter.

De Maisonneuve made a public pledge to erect a cross on Mount Royal should divine providence spare Ville Marie. When the waters lapping on the threshold of their rudimentary lodgings started to recede on Christmas Eve, they knew the colony, its provisions and the mission for which Ville Marie was founded would survive.

True to his word, on Jan. 6, 1643, de Maisonneuve shouldered a cross and forged his way

up the mountain with a band of colonists to erect the cross.

Fast forward 375 years, and another band of believers, led by Archbishop Christian Lépine, gathered before noon to commemorate that act of thanksgiving. In -20 C temperatures, with a wind chill of about -30 C, more than 200 diocesan leaders and pastoral workers assembled at the chalet atop Mount Royal to reenact the pilgrimage to the summit. They were joined by de Maisonneuve, Jeanne Mance, and their retinue (portrayed by local actors) for the 30-minute walk to the summit and back, which included a short prayer service beneath the iconic 31-metre steel cross towering over the city that recalls the event.

There, the Archbishop of Montreal recalled the courage, faith, and forbearance of the city’s founders in establishing a missionary settlement where Europeans and indigenous peoples could live harmoniously together.

This is part of the city’s DNA, Lépine had stated earlier in his

opening remarks at the nearby chalet.

Ville Marie was founded solely to make Jesus Christ known to indigenous peoples and to live the Gospel imperative that all should live harmoniously together, the archbishop said during his address at the chalet.

“It’s commonly thought that because Montreal was part of New France, Ville Marie was founded as a French city,” he noted. However, it was not founded to establish a French city, he stressed.

Montreal “is French in its origins, in its initiatives,” he stated, but its *raison d’être* was to be a city “with an inclusive vision where indigenous and French people were to live together. It’s in our genetic code, which is why we, as a diocese, are committed to living together harmoniously.”

In that spirit, last September then-Mayor Denis Coderre unfurled a revised city flag incorporating a First Nations’ symbol — a white pine — in recognition of the island’s indigenous roots.

In addition to evangelization and living harmoniously together, Montreal’s third commission, Lépine pointed out, was to “love the poor as Christ loved them.”

Personified by Jeanne Mance, known as North America’s first lay nurse, “love and care of the poor and of all vulnerable people has always been part of our mission.” The poor must be served regardless of their beliefs, their circumstances, and without judgment, he said.

The 375th anniversary of Montreal’s founding and the subsequent anniversaries that follow offer an opportunity “not only to explore our roots,” the archbishop concluded, “but to be inspired by the values that motivated the founders of Ville Marie and to respond to the thirst, which only Jesus Christ can satisfy, that resides in the hearts of all.”

The commemorative event was part of the diocesan Epiphany celebration, held annually, which included carol singing, Quebec folk music, prayer, and refreshments.



CROSS ON MOUNT ROYAL — Paul de Chomedey and company return 375 years later on Jan. 6 to commemorate the erecting of a cross on Mount Royal in thanksgiving for saving Ville Marie from flooding.

## Government to be neutral

Continued from page 3

“Government is required, at law, to be neutral in matters of conscience,” Barry Bussey, director of legal affairs for the Canadian Council of Christian Charities, wrote on the organization’s website: [www.cccc.org](http://www.cccc.org). “However it now appears the government wants to direct our consciences against our will. This is simply wrong.”

“It is unlikely that the Canada Summer Jobs program will be the end of this mindset,” he warned. “The quid pro quo is if you want government ‘benefits’ or ‘licensing’ then you must agree with the government’s ideology.”

The Canada Summer Jobs program gives wage subsidies so employers can create quality summer jobs for students aged 15 to 30, to give them work experience. On the Canada Summer Jobs website, it says faith-based groups, non-profits and small business are welcome to apply for funding.

“The employer attestation for CSJ 2018 is consistent with individual human rights in Canada, Charter rights and case law, and the Government of Canada’s commitment to human rights, which include women’s rights and women’s reproductive rights, and the rights of gender-diverse and transgender Canadians,” the website says.

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — As the new year dawns, the prospect of a peaceful future for Christians in the Middle East seems as remote as ever.

“If there is no peace, the life of Christians is at risk,” says Carl Héту, national Canadian director of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA), a Holy See charity. “Peace is the key to save Christians in the Middle East right now.”

The latest incident to shatter that hope came over Christmas. On Dec. 29, a gunman stormed a Coptic Orthodox church in Helwan, Egypt, killing six parishioners and a police officer. The Islamic State (ISIS) claimed responsibility, adding to the toll of more than 100 Christians killed by terrorists in 2017.

“Right now the Middle East is

going through a transformation of who controls what and who influences what regime,” Héту said. In Egypt, Iraq and Syria, regimes are “in transition” and two big nations — Iran, a Shiite Muslim country and Saudi Arabia, a Sunni Muslim country — are vying for power, backed by Russia on the side of Iran and Syria’s Assad régime and the United States on the side of the Saudis.

“Life is very complex,” Héту said. With the proxy wars, “the people being penalized are the general population and minority groups like Christians.”

Recent mass protests in Iran have contributed to the instability in the region, though Héту said it is hard to tell what impact the Iran protests will have in the long run. Also destabilizing is U.S. President Trump’s decision to move the American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

Both Pope Francis and the archbishop of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem have warned that the move will hurt the peace process in the region.

Héту said the embassy decision “can only inflame the situation a bit more and, for Christians, it means more restrictions to go from Jerusalem to Bethlehem or from one town to another.”

With security walls and security checks, “it’s even more difficult for Christians to visit families and celebrate sacred times like Lent or Easter,” Héту said. “It’s easier for people coming from outside like Canada to visit holy sites than it is for Palestinians.”

Even in countries like Lebanon and Jordan, where there is relative stability, there are concerns about “a certain fanaticism and radicalization in overall society,” he said. Christians are “starting to feel a change of attitude from brother Muslims, in Jordan in particular. That worries people.”

In Iraq, for the first time in four years, a Christmas mass was celebrated in Mosul, “but that doesn’t

mean Christians will move back to Mosul,” Héту said. “The city is in bad shape and rapport with local Muslims is not good.”

However, half of the Christians who were forced to flee the Nineveh Plain have returned to their villages. “They found desolation, vandalism, their goods stolen and their churches badly damaged,” he said. While ISIS has been driven out, there is tension between the Kurdish-controlled areas and the Iraqi government. Christians have not returned to villages in the contested area between the Kurds and the government.

In Syria, fighting continues. “It’s hard to feed yourself, hard to get health care, school for kids; families lack everything,” Héту said. Aleppo and Homs, two cities in the northeast where large numbers of Christians used to live, have been severely damaged. “We know that more than 50 per cent of the Christians have left Syria over the last six years.”

Before the civil war began in 2011, Syria was home to about two million Christians in a population of 24 million.

CNEWA has several programs to aid Christians in the Middle East. In Egypt, where Copts make up 10 per of the population, it helps with church renovations and repairs, as well as security systems for protection against attacks, Héту said.

CNEWA also helps churches with pastoral projects such as running schools, dispensaries, skills training, and programs for youth, “not just for Christians but for the full communities, Muslims and Christians together,” Héту said.

In Iraq, CNEWA’s programs include aid for families who remain displaced or are returning to their villages.

CNEWA also supports catechesis for children, training for seminarians and priests, helping religious sisters, and in lay formation, “so the church can remain a church,” Héту said. “People need to be fed spiritually.”

## ‘We want to go as usual’

Continued from page 4

“We still want to be able to give our opinion and advice to girls going into the clinic,” he said.

They will be meeting the police once the regulations come into effect. “We want to go as usual and do our regular march,” he said, noting that last year protesters made the police reroute the march so it couldn’t pass by the Human Rights Monument.

“We are in ongoing discussion with our lawyers,” said Matt Wojciechowski at Campaign Life Coalition headquarters in Toronto.

“Our outreach to pregnant women considering an abortion will continue through our street activists and prayer vigils like the annual Life Chain and the 40 Days for Life Campaign,” he said. “We will just have to be a bit more creative with our pro-life witnessing.”

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# Ukrainian Christmas Eve celebrated January 6

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — The traditional Ukrainian Christmas Eve supper was a little different for the Dedi household this year: they had just 40 guests instead of the usual 50-plus they’ve been hosting for the past 20 years.

“We decided to cut back a little this year,” said Bryan Dedi as he sat at the kitchen table taking a break from the hustle and bustle going on in the house. Renovations to the basement left little room for the large table that had previously occupied the space, and this called for a reduction in the guest list.

January 6 is Christmas Eve for those who celebrate according to the Julian calendar. At 5 p.m. a few guests are already in the house, including Regina Mayor Michael Fougere and Regina Coronation Park MLA Mark Docherty. Lt.-Gov. Vaughn Solomon Schofield is at the door, and Barbara Dedi leaves the kitchen to welcome her with a hug. The modest house is

suddenly filled with guests, and there is a rush to get everyone seated as the meal is about to begin. Tradition dictates that as soon as the first evening star is spotted the celebration begins. This year, however, the sky is cloudy so the meal will begin shortly after sunset at 5:12 p.m..

Preparation for the meal actually began in the summer when Barbara Dedi planted the seeds for the ingredients she will use in the 12 meatless dishes that tradition dictates are to be served.

“Some of what I make I cannot get at the grocery store, so I grow the ingredients, make the dishes and freeze them for use at Christmas,” said Barbara.

“The 12 dishes represent the 12 apostles,” she explains to her guests at the beginning of the meal, “and it’s important to at least taste each one.”

The meatless foods honour the various animals that were present at the time of Christ’s birth. Twenty-seven dishes have been prepared this year — all meatless

except for one: “I make one dish with sausage because some of the men said they need meat.”

She learned some of the traditions from her baba (grandmother), but over time she lost some of the knowledge. Then she married a man whose parents came from Ukraine, and she relearned the traditions from her mother-in-law. She began practising them again when her own children began to arrive, and is now instructing her children in making the same recipes.

Barbara says the “other Christmas” is about giving presents. “Ours is more spiritual. We go back to the original with the birth of Jesus, and Mary and Joseph.”

Barbara is president of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Association and works with people from many cultures. “I’m often invited to cultural events and thought it would be nice if I could share my own culture,” she said, “and Ukrainian Christmas is our big event of the year.”

Thus began what has become an annual event of sharing, now

in its 20th year. This year a woman from Kazakhstan and a First Nations woman took part in the preparation and cooking, and Barbara learned something of their culture. NDP leadership candidate Trent Weatherspoon also showed up and did some cooking.

“He told me he would like to learn about the cooking,” Barbara explained, “so I invited him this year.”

A First Nations elder is always

present to offer a blessing, as “we are on Treaty Four territory, you know.”

This year Lorna Standingready offers the blessing, after which Barbara invites anyone who would like to offer a blessing in their own language to do so, and only then does the meal begin.

Guests are invited to walk among the tables and take some food from each until all have eaten.

## Water an image of the grace of God

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — Water as an image of the grace of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit, even in the most difficult moments of life, was the focus of a parish mission held on a cold January weekend at St. John Bosco Parish in Saskatoon.

“Just Add Water” was the theme of the mission led by Leah

and how our life story connects to God’s story — in particular the Paschal Mystery of life, death, and resurrection.

“In the fullness of time we will be redeemed by that Jesus who came to live in the mess with us,” she said, sharing everyday experiences and struggles where she has encountered the love and presence of God.

“God didn’t show up to fix all our problems, but he shows up and is radically present to us in our suffering,” said Perrault, describing her own struggles to accept that truth in moments of pain, grief, and loss. She pointed to Jesus Christ as the model for how to “walk willingly into the mess of it.”

In moments of suffering, sickness, depression, loss, or death in her own life, she has not always wanted to give space to the Holy Spirit, she admitted. “But the Spirit points us to Jesus as the one who showed us how to open our

heart just a little bit more.”

Like Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, we pray that we will be spared our particular cross, she said. But if that is not possible, then, like Jesus, we are called to “trust that the Spirit is indeed at work in our lives — that God is there, whether we see it or not.”

Perrault encouraged participants to take time to check back,



Kiply Yaworski

**PARISH MISSION — Leah Perrault was guest speaker at a parish mission Jan. 12 - 13 at St. John Bosco Parish in Saskatoon, using water as an image of God’s grace and the presence of the Holy Spirit. “Grace expands our cup,” she said, urging participants to be attentive to the “Holy Spirit hovering over our lives.”**

Perrault of Emmanuel Care, the health ministry owned by the Catholic bishops of Saskatchewan. Perrault had stepped in at the last minute for scheduled speaker Christy Dupuis, who was unable to facilitate the Jan. 12 - 13 retreat because of illness.

In Scripture and story, Perrault described how we are called to be attentive to what God is doing,

heart just a little bit more.”

Like Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, we pray that we will be spared our particular cross, she said. But if that is not possible, then, like Jesus, we are called to “trust that the Spirit is indeed at work in our lives — that God is there, whether we see it or not.”

Perrault encouraged participants to take time to check back,

## Foodgrains Bank commits to \$2.75 million

By Amanda Thorsteinsson

WINNIPEG — Over 99,000 people in six countries will benefit from eight projects totalling \$2.75 million committed by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank in December.

The projects are implemented by Foodgrains Bank members ADRA Canada (Adventist Development and Relief Agency), Canadian Lutheran World Relief, and the Mennonite Central Committee Canada, in collaboration with their local partners.

One project, through ADRA Canada, is responding to drought in Bubanza province, Burundi.

Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world, with a troubled history. Ongoing political violence has contributed to instability, inflation, and high unemployment.

Most of the population relies on small-scale agriculture for their livelihoods. In Bubanza province, inadequate rainfall has resulted in poor harvests. As a result, hunger is widespread.

ADRA Canada is responding by supporting ADRA Burundi in providing 1,300 families (some 8,000 people) with four monthly emergency food baskets of maize, beans, oil, salt, sugar, and soybean flour. The project is worth \$490,000.

In Iraq, through another project, farmers in Kurdistan are being supported by Mennonite Central Committee Canada partner REACH (Rehabilitation, Education, and Community Health) in improving farms and livelihoods.

Farming traditions and knowledge have broken down over the years, owing to conflict. Ongoing drought means many people have left their homes to try their luck in urban areas. In addition, many households are strained as they take in relatives from other, more violent parts of the country.

There are 640 households (some 3,800 people) participating in the project, which totals \$314,000.

Projects supported by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank are un-

dertaken with support from the government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada.

The organization is a partnership of 15 churches and church agencies working together to end global hunger. In the 2016 - 17 budget year, the Foodgrains Bank provided over \$41 million of assistance for over 900,000 people in 35 countries. Assistance from the Foodgrains Bank is provided through its member agencies, which work with local partners in the developing world.



Canadian Foodgrains Bank

**DROUGHT — Niyonizigiye Ladepende walks through the hills of Makembe, Burundi. In response to drought in Burundi, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, headquartered in Winnipeg, is providing emergency food to families who are unable to harvest a crop this season.**



# Germans debate combating ‘imported anti-Semitism’

By Tom Heneghan  
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Germany is rethinking its approach to combating anti-Semitism after a protest against President Trump’s recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital turned the anti-Jewish prejudices of some Muslim immigrants into a national issue.

In the month since immigrants burned an Israeli flag at Berlin’s Brandenburg Gate and chanted anti-Semitic slogans, politicians have proposed appointing a federal commissioner on hate crimes against Jews, making Auschwitz visits obligatory for newcomers and requiring German history tests in cultural integration courses.

Chancellor Angela Merkel’s struggle to form a government after an inconclusive general election on Sept. 24 has held up any clear decisions on the issue.

But with Holocaust Memorial Day coming up on Jan. 27, the anniversary of the 1945 liberation of Auschwitz, her Christian Democrats have decided to wait no longer. They want the Bundestag, the German parliament, to pass a resolution calling for migrants who promote hatred of Jews to be expelled.

“Whoever rejects Jewish life in Germany or questions Israel’s right to exist can have no place in our country,” their draft resolution says, adding that Germany’s states should apply the current expulsion law more strictly in cases of hateful speech or acts against Jews.

“We must resolutely confront the anti-Semitism of migrants with an Arab background and from African countries,” Stephan Harbarth, the Christian Democrats’ deputy parliamentary leader, told the daily *Die Welt*, which first reported on the planned resolution against “imported anti-Semitism.”

Several protests in Berlin over the weekend after Trump’s Jerusalem decision on Dec. 6 triggered the official response because the demonstrators — many waving flags, including those of the Palestinians and the Hamas movement — burned Israel’s flag and shouted, in Arabic, “Jews, remember (the battle of) Khaybar, the army of Muhammad is returning.”

In neighbouring Sweden, which is second only to Germany in the number of Syrian migrants it has taken in, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven responded to criticism — after the Dec. 9 firebombing of a synagogue in Gothenburg by Syrian and Palestinian immigrants — that the government was not taking anti-Semitism by Muslims seriously, by proposing increased funding for trips to Auschwitz for students in Swedish schools.

“We should not close our eyes to the fact that many people have come here from the Middle East, where anti-Semitism is a widespread belief, almost a part of the ideology” that is prevalent, he told the Swedish Jewish magazine *Judisk Krönika*. “Although Muslims are a vulnerable group, that doesn’t make it any more legitimate for them to be anti-Semites.”

*Heneghan is a Paris-based correspondent.*

In Germany, the official outcry to the anti-Semitic protests recalled the one that followed reports two years ago from hundreds of women who said they were groped, sexually assaulted and robbed by men of Arab appearance at outdoor New Year’s Eve festivities in Cologne.

After initially welcoming waves of Middle Eastern refugees that summer, a backlash against “foreign infiltration” set in. One of the results was the rise of the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, which is now the third-largest in the Bundestag.

By adding Jews to the immigration debate, last month’s protest touched Germany’s most sensitive wound and prompted politicians to ask how to counter a new “Islamic anti-Semitism” less responsive to their traditional strategies.

After the Second World War, West Germany sought to fight anti-Semitism by educating its people about racism in their nation’s past. As the decades passed, schools added meetings with Holocaust survivors and class visits to death camps to awaken younger generations to the issue.

But those strategies were all directed at fellow Germans. With the rapid arrival of over a million migrants, mostly Muslims from the Middle East and Africa, Germany faces newcomers from societies that tolerated and even encouraged hatred of Jews.

Last month, a study commissioned by the American Jewish Committee in Berlin confirmed what many Germans — especially German Jews — already knew. Interviews with dozens of Iraqi and Syrian migrants showed that anti-Semitic and anti-Israel prejudice was widespread among them.

Interviewers found that the migrants hated Jews both for political and religious reasons and that migrants also believed rich Jews controlled the world thanks to “a conspiracy theory frame of mind that also explained the wars in Syria and Iraq,” said historian Günther Jikeli, author of the study. Many were ignorant about the Nazi murder of six million Jews in Europe during the Second World War, he said.

Germany’s Jewish minority, estimated at around 200,000, has been warning about growing anti-Semitism in recent years, but politicians have reacted slowly. Few tackled the essential question of how to get migrants to embrace the country’s postwar taboos.

Long-established German Muslim leaders agree that many newly arrived Muslims are openly anti-Semitic and these leaders support calls for tougher measures, but they chafe under the polarized “us versus them” atmosphere the debate could foster.

“Sometimes I think we should put up a giant sign along the refugee route to Germany that says ‘Welcome, you are now in Europe, such and such is not acceptable here,’” said psychologist Ahmad Mansour, an Israeli Palestinian living in Germany since 2004.

“Of course we need better police and better laws, but not only that,” he told DLF radio. “Why aren’t we helping teachers to explain the Middle East con-

flict better, to discuss conspiracy theories and teach youth how to think critically about such (prejudiced) views?”

Politicians are looking for quicker solutions.

One idea with wide support is the appointment of a federal com-

missioner on anti-Semitism who could be the government’s go-to person for all issues dealing with hate speech and crimes against Jews.

The European Commission appointed a commissioner in 2015, after years of appeals from

Jewish communities in Europe, but it took the Berlin protests to prompt German Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere — a key Merkel ally — to call for one to be named in the next government.

— EMPHASIZE, page 12



RNS/Adam Ihse/TT News Agency via AP

**IMPORTED ANTI-SEMITISM** — A view of a site where a synagogue was attacked in Gothenburg, Sweden, late Dec. 9, 2017. Three people were arrested and accused of throwing firebombs at the synagogue. No one was injured in the attack during a youth event at the synagogue and the adjacent Jewish centre in Sweden’s second-largest city.

## Called to love in all circumstances



### Double Belonging

Rev. Marie-Louise Ternier

In the western world we live in a socio-political cultural climate that now considers same-sex relationships to be normal. Those who struggle to accept this are often considered homophobic and judgmental, deficient and grossly outdated. Such labelling can easily create a reverse discrimination of sorts, with a certain relief that the shoe’s on the other foot now. Is it still possible, therefore, to engage in compassionate and respectful conversations without sliding into emotional mud-slinging or risking glib yet unhelpful labels and judgments on both sides?

Anglican Archbishop Fred Hiltz has pointed out that the Anglican instinct of inclusiveness and embracing diversity is being tested severely at this time (*Anglican Journal*, Nov. 10, 2017). This particular Anglican expression of discipleship constitutes one of the Anglican gifts to the Christian family. But every denominational charism also comes with its accompanying weakness, its shadow side.

*Ternier, an Anglican priest, serves the Anglican and Lutheran parishes in Watrous, Sask. This column is co-published with the Saskatchewan Anglican. She blogs at <http://graceatsixty.wordpress.com>*

Rev. Raniero Cantalamessa, the Vatican’s papal preacher, stated in his homily at the Church of England’s General Synod in 2015: “The Anglican Church has a special role. . . . It has often defined itself as a *via media* (a Middle Way) between Roman Catholicism and Reformed Christianity. From being a *via media* in a static sense, it must now become more and more a *via media* in a dynamic sense, exercising an active function as a bridge between the churches.”

While discussions on same-sex marriage/relationships are taking place in both traditions, they occur of necessity below the radar in Roman Catholic circles while they occur in the Anglican public square. However messy and chaotic, painful and challenging that is, I wonder if there is something healthy about the open nature of such discussions, challenging all parties into a demanding, mature loving.

Love is an orientation, the foundational orientation: God is love, and those who live in love, live in God (1 John 4:16). Such is truth — a relationship of love: “Truth is a relationship. As such, each one of us receives the truth and expresses it from within, that is to say, according to one’s own circumstances, culture, and situation in life.” — Pope Francis

Loving as Christ loves is

demanding and painful and sometimes distasteful. Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker movement, used to echo St. Teresa of Avila when she’d tell Jesus: “No wonder you have so few friends!” Yet Jesus loves each of us, sinful creatures who, by God’s crazy design, nevertheless walk around with God’s dream imprinted on our souls. Loving in Jesus’ name involves deep listening — why else do we have two ears and only one mouth? Divine loving requires living humbly and open-mindedly, patiently and graciously with everyone (Ephesians 4:2-3), but especially with those whose lives are most different from our own.

In his report to the Council of General Synod, Archbishop Hiltz said, “More than ever we need to be mindful of who we are and what we are about — who we are as the Body of Christ, and what that means for our regard for one another, how we work together, how we enable the church’s commitment to God’s mission in the world” (*Anglican Journal*, Nov. 10, 2017). Citing Ephesians 4:2-3, Hiltz mused how the apostle Paul would look at Christ’s followers today *with a penetrating eye*.

Falling and rising, we can only do our best with what each of us has been given according to our own circumstances, culture and situation in life. Can we rise to the belief that the demanding God-style loving has the power to reveal truth, to heal wounds, to reconcile differences, to increase understanding and respect? Claiming to follow the One who revealed God’s reckless loving, we have already signed up for this in baptism: to love in all circumstances, in all relationships and in all conversations.



# Nones, and nuns, all right in Gerwig's *Lady Bird*

By Emily McFarlan Miller  
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*Lady Bird* — about a girl in her final year at Catholic high school navigating relationships with boyfriends, friends and her mother — won two Golden Globes on Jan. 7: best motion picture, musical or comedy, and best performer by a female actor, musical or comedy for Saoirse Ronan, who plays “Lady Bird.” Laurie Metcalf (who plays Lady Bird’s mother) earned a best supporting actress nod.

Though writer and director Greta Gerwig was inexplicably left off the ballot for best director, it is widely believed she will be nominated for an Academy Award when they are announced Jan. 23. Gerwig, who grew up Unitarian Universalist but attended Catholic high school, received a Golden Globe nomination for best screenplay.

Gerwig, who never went to film school and pulled much of the script from her own experience, recently spoke to RNS about the religious setting and subtext of the film. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

**You’ve described this movie as a “love letter to Sacramento,” your hometown. But is it also a love letter to Catholic schools?**

Definitely. I wasn’t raised Catholic, but I loved Catholic high school, and I loved my Catholic high school, St. Francis.

I was actually very different than Lady Bird. I wasn’t a rebel. I never made anybody call me by a different name or dyed my hair bright red. I never challenged authority. I was a very rule-fol-



Grace Hill Media

**AWARD-WINNING FILM** — Saoirse Ronan, left, and director and writer Greta Gerwig, are seen on the set of *Lady Bird*.

lowing kid. But I encountered so many adults there who really impacted my life so positively. There were priests and nuns who were just compassionate and funny and empathetic and thoughtful, and they really engaged with the students as people, not figureheads. And that was also true of the lay people who were teachers — theology teachers or choir teachers and all these different parts of the school.

I felt, as a moviegoer, kind of making fun of Catholic school has been covered. There’s lots of movies that have this idea of making it into kind of a joke, and I wanted to do something that reflected more like the genuine guidance and interest and compassion I found in those people, and I didn’t want it to feel like they were just a nun with a ruler or something.

**What does your depiction of the religious characters — the**

**nuns, the priests — say about how people of different faiths and no faith can interact with and respect one another?**

For me, as a person who was not raised Catholic, the warmth with which I was included in everything was deeply moving to me. To me, it’s something that even if you don’t share a background with someone, or even if you believe something different, there can be a quality of kindness and compassion that you can treat one another with — and respect. You can hold a space for them.

The brother school to ours was a Jesuit school, and one of the things that St. Ignatius said was you have to find God in all things. The idea was, you know, every person, every rock, every tree, everything — you have to find the divine in it, and I think I was treated that way. That doesn’t require that everybody think the same thing, but it does require

that everybody approach each other with the same level of empathy.

**While the setting of the film is religious, the story isn’t necessarily. Neither is the main character. It’s set in 2002, even before the “nones” were a hot topic. How does that comment on the presence of religion in our lives?**

It’s funny because the character of Lady Bird is rejecting so much of it because she’s sort of rejecting everything. She’s in that moment of being 17 and saying, “What are you rebelling against?” “What have you got?”

For me, something that is important is that at the end of the movie when she’s gotten to the place where she thinks she wants to be, she finds her way back into a church and listens to a choir and lets that wash over her. I can’t speak to individually how people feel, but I do think that there is for me personally something deeply connecting about communal places and also communal rituals, and I think if you were raised with any kind of religion, there’s a way that ends up feeling like home in some deep way. I think that there’s a hunger for that, whether or not you can go in for the whole enchilada. I do think there’s a sense this is a place that we take time every week and we’re here all together. I don’t think that’s a thing people have lost. I think they’ve just put it in other areas.

My first love was theatre, and that’s another gathering of people in a room that suspends disbelief and emotionally invests in other people onstage. That’s not very dissimilar in the sense of the

gathering together and the being present in the moment. I think cinema is another version of that. I don’t really have an explanation, but I don’t think that need goes away.

**There seems to be something almost divine about family in this movie. As she leaves the church, Lady Bird is calling her parents, and there’s something about the way she begs her mother to respond to her that’s reminiscent of prayer or crying out to a God that seems silent. Was that intentional?**

In other movies that I’ve written and in this one, I always have — and I do think honestly it reflects my four years of theology — I always have some religious story threaded underneath that people can pick up on or not pick up on. I don’t need them to, but it helps me as an organizing principle because even if you don’t believe in the stories, they are very old stories, and they do speak really deeply to people and their psychologies and how they deal with life.

For example, when she denies that she’s from Sacramento, that was, in my mind, sort of when the apostles deny Jesus and say, “I don’t know that man. I have no idea who he is.” And they say they won’t, and they do, because you would. And also you’re forgiven. I think that some of those themes that I like having in there, it’s not the text, but it is the subtext. I think those stories are very potent in talking about the human condition and human impulses that sometimes aren’t as noble as we would like them to be, and that doesn’t make you unworthy. That makes you human.

## ‘Three Billboards’ could be winner of the ‘best religious film’

By Jeffrey Salkin  
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I know, I know: “Best Religious Film” is not a Golden Globes category. Neither is it an Academy Awards category.

Perhaps it should be.

*Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* got a lot of love Jan. 7 at the Golden Globes — best motion picture, drama; best actress in a motion picture, drama (Frances McDormand); best supporting actor in a motion picture (Sam Rockwell); best screenplay — motion picture (Martin McDonagh).

I personally believe that it deserved every award it got. I had seen the movie the night before; it was utterly entrancing. It was perhaps the best movie I have seen in the past year.

Yes, great acting (seriously — has Frances McDormand ever made a bad movie?). A great screenplay.

But, the story itself is one of the most religious tales you will see on the silver screen, and for this alone, it merits your attention.

Simply put: The movie is about sin, forgiveness, and redemption.

*Salkin is the rabbi of Temple Solel in Hollywood, Fla.*

Or, as one of my colleagues said, it was deeply Christian.

Yes — but it is also deeply Jewish.

Let me try hard not to put any spoilers out there.

A mother (Mildred Hayes, played by Frances McDormand), whose daughter had been raped and killed. Her quest for justice. Her relationships with the local police, and a town that seems eager to not help her.

But then the text opens up for us.

The police chief (Bill Willoughby, played by Woody Harrelson), is dying. He leaves letters around town for those who would survive him. They are beautiful, eloquent, personal messages. They speak to the heart of each person, letting that person know how the police chief would want them to live their lives.

In Jewish tradition, we would call such messages ethical wills.

\* The tradition starts with Jacob on his deathbed, at the end of Genesis, addressing each of his sons. (It is less of an ethical will as a prediction of what would happen to the tribes in the future.)

\* The tradition continues with Moses, again, addressing each of the tribes in the final moments of the Torah. (Actually, you could argue that most of the book of Deuteronomy is, in fact, Moses’

ethical will to the Jewish people.)

\* The tradition continues with King David who, on his deathbed, instructs his son and successor, Solomon, in how he would want him to live, as well as a laundry list of the people who deserve David’s posthumous vengeance.

One of the police chief’s messages lands in the hands of the racist, homophobic, violent loser cop (Jason Dixon, played by Sam Rockwell). Dixon is nothing short of a bastard.

There seems to be no redemptive value in him.

But Chief Willoughby’s from-beyond-the-grave ethical will cajoles Dixon into understanding a profound truth: He will never live up to his personal and professional goals until he learns to love.

That, precisely, is what Dixon learns to do.

Right. Love. That Christian thing, you are saying.

You would be right, but you would be only half right.

Because what Willoughby is telling Dixon to do is to develop the capacity for *hesed*, which is less about love as affection, as it is about love that comes from a deep place within you, and which translates from the Hebrew into compassion, and which then translates into a kind of covenant that exists between God’s creatures.



Tim P. Whitby/Getty Images for BFI

**FILM PREMIERE** — Actors Frances McDormand and Sam Rockwell attend the U.K. fall premiere of *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*, at the London Film Festival.

That is the subtext — or, perhaps, the real text — of the movie.

Yes, that’s Christian. And it is also Jewish. It lies at the heart of any number of other religious traditions I would not have the chutzpah to pretend to know.

*Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* is about unspeakable violence. It is about judgment. It is about justice. It is about forgiveness.

When it comes to the once disgusting Dixon, it is about the embodiment of two great Jewish teachings.

\* “In a place where there are no men (which I would choose to translate as *menschen*, people of moral depth), strive to be a man” (Pirkei Avot, the ethical maxims of the ancient sages).

\* “Until the day of your death, God waits for you” (High Holy Day liturgy).

The ultimate message of *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*: Given the right circumstances and the right kind of support and encouragement, deeply wounded people can engage in what Judaism would call *tikkun ha-nefesh*, the repair of their inner lives — and transcend themselves, and become deeper, holier people.

That, it seems to me, is the ultimate religious message there is.

Go see “Three Billboards.” It’s simply that good.



# Documentary excellence abounded throughout 2017

## Screenings & Meanings

Gerald Schmitz



The documentary field has never been stronger, with digital technologies putting the means of production into the hands of more people, and streaming services (Netflix, Amazon and others) putting significant sums into creating content and making it available across expanding online platforms. At the same time the field is increasingly crowded. I watched several hundred in 2017 and almost every day brought news of yet another title of interest. That said, some clearly stood out as reflected in the following choices.

### Faces Places (Visages Villages, France)

Recipient of numerous awards, including the “golden eye” at Cannes, this delightful collaboration between octogenarian master filmmaker Agnès Varda and gonzo photographer “JR” captures images of ordinary French people and their life, then celebrates these through large-format black-and-white prints put on striking display, the process enlivened by the impromptu banter between Varda, JR, and their subjects.

### Last Men in Aleppo (Denmark/Syria)

Another multiple award winner, notably the Sundance grand jury prize for world cinema documentary, directors Firas Fayyad and Steen Johannessen provide an extraordinary window on the death-defying work of Syrian “white helmets” — unarmed civilian first responders — trying to save lives in the besieged areas of the city of Aleppo (which was Syria’s largest) during bombardment from regime and Russian forces. It’s the most devastatingly affecting of the recent films on the Syrian civil war, inter alia: *The White Helmets* (Oscar-winning short film); *Cries from Syria*; *City of Ghosts*; *Hell on Earth: The Fall of Syria and the Rise of ISIS*.

### Intent to Destroy (U.S.)

The first great genocide of the 20th century was that of Armenians in the crumbling Ottoman Empire, beginning 1915 during the First World War. Through both observing the filming of Terry George’s dramatic narrative *The Promise* and conducting a searching probe of the disputed historical record, master documentarian Joe Berlinger presents a multi-layered perspective on these terrible events and the subsequent denials by the Turkish state and its apologists.

### Tomorrow (Demain, France)

Co-directed by Cyril Dion and Mélanie Laurent, this enlightening and empowering 2015 film about meeting global environ-

mental and socio-economic challenges through innovative locally based solutions was only released in North America in 2017 after winning the French “César” award in 2016 for best documentary feature. As the filmmakers explore practical examples in a number of countries, anyone looking for positive alternatives will be inspired.

### Chasing Coral (U.S.)

The deepening climate crisis continues to be an important subject as in Al Gore’s *An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power* which tempered its critique with optimism about a renewable energy revolution. (See also the James Redford’s HBO film *Happening: A Clean Energy Revolution*: <https://happeningthemovie.com/>). Another selection of the 2017 Sundance festival’s inaugural “New Climate” program, recipient of the documentary audience award, was this extraordinary exploration of the damaging effects of ocean temperature rise and acidification on coral reefs around the world. Using time-lapse photography, director Jeff Orlowski and his team (Chasing Ice) capture some of the most stunning under-sea images ever put on the screen, and the scientific implications for the planet are equally compelling. It’s available on Netflix, which is also streaming all episodes of the awesome BBC series *Planet Earth II* narrated by Sir David Attenborough.

### Makala (France)

Director Emmanuel Gras was awarded the Cannes festival’s critics’ week grand prize for this close-up observation of the arduous life of a young man in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We watch his labours as he makes charcoal, then travels on foot with a huge load to the city where he



©Armenian Genocide Museum Institute

**INTENT TO DESTROY — Digging up remains of Armenian victims in Der Zor in 1938. In the documentary *Intent to Destroy* master documentarian Joe Berlinger presents a multi-layered perspective on these terrible events and the subsequent denials by the Turkish state and its apologists.**

hopes to earn enough to buy medicine for a sick child. Every step is an immersion in the kind of hard realities still faced by many of the world’s poor.

### Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked the World (Canada)

Co-directors Catherine Bainbridge and Alfonso Maiorana present a revealing and enlightening portrait of renowned musicians with indigenous roots who shaped the history of North American popular music. That includes seminal guitarists like Link Wray and rock stars like Jimi Hendrix. Often their indigenous ancestry was little known or ignored. This film, which received a special jury award at Sundance and an audience award at HotDocs, is the most engaging of several recent films acknowledging, exploring and celebrating indigenous artistic expression.

### Let it Fall: Los Angeles 1982 - 1992

A number of recent films, both narrative and documentary, have addressed police and racial violence in America past and present (e.g., *Detroit*, *The Blood is at the Doorstep*, *Strong Island*, *Whose Streets?*, *Do Not Resist*, *Baltimore Rising*). Several (*Gook*, *LA 92*) are about the devastating

riots that afflicted parts of Los Angeles in the summer of 1992, triggered by an all-white jury’s acquittal of five police officers despite the graphic video evidence of their savage beating of a young black man. In this Netflix production writer-director John Ridley presents the most comprehensive account of those events, the decade that led up to it, and the aftermath that is of continuing relevance in a racially divided country.

### Human Flow (Germany)

Renowned Chinese artist-activist Ai Weiwei’s stirring 26-country exploration of the human face of the global refugee crisis received five awards at the Venice film festival. In going to the frontlines to meet and talk to the people involved, the desperate migrants seeking safety and those trying to help, Ai shines a spotlight on the challenge to our common humanity at a time when more barriers and walls are being erected.

### Kedi (Turkey/U.S.)

“Kedi” is the Turkish word for cat and this quite amazing tribute to the free-ranging cats of Istanbul will not only appeal to feline lovers but provide a unique perspective of their social and cultural contribution to one of the

world’s great cities. There is far more to appreciate in the cats followed by director Ceyda Torun — truly a cat’s-eye view of that world — than you will ever find in all of the innumerable silly cat videos on YouTube or other social media sites.

### Honourable Mentions

**500 Years (U.S.):** Veteran documentary filmmaker Pamela Yates tells the story of the indigenous Mayan people of Guatemala and their resistance to systematic oppression, with a focus on courageous women leaders and their fight to bring the perpetrators of genocide to justice.

**Dawson City: Frozen Time (Canada/U.S.):** In the hands of writer-director Bill Morrison, the amazing discovery of a frozen archive of old nitrate film reels and stills brings back to the screen the brief but fascinating drama of how the Klondike gold rush briefly transformed this Yukon outpost.

**Bombshell: The Hedi Lamarr Story (U.S.):** Writer-director Alexandra Dean vividly recalls the incredible life story of the Austrian actress of part-Jewish ancestry who left Nazi Europe before the war, became a glamorous Hollywood star, invented a “frequency hopping” communications technique (her scientific curiosity supported by billionaire Howard Hughes), but died a forgotten recluse.

**The Work (U.S.):** Co-directors Jairus McLeary and Gethin Aldous received the South By Southwest festival’s grand jury award for this remarkable emotionally raw account of a four-day group therapy session inside Folsom prison in which inmates interact with members of the community.

**A Better Man (Canada):** Co-directors Lawrence Jackman and Attiya Khan tackle the issues of gender violence through an intimate personal lens as Attiya confronts an abusive former boyfriend and challenges him to acknowledge and work through the consequences of his actions. In these as in other human relationships accepting the truth of what happened, however painful, is necessary before healing and reconciliation can begin.



Courtesy of Cannes film festival

**MAKALA — Director Emmanuel Gras was awarded the Cannes festival’s critics’ week grand prize for this close-up observation of the arduous life of a young man in the Democratic Republic of Congo.**



# God breathes the Word into everything that lives



The Word of God is not a single utterance once spoken, once heard and then passed on by Tradition. The Word is ever being spoken. As long as creation exists, God is breathing the Word into everything that lives. It is not confined to church liturgy nor limited to bounded books of the Bible. As John says: “The Word of God became flesh and pitched his tent among us.” That tent is still pitched, still a living and breathing Word proclaimed for our hearing in so many ways.

While hearing that Word and holding fast to it is the vocation of every Christian, the dynamic relationship we are called into by God requires an open, listening heart. So today we pray in our psalm for an openness to that voice: “O that today you would listen to God’s voice. Harden not your hearts!”

The story of God’s relationship with us is a story of hot and cold responses to a word of love and a call to

*Williston gives parish missions and is a missionary with the Redemptorists. He is also a song writer and recording artist.*

intimacy, repentance, conversion and hope. Today’s reading from Deuteronomy comes as Moses is seeing the end of his role as God’s prophet. The people had grudgingly accepted Moses as their leader. But what would happen with Moses gone? God promises them another prophet, another leader who will transmit God’s will and direction for the people. Along with this promise comes the challenge to accept this prophet’s leadership and inspiration.

In today’s Gospel, Mark is describing the early stages of Jesus’ ministry as he visits the synagogue in Capernaum. It begins with Jesus teaching with authority and ends with the expulsion of an unclean spirit from a man. The response to this “word” is noteworthy. All are amazed at this man and contrasts his message with that of the scribes. His fame is about to spread throughout Judea. This dramatic beginning

<b>Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time January 28, 2018</b>	<b>Deuteronomy 18:15-20 Psalm 95 1 Corinthians 7:32-35 Mark 1:21-28</b>
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of his ministry puts Jesus in the place of a prophet of God. Even the unclean spirits recognize who he is: “I know who you are, the Holy One of God.”

The scribes and Pharisees are less convinced and, while his popularity is on the rise, their position of authority is somehow threatened. Jesus’ teaching is something new, something fresh, something exhilarating. He not only speaks with words of wisdom, but he acts with the loving energy of God: healing, curing illness and dispelling evil spirits.

Mark is a wonderful storyteller and begins his Gospel

with all the right questions: Who is this that heals? Who is this that speaks with authority? Who is this that has power over unclean spirits? What a way to start the story of Jesus!

All of the Gospels will tell a story that asks for a response from us. At the beginning of the story we understand the question as “Who is Jesus?” However, as we delve deeper into the story, we are compelled to answer a more personal question, a question that begs for a deeper answer: “Who am I after I have seen and heard Jesus of Nazareth?” The Word embeds itself in our psyche and in our hearts.

If we are honest, we can look at our sin history and our grace history as a response to this deeper question. Sometimes the word amazes us. Sometimes we are skeptical and sometimes we are just too distracted to even hear it. There is a spectrum of responses to that word that is spoken to us. But we continue to hear the prayer of the psalmist: “Harden not your hearts!”

Alan Light has written a whole book on the life of Leonard Cohen’s song “Hallelujah.” He describes one Jewish rabbi’s reaction to its use in Jewish prayers: “In the beginning of the Kol Nidre service, we say three times *al da’at ha-Makom* — a prayer saying we hereby make it permissible to pray with the wrongdoers. It doesn’t mean there are some black sheep and they can come too. It means bringing our whole self, including the wrongdoer inside ourself, even the piece that maybe doesn’t want to be there or doesn’t believe.”

Into the night of our dark soul, into the light of our inspired spirit, into the greyness of everyday routine, a word is spoken by God . . . to us. “Do not harden your hearts!”

# God’s unimaginable power and love to eventually make all things well



There’s a line in the writings of Julian of Norwich, the famous 14th-century mystic and perhaps the first theologian to write in English, which is endlessly quoted by preachers, poets, and writers: *But all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.* It’s her signature teaching.

We all have an intuitive grasp of what that means. It’s our basis for hope. In the end, the good will triumph. But the phrase takes on added meaning when it’s seen in its original context. What was Julian trying to say when she coined that phrase?

She was struggling with the problem of evil, sin, and suffering: Why does God allow them? If God is both all-loving and all-powerful, what possible explanation can there be for the fact that God lets us suffer, lets us sin, and lets evil be present all over the world? Why didn’t God create a world without sin, where we would all be perfectly happy from birth onward?

Julian had heard enough sermons in church to know the standard apologetic answer for that,

*Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. He can be contacted through his website: [www.ronrolheiser.com](http://www.ronrolheiser.com). Now on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser](http://www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser)*

What Julian wants us to draw out from this is not the idea that sin and evil are of little consequence, but rather that God, being so unimaginable in love and power, is able to draw good out of evil, happiness out of suffering, and redemption out of sin in ways that we cannot yet grasp.

This is Julian’s answer to the question: Why does God allow evil? She answers by not answering because, in essence, no adequate answer can ever be imagined. Rather, she sets the question into a theology of God within which, beyond what we can imagine at present and beyond what theology can really account for, God’s power and love will eventually make all things well, dry every tear, redeem every evil, erase every bad memory, unfreeze every cold heart, and turn every manner of suffering into happiness. There’s even a hint in this that the final triumph of God will be to empty hell itself so that, indeed, absolutely every manner of being will be well.

In a subsequent vision, Julian received a five-fold assurance from God that God *may, can, will, and shall* make all things well and *we ourselves will see it*.


All of this is predicated, of course, on a particular concept of God. The God that Julian of Norwich invites us to believe in is a God who is precisely beyond our imagination both in power and in love. Any God we can imagine is incapable of making all manner of being well (as many atheistic critics have already pointed out). This is not just true in terms of trying to imagine God’s power, it’s particularly true in terms of trying to imagine God’s love.

It’s unimaginable in our present human condition to picture anyone, God or human, who can-

not be offended, is incapable of anger, holds nothing against anyone no matter what evil he or she may have perpetrated, and who (as Julian describes God) is completely relaxed and has a face like a marvellous symphony. The God of our imagination, reinforced by certain false interpretations of Scripture, does get offended, does get angry, does

take vengeance, and does meet sin with wrath. Such a God is incapable of making all manner of things well. But such a God is also not the God whom Jesus revealed.

Were we to look into the eyes of God’s, says Julian, what we would see there would “melt our hearts with love and break them in two with ecstasy.”



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# Prisoner’s reflections offered glimpse of loneliness

Over the next four months the *Prairie Messenger* will occasionally feature writing from past contributors and editors. The following feature is reprinted from the Dec. 23, 1973, issue of the *Prairie Messenger*.

By Randy Sigurdson  
Prince Albert Penitentiary

If I were asked what I missed most while being in prison, I wouldn’t answer freedom or sex. No. What I miss most is love and affection. Plain and simple. Very few men inside prison, or outside for that matter, will “cop out” to such an unmanly thing as missing love and the occasional warmth of affection.

Certainly I miss freedom. I miss it very much. And sex, so often used in society as a sensual substitute for love, I, a physically normal person, also miss. But the opportunity to give and receive a little love and affection ranks first on the long list of needed entities that I carry printed across my mind.

Jail is a bleak, desolate chamber of loneliness, as wide as the outstretched arms and as deep as the sorrow loneliness creates. Consequently, and as a result of trying desperately to forget about what kind of love might wait my eventual release, I am over-involved in clubs and projects within this confined, if not confounded community. But in my desperation to forget, I am unwittingly cheated by habit; my escape into superfluous involvement needs a constructive balance and I find myself dependent upon mental and physical action — action which fills the void left by the lack of love, affection and companionship.

I will be cheated because when I am finally released from prison I will be geared for action and involvement. And what is involvement in the outside community if it is not something that is weighed in terms of friendship and dollars and cents, two items that, unfortunately, I will be somewhat short of.

I have been forcing myself for a number of years to be busy every waking moment, but when I am released from prison I will have less than \$200 in my pocket. With that money I am expected to pay my own way back into society. It is almost impossible for me to become involved in community affairs, service clubs, sports functions or the like without friends or financial means or both.

I need involvement while I am serving time, but it must be a realistic and constructive involvement, not a means of escape. As well, I must prepare myself for the “street.”

The re-entry into society must be a gradual process begun a few

months prior to release. I must be gradually phased out of prison routine, unlearning what I have, through habit, come to accept as being quite normal. This process of re-entry will allow me to adjust myself, gear down in preparedness for the real society. But in order to do this, I need co-operation from the outside community and from the prison system.

The prison system is trying, but it is making a mistake by attempting to duplicate societal situations within a penitentiary. It can’t be done. Society refuses to be duplicated or set upon a stage to be poorly represented. The only way I can become familiar with society is to live within it. I can be readied in some ways to function acceptably upon release, but I need the practical experience.

The process of obtaining practical experience can best be accomplished through such methods as “pre-release employment” and “temporary leaves of absence” from prison. Both of these methods require outside community participation as well as prison system approval.

Pre-release employment is a process which allows a prisoner to leave the penitentiary during the day to work in a normal job situation within the outside community, then return to the prison after work each evening. This method of gradual re-entry into, or reorientation with society, gives the prisoner an opportunity to adjust himself for gainful employment. As well, the prisoner is able to earn enough money before he is released to support himself once he is left on his own.

Having enough money when I am released is very important because all is lost if I don’t have sufficient funds with which to meet costs of room and board the first month I am in society. If I have no friends, from whom will I borrow money on which to get by?

Temporary leaves of absence passes are nearly as important as pre-release employment passes since then the prisoner is given the opportunity to become accustomed to the type of people with whom he will be working. He is allowed to live away from prison for up to five days on these passes. In this way he is able to “feel out” the community. Pre-release employment and temporary leaves of absence work hand in hand to supply the prisoner with an all-around understanding of what he can



Phil Harvey

**A GLIMPSE OF LONELINESS** — “What I miss most is love and affection. Plain and simple . . . the opportunity to give and receive a little love and affection ranks first on the long list of needed entities that I carry printed across my mind.”

expect to be confronted with upon his release.

What have we learned here? We see that involvement in projects within the prison is no guarantee that the prisoner will be able to function acceptably in society, especially when that

involvement is indirectly forced upon a prisoner through his desire to escape the unpleasantness of loneliness.

We see, too, that a man must be gradually taken away from prison routine, not abruptly slapped into society’s hands.

One of the questions remaining is whether or not society feels that I, and others like me, am worth the effort involved in participating in pre-release and leaves-of-absence programs. No one will know the answer until they become involved.

## We all, together, are the Body of Christ

By Peter Oliver

The identification of the Catholic Church’s social teaching with liberalism is a most unfortunate turn of events. It is a blight that is well matched by the identification of the church’s teaching on sexuality with conservatism. These fractious loyalties point to an ecclesial divisiveness the result of which is a cacophony of cantankerous complaining and paranoid finger-pointing. Christ has been divided: integrity is the loser; chastity is defeated; an abortion of personhood is the result; wretchedness is the garment we’ve handed the poor. We are better than this! Lived well, Christianity is beautiful, harmonious, courageous and imaginative.

On most weekday mornings you will find me celebrating eucharist at St. Mary’s Church. At times the worship there is tedious and irksome, just as doing the dishes can be tiresome and exercise isn’t always spine-tingling. But there is necessity in virtue and there is a certain wholeness-making in the prayer at St. Mary’s.

All manner of persons attend the morning service. Many are old, some are sisters from the local convent, some are struggling financially, there is a former professor and a former high school teacher. On one particularly ordinary morning an elderly crippled indigenous man came in late. Inching forward on the toes of his shoes and leaning on the mast of

each pew, he made his way to a seat. We said the prayers, knelt, sat and stood as we always do.

At communion I joined the back of the line (at some masses there are upward of a hundred people praying) and noticed the man who had come in late. Again he was inching forward and leaning on the pews as he went. Father Ciro had forgotten to turn his microphone off and as he distributed communion the words “the Body of Christ” echoed through the church.

The man inched forward — “the Body of Christ” — the man inched forward — “the Body of Christ.” Looking up, I perceived the other people in the line: an old woman bent with age — “the Body of Christ” — a younger girl in sweat pants — “the Body of Christ” — the lady who prays for the souls in purgatory at every mass — “the Body of Christ” — my friend’s father — “the Body of Christ.”

The great mediator of Christian community Jean Vanier observed that “the human heart and its need for communion . . . weakens the walls of ideology and prejudice. It leads us from closedness to openness, from illusion of superiority to vulnerability and humility.”

The church is a communion of persons. *Together*, we are the Body of Christ. His real presence in the sacrament is also a presence made real among us in our vulnerability. But reconciling vulnerability takes commitment.

A second story, about Rev. Andre Poihièvre, illustrates the point. In 1969 David Milgaard was wrongfully convicted for the rape and murder of Gail Miller. Milgaard spent 23 years in prison

before DNA evidence exonerated him. Subsequently, Larry Fisher was arrested and convicted of the crime. Father Andre was the chaplain at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre when Fisher was arrested.

As an expression of acceptance, care and compassion, Andre was committed to shaking hands with every inmate in the centre without reservation . . . until Larry Fisher was incarcerated at the centre. The obscene nature of Fisher’s crime, together with his flagrant abdication of responsibility and the consequent hardships endured by Milgaard, provoked a crisis. For six months Andre refused Fisher the generosity he had shown the other inmates, but the impasse had to be bridged. As Andre says, “I had to recognize I was not his judge. He is a human like everyone else.” He shook Fisher’s hand, perhaps not gladly, but genuinely.

How delicious is hate! How splendid is the self-righteousness of our convictions. Reconciling the left and the right involves heart-rending, nerve-fraying, ego-killing decisions. It always means imaginative dying. The determined pro-lifer must speak the Catholic pro-choicer’s name with reverence, and the Catholic feminist must find kind words for the traditionalist who sees no fault in a male-dominated church.

There is no winning this one without forward-inching vulnerability, no communion without seeing the beauty of each person as a treasured member of the Body of Christ. It is hard, yes, but we are at our best when we courageously choose handshakes over finger-pointing, vulnerability and humility over superiority.

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# Choosing to walk into a new year practising peace

## Barefoot and Preaching

Leah Perrault



There was an easy peace and lots of laughter when the clocks rolled into 2018 totally unnoticed. About three minutes past midnight, my six-year-old, staying up for the first time, asked, “When

do we do the countdown, Mom?” (Thank you, Jesus, for Netflix and the anytime count.) I am nine days into January and about 20 years past making resolutions I will not keep anyway. And the word *peace* has been echoing around me since Christmas. Several friends and a number of writers I follow have been choosing a word for the year for the last several years. (You can read more about the trend started by Rachel

Olsen at myoneword.org) I usually resist any trend that is not my idea; my openness to *peace* must be growth away from self-righteous stubbornness, obviously. Speaking to his disciples at the Last Supper, right before the chaos, denials, and pain of the crucifixion in the Gospel of John, Jesus said to his disciples, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives” (Jn 14:27). Weeks away from birthing a new baby, I am nesting my way from one room to another in a whirlwind. I have enough life experience to know that adding a fourth child to our household is unlikely to be described as the epitome of peace. And still. It is the longing of my heart.

By chance this week I stumbled across a quote attributed to an unknown author. It reads: “Peace does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. Peace means to be in the midst of all those things and still be calm in your heart.” A bit of digging suggests it may come from a Hindu text, but I was not able to find a definite source. Whoever spoke it first has been speaking to my heart, and deepening my appreciation of Jesus’ promised peace.

Oh, to find peace in whatever

lies before me, to receive it as God’s gift, to walk into this year in peace. So much lies before me these days. Baskets of ordinary and baby laundry. Meals and snacks for five most days. Work — paid and unpaid, fun and not. Big feelings and school concerts and unscheduled 90-minute tantrums from a persistent toddler. These I signed up for and planned, even though I am not in charge of how they play out most days.

Then there are the pieces I do not participate in planning. A big dump of snow when my husband is working a long shift and the shovelling needs to be done. The tragedies being carried by my people — a house fire, childhood cancer, death of a parent. A pending court proceeding and trial, eventually sometime. I could seek more intentionally to find peace in these places.

When I have tasted this peace, never having feasted on it or had it as regular fare, it has come from beyond me. I have experienced it as a gift, open enough to receive it — at least for the time it lasts. It is a feeling, but also more than a feeling. It is a reality that exists always, with the certainty of the sun’s daily rising, and the frost that comes with winter. God’s constant peace is the foundation of the world, and I’m running on top of it instead of sinking in. This year I want to practise receiving the gift.

And more, I want to walk through the world more peacefully. Gandhi wrote that “There is no path to peace. Peace is the path.”

My littlest — until the new little arrives — is stretching the limits of her power. When I went to dress her this morning she insisted on downstairs, and then after breakfast, and then in the living room. It is easy for me to get fed up, to use my size and sense of time to get my own way. And it was possible to parent her well, to have good boundaries, to insist on kind words, and still get out the door together peacefully. I want more of that.

The world is full of distractions, and my life is unlikely to slow down. And it is full of good things worthy of my time. For now, peace has been echoing in my heart and my world. It is moving from an echo to an intention, and it doesn’t matter if everyone or anyone else is doing it. I am going to spend the year practising peace.



WALKING INTO A NEW YEAR OF PEACE — “Oh, to find peace in whatever lies before me, to receive it as God’s gift, to walk into this year in peace,” writes Leah Perrault.

Ken Thorson

Perrault is a wife and mom, a grateful employee of Emmanuel Care, and a speaker, writer and consultant at [www.leahperrault.com](http://www.leahperrault.com)

# Business lobby alarmist on Ontario minimum wage



## Pulpit & Politics

Dennis Gruending

The minimum wage in Ontario was increased from \$11.40 to \$14 an hour on Jan. 1 and will rise to \$15 a year from now and that means that the sky is falling, according to a coalition of business groups called Keep Ontario Working (KOW). The name implies everything — by raising the minimum wage Premier Kathleen Wynne will kill jobs. Alberta will increase its wage to \$15 in October 2018 and there have been similar predictions of doom there.

### Flawed analysis

In Ontario, KOW released a flawed analysis which claimed that the increases would lead to \$23 billion in new business costs, place 185,000 jobs “at risk,” and cost each Ontario household \$1,300 a year. The latter figure turned out to be a basic calculating error which would have been caught by most high school stu-

dents. Beyond that the study used a proprietary economic model which lacked transparency and could not be peer reviewed. In other words, they threw out numbers but did not back them up. The KOW document focused almost entirely on the costs to business while ignoring the beneficial effects of raising the incomes of 1.5 million Ontario workers, a number equivalent to 25 - 30 per cent of the workforce. The vast majority of these workers are not, as the business lobby implies, teenagers living at home, but rather a variety of adults and a demographic skewed toward women and new immigrants.

### Enormous importance

Even at the newly minted rate of \$15 an hour, a full-time worker will in 2019 make only \$600 a week, or \$31,000 a year. However, this amounts to a raise of about \$5,000 a year and is of enormous importance to the individuals and families involved. It will have beneficial effects beyond that as well, because almost everything low-income earners make is spent almost imme-

diately in the local economy. **Fast and furious** Still, the response to wage increase has been fast and furious. The business lobby has used its privileged access to newspapers and the media to peddle its message that the increased wage will mean layoffs and other cutbacks that will actually hurt the employees it is supposed to help. The chief economist for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CBIF) wrote sarcastically about Premier Katherine Wynne in The Globe and Mail. Essentially, he accused her of being a liar who created “unfulfillable expectations” with the minimum wage hike.

### Time is never right

We have heard all of this before. In 20 years of journalism, communications work and in politics, I do not recall even once when the CFIB, the Canadian Taxpayers’ Federation or the Fraser Institute supported a hike in the minimum wage in any province. For them, the time is never right. Nor is it ever right for improvements to the Canada Pension Plan, in which employers and their workers would contribute jointly toward retirement security.

The business lobby insists on each occasion that improved wages or pensions are “job killers” and they predict ruin and woe as they did when Finance Minister Paul Martin improved the Canada Pension Plan in the 1990s. The lobby was proven

completely wrong when the economy took off soon after. They were wrong again in B.C. in 2011 when the provincial government raised the minimum wage by an amount equivalent to Ontario’s current increase. Despite the foreboding of lobbyists, in the following year B.C. added 50,000 jobs.

### Will they confess?

Jobs and economic growth depend on many factors, and wages are just one of them. But don’t expect the business lobby to confess to alarmism and self-interest if in the case of Ontario they are proven wrong once again.

# Emphasize Holocaust

Continued from page 7

Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel and Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen have said burning an Israeli flag should be banned. Justice Minister Heiko Maas looked to the integration courses for migrants, which help them learn German and qualify for a more rapid naturalization, to counter “imported anti-Semitism.” “It’s urgently necessary for integration courses to emphasize the Holocaust and its meaning for our society even more than they do now, and include questions about it in their final exams,” he said. Sawsan Chebli, the daughter of Palestinian immigrants who is now Berlin’s state secretary for relations with the federal government, sug-

gested that all migrants be required to visit a concentration camp. “This generation (of migrants) has a harder time identifying with Germany than mine did,” she said. The memory of Nazi crimes could help unite all people in Germany in the fight against discrimination, she explained. While welcoming these statements, the head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany said the older anti-Semitism of the far right was just as dangerous as the new version.

“Most attacks actually come from the right-wing extremists, while the most anti-Jewish demonstrations and the loudest anti-Semitic insults have been coming recently from the Muslims,” Josef Schuster told *Die Welt*.

Gruending is an Ottawa-based writer and a former member of Parliament. His blog can be found at <http://www.dennisgruending.ca>



# An ancestral homeland: wonder in the rubble

## Around the Kitchen Table

Lloyd Ratzlaff



I know a good place. By day I tramp around its trails and through its bushes, stoop like one of Gideon’s failed soldiers to drink water at its creek, gaze at things that flap and fly there, and listen to others that chirp or shriek or thump. Sometimes I talk to these creatures as if I were a child, and sometimes they reply.

But when the sun sinks below the hills across the river, stillness pervades and the dark closes in, lively critters withdraw to their thickets and nests and holes, and I am alone. There are no conveniences and no diversions — no television, no music, no toilet but an outhouse huddled in a distant black clump of trees; and if I don’t take a bottle of brandy with me, no insulation of any kind against the vastness and silence.

Here I become a boy again. In daylight, adventures beckon: spreading trees are familiar spirits, no creature fails to announce the world’s wonders. But when the

place goes dark, the spooks driven off by city lights congregate, and if I’m alone I hear them, too.

Five generations of my family have known this place. My old ones used to see the indigenous peoples dragging their travois across the other end of the valley, and here my grandfather’s plow unearthed the skulls of the bison they had once hunted. My parents lived here before I was born; and when they moved to a less lonely place uphill, they continued farming the land while I played here through childhood’s slow days. Later I worked with them, lending adolescent strength to the hauling of stumps and stones so our wheat could grow beside the river. Most of my youthful memories are daytime images of springs and coverts, and the ancient river, and fabulous wild things like the bats we roused from the vacant house by beating on its crumbling walls.

I’m older now, and still go there in quest of magic. Once in a while I stay overnight — to scare myself, to conjure another kind of enchantment, the shuddering and creeping and knowing again that vastness contains all manner of things. Something in me wonders where the wonder has gone, and the place pulls me back.

My marriage of nearly 20 years expired. She wished for the old-time religion, while I (as I supposed) was far along in recovering from it. My 10-year vocation as a clergyman ended with the separation. I feared for my



Lloyd Ratzlaff

**ANCESTRAL HOMELAND** — *Five generations of my family have known this place. My parents lived here before I was born; and when they moved to a less lonely place uphill, they continued farming the land while I played here through childhood’s slow days. . . . I’m older now, and still go there in quest of magic.*

*Ratzlaff is a former minister, counsellor, and university lecturer. He has authored three books of literary non-fiction published by Thistledown Press, and edited an anthology of seniors’ writings published by READ Saskatoon. He has been short-listed for three Saskatchewan Books Awards, won two Saskatchewan Writers Guild literary non-fiction awards, and served on local, provincial, and national writing organization boards.*

10- and 12-year-old daughters; a legion of inward demons sneered about wretchedness and guilt; and I learned something about the blues I hadn’t known before.

Often I fled the city to visit my ancestral place, invoking its sunshine and calm, pursuing child-gone paths through old terrain, sitting long and vacantly on big rocks, imploring the land to restore some innocence amid the rubble of fallen dreams. But when evenings came I hastened back to the city, to its lights and crowds, to a bar where one night an old black musician said, “The blues is just a good man feelin’ bad,” and man, I knew what he meant.

One day I made up my mind to stay at the river, and for once encounter the night, to peel off some insulations and feel the place alone in the dark. I wish I could say I had taken nothing but

a blanket with me for warmth, like a hopeful elder seeking a vision; but that evening I parked a trailer under a bent maple tree, which had felt friendly since my childhood, and sat beside an old stone firepit.

A breeze floated from the hills behind me and along the creek bed, roaming its way toward the river. A few clouds hung on the horizon as the sun went down, and white wisps overhead patched themselves into a grey blanket between land and stars. Songbirds fell silent, busy drones ceased, poplar leaves waited. While I could still see, I went scavenging for sticks and branches and dragged them thankfully to my stone circle, and lighted a light.

And I sipped some brandy, a little medication against the elemental things. I had ways of justifying the insulations. The Christ in whose name my life was steeped had refused even a swallow from the wine-soaked sponge fetched up to him, in his anguish, at the end of an olive stick; but I wasn’t him. And who was I, then?

I sat with thoughts about children and church, marriage and ministry, the world and its women. From time to time, something made me venture out toward a dimly divined circumference between the camp and the night. I didn’t know where the edge was, I only knew I was getting close when the spooks began threatening, and then I hurried back to the fire.

Hours passed. Finally I rolled the logs over, stared at the pulsing embers until they dimmed, and retired to the camper. I pulled the curtains across the windows to shut out the night, and sat in the glow of a little kerosene lantern. And I wrote. About Adam eating forbidden fruit and dragging Eve from the garden; about a little cage full of the Bible; about the patriarch Jacob fighting with a demon which really was a God, and limping away in the morning as a different man. The lantern’s light reached toward the corners of the camper, and I felt less alone.

Long after midnight I blew out the flame and crawled into bed. Good night world and women, good night children and church. Now I lay me down to sleep.

During the night something came. I heard it through a shroud of sleep, advancing slowly and beginning to circle. As waking widened to a crawling skin, and eyes to saucers and a mind to huge imaginings, I heard that it was a throat. It breathed the way a throat breathes when no human voice orders it. It circled in the night so far from the city, voicing itself at the border of two worlds and coming into this one. Jesus, I prayed, and God and Mother, help, while somewhere another old bluesman sang *You can call on your mother, but your mother can’t do you no good*. I lay fending off the sound, admitting it, exorcising, listening again. I had wanted something, and now it was here. It breathed another circle, circumference closing in, deep-throated spook an octave below the blues, circling too slowly and tearing something as it went breathing in the night.

At the boundary between worlds, time is a fiction stretching on forever or packing half a life into minutes. Alone and with frail insulations, there is no choice about listening.

Finally I crept to a window and peeped under the curtain. A black shape loomed there, raised its horns slowly toward the window. The beast had broken through a fence and wandered along a cloudy night into the patch of grass around my camper. She had not come to terrify. She was eating grass, and making milk to soften somebody’s cornflakes for breakfast in the city, so they could be strong to do what city people do, until they land exhausted in a blues bar, or are driven down to the river to build a little circle of comfort, which turns out to have no power whatsoever against the sound of one cow grazing.

Jacob craves forgiveness with a craving as selfish as the original sin. The angel is just an angel, going its way by day or by night.

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## Changing Christmas traditions

In the last few decades a controversy has arisen over the proper greeting during the Christmas season. “Happy Holidays” is replacing the traditional “Merry Christmas.”

Some American polls indicate recent trends.

A majority of Americans — 59 per cent — say they prefer the greeting “Merry Christmas” to “Happy Holidays,” according to a Knights of Columbus-Marist poll. The nearly six in 10 preferring “Merry Christmas” is slightly higher than last year’s 57 per cent. This year 39 per cent said they preferred “Happy Holidays.” The poll was conducted by Marist Institute for Public Opinion in Poughkeepsie, New York.

A study by Pew Research Center asked Americans how they think store clerks should greet customers. “Merry Christmas” is the preferred choice of 32 per cent, down from 43 per cent in 2012, the last time Pew asked the question. The generic “Happy holidays” or “Season’s greetings,” went up from 12 to 15 per cent, while 62 per cent said it didn’t matter.

Meanwhile, the percentage of Americans who see Christmas as a religious holiday continues to slide across nearly all demographic lines.

“Nine in 10 U.S. adults say they celebrate the holiday, which is nearly identical to the share who said this in 2013,” said the Pew survey. “About eight in 10 will gather with family and friends.”

Among Catholics, 65 per cent said they celebrate Christmas as a religious holiday, down from 68 per cent in 2013 — and 51 per cent see it as more religious than cultural. Almost seven out of 10 said they would go to church, down from 76 per cent.

While the decline in Christmas greetings is a sign of today’s more diverse society, a look back at history shows that Christmas greetings are a recent tradition.

In his Jan. 15 Daily Meditation, Franciscan Father Richard Rohr of the Center for Action and Contemplation gives this historical record:

“It was probably St. Francis of Assisi (c. 1182 - 1226) who first brought attention to the humanity of Jesus within organized Christianity. During its first thousand years, the church was mainly concerned with proving that Jesus was God. Prior to St. Francis, paintings of Jesus largely emphasized Jesus’ divinity, as they still do in most Eastern icons. Francis is said to have created the first live nativity scene.

“Before the 13th century, Christmas was no big deal. The emphasis was on the high holy days of Holy Week and Easter, as it seems it should be. But for Francis, *incarnation was already redemption*. For God to become a human being among the poor, born in a stable among the animals, meant that it’s good to be a human being, that flesh is good, and that the world is good — in its most simple and humble forms.

“In Jesus, God was given a face and a heart. God became someone we could love. While God can be described as a moral force, as consciousness, and as high vibrational energy, the truth is, we don’t (or can’t?) fall in love with abstractions. So God became a person ‘that we could hear, see with our eyes, look at, and touch with our hands’ (1 John 1:1).

“The brilliant Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1905 - 1995) said the only thing that really converts people is ‘an encounter with the face of the other,’ and I think he learned that from his own Hebrew Scriptures.”

In our commercialized Christmas celebrations, it’s good to remember the real reason for our greeting: to give God a face and a heart. It’s more than a trite greeting. It’s a sign of our own conversion and transformation. — PWN

# Walls come tumbling down between respect life, social justice camps

By Dennis Sadowski

WASHINGTON (CNS) — When Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin offered the idea that the church could approach its concern for protecting human dignity in tackling abortion, euthanasia, poverty and peace under a “seamless garment” during a 1983 speech at Fordham University, there were doubters who said the concept was flawed.

For years, the ideological rift between respect life adherents on the “right” and the peace and justice advocates on the “left” felt wider than the Grand Canyon and nigh impossible to bridge.

It was, some concluded, one church, two camps. So the work of both continued, largely with limited collaboration.

Such divisions just may be breaking down.

The desire to protect human dignity from conception to natural death is increasingly being embraced by Catholics, bringing together the respect life advocates and the social justice advocates to carry out the church’s call to missionary discipleship.

Such collaboration is evident in some dioceses where traditional respect life and social justice offices now operate as one. Where they remain separate, collaboration is strong across the wide spectrum of social concerns.

“It’s so unfortunate in our American culture, we’ve divided the respect life issue from other social justice issues and vice versa,” Tony Stieritz, director of the Catholic Social Action Office in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, told Catholic News Service.

“We want to exemplify as much as we can in this archdiocese that we go beyond those ideological separations. To be pro-life, to work for social justice, all comes from the same. There are not real political boundaries on any of this,” Stieritz said.

Stieritz’s office at the archdiocese’s downtown headquarters is next to that of Bob Wurzelbacher, director of the Office for Respect Life Ministries. Both regularly work together.

“Obviously, we care for life

from conception to natural death. You have to be consistent in upholding dignity of that life,” Wurzelbacher said. “Whether born with handicaps or born to illegal immigrants, we still care about that child as they grow up to become adults. That spreads into all the areas of social justice. We can’t give off the appearance that we only care about babies.”

In the Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon, Matt Cato has been the director of the Office of Life, Justice and Peace for eight years. He described all of his efforts as working for social justice.

Soon after he started in the position, Cato learned about the long-simmering divide, which he said he never realized existed. Prior to joining the archdiocese, he and his wife headed their parish social justice ministry and for years they melded respect life concerns with justice and peace work.

That doesn’t mean he doesn’t occasionally get pushback from one side or the other. He writes a monthly column on social concerns for the archdiocese. He described how one month he’ll be praised for a position he espoused by some readers and then criticized the next by the same readers on another issue. He said he makes clear to the critics that the stances taken come directly from Catholic social teaching.

“It’s just Catholic. It’s just the way it is,” he told CNS. “I’m hoping more and more people understand this.”

The consistent life ethic is the focus of the Pittsburgh-based Rehumanize International. Executive Director Aimee Murphy, who is Catholic, helped found the organization after graduating from college in 2011 to fill a “niche” and address the many human actions that destroy human dignity.

“Our number one passion is violence against humans,” said Murphy, who was a leader in the pro-life group at her alma mater, Carnegie Mellon University.

“We wanted an organization that could address not only the life of a child in the womb but also the life of the child behind enemy lines or the life of an inmate in prison or the life of a refugee, the life of any human being in any circumstance,” she explained.

While Rehumanize International is non-partisan and non-secular, Murphy acknowledged that its work is strongly influenced by Catholic social teaching and that those values also are shared by many other faiths. In the broadest sense, she said, the work focuses on human rights.

“Among young people, this human rights paradigm is catching on,” Murphy said.

The organization has developed

educational material on unjust wars and military conflicts, abortion, euthanasia, suicide, human trafficking, poverty, sexual assault, embryonic stem-cell research, capital punishment and torture. There’s even the current “Nukes Are Not Pro-Life” campaign.

The integration of respect life and social justice concerns is a welcome development among two staff members of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Jonathan Reyes, assistant general secretary for integral human development, and Tom Grenchik, executive director of the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, told CNS such integration is key to the life of the church.

People have varying interests and areas of expertise and sharing them with society is what it means to be Catholic, Grenchik said.

“It’s the dignity of the human person that motivates the church, that motivates Catholics to respond with love,” he said. “Whether it’s the child in the womb or the homeless person or the person with a disability, it’s that God-given dignity that motivates us to respond.”

Reyes said the long-existing divide along left/liberal and right/conservative lines means little to young people especially. What matters most is upholding human dignity, he said.

This shrinking of the gulf is “more important than ever because the challenges to human dignity are remarkable, whether it’s in the protection of human life or providing people with health care. There are real threats to human dignity right now,” he told CNS.

People also may be seeking answers to basic questions about life and their place in the world in the face of deep polarization and that it may be the Holy Spirit which has inspired people to set aside differences in response to Pope Francis’ call to be people of mercy for the world.

“It’s really very much Pope Francis’ message,” Grenchik agreed. “We’re supposed to be a hospital and we’re supposed to be in the healing business.”

More information about Rehumanize International is online at [www.rehumanizeintl.org/](http://www.rehumanizeintl.org/)



CNS/Kenneth Song, Santa Barbara News-Press via Reuters

**DEADLY MUDSLIDES IN CALIFORNIA** — Floodwaters and debris surround the Montecito Inn Jan. 9 after a mudslide in California. Weeks after devastating fires tore through Southern California, heavy rains sent mudslides rolling down hillsides in Santa Barbara County, leaving at least 17 people dead, dozens injured and dozens of homes destroyed. Those killed ranged in age from three to 89, and all lived in Santa Barbara County, northwest of Los Angeles.



# Summer employment program now a testing ground

By Peter Stockland  
Troy Media

It's tough work to imagine two groups more radically different than the Canadian Council of Christian Charities and the gays rights network LGBTory.

So when both join the rising chorus opposing changes to what should be among Ottawa's most innocuous programs, it's a signal something significant is going on.

The Four Cs, as the council is known, is Canada's largest group of Christian charities. It's firmly evangelical. Its mission is advancing gospel ministry.

LGBTory is an affiliation of gay Canadians advocating for individual liberty and free markets: libertarians rather than social conservatives. The group started in 2015 to ensure gay small-c conservatives could march in Toronto's Pride Parade.

Stockland is senior writer with think-tank Cardus and publisher of Convivium.ca

What I've heard from both groups justifies alarm over recent changes to the Canada Summer Jobs program.

"We're seriously evaluating a legal challenge," says the Four Cs' legal affairs director, Barry Bussey. "It confirms the group think in government halls (against) religious groups (with) opinions the government doesn't like."

"Funding should not be used as a tool to silence critics," says Eric Lorenzen, vice-president of communications for LGBTory. "In a nutshell, it's a free-speech, free-thought issue for us." Group think? Silencing critics? Legal action? Student summer jobs? One of these things doesn't belong with the others. Well, until a few weeks ago it didn't.

Then in late December, under the obscuring fog of Christmas, the federal Liberal government announced a new application process for the funding used to help small business, non-profits, charities and faith groups employ students for summer projects.

I initially suspected the report-

ing about it originated in right-wing conspiracy fantasies. Wrong. A government media release confirmed it. And Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has now vigorously defended it.

Applicants must now endorse a covenant to uphold "charter values" that, in the not-so-fine print, require accepting current government positions on abortion, sexual minority advocacy and various progressive causes. Those who can't, in good faith, toe the Liberal line are advised to avoid wasting ink applying. Summer employment is now a testing ground for ideological adhesion, obedience and purity.

So, churches that teach marriage is a heterosexual institution? No sale. Charities that believe in further public debate before giving teenagers life-changing surgery to advance transgender rights? Out of luck. Pro-life groups? No.

Nor is the shift mere skulduggery by faceless bureaucrats or a rogue cabinet minister's fever dream. The prime minister says it fully reflects his view of democratic politics.

"We need to know there is a difference between freedom of expression and acting on those expressions and beliefs," the PM told university students in Hamilton, expressing the belief his government acted upon.

The implications for democracy roil both the libertarian in Lorenzen and the social conservative in Bussey.

"We can't have cabinet ministers deciding what Canadians can and cannot believe," Lorenzen said in an interview even before the PM's remarks.

Bussey goes further. He sees the changes denying summer job help to those the government dislikes but, much worse, also covertly undermining Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms with nebulous, politically charged "charter values."

Such "values," Bussey says, turn language cherry-picked from charter case law into pretexts to pander to political preference.

An invented "right" existing nowhere in the charter becomes a "charter value," miraculously distilled. The "value" becomes justification to deny public funds to groups the government wants suppressed. The feedback loop swaps out law for ideology.

Lorenzen says Canada's sexual minorities, in particular, must see the threat. What if, he wonders, future governments hostile to LGBT rights adopt the Liberals' tactic of punishing politically those seeking to turn belief in democratic action?

"Within my lifetime, you couldn't work for certain branches of the federal civil service if you were gay," he says. "We know the shoe could easily be on the other foot (again)."

No wonder unimaginably different groups of Canadians are raising their voices to oppose the changes. What's at work, they agree, affects Canada's future even more than students having summer jobs.

## Americans differ on 'Merry Christmas'

By Mark Pattison

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The percentage of Americans who see Christmas as a religious holiday continues to slide across nearly all demographic lines.

In a telephone survey of 1,503 U.S. adults conducted Nov. 28 - Dec. 4 for the Pew Research Center, 55 per cent said they mark Christmas as a religious holiday. The figure in 2013, when Pew last asked this question, was 59 per cent.

"Nine in 10 U.S. adults say they celebrate the holiday, which is nearly identical to the share who said this in 2013," said the survey, whose results were released Dec. 12. "About eight in 10 will gather with family and friends. And half say they plan to attend church on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day," it said. Those numbers, Pew added, are roughly the same as those of 2013.

"Most respondents in the new poll say they think religious aspects of Christmas are emphasized less in American society today than in the past. But relatively few Americans both perceive this trend and are bothered by it," the Pew survey said.

"Overall, 31 per cent of adults say they are bothered at least 'some' by the declining emphasis on religion in the way the U.S. commemorates Christmas, including 18 per cent who say they are bothered 'a lot' by this. But the remaining two-thirds of the U.S. public either is not bothered by a perceived decline in religion in

Christmas or does not believe that the emphasis on the religious elements of Christmas is waning," it added.

One flashpoint is how Americans think store clerks should greet customers at this time of the year. "Merry Christmas" is the preferred choice of 32 per cent, down from 43 per cent in 2012, the last time Pew asked the question. The generic "Happy holidays" or "Season's greetings," went up from 12 per cent to 15 per cent, while 62 per cent said it doesn't matter, up from 45 per cent in 2012.

"One of the most striking changes in recent years involves the share of Americans who say they believe the birth of Jesus occurred as depicted in the Bible," the Pew survey said.

"Today, 66 per cent say they believe Jesus was born to a virgin, down from 73 per cent in 2014," the last year this question was asked, it noted. "Likewise, 68 per cent of U.S. adults now say they believe that the wise men were guided by a star and brought gifts for baby Jesus, down from 75 per cent. And there are similar declines in the shares of Americans who believe that Jesus' birth was heralded by an angel of the Lord, and that Jesus was laid in a manger as an infant."

"Overall, 57 per cent of Americans now believe in all four of these elements of the Christmas story, down from 65 per cent in 2014," the Pew survey added, including a decline from 81 per cent to 76 per cent among Christians. "This decline has been particularly pronounced among white

mainline Protestants," it said.

Millennials, including Christian millennials, also are less likely to believe in each of the four elements in the biblical account.

Among Catholics, 70 per cent said it is not OK to display Christian symbols such as Nativity scenes on government property, down from 75 per cent in 2014. Thirty-five per cent said it was OK but only if accompanied by other religious symbols such as Hanukkah candles, up from 32 per cent. Also, 35 per cent said it is not OK even if accompanied by other religious symbols, down from 43 per cent. And 19 per cent said no religious symbols should be allowed on government property, unchanged from 2014.

Regarding their Christmas observances, 65 per cent of Catholics said they celebrate it as a religious holiday, down from 68 per cent in a 2013 survey, and 51 per cent see it as more religious than cultural, down from 59 per cent. Eighty-nine per cent said they would gather with family and friends, up from 85 per cent, and 68 per cent they would go to church, down from 76 per cent.

Catholics are not immune from the decline in belief about the biblical account of Jesus's birth. In 2017, 83 per cent said they believe in the virgin birth (86 per cent in 2014), 82 per cent said an angel announced Jesus' birth to shepherds (90 per cent), 80 per cent said wise men guided by a star brought Jesus gifts (84 per cent) and 87 per cent said Jesus was laid in a manger (92 per cent).



Gently he calls me  
I stand, face uplifted, eyes closed.

Swirling snow surrounds me,  
a benediction of love.

Mouth open I receive  
His gift of crystal eucharist.

By Diane Bauer

## Autism sufferer killed

Continued from page 1

However, in its report, Cathobel said a commission member had recently resigned when the case of a dementia patient, killed without consent, was not referred to prosecutors.

It added that the commission had failed to refer complaints by the family of a 38-year autism sufferer, when she was killed by request without the required documentation after ending a love affair.

Kockerols said he was pleased prominent Belgians were now debating euthanasia practices, rather

than resigning themselves to them.

He added that public support for euthanasia remained widespread, especially in the country's Flemish-speaking regions, but said it was important the "moral dangers" were better recognized.

"Even if there's little chance for now of legal changes, the church can work on a moral and pastoral level with medical staff and support critical voices," the bishop said.

"We've been discussing tougher application of church rules to those who endorse euthanasia. But we also have to be prudent, considering each situation with its nuances."



# Pope faces challenge of restoring trust in Chile, Peru

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — When Pope Francis embarks on his fourth visit to South America, he will face the enormous task of restoring trust and encouraging healing after scandals in Chile and Peru left many wounded and angry at the Catholic Church.

Pope Francis planned the Jan. 15 - 21 trip as an opportunity to take a message of hope and comfort to people on the margins of society, particularly the indigenous people.

However, the challenges facing the church in both Chile and Peru will make this visit different from his previous trips to South America.

In Peru, young members of *Sodalitium Christianae Vitae*, a Catholic movement, were subjected to psychological and sexual abuse by group leaders, including the founder, Luis Fernando Figari. An internal *Sodalitium* investigation confirmed the abuse of children, teens and young adult members of the movement.

Less than a week before the

pope's visit to Peru, the Vatican Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life named a Colombian bishop to be the trustee of the scandal-plagued movement.

The Vatican said Jan. 10 that Pope Francis followed the case "with concern" and "insistently requested" the congregation to act.

Despite his actions to address the issue of sexual abuse in Peru, his decision to appoint a bishop accused of turning a blind eye to abuse drew outrage in Chile.

The pope's appointment of Bishop Juan Barros as head of the Diocese of Osorno in January 2015 sparked several protests — most notably at the bishop's installation mass — due to the bishop's connection to Rev. Fernando Karadima, his former mentor.

Karadima was sentenced to a life of prayer and penance by the Vatican after he was found guilty of sexually abusing boys.

Greg Burke, director of the Vatican press office, told reporters Jan. 11 that Pope Francis' formal schedule for Chile and Peru does not

include a meeting with sexual abuse victims or with the people still protesting Barros' appointment. Sexual abuse is "clearly an important theme," Burke said, adding "the best meetings are private meetings."

The Associated Press Jan. 11 published what it said was a letter from Pope Francis to members of the permanent committee of the Chilean bishops' conference just three weeks after Barros' appointment to Osorno was announced. The Vatican would not comment on the letter.

In it, Pope Francis thanked the committee members for expressing their "concern" over the appointment as well as for their "prudent and constructive" suggestions made to him in February 2014.

According to the letter, Archbishop Ivo Scapolo, the nuncio to Chile, asked Barros to resign as military ordinary and take a sabbatical. The nuncio, the letter said, told Barros that two other bishops connected to Karadima would be asked to do the same. "The nuncio's comment compli-

cated and blocked any eventual path to offering a year's sabbatical," the pope wrote without further clarification.

Barros was installed as bishop of Osorno March 21, 2015.

The protests against the appointment gained steam when a video of Pope Francis defending the appointment was published in September 2015 by the Chilean news channel, *Ahora Noticias*. Filmed during a general audience a few months earlier, the video showed the pope telling a group of Chilean pilgrims that Catholics protesting the appointment were "judging a bishop without any proof."

"Think with your head; don't let yourself be led by all the lefties who are the ones that started all of this," the pope said. "Yes, Osorno is suffering but for being foolish because it doesn't open its heart to what God says and allows itself to be led by all this silliness that all those people say."

Many were outraged by the pope's assessment of the situation, including several of Karadima's victims, who organized an event to coincide with Pope Francis' arrival in the country.

The conference, titled "Sexual Abuse in an Ecclesiastical Context," is sponsored by the Foundation for Trust and will feature several notable speakers, including Peter Saunders, a former member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors.

"The fact that the pope is coming and we are having this seminar is because many people are coming to show their commitment to the rights of children as well as their anger at the lack of reaction and the mistaken words the pope gave," Jose Andres Murillo, director of the foundation for people who suffered abuse at the hands of Karadima, said in an interview with Chilean news website, *El Mostrador*.

## U.S. decision on Jerusalem opposed

By Dale Gavlak

AMMAN, Jordan (CNS) — Church and political leaders in the Middle East are intensifying efforts to combat U.S. President Donald Trump's unilateral decision declaring Jerusalem as Israel's capital and plans to move the U.S. embassy there.

"The two-state solution is accepted by all the world, including the Vatican. It corresponds to the legitimate resolutions passed by the United Nations," Auxiliary Bishop William Shomali of Jerusalem, patriarchal vicar for Jordan, told Catholic News Service.

He spoke of how the church sees the way to end the simmering Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, apostolic administrator of

the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, told CNS, "Nothing should prevent Jerusalem from being a national symbol for the two peoples."

"Any unilateral decision is not a solution," Pizzaballa said. "Jerusalem cannot be reduced to a dispute. It is something much more than that."

In his annual "state of the world address" Jan. 8 to diplomats from more than 180 countries, Pope Francis urged countries once again to respect the status quo of Jerusalem.

He reiterated the church's call "for a common commitment to respect, in conformity with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the status quo of Jerusalem, a city sacred to Christians, Jews and Muslims."

Pope Francis also urged a two-state solution for Palestinians and Israelis, saying: "Despite the difficulties, a willingness to engage in dialogue and to resume negotiations remains the clearest way to achieving at last a peaceful coexistence between the two peoples."

"The pope emphasized that Jerusalem must be respected for all three religions," said Rev. Rifat Bader of the Catholic Centre for Media and Studies in Amman. "That respect must be made not just in political affairs, but religious matters."

He said that, shortly after Trump's Dec. 6 declaration, "Jordan's King Abdullah II met with the pope with great emotion, focusing on the status quo of Jerusalem, how international decisions need to be respected, and how to maintain the custodianship of Jordan's Hashemite monarchy over the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem."

Later, Christian and Muslim leaders from Jordan and the Palestinian territories met at the Baptismal Site on the Jordan River and agreed to fight the decision.

"They all agreed to support the king and his diplomatic efforts calling for justice for Jerusalem as well as recognizing the king's Hashemite custodianship over the Muslim and Christian holy sites there," Bader said.

Jordan's king is recognized as the custodian of Muslim and Christian sacred places under a signed 1994 peace treaty with Israel.

"Jerusalem is very important for us as Jordanians. Jordan's Hashemite kings have supported restorations in the Al-Aqsa Mosque, while King Abdullah II also aided the restoration of the Holy Sepulcher Church (with) his own money. This Hashemite custodianship is not rhetorical, but realized by real support, including finances, for Jerusalem, which is also the future capital of Palestine," Bader said.



CNS/Sony Pictures Classics

**TRAPPIST MONKS RECOGNIZED AS MARTYRS** — In a scene from the 2011 movie *Of Gods and Men*, seven Trappist monks depicted in the film are among the victims of Algeria's civil war. A bishop, seven Trappist monks and 11 other religious men and women killed by extremists in Algeria in the 1990s will soon be recognized as martyrs, the postulator for their causes said. A 10-year-long armed conflict between government forces and extremist Islamic rebel groups left tens of thousands of people dead, making the deaths of the 19 religious "a martyrdom in the midst of a sea of violence that devastated Algeria," Rev. Thomas Georgeon said.

## German bishop urges church debate on same-sex blessing

OSNABRUCK, Germany (CNS) — The vice-president of the German bishops' conference has urged a debate on whether Catholic clergy should bless same-sex unions.

"I'm concerned with fundamental questions of how we deal with each other; although 'marriage for all' differs clearly from the church's concept of marriage, it's now a political reality," said Bishop Franz-Josef Bode of Osnabruck.

"We have to ask ourselves how we're encountering those who form such relationships and are also involved in the church, how we're accompanying them pastorally and liturgically."

In the fall, the first gay weddings were conducted in Germany, following a June 30 vote by the parliament to allow full same-sex marriage.

"Same-sex relationships are generally classified as a grave sin in the church, but we need to think how we can differentiate," Bode said in a Jan. 10 interview with the *Neue Osnabrucker Zeitung* daily.

"Shouldn't we be fairer, given that there is much that's positive,

good and right in this? Should we not, for example, consider a blessing — something not to be confused with a wedding ceremony?"

He said the church should discuss same-sex unions in more detail and recognize "silence and taboo" settled nothing.

Canons 1055 - 1057 of the church's Code of Canon Law define marriage as an indissoluble union between a man and woman.

The June vote to allow same-sex marriage was condemned by German church leaders, including Archbishop Heiner Koch of Berlin, chair of the church's Marriage and Family Commission, who said in a statement same-sex cohabitation could be "valued through other institutional arrangements."

However, it was approved by the country's Protestant church. Some lay Catholic groups, including the We Are Church organization, have called for same-sex couples to be offered church blessings.

In May 2015, the German church amended its employment rules to permit lay staffers to keep their jobs after they were divorced and remarried without an annulment or if they formed a gay union.



CNS/Jose Cabezas, Reuters

**U.S. DEPORTEE TO EL SALVADOR** — Deportees get off a bus at an immigration facility Jan. 11 after a flight arrived in San Salvador, El Salvador, with immigrants who were in the U.S. without documents. UN officials said Jan. 12 that U.S. President Donald Trump's reported use of an expletive to describe El Salvador and other countries could "potentially damage and disrupt the lives of many people."

Let me fall if I must. The one I will become will catch me.

— BAAL SHEM TOV