



Understanding sought

A range of community partners, including the Saskatoon Diocesan Council for Truth and Reconciliation, are working to come up with a concrete way of addressing divisions and bringing about understanding and reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous people.

— page 3

Ticking clock

An American \$1.2-trillion investment in new nuclear weapons systems, plans for tactical use of nuclear bombs on battlefields, threats of responding to cyberattacks with a nuclear strike and rejection of international efforts — including pleas by Pope Francis — to encourage disarmament have people worried.

— page 4

Spiritual Exercises

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola have been the core of the Jesuit way of life since the Society of Jesus was founded. In the past 40 years, more and more lay people have been following this regimen of prayer and contemplation. St. Ignatius Parish in Winnipeg has provided a means of doing them over the course of six or seven months.

— page 6

'Bad thoughts'

Among the deadliest of sins, writes Ron Rolheiser, OMI, is wrath. Raw hatred and anger justifying themselves on moral and divine grounds has never been more evident. Just look at the comments on social media.

— page 11

Challenge of fasting

For Catholics, the practice of fasting has fallen off the screen, due in large measure to the minimalistic interpretation of what church members are told "fasting" means, writes Tom Ryan, CSP. But a different interpretation should be given some thought.

— 13



Saskatchewan bishops issue statement

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — The Anglican, Catholic, and Lutheran bishops of Saskatchewan have released a statement in the wake of often-divisive reactions to the recent not-guilty verdict in the trial of Biggar-area farmer Gerald Stanley for the shooting death of a young indigenous man, Colten Boushie.

"As bishops who serve Christian communities in our province, we join all those who are longing to escape the slavery of prejudice, racism, anger, frustration, violence and bitterness. We wish to join all those who are rededicating themselves to work for reconciliation and peace among all people in our communities and in our nation," wrote the bishops.

The letter was signed by Bishop Bryan Bayda of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon; Archbishop Donald Bolen of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Regina; Archbishop Murray Chatlain of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas; Bishop Mark Hagemoen of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon; Bishop Adam Halkett, the Anglican

Indigenous Bishop of Missinippi; Bishop Robert Hardwick of the Anglican Diocese of Qu'Appelle; Bishop Sid Haugan of the Saskatchewan Synod of the Evan-

gelical Lutheran Church in Canada; Bishop Michael Hawkins of the Anglican Diocese of Saskatchewan; Bishop David Irving of the Anglican Diocese of Saska-

toon; and Bishop Albert Thévenot of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Prince Albert.

— STANLEY, page 4



CNS/Vatican Media

POPE HAS LENTEN SESSION WITH PASTORS — Pope Francis holds his annual lenten meeting with the pastors of Rome parishes Feb. 15. The meeting, occurring in Rome's Basilica of St. John Lateran, included prayer, confessions and a question-and-answer session with the pope.

Acknowledge sin, but look for signs of God at work

By Cindy Wooden

ROME (CNS) — While it is true that the world is full of sin and sinful behaviour, priests must learn to scrutinize the "signs of the times" for new trends and attitudes that are good and healthy and holy, Pope Francis told pastors from the Diocese of Rome.

While there is "moral conduct that we aren't used to seeing," such as the normalization of living together before marriage, there also is a greater awareness of human rights, a push for tolerance and equality and appreciation for the values of peace and solidarity," he said Feb. 15.

"We should not be frightened of the difficulties, but discern the signs of the times, the things that come from the Spirit" and then "help with the others," he said, according to *RomaSette*, the diocesan newspaper.

As is customary on the day after Ash Wednesday, Pope Francis spent the morning with the pastors in the Basilica of St. John Lateran, the Rome cathedral. The session began with a penitential liturgy and with the pope spending almost an hour hearing confessions.

Afterward, he responded to some of their questions. The event was closed to the press, although the Vatican Media web-

site and *RomaSette* provided some information later in the day.

The questions were submitted by groups of priests according to how long they had been ordained.

The younger priests asked how they could fully live their vocation. Pope Francis has three recommendations: first, learn to balance commitments; second, "find

your own style"; and finally, spend time in private prayer and find a good spiritual director with whom to talk over what arises in prayer.

While forgiveness always is available, the pope said, a person needs to learn how to examine the things that lead to sin in their lives and, especially for that reason, a mature spiritual guide is

necessary.

To priests who are 40 to 50 years old and have been ordained a bit longer, Pope Francis said theirs is a time when ideals tend to become weaker and when the weight of ministry and administrative duties start to be felt.

— TEMPTATIONS, page 15

D&P takes the Leap into manifesto

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — Development and Peace has signed onto a political manifesto that reflects in part the teaching of Pope Francis in a call for drastic change in environmental policy.

The Leap Manifesto was written by the prominent Toronto husband-and-wife team of filmmakers and activists Naomi Klein and Avi Lewis, son of the prominent NDP family of Stephen and David Lewis and the bestselling author of a book on globalization called *This Changes Everything*. The manifesto calls for a radical restructuring of Canada's economy away from reliance on fossil fuels and for stronger legal commitments to honour treaties with indigenous Canadians.

"Climate scientists have told us

this is the decade to take decisive action to prevent catastrophic global warming. That means small steps will no longer suffice. So we need to leap," reads the manifesto, which was introduced in 2015.

A Development and Peace signature on the document was first proposed at the organization's May 2016 Ontario regional assembly. The Ontario vote in favour of Leap didn't make it to Development and Peace's national council until November 2017. At that point Development and Peace staff recommended that national council members individually add their names to the list of 49,486 signatories.

After a long debate, the national council decided it would sign as an organization, said Ontario national council representative Keith Gauntlett. The manifesto was posted to the Development and Peace

website on Jan. 31.

"It has nothing to do explicitly or implicitly with saying we support the aims or objectives of other signatories," Gauntlett told *The Register*. "We resist all inclination that may surface to engage in anything in the way of partisan activity. We're not endorsing any political party. We never have. I'm confident in saying we never will."

Pointing to the signature of former Progressive Conservative Attorney General of Ontario Roy McMurtry, Gauntlett rejects the idea the Leap Manifesto is a product of internal NDP struggles.

It was echoes of Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'* throughout the manifesto which inspired the movement among Development and Peace members to sign, Gauntlett said.

— DIALOGUE, page 7

Pope regularly meets abuse survivors on Fridays

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis told a group of Jesuits in Peru that he often meets on Fridays with survivors of sex abuse. The meetings, which he said do not always become public knowledge, make it clear that the survivors’ process of recovery “is very hard. They remain annihilated. Annihilated,” the pope had told the Jesuits Jan. 19 in Lima. The scandal of clerical sexual abuse shows not only the “fragility” of the Catholic Church, he said, “but also — let us speak clearly — our level of hypocrisy.”

The director of the Vatican press office Feb. 15 confirmed that the pope’s meetings with abuse survivors is regular and ongoing. “I can confirm that several times a month, the Holy Father meets victims of sexual abuse both individually and in groups,” said Greg Burke, the director. “Pope Francis listens to the victims and tries to help them heal the serious wounds caused by the abuse they’ve suffered. The meetings take place with maximum reserve out of respect for the victims and their suffering.” On his trips abroad, Pope Francis usually spends time with local Jesuit communities and holds

a question-and-answer session with them. Weeks later, a transcript of the exchange is published by *Civiltà Cattolica*, a Jesuit journal in Rome. The transcribed and translated texts from Pope Francis’ conversations with Jesuits in Chile Jan. 16 and in Peru three days later were released in Italian and English by *Civiltà Cattolica* Feb. 15 with the pope’s approval, the journal said. The Jesuits in Chile had not asked the pope about the abuse scandal, even though the scandal was in the news, particularly because of ongoing controversy over the pope’s appointment in 2015 of Bishop Juan Barros of

Osorno, who had been accused of covering up the abuse committed by his mentor, Rev. Fernando Karadima. Pope Francis met with the Jesuits in Santiago at the end of his first full day in Chile. Earlier that day he had met with “a small group” of people who had been abused by Chilean priests, according to the Vatican press office. The meeting with the survivors and with the Chilean Jesuits took place days before Chilean reporters asked Pope Francis about the accusations against Barros and he replied, “The day they bring me proof against Bishop Barros, I will

speak. There is not one piece of evidence against him. It is calumny. Is that clear?” The pope later apologized for the remark and, soon after returning to Rome, sent Archbishop Charles Scicluna of Malta, an experienced investigator, to Chile to conduct interviews. The pope told the Peruvian Jesuits that it is a temptation for people in the church to seek a “consolation prize” by comparing statistics about abuse within the church and abuse within families or in other organizations. But even if the abuse rate is lower in the church, the pope said, “it is terrible even if only one of our brothers is such! For God anointed him to sanctify children and adults, and instead of making them holy he has destroyed them. It’s horrible! We need to listen to what someone who has been abused feels.” At that point the pope told the Jesuits in Peru, “On Fridays — sometimes this is known and sometimes it is not known — I normally meet some of them. In Chile I also had such a meeting.” The abuse scandal is “a great humiliation” for the Catholic Church, he said. “It shows not only our fragility, but also — let us say so clearly — our level of hypocrisy.” Pope Francis also told the Jesuits in Peru that “it is notable that there are some newer congregations whose founders have fallen into these abuses.” He did not specify which congregations, however. In the “new, prosperous congregations” where abuse has been a problem, he said, there is a combination of an abuse of authority, sexual abuse and “an economic mess. There is always money involved. The devil enters through the wallet.”

Pope, Melkite patriarch formalize full communion

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Formalizing their unity in the intimate setting of the chapel of the papal residence, Pope Francis and Melkite Patriarch Joseph Absi concelebrated mass together in the presence of members of the Melkite synod of bishops. Instead of giving a homily at the early morning mass Feb. 13, Pope Francis explained the special nature of Absi’s visit. “He is the father of a church, a very ancient church, and he comes to embrace Peter, to say, ‘I’m in communion with Peter,’ ” Pope Francis said during the mass in the *Domus Sanctae Marthae*. The Melkite church, one of the many Eastern churches in full union with Rome, “has its own theology within Catholic theology, it has a marvellous liturgy and a people of its own.” “At this time, a large portion of that people is being crucified like Jesus,” the pope said, referring especially to Melkites who, like Absi, are from Syria. “We offer this mass for the people, for the people who suffer, for the persecuted Christians of the Middle East.” The 71-year-old patriarch, who was elected in June, told Pope Francis, “I cannot describe how beautiful this moment is,” but he said he was “very moved by your fraternal charity, by the gestures of fraternity and solidarity you

have shown our church.” At the end of the mass, Pope Francis asked the patriarch to join him in giving the final blessing to the few dozen people invited to the morning mass. The pope, patriarch and bishops also had met Feb. 12 in the papal library. “At this difficult time, many Christian communities in the Middle East are called to live their faith in the Lord Jesus in the midst of many trials,” the pope told them. He prayed that the patriarch, bishops and priests of the Melkite church would live in a way that would encourage all the faithful “to remain in the land where divine providence wanted them to be.” Pope Francis urged them to be “pastors — like the Lord with his disciples — who reanimate the hearts of the faithful by staying close to them, consoling them, reaching down to them and their needs; pastors who, at the same time, accompany them up, to seek what is above, where there is Christ, and not the things of earth.” While Pope Francis had called



POPE MEETS MELKITE BISHOPS — Pope Francis listens as Melkite Patriarch Joseph Absi speaks during a meeting with members of the Melkite synod of bishops at the Vatican Feb. 12. The Melkite Church is an Eastern Catholic church in full communion with Rome.

Catholics to join a day of prayer and fasting Feb. 23 specifically for peace in Congo and South Sudan, he told the Melkites, “I

will not fail to remember, in a special way, Syria, which has been struck by indescribable suffering these past few years.”

Lent is time to notice God’s work: pope

By Cindy Wooden

ROME (CNS) — Lent is a time for Christians to get their hearts in sync with the heart of Jesus, Pope Francis said. “Let the Lord heal the wounds of sin and fulfil the prophecy made to our fathers: ‘A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh,’ ” the pope said Feb. 14, celebrating mass and distributing ashes at the beginning of Lent. After a brief prayer at the Benedictine’s Monastery of St. Anselm, Pope Francis made the traditional Ash Wednesday procession to the Dominican-run Basilica of Santa Sabina on Rome’s Aventine Hill for the mass. He received ashes on his head from 93-year-old Cardinal Jozef Tomko, titular cardinal of the basilica, and he distributed ashes to the cardinals present, three Benedictines, three Dominicans, an Italian couple with two children and members of the Pontifical Academy for Martyrs, which promotes the traditional lenten “station church” pilgrimage in Rome. In his homily, he said the church gives Christians the 40

days of Lent as a time to reflect on “anything that could dampen or even corrode our believing heart.” Everyone experiences temptation, the pope said. Lent is a time to pause and step back from situations that lead to sin, a time to see how God is at work in others and in the world and, especially, a time to return to the Lord, knowing that his mercy is boundless. Lent, he said, is a time “to allow our hearts to beat once more in tune with the vibrant heart of Jesus.” Hitting the reset button, the pope said, requires taking a pause from “bitter feelings, which never get us anywhere” and from a frantic pace of life that leaves too little time for family, friends, children, grandparents and God. People need to pause from striving to be noticed, from snooty comments and “haughty looks,” he said; instead, they need to show tenderness, compassion and even reverence for others. “Pause for a little while, refrain from the deafening noise that weakens and confuses our hearing, that makes us forget the fruitful and creative power of silence,” the pope said. Use the pauses of Lent “to look and contemplate,” he suggested.

Christians can learn from seeing the gestures others make that “keep the flame of faith and hope alive.” “Look at faces alive with God’s tenderness and goodness working in our midst,” the pope said, pointing to the faces of families who struggle to survive yet continue to love, the wrinkled faces of the elderly “that reflect God’s wisdom at work” and the faces of the sick and their caregivers who “remind us that the value of each person can never be reduced to a question of calculation or utility.” “See the remorseful faces of so many who try to repair their errors and mistakes, and who from their misfortune and suffering, fight to transform their situations and move forward,” Pope Francis said. But most of all, he said, “see and contemplate the real face of Christ crucified out of love for everyone, without exception. For everyone? Yes, for everyone. To see his face is an invitation filled with hope for this lenten time, in order to defeat the demons of distrust, apathy and resignation. The invitation, he said, is to “return without fear to those outstretched, eager arms of your Father, who is rich in mercy, who awaits you.”



FLORIDA SCHOOL SHOOTING — Students mourn during a Feb. 15 prayer vigil in Pompano Beach, Fla., for victims of the shootings at nearby Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland. At least 17 people were killed in the shooting. The suspect, 19-year-old former student Nikolas Cruz, is in custody.

Reconciliation sought among diverse communities

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — For the past eight months, members of the Diocesan Council for Truth and Reconciliation (DCTR) have met with community leaders west of Saskatoon, working to come up with a concrete way of addressing divisions and bringing about greater understanding and reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous people.

A range of community partners are now working on a newly created West Central Reconciliation Committee, planning an event aimed at Grades 7 and 8 students from schools at Red Pheasant Cree Nation, Mosquito First Nation, and Biggar, Sask.

The group is planning a day-long experience of dialogue and awareness for youth in May, which will serve as a witness to the wider community, explains Myron Rogal, diocesan co-ordinator of Justice and Peace in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

“We are hopeful that the youth can come to know each other, and that something of their experience will be shared with their parents,” says Rogal.

Established as part of a promise by the Saskatoon diocese at a June 2012 Truth and Reconciliation Commission national event, the DCTR has been doing a range of work around healing and reconciliation.

DCTR members were inspired by the documentary Reserve 107, which tells the story of reconciliation and healing among Mennonites, Lutherans and the Young Chippewyan First Nation in one Saskatchewan community.

The area west of Saskatoon, between Biggar and North Battleford, has been the focus of much attention and emotion since area farmer Gerald Stanley was charged and recently found not guilty in the August 2016 shooting death of Colten Boushie, a young indigenous man. Those events have also heightened the DCTR’s desire to address divisions that plague many areas of the province.

“Last year we called a committee together of elders, representatives of the Catholic school board, the University of Saskatchewan, ecumenical partners and other stakeholders and held a meeting with local pastors to gather their thoughts and insights on divisions in their area.”

At the fourth meeting, a feeling of hesitation and uncertainty about whether to keep going was ultimately dispelled when an elder spoke up and urged the group to go ahead, saying that reconciliation is a profound need that must be addressed.

The group asked for a meeting with the band council at Red Pheasant Cree First Nation, and were invited to a regular Red Pheasant/Mosquito Inter-Agency Meeting on Oct. 25, 2017.

This monthly inter-agency gathering includes a range of community partners, including Battle River Treaty 6 Health Centre, BATC (Battlefords Agency Tribal Chiefs) Social Development, Kanawayimik Child and Family Services, Clifford Wuttunee

School, Mosquito School, the RCMP, BTC (Battleford Tribal Council) Justice, the City of North Battleford, as well as Red Pheasant and Mosquito First Nations. Issues regularly addressed by this group include health care, education, employment, child care, transportation, community leadership, and barriers to services.

“We went to the community because we didn’t want this to be a program that we were imposing on anyone. We wanted it to be something developed from the grassroots, something we could then assist with but was led by the community,” Rogal describes.

“We discovered there was a definite need, and the inter-agency group indicated it would be helpful for an outside group to be involved.”

The inter-agency group and First Nations representatives encouraged the committee to “have a brave and a bold conversation, focused on youth.” The committee ultimately decided to focus on youth in Grade 7 and 8, and met with the principals of local schools.

“We wanted to have a day focused on traditional teachings — the culture and values of both groups — a day in which indigenous and non-indigenous stu-

dents could come together and share.” In exploring culture, knowledge and values, Rogal adds, rural youth have the potential to realize that they share much in common.

The project will include a preparation event held in the schools involved, including an information package for parents, as well as a debriefing session afterward. The main event, hosted at a First Nations school, would bring together some 50 young people for activities and teachings, and facilitated sharing circles.

This will not be a one-time

event, Rogal stresses. “We have been asked by the local community to establish a long-term relationship.”

Because some of the communities involved are in the Diocese of Prince Albert, two deacons from there are offering input into the committee, adds Rogal. “They have long-standing relationships in the area.”

Key insights and leadership have been provided by Harry Lafond of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, and Elder Reg Buglar of Red Pheasant Cree First Nation, who serves as an elder at St. Francis Cree Bilingual School in Saskatoon.

The West Central Reconciliation Committee is hoping the experience will build connections among young people that will “reset the needle” on racism. “We are hoping that students from the different schools will find commonalities in their love of the land, and perhaps even in their mutual feelings of marginalization. We hope there will be dialogue and relationship-building in the listening circles.”

Rogal notes that the challenges facing First Nations and rural communities are often similar: “There are many commonalities. Both are losing young people. Both want to pass on their traditions. Both are dealing with complex issues such as grief, and both are facing the barriers of marginalization.”

When reflecting on why it is important to make this effort, Rogal comes back to the Gospel call: “We have a responsibility to open ourselves to this pain and this division, and to listen.”



Tyler Gingrich

WEEK OF PRAYER — The 2018 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was celebrated Jan. 18 - 25 in Winnipeg with church leaders and representatives gathering for services throughout the week. Above, from left: Rev. Tyler Gingrich, Very Rev. Paul N. Johnson, Most Rev. Richard Gagnon, Most Rev. Lawrence Huculak, Most Rev. Albert LeGatt, Rick Neufeld, Rev. Peter Bush, Rev. Noel Suministrado, Captain Gordon Taylor, Rev. Loraine MacKenzie Shepherd, Rev. Robert Polz, Théophile Tuyisingize, and Deacon Rudolph LeMaitre. The photo was taken at the city-wide ecumenical worship service Jan. 21 at Westworth United Church. Other gatherings were held at St. John XXIII Roman Catholic Church, Golden West Centennial Lodge (The Salvation Army), Holy Eucharist Ukrainian Catholic Church, St. Saviour’s Anglican Church, Résidence Despins, and First Lutheran Church.

Alberta mourns ‘giant’ of a man in Archbishop MacNeil

By Andrew Ehrkamp
Grandin Media

EDMONTON (CCN) — Alberta’s Catholic community is mourning a giant character in its storied history following the death of retired Archbishop Joseph MacNeil, a humble disciple with a unique ability to remember names, faces and details of the lives of thousands of people.

“Archbishop MacNeil, throughout his tenure here, was a larger-than-life kind of a figure and he was known far beyond the local Catholic community,” Edmonton Archbishop Richard Smith told reporters and archdiocesan staff at a news conference on Feb. 12.

“Wherever he was known, wherever he was encountered, he was always met with profound gratitude and respect for his person, for his integrity, for his ministry, for his dedication to people, for his dedication to the church. His passing marks at the same time, I would say, the passing of an era,” Smith said.

MacNeil, who led the Catholic community in the Archdiocese of Edmonton for 26 years, died on Feb. 11 at the Grey Nuns Hospital after suffering a stroke. He was 93.

“In those 26 years, obviously he was able to exercise a massive impact, an impact that we probably never will be able fully to measure, on the lives of many,

many people and certainly in the life and the ministry of this church.”

“A gentle giant has gone,” added Rev. Gregory Bittman, Auxiliary Bishop of Edmonton, who was ordained as a deacon, priest and bishop by MacNeil and was with him by his hospital bedside when he died.

Joseph MacNeil was born the oldest of three children in Sydney, N.S., on April 15, 1924, and he had made Alberta his home ever since he was installed as Archbishop of Edmonton on Sept. 5, 1973.

In 1984, as president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, he invited St. Pope John Paul II to his first visit to Canada in 1984, and escorted him on the Edmonton leg. But it was within the Edmonton archdiocese where MacNeil’s impact was felt the most.

During his term, he committed himself to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, empowering lay people in the church, building friendships with other faith communities, and extending the church’s efforts in social justice. In retirement, he continued his ministry with personal visits and retreats.

There are few Catholics in the Edmonton archdiocese who don’t have a connection with MacNeil, either through a personal en-

counter or through the sacraments, especially confirmation.

“He was a living history of this diocese. He loved to talk and he had many, many stories,” Bittman recalled.

MacNeil took particular pride in the Edmonton junior and senior high school named after him, which opened in 2003, and he loved visiting the students there.

“He was just a wonderful priest, a wonderful bishop with a great touch, especially close to young people,” Smith said. “He was able to have that personal, direct touch with anybody he came into contact with and it left a deep, deep impression.”

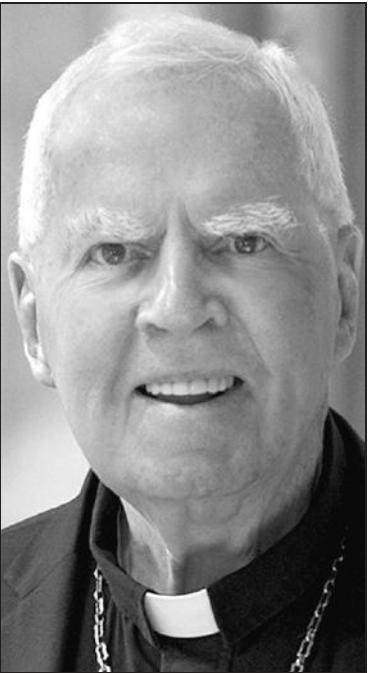
And if MacNeil met you, it’s more than likely he remembered you years later.

“Probably the key standard of measure, in his episcopal role, that I find extraordinarily difficult to measure up to, is the way that he knew everybody,” Smith said.

“He knew people. He remembered their names. He could tell you where they were from, probably the name of their pet, the names of their cousins. He knew them through and through. And people knew that and knew that because he knew them, he loved him.”

That facility to make friendships extended to people, and leaders, of other denominations and other faiths. MacNeil even

insisted upon inviting other faith leaders to the prayer service that St. John Paul II led in Edmonton in 1984.



Robert Bray

Archbishop Joseph MacNeil

Security was an especially sensitive issue at the time, because the visit came after an assassination attempt on the pope. But MacNeil and the Holy Father made plans to visit Elk Island National Park, about 60 kilometres east of Ed-

Wake up to the ticking clock on nuclear threat

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — Is the world moving closer to nuclear war?

An American \$1.2-trillion investment in new nuclear weapons systems, plans for tactical use of nuclear bombs on battlefields, threats of responding to cyberattacks with a nuclear strike and rejection of international efforts — including pleas by Pope Francis — to encourage disarmament have people worried.

“Not to sound alarmist, it’s a wonder people aren’t running for cover,” said Project Ploughshares executive director Cesar Jaramillo. “Very authoritative observers and stakeholders have said there is a real chance of thermonuclear war in 2018. Maybe it sounds too close to science fiction to be taken as seriously as it should.”

Jaramillo and his colleagues at Canada’s ecumenical Christian peace and disarmament think-

tank don’t base their worries on science fiction. On Jan. 25 the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists moved the Doomsday Clock to two minutes to midnight, the closest it has been to Armageddon since 1953. On Feb. 2 the United States issued its quadrennial “Nuclear Posture Review,” proposing a complete overhaul of the U.S. nuclear triad and setting out justifications for breaking existing arms control treaties. On Feb. 5 the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty came into full effect without any new nuclear talks planned before the Russia-U.S. agreement runs out in 2021.

“Of course, President (Donald) Trump has upended the traditional understanding of American foreign policy with a high degree of unpredictability, volatility, recklessness. Through a nuclear lens, those are very alarming red flags,” said Jaramillo. “If one looks at the details of the (Nuclear) Posture Review, coupled with other recent

comments by Trump in the State of the Union address, it’s really an affirmation from that perspective of the validity and legitimacy of nuclear weapons possession.”

This isn’t something happening just south of the border. Canada’s defence policy is tied to NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization of 29 allies reliant on America’s nuclear umbrella. NATO has no plans for how it will operate or what it could be without nuclear weapons.

“Efforts for nuclear disarmament need to take into account the realities of the threats and challenges we face,” a NATO spokesperson told *The Catholic Register* by email. “As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO must and will remain a nuclear alliance.”

Anti-nuclear voices include the 122 nations who endorsed a United Nations treaty last July to classify nuclear weapons as illegal, indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction. And Pope

Francis unequivocally stated possession of nuclear arms is gravely immoral at a Vatican conference on disarmament Nov. 10.

“At best, it (the UN’s Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty) is ineffective and will do nothing to stop regimes — such as North Korea — from developing their nuclear programs. At worst, it is counterproductive in that it risks undermining years of steady progress under the Non-Proliferation Treaty,” said the NATO spokesperson.

“The fact of the matter is that all the nuclear weapons states are in violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty,” said Douglas Roche, former Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament and disarmament adviser to the Holy See.

Under Article VI of the 1968 treaty, the five nuclear powers who signed on are obliged to gradually, verifiably reduce their nuclear weapons stocks with the goal of nuclear disarmament. While the number of warheads has gone down, the practical nuclear threat has either increased or remained steady as the sophistication of nuclear weapons systems has increased.

“A new nuclear weapons race has already started,” said Roche. “It’s extremely disconcerting to be fed this bilge by the NATO press department that they’re doing everything they can to move forward. It’s hogwash.”

Rev. John Perry, Jesuit senior scholar at the University of Manitoba’s St. Paul College, rejects the charge that Pope Francis has changed the Vatican’s tune on nuclear deterrence.

It isn’t Catholic teaching that has changed, rather the military doctrine of deterrence which has shifted over the last two generations, said Perry.

“The concept of deterrence is a very questionable moral position. It’s based on the right to self-defence, of course. But, of late, there are those who would say that deterrence includes a pre-emptive strike,” he said. “They’ve managed to change the idea of deterrence in such a way that we can no longer talk about it as something we can embrace as a viable moral option.”

Perry has no patience with the mental gymnastics of just war theory applied to weapons that can wipe out entire cities full of non-combatants and whose long-term effects include broken DNA, birth defects and disease into the next generation.

“The theory of just war is not Christian in any proper sense of the word. It has no biblical, theological or canonical foundation,” he said. “Even using it, you can’t justify nuclear deterrence.”

The church isn’t living in a Care Bears movie, demanding a global group hug to dissolve fears fuelling weapons programs in North Korea and the United States.

“We’re not naive,” USCCB Office of International Justice and Peace director Stephen Colecchi told *The Catholic Register*. “We know and Pope Francis knows — he has said this in a statement last year — that this will be a long-

term process. But we’ve got to take a step down that road.”

The Trump administration’s Nuclear Posture Review is a step in the opposite direction, Colecchi said.

“We had hoped that the weapons would be taken off launch-on-warning status to avoid a catastrophic accident. We had hoped that instead of investing hundreds of billions of dollars in modernizing nuclear weapons we would be investing in diplomacy to reduce the nuclear weapons threat,” he said.

Rather than operating out of fear, we should be investing in the science and the rational diplomacy, said Colecchi.

“Peace is something that if you ask most Americans, it’s what they desire. The question is, how do we get there? It’s whether we will allow fear to dominate our decisions or whether we will allow hope to dominate our decisions. As people of faith, we are always people of hope,” he said.

In October the 25 member denominations of the Canadian Council of Churches wrote to Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland asking Ottawa to use its diplomatic muscle at NATO and the UN to nudge the needle toward disarmament.

“We find it disconcerting that Canada’s position on nuclear disarmament aligns with that of states with nuclear weapons,” said the letter signed by Justice and Peace Commission chair Rev. Paul Gehrs.

So far, there’s been no reply from Freeland’s office.

Canada has taken a leading role in preparing for negotiations of a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty, which would starve the bomb-makers of material to make bombs. Roche calls it an empty gesture with no likely result.

“No negotiations have even started. In the discussions, all they’re talking about is cutting off future production. It says nothing about existing stocks,” said Roche.

Rather than making nuclear disarmament all about politicians, Roche craves a conversation in Catholic parishes, schools and universities, led by bishops who are concerned about their flock locally and globally. He calls on Canada’s bishops to spark that conversation.

“We need to back the pope,” he said. “The Canadian bishops should be issuing a statement to back Pope Francis when he firmly condemned the very possession of nuclear weapons. Everybody ought to wake up and listen to those words.”



Gail Kleefeld

BLESS THE BEASTS — A young moose settled comfortably in the snow right outside the *Prairie Messenger* office window on Feb. 13. While some may think a moose has a face only a mother could love, “You are not what others think you are. You are what God knows you are.” — Shannon L. Alder

Stanley verdict ‘resurfaced profound pain’

Continued from page 1

“The events surrounding the tragic shooting death of Colten Boushie in August 2016, and the subsequent trial of Gerald Stanley and recent jury decision, have resurfaced profound pain to families and communities,” begins the statement, which was circulated to parishes, churches, media, and on diocesan websites Feb. 15. These events “have also raised enormously important questions and challenges for our province and our country.”

“We continue to offer our prayers for all of you, and remain committed to the spirit and principles of truth and reconciliation as we learn to walk together as indigenous and non-indigenous people.”

In the statement, the bishops said they were rededicating themselves to work for reconciliation and peace in the province, and

called upon the community to continue on the path of “building right relationships.”

“The path of peace is more than simply avoiding conflict — it is a call to active engagement and to concrete action that builds right relationships. Our biblical tradition highlights that violence breeds violence; that the path forward encompasses acting honourably and seeking mutual respect as we address difficult issues together. We acknowledge the message many of us are already hearing from indigenous people across this province and beyond: ‘Be the change you want to see.’”

The statement notes that building right relationships has been the goal of the Truth and Reconciliation process that Canada has embarked on in recent years, saying that all are now being challenged and called to pursue that goal with renewed passion and

commitment.

They also reiterated an earlier statement made by Saskatoon Tribal Chief Mark Arcand and Saskatoon Mayor Charlie Clark: “We must continue to work with each other in a good way, in a respectful way.”

The bishops concluded their statement by asking for a renewed commitment to dialogue and to building relationships. “As representatives of our churches, we call our own communities, and the wider community, to take concrete steps, in words and actions, in a spirit of humility and goodwill, rooted in profound prayer,” they said.

“With a renewed commitment to pursue meaningful, respectful dialogue and the building of positive relationships between all peoples, may we reject the evils of racism and division, and strive to work for peace and reconciliation for a renewed future.”

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Volunteers push back against assisted suicide

By Agnieszka Krawczynski
The B.C. Catholic

VANCOUVER (CCN) — Assisted suicide was legalized just over a year ago, but the debate is far from over.

Various health care workers and volunteers are continuing to fight the practice in the face of increasing pressure to end the lives of their patients.

“I’m speaking on behalf of the sick and most vulnerable who cannot advocate for themselves,” Nancy Macey, the executive director of Delta Hospice Society, told *The B.C. Catholic* Feb. 6.

Macey, who created the non-profit on her kitchen table 25 years ago, was horrified to find out the Fraser Health Authority was moving ahead on plans to force hospices to provide assisted suicide, popularly termed medical assistance in dying (MAiD).

That was before Christmas, and now she and many others are raising the issue with local politicians, the media, the Fraser Health Authority, and with anyone willing to listen.

“Hospice palliative care, as defined by the World Health Organization, does not hasten or prolong death,” Macey wrote in a letter to Health Minister Petitpas Taylor and seven local politicians Feb. 1.

Assisted suicide, Macey said, runs contrary to these principles. She wants to see hospices have the ability to opt-out of providing assisted suicide on-site, and instead transfer patients who want the lethal injection to their homes or other facilities.

“What we’re concerned about is if you introduce euthanasia into (hospice care), it’s going to put up barriers to access.” She’s worried the consequences of forcing assisted suicide into hospices, especially those who don’t want to participate, will only make matters worse for the majority of the dying.

“Those who choose to have MAiD represent one per cent of the population,” she said. “The euthanasia people have choice anywhere they want it. Where does the choice come for the people who don’t want to be in an

environment with euthanasia?”

Hospice supporters say imposing assisted suicide would exacerbate the already difficult problem of providing quality palliative care to all Canadians: only about 30 per cent can currently access it.

They say the majority of terminally ill patients who won’t seek assisted suicide might fear entering a hospice.

“If people are afraid to access it, there is going to be more suffering,” said Macey. “There is going to be people ending up in emergency departments, there will be caregiver burnout, and people will die in emergency care and hospitals, all the stuff we’ve been working on for 25 years to avoid.”

The Delta Hospice Society operates under contract with Fraser Health and is not required to provide assisted suicide under current policies. The Langley Hospice, however, is affected.

“To mix MAiD with hospice care makes absolutely no sense,” said Kiernan Hillan, a volunteer at the Langley Hospice for four years.

“It’s contrary to the whole direction the hospice should be going in. It’s not a place of killing. It’s a place where you live your last moments. You’re not going there to decide that you’re going to die. You’re going there to live your last moments to the fullest possible.”

Hillan is passionate about caring for the dying and feels it’s important to be there as one of the few male volunteers and employees. However, he’s worried that if assisted suicide is forced in, he will be forced out.

“We love people, we care for people, we listen to them, we make coffee for them, we get a blanket, and we help them when they eat. But now comes a point where we’re supposed to support them when they make a decision to end their life? No, that doesn’t make sense,” he said. “If I’m sitting there as a volunteer and someone in the next room would be having MAiD, I don’t know if I could be in that facility.”

He’s not the only one worried that existing hospice staffing

issues will get worse. Already, high-profile medical professionals like Dr. Neil Hilliard, the executive director of the Fraser Health Palliative Care Program, are resigning over the issue.

“It’s a very dangerous place to go,” said longtime Langley Hospice supporter Michele Coleman. She said hospices also stand to lose substantial donations.

“We have a number of people who are very much against MAiD who will withdraw their funding and support,” said Coleman, who solicited funds for the hospice while on the foundation’s board of directors for 16 years.

Those funds contribute to beds, staffing, and grieving programs. “They do a fantastic children’s camp for children who have lost parents, grandparents, or siblings,” offer various types of counselling, and host vigils at the bedsides of people who would otherwise die alone.

“All of this type of thing is at jeopardy” if the hospice loses donors who don’t support MAiD.

Retired family doctor Karen Mason also volunteers at Langley Hospice. She has recognized suicide contagion as a real issue in her practice and worries about the impact it could have in hospice settings.

“If a kid commits suicide in a high school, they bring a counsellor in to talk to the other ones because they know the chance of

more suicide is higher. I spent my whole career sending people to psychiatric units because they were suicidal and needed help,” she said.

In hospice care, “people feel the pressure because they don’t want to be a burden for their fam-

ilies” and could be more vulnerable to suicide contagion.

“It’s been a long, long journey to convince society as a whole that palliative care isn’t something you need to be afraid of. If you put MAiD in palliative care, people are going to be afraid again.”



Kiply Yaworski

BISHOP’S VISIT — Saskatoon Bishop Mark Hagemoen recently visited École St. Gerard Catholic School to thank students and staff for their prayers and support. At a recent school retreat, students and staff put together a booklet featuring a spiritual bouquet of prayers offered as a welcome to the new Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

Youth look forward to pre-synod in Rome

By Jean Ko Din
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — Planning for this fall’s General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on Youth has been underway for some time, and recently the Canadian bishops selected two people to represent the country for preparation sessions in Rome next month.

Jacob Jason Genaille-Dustyhorn isn’t Catholic, but his spiritual roots with the indigenous community has qualified him as one of only two young people selected by Canadian bishops (see *PM* story, Feb. 14, 2018).

The 21-year-old Cree native will join Emilie Callan, 28, who works for Salt + Light Media Foundation, at the pre-synodal youth meeting March 19 - 24 that will help set an agenda for this fall’s General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on youth.

“Two people in the whole country is really not very easy but finally we got these two names,” said Bishop Lionel Gendron, president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB). “When we were in Rome in December, they told us no more than two persons. So we finally looked for having a man and a woman, English and French, indigenous and so on.”

Gendron said it was a priority for the CCCB executive council to select at least one young person who represented the native community.

“He’s not a Catholic, but as the pope mentioned, he wants to speak

to Catholic and non-Catholic, believers and non-believers and so on, so his name was accepted also in Rome,” said Gendron.

Genaille-Dustyhorn is a second-year student in the Indian Teacher Education program at University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon.

Genaille-Dustyhorn said he is approaching the pre-synod from a bit of an outside perspective. His mother is Christian and he said he has “grown up with that faith.” He also attends regular youth nights at The Bridge Fellowship Centre, a Christian-based community centre in Saskatoon, and is involved with the Youth for Christ local hockey league. Still, he identifies more with his Cree spirituality.

“Every religion, they all have a Great Spirit that they look up to, so it’s kind of hard not to believe,” said Genaille-Dustyhorn.

Genaille-Dustyhorn said he does feel connected to the Christian faith through the friends he’s made in youth group.

“Believing is the greatest challenge for young people today,” he said. “There’s a lot of material stuff nowadays that are becoming more important than spirituality. They put their faith in something that can make them happy for maybe a year, instead of putting their faith in something that can make them happy their whole life.”

Genaille-Dustyhorn doesn’t know what to expect for the pre-synod, but he’s already doing his research.

Callan grew up in a French-speaking family in Cornwall, Ont., and works in Toronto as a writer

and producer for Salt + Light Media Foundation. CEO Rev. Thomas Rosica recommended her as a candidate for her work as co-host for a national youth forum broadcast in October last year.

Callan said her work on that broadcast was a great starting point for her pre-synod preparation, but there is still more to learn.

“Recently, I’ve been doing a couple of streeter-style, quick interviews with young people on the street,” she said. “A lot of these young people had similar answers. . . . They had a lot of fears about the future, about finding jobs, and good jobs, and enough money to support themselves.”

Although many of the young people she has interviewed do not necessarily belong to a faith, she said that they have the same life concerns as Catholics. As a youth delegate, Callan said she sees the pre-synod as an opportunity to have open discussions on hard topics that concern young people.

“I have friends in the medical field that are facing really tough decisions in regards to listening to their conscience on life issues,” said Callan. “Listening to their conscience and maybe risking losing their jobs is a concern, I’ve heard.”

Issues about love, relationships and sexuality are also a recurring topic of discussion among her peers, said Callan.

Callan and Genaille-Dustyhorn have yet to meet but are looking forward to working together alongside 300 delegates from around the world to discuss challenges young people face today.

Alberta became home

Continued from page 3

monton, after a planned visit to Jasper fell through because of the weather.

“This was worked out between the archbishop and the pope, nobody else knew this,” Smith said, recalling the story. “Security went crazy — ‘We can’t do this,’ ‘Nothing is secured’ — and the archbishop looked at the head of security and said, ‘I don’t even think God knows that we’re going out to Elk Island! We’re going to be OK.’ And so off they went.”

In the end, a photo of St. John Paul II at Elk Island Park — alone among the trees, praying his rosary as he often did — became one of the most famous photos ever taken of the Pope John Paul II.

After retiring in 1999, MacNeil

didn’t seek the limelight but his ministry — leading retreats or making visits — continued unabated. In the last few months, he knew his time was short and he was preparing for his death.

A native of Nova Scotia, MacNeil said — in an interview shortly after his appointment to Edmonton — that he missed the Maritimes terribly. But after decades as archbishop, he was particular about being buried in the Edmonton archdiocese.

Months before his death, MacNeil made those arrangements with Rev. Adam Lech, the chancellor of the Archdiocese of Edmonton.

“He said ‘Adam, you are the chancellor. You will bury me here. Here is my home. Don’t take my dead body anywhere. Here I will be buried.’ ”

Spiritual Exercises the core of Jesuit philosophy

By Johnston Smith

WINNIPEG — The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola have been the core of the Jesuit way of life since the Society of Jesus was founded nearly 500 years ago.

In the past 40 years, more and more Canadian lay people have been following this regimen of prayer and contemplation. The Spiritual Exercises were designed to be made over 30 - 40 days in a monastic setting; however, St. Ignatius provided for a means of doing them in ordinary life over

the course of six or seven months. This is the program that Winnipeg's St. Ignatius Parish has been offering for some 25 years.

Some of the principal effects people experience from the Spiritual Exercises are: finding God in ordinary daily life; developing a personal relationship with the risen Jesus; learning how to identify and be freed from desires that lead away from God; experiencing the reality of God's love; and learning how to make decisions that are guided by the Holy Spirit.

Retreatants commit to doing up to an hour per day of contemplative prayer, a method that stresses the engagement of the imagination and the emotions. The focus of the Spiritual Exercises is developing a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus, using Gospel stories as inspiration. While praying the exercises, retreatants weekly meet one-on-one with a spiritual director who has been trained in guiding others through the exercises.

The program begins each May with an exploratory "taste" of the Ignatian style of prayer. Candi-

dates then decide whether they wish to continue with the program. In October, the Exercises begin. They conclude in May the following year.

Several of the 2016 - 17 retreatants offered comments on their experience. One spoke of feeling greater emotion during prayer: "I now have the skills to think about God when I pray, rather than just focusing on myself or the needs of loved ones."

"I am closer to Jesus," said another, "and experience him directly sometimes."

Another said: "I now will not make my own decisions without praying on them and talking to God about what he wants for me."

The exploratory/introductory sessions occur this year at the St. Ignatius Education Centre for five consecutive Tuesday evenings, 7 - 8:30 beginning May 1. For further information contact 204-453-9243 or education.centre@stignatiusparish.ca

Smith is a director in the St. Ignatius Spiritual Exercises program.

Dahl speaks on 'The Uncomfortable Pew'

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — We are in a new era of ecumenical culture, said Dr. Darren Dahl, addressing a small audience who were attending, on a very cold evening, a workshop titled "The Uncomfortable Pew" at Regina's Living Spirit Centre. It was an appropriate location, in that the centre houses three Christian communities: St. Phillip's Anglican, East Side United, and Bread of Life Lutheran. The workshop was a project of The Prairie Centre for Ecumenism.

Dahl said ecumenism has progressed from the 1960s when people had no awareness of Christian traditions other than their own, to today, where people more easily "move in and out of each other's churches and places of worship. That's a good thing," said Dahl. "However, this new ecumenical culture can produce situations of very uncomfortable pews."

He gave the example of, after a lifetime of not entering Uncle Peter's Greek Orthodox Church, cousin Ashley thinks she will arrive Saturday afternoon for the family wedding as if she were arriving at her local community church.

"Ashley is in for some serious discomfort," said Dahl. "It's not because Uncle Peter's church is stodgy or traditional, it's because everybody lives within a particular and determinate set of Christian traditions without which we cannot think of ourselves as practising Christians."

After Dahl's introductory comments, the group shifted to the workshop. Participants representing different traditions were seated at tables where each was asked to describe a situation in which they had experienced, or knew of someone who had experienced, discomfort visiting their own or someone else's church.

One participant described a situation where the welcome included an offer to be escorted up the aisle to a seat; another described a young couple who were excitedly greeted because of their youth; and another described being confused about appropriate behaviour when the eucharist was offered.

Participants were asked to reflect on those moments, then offer some thoughts on what could be done to make visitors more comfortable. One suggested a visitor's booklet that would describe the service,

including prayers and responses as well as when to stand, sit, or kneel, and washroom locations. Another suggested the presider, minister, or priest offer a welcome to visitors, offer a brief explanation of the service and ask everyone to greet those next to them, and perhaps introduce themselves.

"We must find a way to celebrate together in ways that welcome the neighbour by opening to them the very practices that make us who we are," Dahl told the group.

Dahl is the executive director of the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism in Saskatoon. There was no charge for the workshop, but participants were asked for a free-will offering to cover expenses that included coffee and cookies after the workshop.

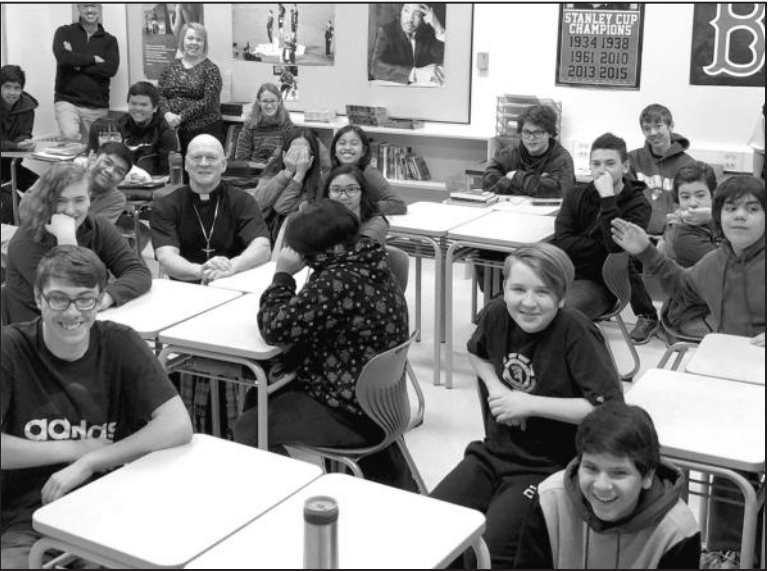


Photo submitted by GSCS

SCHOOL VISIT — Bishop Mark Hagemoen of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon met with Grade 9 students at E.D. Feehan Catholic High School Feb. 5, introducing himself and getting to know more about Catholic schools in his new diocese, and answering students' questions.

Many foster families in need in Canada

By Myron Rogal

SASKATOON — "Who will walk with me through my pain?" This was one of the questions that speaker Lynn Chotowetz of Hands at Work asked the audience Jan. 28 at St. Phillip Neri Church in Saskatoon, as some 40 participants gathered to learn about a growing ministry dedicated to supporting vulnerable families.

The "Foster the Foster Families" event was a joint effort of the Office of Justice and Peace of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, Time out for Moms, and Hands at Work, with support from Pure Witness Ministries, which offered a youth component for the evening.

Andi Early of Time out for Moms welcomed participants and introduced the speaker.

Chotowetz described a model of care for vulnerable families: "Christ the King who was first and foremost a servant." The background of this model, founded on friendship and relationship, was born through Chotowetz's experience serving in South Africa during the AIDS crisis. Chotowetz and his wife, Jamie, were motivated by a desire to be with "the most vulnerable of the vulnerable."

The need for families to support families was clear. Although services to meet basic needs were available, depression, suicide, and family breakdown rates remained high. There is a need within the hearts of people that even the best

services cannot fulfil, Chotowetz explained: the need to break down isolation through relationship and friendship.

Today, Hands at Work builds hope in 68 villages throughout South Africa. As Chotowetz began planning to return to Canada, he and Jamie started thinking about the "most vulnerable of the vulnerable" in this country.

Looking across the spectrum of needs in Canada — "all of which are extremely complex," stressed Chotowetz — the couple saw that there was often a link to the child welfare system. He and Jamie discovered that, despite a system with competent and caring professionals, many foster families remain in need when it comes to the basic relationships and connections that can help sustain them in their work.

For foster parents, there can be a sense that they are under daily pressures, yet "when we are most in need is when we are least likely to ask for help," said Chotowetz. This is not a fault of the foster parents, nor of a system that cannot work well when it is overburdened.

Since policy and resources cannot ultimately solve this deeper need for connection, Chotowetz focuses on the opportunities that

remain for churches and families to share these burdens and respond to families' needs. For some, this may eventually lead to a call to foster, but for most it involves building a friendship.

Many basic needs can be met in acts of friendship and support: bringing meals, offering parents a break, becoming mentors. Chotowetz expressed confidence in the ability of churches to take on this kind of outreach, pointing out that the government's mandate is not to love, and that love cannot be "outsourced": "Christ did not pay someone to go to the cross for him."

The government is doing a good job, he said, it is "we in the church who can build these needed relationships."

For Chotowetz, this is not an abstract theory, but a practice with a process. An entry point for interested couples and families begins by attending a celebration with foster families.

The final challenge Chotowetz offered was for "families to become something bigger than ourselves." As Mother Teresa said, "The problem with the world is that we make the circle of our families too small."

For more information, contact justpeace@saskatoonrcdiocese.com



Kiply Yaworski

FRENCH LANGUAGE RETREAT — Amanda Chan, Youth Ministry co-ordinator at St. John Bosco Parish in Saskatoon, speaks to some 110 Grade 7 - 9 students from seven different French schools across the province gathered for a French-language spiritual retreat Feb. 9 hosted at Sts-Martyrs-Canadiens francophone parish in Saskatoon. Other speakers included Joseph Wacholtz, Sister April Mireau, PM, Daniel Denis, and Nicholas Gerwing, with music led by Monique Mireau and assistance provided by a team of volunteers. The day featured talks focused on deepening a relationship with Jesus Christ, opportunities for the sacrament of reconciliation, games, and prayer, as well as a panel discussion and question-and-answer session that included Saskatoon Bishop Mark Hagemoen.

The temporality of angels and friends: a blessed gift

By Edna Froese

I dropped the angel on the floor as I was dusting my dresser. The chunka-ka-chunk stopped my breath — “please, no, don’t break!”

Conscious or not, the prayer was answered. Not so much as a chipped wing. Yet even in that beat or two of unknowing, I was aware of an unwelcome “so what?” It wasn’t as if the giver of the angel hadn’t already broken faith with me a long time ago.

Dusty angel in hand, I was lost in memories, contemplating also another figurine on the other end of the dresser — two women seated, forever turned to one another in intimate, silent conversation. That too was a gift from another country, which I had interpreted as a promise that distance wouldn’t matter.

But it did.

Suppressing my impulse to toss into the trash both reminders of a friendship that was, I returned

to the dusting, still brooding on inevitable comings and goings of friends, the joy and pain of finding and then losing what Anne of Green Gables called “bosom friends.” In the giver of the angel and the two clay women, I thought I had finally found a bosom friend. Ruefully I concluded that only in novels of yesteryear, or as clay statuettes, do bosom friends last a lifetime.

Back in April 2016 I had written about the uncanny way books have of falling off shelves into our hands precisely when we need them. In-between such incognito epiphanies, habitual readers, of course, choose many other books, some for delight, some for profit, some out of obligation, some never finished. Of the books destined to be read, some become beloved companions, each rereading another gift. Yet strangely enough, there are books, once truly life-altering, that turn out to be a disappointment when picked up again years later. The right moment for the reading has passed and will not come again.

So, too, I have come to believe that the universe conspires to bring together friends as designated angels for one another. Just as books can be pleasurable temporary companions



Edna Froese

Of Angels, friends, and letting go . . .

while others speak to our souls at the deepest level, so friends are not all alike. Wayne Booth, in *The Company We Keep*, distinguishes three kinds of friendships (actual or book-friends) based on the gifts they offer — pleasure, profit, and “shared aspirations and loves of a kind that make life

together worth having as an end in itself.”

In other words, some friends we keep company with because they’re entertaining or they make a given social context (dance clubs, schools, cooking classes, community groups) more comfortable. When graduation has passed or the club membership is dropped, so too do the friendships end. Friends are also useful; we collaborate with colleagues, learn from teammates, share babysitting, carpool with neighbours. Both these kinds of friendship — pleasure and profit — end naturally when circumstances change. Unless the friendships have advanced to another level, they do not last beyond the boundaries of their making.

The third kind of friendship is qualitatively different, whether having begun that way or having developed into it. With these friends, we can “be ourselves,” yet we also know that we are, in their company, becoming better people. The interaction feels supportive, transformative; life seems richer, more worthwhile. Abstract language here inevitably fails because what happens between “bosom friends” is highly specific and the friendship changes as it grows.

The giver of the angel — let me call her Becca — and I were just getting to know one another when

the aftermath of family grief and an increasing anger over my church experiences pushed me into spiritual crisis and depression. How was it that she, a colleague and an ordained minister, just “happened” to be there? That we “happened” to have grown up in similar family dynamics with equally fraught relationships with our mothers? As our friendship deepened, Becca also faced the death of her mother, and then the loss of a job. Then it was my turn to listen and comfort, which I could do because I understood. There was between us a meeting of minds and hearts that neither of us had known before in quite that way. Without her presence in precisely those years, I would not be who I am today.

And then she moved to a different country. She was not a letter-writer.

In rare visits during the first few years, our conversations picked up where they’d left off, and the only sign of prolonged separation was the need to catch up on news. Nevertheless, a subtle, unnameable change was underway. People, unlike books, are not static, and while we may, decades later, understand and interpret a book very differently than we did at first, the book itself responds — if one may use such an active verb for paper and ink — out of its unchanging soul. Not so our friends. As our bodies’ cells are sloughed off and regrown, so we, too, change through our experiences, our decisions with their consequences, our losses, and our other, newer friends.

There is a time to laugh and to mourn, to embrace and to refrain from embracing (Ecc1 3:1-8). It follows that there is a time to laugh and weep together, and a time to laugh and weep apart. As deep as the grief may be, it is time to let go. The gift that was given — and I speak not of clay statuettes, but the expansion of soul that happened in her presence — has not been withdrawn. For that, and for all the friends who have walked with me, whether for a mere mile or two or for a thousand, I am grateful. I’m trying to remember that a clenched hand receives no gold. To receive new gifts, one’s hands must be opened and empty. For the divine benevolence that grants us books and friends is always generous.

Scrabble, where hope springs eternal



Everyday Theology

Louise McEwan

“Why do we play this game?” I asked my husband for the umpteenth time.

I was referring to Scrabble, and it was not going well. Despite the claims on the box, not every word is a winner. Not all Scrabble games are fun.

It is definitely not fun to lose by over a hundred points. Nor does winning by a similar margin give much satisfaction.

We don’t follow all of the official game rules. We don’t challenge words. Consulting a dictionary before laying down tiles is acceptable to us. And, although the official Scrabble rules permit the use of obsolete and archaic words, we don’t.

We know a great many uncommon two-letter words, words that would never make it into everyday conversation. Yet, we use these words with impunity when desperate to make a play.

Our primary source for these words is a dictionary we’ve dubbed “Cheapo.” Cheapo is a tattered Oxford English pocket sized dictionary that belonged to one of my children when in elementary school. Cheapo’s best feature is a word game supplement that comprises two-letter words and words beginning with “q” not followed by “u.”

Unfortunately for us, most of the “q” not followed by “u” words are

obsolete or archaic. Nevertheless, words like “qi” (life force) and “qat” (Ethiopian bush) have rescued me from humiliation on more than one occasion. I recently discovered “qivuit” (belly wool of the musk-ox), and can’t wait for an opportunity to lay it down, preferably pluralized for a seven letter word bonus.

Two-letter words are an essential part of play, especially during frustrating games when the Scrabble gods are against you. Building boxes with cheap little words can be worth a surprising number of points. The strategic placement of “zo” (hybrid yak) can be worth a minimum of sixty-two points.

There are some games, though, when even Cheapo can’t help pull a rabbit out of the hat. Those are the games when playing “ot” (urchin) or “ai” (three-toed sloth) for four points leads to the question, “Why do we play this game?”

“Why, indeed?” We play for reasons both mundane and profound.

Scrabble is a great way to learn new words — like qivuit. Without Scrabble, learning new words might require reading the dictionary, something my daughter did at age nine to increase her vocabulary. Not being quite so Type A, I prefer Scrabble games.

Scrabble requires adding, multiplying, and recalling the three times table. The scorekeeper has

the added challenge of adding points while simultaneously plotting his next play. Without Scrabble, I’d probably never do much arithmetic. I’d need to sign up for some brain games, instead.

Playing Scrabble is always challenging, even when games are going well. Strategy matters; a good player manages the tiles on the rack with both an offensive and defensive eye.

Scrabble can reduce an entertainment budget. It can be a pleasant way to spend time together, whether sitting before a fire on a snowy afternoon or catching some rays on a beach. Once while on vacation on Vancouver Island, we looked up from the Scrabble board to see an orca and calf swimming a few hundred meters offshore. We hadn’t needed that expensive whale watching tour after all.

Believe it or not, Scrabble has a spiritual element. Because it requires concentration and focus, Scrabble keeps one in the moment. Like meditative or contemplative practices, it calms the restless churning of the grist mill of the mind.

Scrabble teaches patience and humility. It is pointless to rail when a game is going badly or to crow after a clever, high scoring play. Pride goes before a fall, and the tide may turn against you. A drubbing is just as possible as a lopsided win.

“Why do we play this game?” I asked my husband for the umpteenth time. “Because we are hopeful people,” he replied. He’d hit the nail on the head. Like a new day, every Scrabble game represents a new beginning, another opportunity to face challenges, successes and failures with grace. We play Scrabble because hope springs eternal.

Dialogue is needed

Continued from page 1

“*Laudato Si*’ was a seminal document. . . . It’s just a wonderful document,” he said.

A motion to debate the Leap Manifesto at the NDP’s 2018 policy convention was voted down at the party’s 2016 convention in Edmonton.

“These downtown Toronto political dilettantes come to Alberta and track their garbage across our front lawn,” said Alberta labour leader Gil McGowan.

Development and Peace isn’t attacking Albertans working in oil and gas by signing onto Leap, Gauntlett said.

“We’re not trying to demonize

certain sectors of Canadian society by signing onto this document,” he said. “Can we at least talk? That’s what we would like to see happen instead of these sometimes quite hateful attacks.”

Development and Peace joins a number of Catholic organizations and individuals who have supported the Leap Manifesto, including Jesuit provincial superior for English Canada Rev. Peter Bisson, his counterpart for French Canada Rev. Jean-Marc Biron, Catholic novelist Yann Martel and philosopher Charles Taylor, the national ecumenical social justice organization KAIROS and the Jesuit Centre for Justice and Faith in Montreal.

Sundance shines a light on promising new dramas

Screenings & Meanings

Gerald Schmitz



Two 2017 Sundance presentations — *Call Me By Your Name* and *Get Out* — have made the Academy Awards list of best-picture nominees (see next week's column for my pre-Oscar assessment). Although a repeat of that seems unlikely based on the 2018 crop of new dramatic features, a great range of excellence was on offer. Here are some that most impressed along with notable mentions (all are U.S. productions unless otherwise noted).

Burden

Winner of the audience award in the U.S. dramatic competition, this true story of overcoming racial prejudice, 20 years in development as a film project by first-time writer-director Andrew Heckler, strikes a chord in the current climate of racial tensions. In the mid-1990s a group of Ku Klux Klansmen in Laurens, South

gives a remarkable performance. And as Heckler put the story's driving force: "You can never turn an enemy into a friend through hate. You can only turn an enemy into a friend through love."

Blaze Juliet, Naked

Directed by the remarkable actor-author Ethan Hawke, who first came to Sundance with a short film almost 25 years ago, this "gonzo indie country-western opera," as he described it, is an affecting tribute to legendary country-music troubadour Blaze Foley, who died in 1989. Foley is brilliantly played by Benjamin Dickey, who received a special jury award for achievement in acting. His faithful female companion and muse, Sybil Rosen (Alia Shawkat) — whose memoir is a source for the movie — had to put up with a

lot but never abandoned him. Foley's talent vied with his self-destructive side. Dickey and Shawkat have great chemistry in flashback scenes of their relationship. The mythology of Foley's musical influence emerges from interviews with several associates (conducted as unobtrusively as possible by Hawke).

Hawke has his own star turn as a legendary singer-songwriter from the past, Tucker Crowe, in the Jesse Peretz-direct-

ed *Juliet, Naked*, a Sundance audience favourite based on the Nick Hornby novel. Crowe has an obsessive fan in Duncan (Chris O'Dowd), who lives with long-suffering girlfriend Annie (Rose Byrne) in a seaside English town. Although Annie couldn't care less about Crowe, her offhand negative reaction to a Crowe album arriving in the mail leads to an unexpected email correspondence with the man himself, and then to much more. The offspring of Crowe's very mixed-up life, marked by addictions and abandonments, will bring him to London, and voilà, sparks fly. There are separations, awkward meetings with relatives you never knew you had, even a heart attack. Yet things turn out in a way that leaves one more lighthearted than sorry. Not brilliant perhaps, but a delight in its own right.



Sundance Institute/Alex Bailey

SUNDANCE FAVOURITE — Ethan Hawke, Rose Byrne, and Chris O'Dowd appear in *Juliet, Naked*, directed by Jesse Peretz, an official selection of the Premieres program at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival.

Leave No Trace

Director Debra Granik is best-known for the Oscar-nominated Sundance prize-winner *Winter's Bone* that propelled Jennifer Lawrence to stardom. Here she adapts the Peter Rock novel about Will (Ben Foster), a homeless veteran suffering from PTSD, who is roughing it with his 13-year-old daughter Tom (Thomasin McKenzie) in a makeshift camp in a park near Portland, Oregon. Its discovery by park staff brings social agencies on the scene including a sympathetic social worker, Jean (Dana Millican), who finds them quiet lodgings and outdoor work for Will. While Tom thrives, he does not, tormented and unable to adapt to society. Their return to the wilderness provokes a parting. Yet the father-daughter bond endures. Foster is excellent in the role, and McKenzie is a major new talent.

Wildlife

Actor-director Paul Dano, working with screenwriting life partner Zoe Kazan (who was in last year's Sundance hit *The Big Sick*), adapts the Richard Ford novel set in small-town Montana circa 1960. When Jerry (Jake Gyllenhaal), husband of Jeanette (Carey Mulligan) and father to teenage son Joe (Ed Oxenbould), loses his temper and gets fired from his job at a golf and country club, he starts on a boozy downward spiral. After he leaves to fight forest fires, Jeanette is wooed by an older man, Warren (Bill Camp), the wealthy owner of a car dealership. While young Joe finds an outlet in satisfying part-time work as an assistant in a local photography studio, through his eyes we also see the growing strains of his parents' crumbling marriage. The performances are all strong; that of Australian Oxenbould, a revelation in virtually every scene, is outstanding.

Hearts Beat Loud

Brett Haley helms this audience favourite, the winning upbeat story of vintage Brooklyn record store owner Sam Fisher (Nick Offerman) and his talented daughter Sam (Kiersey Clemons), who create some catchy music together even though his Red Hook Records is going out of business and she's preparing to fly across the country to begin pre-med studies at UCLA.

His upload of a track to Spotify, and her ties to a girlfriend, divert those plans and launch a new musical chapter. Offerman and Clemons opened the Sundance awards ceremony with a rousing rendition of the title signature tune backed up by its ace composer-singer-songwriter Keegan DeWitt.

Come Sunday

In this true-story Netflix production (to be released April 13) directed by Joshua Marston, Chiwetel Ejiofor is compelling as the African-American evangelical pastor Carlton Pearson who preaches to a large megachurch and broadcast following in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where the senior televangelist, Oral Roberts (played by noted Catholic activist-actor Martin Sheen), considers him to be a protégé and potential heir. Pearson, a bishop in the Church of God in Christ, is a star. But when he begins to question the fear-and-hellfire fundamentalist gospel — did not God's unconditional love and the sacrifice of his Son redeem all of humanity? — he loses much of his flock, is spurned by his church, and must find a renewed faith to carry on.

Search

Directed by Aneesh Chaganty, winner of both the best of NEXT and Alfred Sloan prizes, this was an amazing thriller — the images entirely composed of those appearing on electronic screens — that had me guessing until the final moment. Margot (Michelle La) is the 16-year-old daughter of David Kim (John Cho), a good student taking piano lessons who dearly misses the mom she lost to cancer. When Margot mysteriously disappears from her California home, it sets off an increasingly frantic search through a trail of often misleading social-media clues and online identities. As a desperate David interacts with detective Rosemary Vick (Debra Messing) who has volunteered to lead the case, the investigation reaches a most unexpected destination.

Eighth Grade

From writer-director Bo Burnham comes another story involving the sometimes dangerous world of social media and millennial adolescent youth. Elsie Fisher is remarkable as the teen-

age girl, Kayla, who lives with devoted single dad Mark (Josh Hamilton, also in *Blaze*) while navigating the awkward hormonal peer pressures and anxieties of her last year of middle school. Kayla posts selfie videos to her YouTube channel. Like today's teens she's always on her phone, trying to be "cool." But it's her bundle of introspective insecurities that makes her genuinely likeable and puts us in her corner.

Butterflies (Turkey)

Writer-director Tolga Karaçelik received the world cinema grand jury prize for this fantastical tale of a trio of squabbling estranged siblings living abroad who are reunited after many years when a letter from their father brings them back to their native village, by which time he has passed on. The absurdist tone is set early on when older brother Cemal (Tolga Tekin) sets fire to himself in an astronaut suit on German television. Brother Kenan is an unsuccessful actor and sister Suzan a teacher who's left an arrogant husband. Exploding chickens (literally), a tale of when butterflies come to die, an apostate imam, and a last request add to the bizarre happenings that end with a blind shepherd under a tree.

The Miseducation of Cameron Post

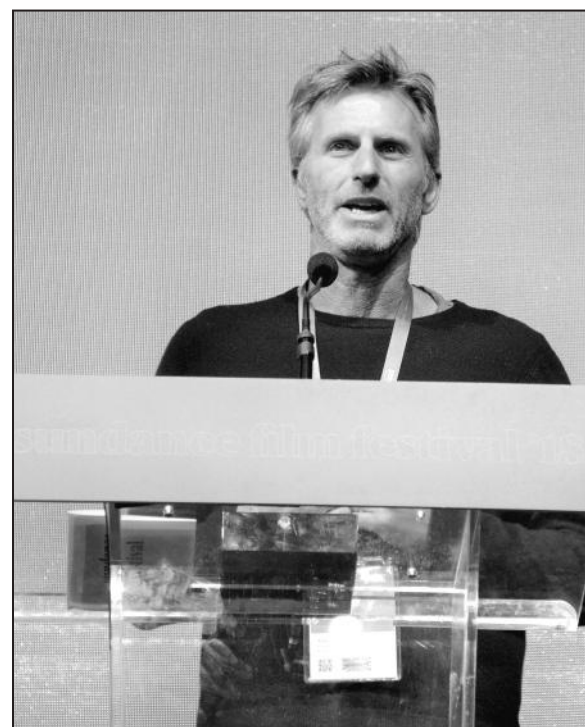
Director Desiree Akhavan won the U.S. drama grand jury prize for this adaptation of the Emily Danforth novel about Minnesota high school student Cameron Post (Chloë Grace Moretz) who, when discovered making out with another girl, is sent upstate by her strict Christian foster parents to a "gay conversion" Christian camp run by a "converted" Rev. Rick (John Gallagher Jr.) and his forbidding psychologist sister Dr. Lydia Marsh (Jennifer Ehle). Cameron befriends two other outcasts, a girl with a prosthetic leg, Jane Fonda (Saska Lane, also in *Hearts Beat Loud*), and a Native American, Adam (Forrest Goodluck). After another troubled teen (who doesn't want to be loved by Jesus?) is driven to suicide, you have to cheer when the three abscond. (Although scientifically discredited, a January 2018 University of California report estimates that some 700,000 Americans have undergone "gay conversion therapy," half of them as adolescents.)

sundance
film
'18 festival

Briefly Noted:

Joaquin Phoenix gives exceptional performances in two Sundance selections. In Gus Van Sant's *Don't Worry, He Won't Get Far on Foot*, he plays the iconoclastic and alcoholic Portland cartoonist John Callahan, confined to a wheelchair as a quadriplegic after a crazed car crash. (In the movie, Jonah Hill is also great as

— FILMS, page 9



Gerald Schmitz

AWARD-WINNER — Writer director Andrew Heckler accepts the U.S. drama audience award Jan. 27 for *Burden*, the true story of overcoming racial prejudice.

Carolina, led by Tom Griffin (Tom Wilkinson), converted a closed movie theatre into a "Redneck Shop" and "KKK Museum." Griffin was a father figure to an angry young man, Mike Burden (Garrett Hedlund), who had grown up in white-trash surroundings and participated in the Klan's violence and intimidation tactics that were protested by the town's African-American residents led by Pastor David Kennedy (Forest Whitaker) of the New Beginnings Baptist Church. Through the love of Judy (Andrea Riseborough), a single mom with a young son, Burden began a troubled journey from darkness into the light of forgiveness. When ostracized by the Klan, the couple found refuge in the pastor's home. Hedlund, who starred in last year's racially charged Deep South saga *Mudbound*,

School division lives theme ‘be joyful in hope’



Catholic Connections

Bernadette Cey

This school year Holy Trinity School Division took as its theme “Be Joyful in Hope,” taken from Romans 12:12. To get the year started the theme was introduced at our staff retreats in late August just before the new school year began. Mark Selinger, our new Religious Education Consultant, presented a reflection on the new theme by taking a deeper look at the words joy and hope.

Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit. It is often equated with happiness, which is very different. Happiness is something we experience when things go well. Joy however, is a state of being, not a feeling. It is a deep peace, which comes from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within a person and endures despite hardships.

A great analogy Mark used to illustrate this is first-time parents. Their lives are changed completely. Sleep deprivation, feeds, changes, renewed financial needs, can be a huge adjustment. However, lying on the couch with your sleeping infant on your chest in a moment of quiet fills you with deep joy and contentment in spite of the sacrifices.

Hope is one of the theological

Cey is the outgoing Religious Education Consultant, Holy Trinity Catholic School Division, Moose Jaw.

virtues, the other two being faith and charity. Christian hope has its origin and model in the hope of Abraham, our father in faith. God’s promise to him that his descendants would number as the stars is the source of his hope, which never wavers. Jesus’ teaching on the beatitudes early in his public ministry becomes the foundation for Christian hope. No one can live without hope. It is our spiritual headlamp, the soul’s food, without which we cannot live. Hope does not come from us, but is our response to God’s promise.

As joy cannot be equated simply with happiness, neither can hope simply be equated to a wishful feeling. It is rather a rock-solid certainty, a guarantee and anchor. Christian hope is not mere optimism, but a bold confidence in a future that is founded on God’s promise to us.

Staff groups shared what joy and hope means to them, discussing how they might incorporate the division theme in their schools. Mark shared three contemporary music videos on hope with staff to use for school assemblies or classroom discussion and reflection. These songs, “Hope in Front of Me” by Danny Gokey, “My Lighthouse” by Rend Collective, and “Go Light Your World” by Chris Rice, are a mixture of upbeat and prayerful music with beautiful and hope-

filled lyrics that call all of us to proclaim and share why we can and should “be joyful in hope” if we believe in the message of the Gospel.

In another segment of the retreat day, Holy Trinity staff experienced the opposite of joy and hope by being led through an exercise detailing with what our First Nations people felt and still often feel as a result of the legacy of European colonization. The Blanket Exercise guides participants through the historical journey of white settlement in Canada by narration and role-play.

In a bitter irony it was the First Nations who welcomed and then assisted newcomers to navigate the forests, rivers, mountains and plains of this vast land. It was gut wrenching to become aware of the arrogance of the colonists and the terrible things done to the First Peoples.

The Blanket Exercise is so named because we begin with all participants representing First

Nations people, standing on large blankets spread out representing the land of Canada. By the time colonization is complete, few people remain, on tiny folded-up blankets. It is eye-opening and mind-boggling.

After the exercise everyone sat down for a sharing circle that allowed participants to process and share their experience of the Blanket Exercise. The point is not to paralyze with shame and self-guilt as white persons, but to be aware of our national and religious history and perhaps our own latent racism. We can then become agents of hope and healing in our personal lives and especially in our classrooms.

With our theme of “Be Joyful in Hope” and the experience of the Blanket Exercise, we reflected on joy, fruit of the Spirit and

hope, theological virtue and what happens when it is stripped from the human soul.

We have many souls in our care in our classrooms who are in need of hope and joy.

There is a crisis of meaning in our culture and the temptation to a nihilistic worldview is great. As Catholic educators we have the privilege of being agents

of joy and hope, healing and reconciliation. Romans 12:12 that we began with finishes: “Be joyful in hope, patient in your troubles and pray at all times.” We could call it the 12:12 cycle. May Holy Trinity be led by the promises of our loving God who is always faithful and who is the foundation of our hope and joy.



Sundance films worth waiting for

Continued from page 8

an HIV-positive gay man who leads an AA group.) Phoenix is even better as a hired killer in Lynne Ramsay’s *You Were Never Really Here*, which screened at Cannes and is scheduled for an April release.

Keira Knightley is convincing as the pioneering French novelist in Wash Westmoreland’s *Colette* (U.K./Hungary/U.S.). In Claire McCarthy’s *Ophelia*, based on the Lisa Klein novel, Daisy Ridley commands the title role to George MacKay’s Hamlet.

Ben Lewin’s *The Catcher Was a*

Spy and Brad Anderson’s *Beirut* are moderately effective thrillers. *Catcher* tells the true story of Jewish pro-baseball player Moe Berg (Paul Rudd) who was recruited as a secret agent during the Second World War and in 1944 sent on a mission to prevent the Nazis from developing an atomic bomb, if necessary to assassinate renowned physicist Werner Heisenberg. In *Beirut*, Jon Hamm plays a senior American diplomat caught up in a deadly 1972 terrorist attack in the Lebanese capital who, a decade later with Israel threatening to invade, is sent back by the CIA on a dangerous mission to negotiate the release of a former colleague held captive by Palestinian jihadists.

In Elizabeth Chomko’s *What They Had*, Michael Shannon and Hilary Swank do good work as a brother and sister tangling with their father over what needs to be done to deal with their mother’s worsening dementia. (The mother is played by Blythe Danner who also has a somewhat similar but minor role as an addled elderly

parent in *Hearts Beat Loud*.)

Claire Danes and Jim Parsons are excellent in transgender director Silas Howard’s *A Kid Like Jake*, about parents coping with concerns over their four-year-old boy Jake’s decidedly feminine preferences.

Writer-director Ísold Uggadóttir received the world cinema jury’s directing award for *And Breathe Normally* (Iceland/Sweden/Belgium), a beautiful story of the relationship that develops between an Icelandic single mother and a female migrant from Guinea-Bissau at risk of deportation.

Finally, although I generally steer clear of midnight horror movies, I can see why Sam Levinson’s *Assassination Nation* became an audience favourite. The violence run amok takes place in a fictional modern-day American “Salem” of social-media trolling and manic vigilantism. It’s subversive, transgressive, excessive, and sometimes bloody brilliant (emphasis on the first “b”) — a late-night cult movie in the making. You’ve been warned.

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A message to our subscribers . . .

As most readers of the *Prairie Messenger* are aware, we will cease publication in May 2018.

For those subscribers who would normally receive a renewal notice during the months of February, March and April, we wish to assure you that you will continue to receive your copy of the *Prairie Messenger*. Renewal notices will not be sent out. Your previous support on our subscription list guarantees your copy until we cease publication.

For any readers who are interested in a new subscription until May 9, 2018 (our closure), we will charge a fee of \$15 to help offset administration and mailing costs. pm.circulation@stpeterspress.ca

We are humbled by the outpouring of support for the *Prairie Messenger*. Although this support cannot change the decision made by the Benedictine community to cease publication, it encourages our efforts to continue in our mission to deliver the Good News.

Religious orders 'built' faith on the Prairies

Both Lungs

Brent Kostyniuk



When the pioneer settlers came to the Prairies, they brought with them precious possessions that would remind them of the lives they had left behind, keepsakes that would help see them through the challenges and hardships that would be inevitable in the new land. While material goods were essential, they also brought with them a more valuable intangible possession — their faith.

Settling on homesteads in the vast wilderness, the pioneers had little to support their efforts to build new homes and raise children. Neighbours were few and far between, stores and doctors often dozens of kilometres away. Yet even as they struggled to survive, they made plans to ensure their faith would survive. Often primitive churches were built in anticipation of the arrival of a priest, who even after he arrived might only be able to visit each community once or twice a year.

Indeed, the wait could be even longer than that. The first group of Ukrainian settlers arrived in East Central Alberta in 1892, but it was not until the spring of 1897 that Rev. Nestor Dmytrow, a Ukrainian Greek Catholic priest, made a visit to the colony some 80 kilometres east of Edmonton.

The first permanent pastoral

Kostyniuk, who lives in Edmonton, has a bachelor of theology from Newman and is a freelance writer. He and his wife Bev have been married for 39 years and have eight grandchildren.

presence came in 1902 when Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky sent four members of the Order of St. Basil the Great, Revs. Platonid Filas (superior), Sozont Dydyk, and Anton Strotsky, Brother Yermii Yanishewsky, as well as four Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate, to tend to the religious needs of the Ukrainian pioneers. On Nov. 1 Rev. Filas, in the company of Roman Catholic Bishop Emil Legal, travelled from rail's end at Strathcona to the area of present-day Mundare, while the others took up duties around Edmonton. Two months later, in January 1903, Rev. Filas filed for a homestead and work began on building a house, with the help of local settlers. This was to become the first monastery for the Basilians.

On July 12 1903, the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul (Julian calendar), a divine liturgy was celebrated at the monastery attended by Ukrainian homesteaders from throughout the region. The event is commemorated to this day by an annual *vidpust* — pilgrimage — which draws hundreds of Ukrainian Catholics to Mundare on the last Sunday of June. By the end of that year a simple chapel had been constructed, formalizing Mundare as the centre of religious life for Ukrainian Catholics in East Central Alberta. From there, the Basilian priests, along with the Sister Servants, served the far-flung Ukrainian settlement.

With the coming of the Canadian Northern Railway, Mundare began to grow as a town. With its



Photo courtesy of Basilian Fathers Museum, Mundare

BASILIAN MONASTERY — After 1910, the Basilian community in Mundare, Alta., became an important centre for Ukrainian Catholics, not only in Western Canada, but throughout North America. In 1923 a brick monastery dedicated to Sts. Peter and Paul was constructed in Mundare, under the direction of architect priest Rev. Philip Ruh, a Belgian-born Oblate who dedicated his life to serving Ukrainian Catholics in Canada.

future development in mind, a church dedicated to Sts. Peter and Paul was built in Mundare in 1910. The formal blessing, on Oct. 23, 1910, took place during the visit of Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky to Canada. The Basilian community in Mundare soon became an important centre for Ukrainian Catholics, not only in Western Canada, but throughout North America.

In order to expand their activities, in 1923 a brick monastery dedicated to Sts. Peter and Paul was constructed in Mundare, under the direction of architect priest Rev. Philip Ruh, a Belgian-born Oblate who dedicated his life to serving Ukrainian Catholics in Canada. Ten years later a subsidiary monastery was built at the site of Rev. Filas' original homestead. Expanding their missionary presence even more, a printing

press was built in Mundare in 1936. This produced Ukrainian language religious publications, a boon for settlers who would otherwise have had little to read in their own language.

Together, the two monasteries enabled the Basilians to provide novitiate training for future members of the order. As many as 60 young men lived there, receiving education in the arts, humanities, and philosophy. The novices also worked the land at the "farm" monastery, providing meat, vegetables and grain for their own needs. Surplus produce was sold to help meet the expenses of running the monasteries.

While the rich prairie soil is noted for the cereal crops it produces, it has also proven to be fertile ground for religious vocations. Indeed, seven Ukrainian Catholic bishops either studied at the Mundare monastery or were raised in the region served by those first Basilian missionaries.

The story of the Basilian monastery at Mundare is not unlike that of St. Peter's Abbey, the oldest Benedictine monastery in Canada, and home to *Prairie Messenger*. The abbey was founded in Muenster by monks who had moved from Cluny, Illinois, to serve the

— MONASTERIES, page 11

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The Director of Faith Formation is responsible to the Bishop in designing and implementing programs for adult faith formation, children's catechetics and sacramental preparation for use in the diocese and in supporting the ministry of the laity. The Office is based in Kelowna but will require travel to the various regions of the diocese.

The Director works in collaboration with:

- The Superintendent of Catholic Schools in the faith development of staff.
- Parish pastoral teams.
- The Diocesan Religious Education and Adult Faith Formation Committees.
- The Diocesan Finance Office (Budgeting).

Requirements:

- A Master's Degree in Religious Education or Theology or equivalent
- A demonstrated commitment to the Church, her teachings and authority.
- Familiarity with children's catechetics and adult models of faith formation.
- Steeped in the principles of The General Directory for Catechesis and On Good Soil.
- Evidence of effective leadership, communication and facilitation skills.
- Proven ability to work collaboratively for a common vision.
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Contact Fr. Bart van Roijen, bartvrijen@hotmail.com for further information.

Please submit resumé with three letters of reference (one from your Pastor) by **March 31, 2018**. The position will commence July 1, 2018.

We are baptized to turn the world upside down

Liturgy and Life

Margaret Bick



Paul tells the Corinthians that “Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom.” People in the first group want signs that one is right with God, signs that a person’s words are true. Those in the other group want wisdom to know the right path of life. The signs and the wisdom are at the core of their deepest longings.

What demand or desire is at the deepest core of your being right now? If Paul were observing your life these days, what would he think you are seeking in life? If Paul were observing your parish’s life together, what would he think your parish is seeking?

I met an accountant once who was working with a group of sisters. At their first meeting the group’s leader presented the accountant with their financial books and a mission statement. “This is what we are about,” she said. “Thank you Sister,” answered the accountant, “but all I need is your books. They will tell me what you are about.” If your life is an open book, what do people think you are about?

What is life in our modern North American society about? I think the accountant would tell us to check out the world of advertising. The marketing business is all about convincing us of what it believes our life should be about. To do this they must appeal to our deepest longings. Ads, billboards and TV commercials tell us we should be

Bick is a happily retired elementary school teacher who lives in Toronto. She is a liturgist with a master’s degree in liturgy from the University of Notre Dame and is a human rights advocate working for prisoners who have experienced prolonged solitary confinement.

seeking several things. The first among them is stuff: the more, the better and the newer, the better. Another is the attention and approval of others. You’ll be more popular if you look right, smell right, drink the right brand of beer, and drive the right car. And much advertising energy is put into selling us strategies for protecting ourselves and our stuff. After all, once we have accumulated these status symbols, we have to protect them. At a certain point our possessions begin to possess us. Life comes to be about them.

According to Paul, people who are possessed by their possessions see the Christian way of life as foolishness. And rightly so. If we live according to the beatitudes and other gospel values, we must look foolish to those who have been lured into the traps laid out in the world of marketing madness. Poverty, meekness, social justice, and mercy have no role in a life

Third Sunday of Lent
March 4, 2018



PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD

Exodus 20:1-17
Psalm 19
1 Corinthians 1:18, 22-25
John 2:13-25

centred on ourselves and our possessions. And there is certainly no role there for the cross. In the eyes of society, if living for the life of the world is at the centre of our being, Christians are baptized into an upside-down way of life.

You might well ask at this point, “What does all this have to do with Jesus’ actions and teaching in the temple?” Well, those who challenged Jesus’ actions asked him for a sign proving that his actions — overturning the money tables and chasing out the money lenders — were OK with God, a sign they should pay attention to him. Now,

unlike the other gospel writers, John places this action at the very beginning of Jesus’ public life. It’s kind of a declaration: “If you want signs, I’ll give you plenty of them. Just watch me!”

Jesus overturned the money tables in the temple as a sign that someone had lost sight of what the temple is about. From this point on, John’s Gospel follows Jesus as he keeps the promise of signs aplenty. In fact, Jesus does not just give signs, he is a sign. He is THE sign. And he hinted at this in his answer to his opponents. He is God’s message to the world concerning the way

humans are made to live in this world — a life of justice, mercy, love and peace. For Jesus, this is what being human is about.

We, the baptized who live in the 21st century, hear this story proclaimed in the middle of Lent. Lent is when we, the baptized, are preparing to make new again our baptismal promises at Easter, in solidarity with those who will make them for the first time when they are baptized at the great Easter Vigil. This story reminds us today that we, who are baptized into Christ, are baptized to be signs as he was. In this story we are called to take a close look at ourselves to examine the extent to which poverty, meekness, social justice, love and mercy have a place in our lives. Are they among our deepest longings and desires?

We are baptized to turn the values of the world upside down, by turning our own values upside down. Our lenten observance of prayer, fasting and almsgiving help us to grow into the person we were meant to be from our baptism. If we “do” Lent as a community, Lent will help our parish to grow as a sign of God’s love to all the community, rather than just people who gather in a building round the corner every Sunday morning.

Anger, our most common sin, often parades itself as Godly virtue

In Exile

Ron Rolheiser, OMI



Classically Christianity has listed seven sins as “deadly” sins, meaning that most everything else we do which is not virtuous somehow takes its root in one of these congenital propensities. These are the infamous seven: *pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, and sloth*.

In spiritual literature the first three, *pride, greed, and lust*, get most of the ink and attention. Pride is presented as the root of all sin, Lucifer’s primordial defiance of God as forever echoed in our own lives: *I will not serve!* Greed is seen as the basis for our selfishness and our blindness toward others and lust has often been given the ultimate notoriety, as if the Sixth Commandment were the only commandment.

Not to deny the importance of

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these, but I suspect that the sin which most commonly afflicts us and is not much mentioned in spiritual literature is *wrath*, that is, anger and hatred. I venture to say that most of us operate, however unconsciously, out of anger and this shows itself in our constant criticism of others, in our cynicism, in our jealousy of others, in our bitterness, and in our inability to praise others. And unlike most of our other sins, anger is easy to camouflage and rationalize as virtue.

At one level, anger often rationalizes itself as justified indignation over the foibles, stupidity, egotism, greed, and faults of others: *How can I not be angry given what I see every day!* Here anger shows itself in our constant irritation and in our quickness to correct, criticize, and make a cynical remark. Conversely we’re very slow to praise and affirm. Perfection then becomes the enemy of the good and since nothing and no one is perfect, we’re always in critical mode and we see this as a virtue rather than for what it in fact is, namely, an inchoate anger and unhappiness inside of ourselves.

But our unhappy cynicism isn’t

the biggest problem here. More seriously, anger too often parades itself as Godly virtue, as righteousness, as prophecy, as a healthy divinely inspired militancy for truth, for cause, for virtue, for God. And so we define ourselves as “holy warriors” and “vigilant defenders of truth,” taking justification in the popular (though false) conception that prophets are angry people, on passionate fire for God.

However, there’s a near infinite distance between true prophetic anger and the anger that today commonly parades itself as prophecy. Daniel Berrigan, in his criteria for prophecy, submits (and rightly) that a prophet is someone who takes a vow of love, not of alienation. Prophecy is characterized by love aching for reconnection, not anger pushing for separation.

And love isn’t generally what characterizes most so-called prophetic anger in our world today, especially as it pertains to God, religion, and defence of truth. You see this in its worst form in Islamic extremism where, in the name of God, every kind of hatred, violence, and random murder puts on God’s cloak. Blaise Pascal captures this well in his *Pensees* where he writes: “Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.” He’s wrong on one thing; mostly we aren’t doing it cheerfully, but angrily. One only has to read the letters to the editor in our newspapers, listen to most talk-radio stations, look at social media, or listen to any debate on politics, religion,

or morality to see raw hatred and anger justifying themselves on moral and divine grounds.

There is such a thing as healthy prophetic anger, a fiery response when the poor of God, the Word of God, or the truth of God are being slandered, abused, or neglected. There are important causes and boundaries to be defended. But prophetic anger is an anger that emanates out of love and empathy and always, regardless of the hatred it meets, still exhibits love and empathy, like a loving mother in the face of a belligerent child. Jesus on occasion exhibits this kind of anger, but his anger is antithetical to most of what masquerades as prophetic anger today, where love and empathy are so noticeably absent.

Someone once said that we spend the first half of life struggling with the Sixth Commandment, and then spend the second half of life struggling with the Fifth Commandment: *Thou shalt not kill!* We see this illustrated in the famous parable of the Prodigal Son, his older brother, and his prodigal father. The younger son is effectively out of his father’s house through wrestling with the seductive energies of youth. The older brother is just as effectively outside his father’s house, not through sin, but through wrestling with anger.

As a young boy I was catechized to confess “bad thoughts” as sinful, but bad thoughts then were defined as sexual thoughts. As we age, I suggest, we might continue to confess “bad thoughts,” but now

those “bad thoughts” have to do with anger.

A cynic, it’s said, is someone who has given up, but not shut up! He’s also someone who has confused one of the seven deadly sins, wrath, with virtue.

Monasteries centres of faith

Continued from page 10

growing Catholic colony in Saskatchewan. Like that of the Basilians, the Benedictine mission began with a simple log and mud house. Later a wood monastery was constructed in which the monks could continue their lives of prayer on the Prairies. Their ritual of gathering several times a day to pray the monastic office has continued uninterrupted to this day.

Beyond this, the Benedictines worked tirelessly to serve the pioneer settlers. The first task was to simply find them on the vast prairie. Later they organized parishes, erected churches and residences, and established parochial schools for the growing Catholic community.

These two monasteries, East and West, remain as centres of religious life, not only for the monks who inhabit them, but for the Catholic communities they serve. They are precious reminders of the dedication, foresight, and suffering of the monks who bravely left their homes to bring Christ to those pioneer settlers who sought to make new homes on the Canadian Prairies.

St. Peter’s Messenger defends Catholic teachings

This is the third of seven articles on the Prairie Messenger and the past 100 years of the journalism of the Benedictine monks of St. Peter’s Abbey.

By Paul Paproski, OSB

Twenty years after arriving in Canada, the Benedictines added another service to their apostolates — *St. Peter’s Messenger*. The first edition rolled off the press on May 24, 1923, some 19 years after the first issue of the German newspaper, *St. Peter’s Bote*, was printed. The monks were now publishing two broadsheets, one in English and one in German. *St. Peter’s Messenger* became known as

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Prairie Messenger in 1928. *St. Peter’s Messenger* (*Messenger*) continued the two-fold mission of *St. Peter’s Bote* in providing news and teaching the Catholic faith. Similar to the *Bote*, the *Messenger* often defended the Catholic Church against outside attacks. The first anniversary edition of May 22, 1924, stated the *Messenger’s* mandate: “The watchword of the *Messenger* is service in the defence of the church and the advancement of its interests.” The terms “defence” and “interests” had very different meanings in the 1920s than what would be understood today. The Catholic Church was struggling to find

acceptance and legitimacy in a society that was suspicious of Catholics and people of German heritage. Canada was largely British and Anglo-Saxon Protestant and its establishment wanted Canada to remain that way. The *Messenger* became a vehicle to explain traditional Catholic values and defend them against criticisms and false accusations. The first editor of *St. Peter’s Messenger* was Rev. Lewis Gwynn, a Benedictine Oblate who served briefly in 1924. He was followed by Rev. Cosmas Krumpelmann, OSB (1924 - 26), and Rev. John Hable, OSB (1926 -31). The first two Benedictine editors had a common zeal for promoting Catholic teachings and pulling no punches in defending them.

Krumpelmann has the distinction of being not only the first member of the monastic community to serve as the *Messenger* editor, but one of the most outspoken. His frankness got him into conflict with a person who later became a well-known public figure. John Diefenbaker, a future prime minister, was a Conservative candidate in the Prince Albert constituency during the 1926 federal election. Diefenbaker became incensed over an editorial Krumpelmann had written about one of his campaign

speeches. Diefenbaker threatened to sue *St. Peter’s Messenger*. In his editorial Krumpelmann expressed annoyance when Diefenbaker addressed an audience of Orangemen, whom Krumpelmann considered to be fanatics and bigots. The Orangemen were opposed to separate schools and were suspicious of the Catholic Church and Catholic-run institutions. The Conservative candidate told the Orangemen that Canada should always remain British. This statement, Krumpelmann said, proved Diefenbaker could not be trusted as a representative in Parliament. Canada, he said, was an important friend and trading partner of England, but Canada must remain an independent nation.

The *Messenger* was born in a society where there were sharp divisions along denominational and ethnic lines. The Catholic weekly made it known in front-page stories and editorials who the friends and foes were of the church. Conservatives, Masons and Orangemen, who opposed separate schools, could not be trusted. Communists were agents of the devil who were trying to destroy the church, especially in Russia. Masons proved they were opposed to Christianity by supporting the persecution of the church in Mexico, and the American media exemplified its anti-Catholicism by largely ignoring the persecution.

The editors of the *Messenger* were well-informed about local, national and international news events and were outspoken in sharing their views. The editors pointed out how the Catholic

press was essential in counterbalancing the bias of the American and Canadian press toward the Catholic Church and Catholic immigrants. Front-page stories told of bigotry toward the church and how the church was under siege in Mexico, the Middle East, Russia, China, and in Italy where fascism had taken root. Attacks on the church in Canada grew during the 1920s when immigration from eastern Europe fuelled bigotry and racism. As Saskatchewan became more multicultural, the popularity of the Ku Klux Klan rose among the Anglo-Protestant establishment. The Klan held rallies throughout the province. The rallies attacked the French and Catholic presence in Canada and accused Catholics of being disloyal citizens who owed their loyalty to a foreigner, the pope. In an editorial Hable warned readers to ignore all the statements against the church. “History shows us this practice is not new. Their methods are repulsive and their logic fallacious.” The *Messenger* conveyed loyalty to the country during elections by encouraging readers to be good citizens and vote. Canadians were urged to join the Catholic hierarchy in offering prayers for His Majesty King George V when he became ill.

The *Messenger* was not a friend of the temperance movement, which had support among Protestant churches. Both Krumpelmann and Hable believed the notion of forbidding people the right to a drink was outrageous. There were bigger issues to worry about, one being racism which was especially rampant south of the border.

A growing concern for the Catholic press was sexuality in movies, reading material and advertising. The *Messenger* reminded parents of their responsibility for teaching children religion. Parents were warned to stay away from barn dances and to keep their children away from them. Barns were for cattle, not dancing.

Editorials presented opinions on issues and events, and they were used to teach religion. Readers were reminded that the church was a divine institution and its hierarchy was the leadership of the “one true church.” Editorials praised church leadership for maintaining the unbroken apostolic line, which did not compromise beliefs through dissension and division. The church was commended for withstanding the assaults of the world against morality, believing some Protestant churches had given in to secular values and had become more accepting of birth control and divorce.

There was a new wave of thinking in liturgy (public worship) through the liturgical movement, which encouraged public participation at mass. Hable expressed his admiration for Pope Pius X, who encouraged daily eucharist and renewal in liturgy. A new mass book enabled people to be more consciously aware of the parts of the mass, and a Catholic missal was available in English to help parishioners follow at a time when mass



Paul Paproski, OSB

ST. PETER’S MESSENGER — The first edition of *St. Peter’s Messenger* rolled off the press in the Diocese of Muenster (St. Peter’s Abbey) on May 24, 1923. The English-Catholic weekly was an important source of local, national and international news. It provided information on the Catholic faith and church issues. In 1928, the weekly’s name changed to *The Prairie Messenger*.

Birthing barefoot, and finding God at the bottom

Barefoot and Preaching

Leah Perrault



I love giving birth. It’s a strange thing to love, given the pain it brings. However, I am a recovering perfectionist, a doer of all things, and a prayer easily distracted. Birth takes me over, and I go, willing and resisting, barefoot, into the heart of it. Physically, the barefoot part is bit of a given. My long hours of labour start with a pony tail and comfortable clothes and slippers. Each stage of labour brings less composure, less clothing, less control. I am in labour and I am labouring, and the focus becomes less and less external and more and more internal. And this is where the lines between the physical and spiritual reality blurred to incoherence. Each birth has been different from the others, each one carefully unwinding two persons who

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have been growing together. Birthing barefoot is showing up to see myself, my baby, and my God in the unwinding. I have never been so prepared for a birth. Ten hours of false labour the week before gave us time to have things ready. The early hours before sunrise allowed for lunches to be made and the floors cleaned. After so much grief, I have been ready for and anticipating new life. The labour progressed in its typically slow way for my body. It became more intense in a welcomed way over hours. We moved from the excitement of early labour and the attentive timing of contractions into the second stage with visiting between pain and focus in it. For me, the middle feels familiar — like leaning into the more difficult moments of my life: taking deep breaths when the kids throw fits, swallowing a reaction when someone speaks sharply, powering through procrastination and fear when I would rather give up. The middle is all optimism. Birth and my body in it

still feels like a miracle. And then I got stuck. For three-and-a-half hours, despite my effort and the midwife’s, we did not move from seven centimetres. The pain deepened, my body fatigued, and I hit a wall of fear. I heard myself saying (more than I intended to say), “I feel like I cannot do this, like he is stuck, and something is wrong.” I begged for a trip to the hospital instead of staying at home, even though I did not want to go. For oxytocin, for epidural, for surgery. Anything to bring the unwinding to its right end, with no more pain. The midwives did their monitoring. They ensured that my baby was not in distress. They monitored my health. But more, they heard the cry of my soul that I had not heard. The last baby I delivered was without breath, and was overshadowed by the death of the girl who was delivered with me. What if the new life I longed for wasn’t going to arrive? Physically, I could feel my resistance, but not spiritually. I felt like a complete failure. My other births had been physically harder. I was begging for relief and caught in my own head. Hearing the reality, I was powerless to do anything else. I was at the bottom of my own capacity and God did not seem to be answering my prayers to take over. While one midwife explained what moving to the hospital would mean, I listened with relief at sim-

ply doing something to change something, in complete desperation. The other midwife whispered: “You’ve had a really hard year. It makes sense that you would find it hard to trust the pain.” Something shifted. I lost myself and my thoughts. My body took over. I shuddered through the next 20 minutes, clinging to Marc and crying until I heard myself say, “He’s coming.” And he did, right there in the living room, beside the birthing pool that had eased so much of the intensity before. And he was laying on my chest, warm and perfect. My instinct is shame at the falling apart. The day after, a midwife knocked on the door, and let herself in. She checked us both over and reflected on the miracle. She poured her experience on the story of it all, and helped me see the moment when resistance surrendered to possibility. It is only in the thinking back on it that I can see the bottom of my capacity as the greatest gift of the barefoot birthing. I have been so afraid to trust the pain. I needed birth and a midwife to whisper it to let God into the fear and break it up. And so God arrives in a Christmas spilling into Lent, pouring new life into a season marked by ashes. Atticus is rising from ashes buried with Claire and Abbie, and God is raising me with him, here and now, in the barefoot birthing of a baby and my life.

During Lent, give the practice of fasting two wings

By Tom Ryan, CSP

For Catholics, the practice of fasting has by-and-large fallen off the screen, due in large measure to the minimalistic interpretation of what church members are told “fasting” means:

“Take only one full meal. Two smaller meals are permitted as necessary, but eating solid foods between meals is not permitted.”

Should you convey that to a Muslim or Jew or Buddhist, who might ask you what fasting means for Catholics, be prepared to be looked at with an ‘uncomprehending frown and then asked, “How is that different from a normal day? Don’t you normally eat one main meal and two smaller ones? Or even if you do cut down a little, why don’t you call that ‘reduced eating’ rather than ‘fasting’?”

The point is well taken. For most people in the world, the word “fasting” means what your doctor has in mind in saying to you, “When you come in for your physical, I want you to fast from midnight the night before.” We know what that means: nothing but water.

We’re talking here about a spiritual practice that surfaces in just about every world religion, so if it’s no longer on our screen, we might justifiably ask: Are we missing something valuable here?

When the American and Canadian bishops adapted the laws concerning fasting after the Second Vatican Council, they weren’t saying that fasting isn’t important anymore. The message was that fasting is *so important* that it had to be rescued from the legalism, minimalism, and externalism into which it had fallen. Did we get that?

Recognizing that the laws of fast and abstinence from meat on Fridays throughout the year had become more or less rote observances, the bishops called upon

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Financial issues began early

Continued from page 12

was celebrated in Latin.

The *Messenger* was a family newspaper. Columns explained faith issues. Front-page stories were always complimentary to the church, often reporting on addresses of church leaders or successful church projects and missions. A Juvenile Page was devoted to youth, where pious stories were written on saints and topics that taught morality. Editorials to youth explained morality and proper behaviour.

The *Messenger* struggled over the issue of needing more subscribers and income. Readers were reminded, at the end of every year, to pay their annual subscription fee of \$2. The editors often expressed their dismay over the lack of appreciation for the local press. Lack of interest in the Catholic newspaper, they said, is a symptom of a lack of interest in faith.

their people to rediscover the spirit of it and to find the forms that would give meaningful expression to the sentiments of the heart.

While Friday abstinence from meat was itself no longer going to be required by law (except during Lent), Fridays were singled out in the U.S. Bishops’ 1966 Pastoral Statement on Penance and Abstinence as days on which we should try to give special expression to our everyday call to love by entering into some service-related activities.

“It would bring great glory to God and good to souls,” they wrote, “if Fridays found our people doing volunteer work in hospitals, visiting the sick, serving the needs of the aged and lonely, instructing the young in the faith, participating as Christians in community affairs, and meeting obligations to families, friends, neighbours, and parish with special zeal.”

Most Catholics got the part about something being taken away, but most also seemed to miss the part about something positive being put in its place, namely, that abstinence and fast, still valuable and encouraged, could be either complemented by or substituted by other forms of penitence, works of charity, and exercises of piety.

The leadership was summoning us to be adults in the faith, to act responsibly and with awareness.

As someone remarked in summarizing the previous approach, “Before, we just obeyed church laws. It was an obligation imposed

on us, and we just did it.”

Now the church was asking its members to give it some thought and to use the tools of the spiritual life that fit their needs and situation.

Our interest here is in a particular kind of fasting — fasting as a religious act. What is there to guide us in Scripture and tradition? Three major themes in the history and practice of Christian fasting deserve further attention.

The first is mystical longing for fulfilment. “The wedding guests cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? The days will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and then they will fast” (Mt 9:15). The faithful, after Jesus’ departure, are to fast as a sign of their expectant longing for his return at the end of time.

The second is liberation through discipline. Paul’s great theme is freedom: “For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters, only do not use your freedom for self-indulgence, but through love become servants to one another” (Gal 5:13). Penitence is always oriented toward freedom, to liberating transcendence



CNS/Dado Ruvic, Reuters

MEANINGFUL EXPRESSIONS OF FASTING — After the Second Vatican Council, Canadian and American bishops called upon their people to rediscover the spirit of fasting and to find the forms that would give meaningful expression to the sentiments of the heart. “It would bring great glory to God and good to souls,” they wrote, “if Fridays found our people doing volunteer work in hospitals, visiting the sick, serving the needs of the aged and lonely, instructing the young in the faith, participating as Christians in community affairs, and meeting obligations to families, friends, neighbours, and parish with special zeal.”

of the attachments that bind us (like our routines around food and drink) that we might become freer for service in love.

The third motif is the intimate connection between fasting and works of charity and justice. For St. John Chrysostom, fasting without almsgiving was not fasting at all: “Who benefitted from what you did not take?” And St. Gregory the Great, bishop of Rome, preached, “The one who

does not give to the poor what he has saved but keeps it for later to satisfy his own appetite, does not fast for God.”

The challenge is to hold the personal and the social dimensions together. What makes fasting a religious act is that it is something done for God and others as well as for oneself. In Augustine’s words: Give your fasting two wings: prayer and almsgiving.”

Prairie town discovers similarities among traditions



Double Belonging

Rev. Marie-Louise Ternier

In the past 50+ years a lot of ecumenical agreements have been published by a variety of bilateral dialogue groups at national and international levels. But for the most part these remarkable texts are like unopened Christmas presents, left on library shelves and in church archives. Rarely do they trickle down to the people in our churches.

In our small prairie town of Watrous we wanted to change this. So it was that in six sessions Lutherans, Anglicans, and Roman Catholics (LARC) dove into the document *Growing Together in Unity and Mission* published in 2007 by the International Anglican — Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission or IARCCUM.

It was no small task. While

everyone sort of knew each other in this small community, rarely had they had occasion, or permission, to share their faith at this personal a level. Moreover, the brave souls that participated felt initial hesitation and inadequacy in engaging such a comprehensive document, full of theology and history. But the beauty of breaking open the text “in community” soon became evident. Engaging the text together replaced apprehension with curiosity and openness, surprise, humour and . . . more questions!

The discovery that the similarities between our traditions far outnumber the differences lifted a lot of spirits. The realization that each tradition has made past exclusive truth claims, thus dismissing other denominational expressions of the Gospel, now caused a good deal of liberating laughter. On the other hand, some learning sparked shock, embarrassment and even anger: “I am shocked and embarrassed to learn that Rome does not recognize Anglican and Lutheran ordinations,” a Roman Catholic

participant lamented.

Participants admitted struggling with old stereotypes of the other: “A challenge for me was trying to get past what was instilled in me as a child.” Yet, even to voice this struggle, daring to be vulnerable, resulted in deeper understanding and closeness in the group.

A Lutheran participant noted: “The written material made very clear the reasons for the diversity between the Catholic Church and the Lutheran/Anglican churches. In the Lutheran Church we recognize Mary as the mother of Jesus. I wasn’t aware of the extent to which the Catholic Church places Mary in their faith.”

One general sentiment was the group’s previous ignorance of ecumenical dialogues that have been taking place at national and international levels between our respective bishops and theologians . . . for the past 50 years! Participants felt “left out,” asking why they were not informed of these developments years ago. This led to a discussion about the notion of reception, and the arduous process this can be. One participant noted rightly that an ecumenical vision by local pastors is crucial for making the fruits of ecumenical dialogue and agreements available and accessible, so that they can be unpacked and embraced by the people in the pews whose lives are directly impacted by these achievements.

The most salient parts revolved around the eucharist. Lutherans and Anglicans had trouble understanding why Rome limits sharing the eucharist and how that can be justified from Scripture. Catholics were surprised to learn that Rome asks them to refrain from sharing holy communion in an Anglican or Lutheran eucharist. By the time we explored this sensitive subject, however, mutual affection led one Anglican to say to a Roman Catholic: “Well, if God moves you to receive communion at our eucharist, you can always go to confession after.”

The final session was characterized by a strong desire that this exchange not end. Using the categories from Part II in the GTUM document (*Joint Study, Visible Faith Expression, Co-operation in Ministry, Shared Mission*), practical ideas were generated on how to continue to foster Christian unity in our prairie town: Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, joint services on fifth Sundays of the month, pray for one another in the Sunday intentions, mid-week services during Advent and Lent rotating churches, ecumenical retreats, sponsoring refugees, regular sharing circles, shared Good Friday service and Way of the Cross, joint Bible studies — the list goes on. Some of these are already happening. Now that we have encountered one another as sisters and brothers in Christ, there is no turning back.

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What Lent is about

Lent is usually presented as a time for penance and fasting. For example, the Canadian liturgical calendar says that Lent has two major purposes: “It recalls or prepares for baptism, and emphasizes a spirit of penance.”

For many Christians, this is a negative obligation, such as giving up something or depriving oneself of something they enjoy. However, it must be kept in mind that the ultimate objective is always positive.

This has been emphasized in Christian tradition. In his Rule, St. Benedict wrote a special chapter on the Observance of Lent. He mentions various penances for the monks, including prayer, reading, and abstinence from food and drink. Then he adds the ultimate reason for these penances: “to look forward to holy Easter with joy and spiritual longing.”

In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah warned against a false notion of doing penance. On the Friday after Ash Wednesday, his words are: “Look, you serve your own interest on your

fast-day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting will not make your voice heard on high. . . . to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them. . . . Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly.”

Pope Francis is on the same wavelength. In his address to the pastors of Rome at St. John Lateran Basilica, he said that, while the world is full of sinful behaviour, priests must learn to scrutinize the “signs of the times” for trends and attitudes that are good and healthy and holy.

While there is “moral conduct that we aren’t used to seeing,” he explained, there also is “a greater awareness of human rights, a push for tolerance and equality and appreciation for the values of peace and solidarity.”

Pope Francis took the same tone during his Ash Wednesday homily at the Dominican-run Basilica of Santa Sabina on Rome’s Aventine Hill, next to

the Benedictine Abbey of St. Anselm.

Lent is a time for Christians to get their hearts in sync with the heart of Jesus, he said: “Let the Lord heal the wounds of sin and fulfil the prophecy made to our fathers: ‘A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.’”

On a practical level, he said Lent is a time “to allow our hearts to beat once more in tune with the vibrant heart of Jesus.” Hit the reset button, he advised, and take a pause from “bitter feelings, which never get us anywhere” and from a frantic pace of life that leaves too little time for family, friends, children, grandparents, and God.

An anonymous monk once wrote: “In this world, what is important is not so much where we stand that counts, but in what direction we are moving.”

Much like training for the Olympics, we need to have a purpose and set our goals, make it a positive improvement for ourselves and society, and then our “training” doesn’t feel so difficult. — PWN

Fraser Health Authority orders hospices to participate in euthanasia

By Alex Schadenberg

The recent edict by the Fraser Health Authority in British Columbia ordering (non-religious) health care facilities to participate in euthanasia (MAiD), including hospices, is an infringement on the conscience rights of the medical staff. I believe institutional conscience rights are about the rights of the workers within an institution to not participate in acts that they consider wrong.

The edict by Fraser Health directly affects institutions such as the Delta Hospice that is opposed to participating in euthanasia. Janice Strukoff, an administrative leader with the Delta hospice, stated: “Hospice palliative care is not about hastening death and we object to the bullying currently taking place in B.C.”

Nancy Macey, the founder and executive director of the Delta hospice stated: “MAiD can be a traumatizing experience for staff, patients and volunteers, and all groups might not want to stay or work there if the principles of palliative care are compromised. Hospices are already grappling with a shortage of health professionals that compelling the society to provide MAiD could exacerbate the problem.”

In response to the order by the health authority, Delta hospice rejected the order and Dr. Neil Hilliard, the medical director of the Fraser Health Palliative Care, stated in his resignation letter: “Providing euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide is not in accordance with palliative care (which) ‘affirms life and regards dying as a normal process’”

Last weekend a meeting was held in Langley, B.C., concerning forcing euthanasia upon medical facilities against the staff decision to not participate in MAiD.

The meeting attracted 300 people and featured federal MP Mark Warawa and provincial MLA Mary Polak, along with representatives from the Fraser Health

Authority. At the meeting Warawa commented that the battle to protect conscience rights “is not over. It’s just begun.” Warawa also stated: “That (permitting MAiD) will destroy palliative care as it has developed.”

Mary Polak was forthright in her comments, stating: “To say that you are going to place medical assistance in dying — or let’s

call it what it is, killing people. Sorry, but that is what it is — (and decide that) you’re going to put that into a hospice palliative circumstance, is to completely contradict what palliative care is to begin with.”

The decision of the Fraser Health Authority also affects plans to build a new hospice in Langley. Kathy Derksen, the

executive director of the Langley hospice, stated: “When MAiD was first law, Fraser Health consulted with stakeholders and agreed it would not be imposed on hospice and palliative care facilities.”

Health care workers’ conscience rights have become a national issue in Canada. Recently, an Ontario Court decided that doc-

tors who oppose euthanasia must participate by doing an “effective referral” for euthanasia.

Dr. Will Johnston explained the pressures that are faced by medical professionals in his article “The alarming trend of forcing hospitals and hospices into doing assisted suicide.” His article was published by Huffington Post on Jan. 29, 2018.

‘King-for-a-day’ solutions to homelessness don’t work

By Vivian Tam

Three years ago, I set out for a clinic on the kind of morning like those we’ve been having in Toronto lately, where the hair in your nostrils freezes with each breath. I had walked about two intersections before I realized my

fingers were stiff from cold — of course, I had forgotten my gloves.

So I walked into one of the many stores lining Yonge Street and quickly emerged with two pairs of mittens, courtesy of a buy-one-get-one-free discount. When I left the store, I came across an individual sleeping on the street covered only with a thin blanket.

Snow was falling and he looked cold. Feeling the extra mittens in my bag, I offered them to him. His response has stayed with me ever since. He said, “Well, doesn’t everyone like to be king for a day?”

Initially, I was stunned. I had only meant to do what I could, with the resources I had, in the place that I was in.

But I realized he had articulated a valuable truth: as a society, we’ve become really good at king-for-a-day solutions. For the chronically homeless or underhoused, this has meant that over successive winters we’ve temporarily increased shelter capacity. Just recently, the City of Toronto has also heeded the call resounding on social media to #OpenTheArmouries to facilitate additional shelter space.

For many citizens using

Toronto’s at-capacity shelter systems, respite takes the form of a sleeping mat on the floor.

But while this reactive approach is necessary to address crises, it’s no longer enough. If we’re serious about ending homelessness, we need to institute long-term solutions and invest in a public-health, preventive approach to homelessness.

We need an approach that targets the milieu of causative factors (primary prevention), supports those who are at risk of or newly experiencing homelessness (secondary prevention), and addresses those who experience chronic homelessness (tertiary prevention), in equal measure.

Last November, the federal government launched a \$40-billion National Housing Strategy that aspires to reduce chronic homelessness by 50 per cent over the next 10 years. The strategy will create and repair housing units, and involve the development of a \$4-billion housing benefit, set to launch in 2020.

The National Housing Strategy is a welcome sign of emerging progress. But it will only succeed if we also commit to addressing the factors that make individuals vulnerable to homelessness in the first place.

Previous long-standing federal divestment in affordable housing is one such cause. However, systemic issues — including poverty, racism, discrimination, inadequate mental health supports, domestic violence and a history of colonialism confronting disenfranchised individuals and populations — also directly contribute.



CNS/L'Osservatore Romano

POPE MEETS HUMAN TRAFFICKER SURVIVORS — Pope Francis meets at the Vatican Feb. 12 with Italian young people, adults and migrants rescued from human traffickers. The pope responded to the questions five of the young people asked about preventing trafficking and assisting survivors.

Schadenberg is executive director, Euthanasia Prevention Coalition. Reprinted with permission from his blog at info@epcc.ca

Vatican's potential deal with China is a good thing

By Drew Christiansen, SJ

News of the Holy See's possible rapprochement with China's communist government on the appointment of bishops has aroused charges of a betrayal of the "underground church" and fears of the abandonment of Catholics who, for decades, have suffered for the sake of their fidelity to Rome. Western journalists have been too easily swayed by misleading accounts circulated by those opposed to an entente between Rome and Beijing.

Too many Catholics, Americans in particular, still see the situation of Chinese Catholics through the lenses of the Cold War. Most foreigners are ignorant of the changes that have affected Chinese Catholics in recent decades. They also ignore the transformation in official Catholic attitudes toward communism and in favour of the enculturation of the Gospel in local cultures. In light of these developments, the new Vatican initiatives on the nomination of bishops and the promise of normalization of the church's life in China are not new departures, but the outcomes of long trends in the life of the local church and of Vatican-Beijing relations. Here are some developments to consider.

Joint appointment of bishops: On and off, the Vatican and Beijing have been jointly appointing bishops for more than 20 years. Sometimes there have been problems, especially when lay leaders of the government-controlled Patriotic Association wanted to reclaim power within the process, but the trend has been for joint appointment.

At its best, diplomatic co-ordination has led to joint appointments for new bishops to succeed to the leadership of both registered and unregistered diocesan churches. Even before joint appointments, most government-selected bishops quietly offered their pledges of fidelity to the pope. The joint appointment of bishops illustrated the common interest both Rome and Beijing have in the unity of Chinese Catholics.

Reconciliation between what St. John Paul II called the "One Church-Two Faces" policy in China was the goal of Pope Benedict XVI's 2007 letter to the Chinese church. It appealed for church unity and unity among the bishops for ecclesial and theological reasons. But it is likely that Pope Benedict also regarded unity as a prerequisite for normalization of the church's status within China.

Intermingling of Catholics in daily life: What most outsiders do not understand is how closely Catholics from registered and unregistered churches are already

interacting, especially in cities. Candidates for the priesthood study together in the same seminaries. Parishes often share the same quarters, with underground Catholics worshipping in the official parish church at their own times, and pastors of the two communities share rectories.

Anti-communist Catholicism: Time for *aggiornamento*? It has been 55 years since St. John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth). At the time of its publication, the letter's most controversial affirmation was its opening to dialogue with political parties of the left, including the Italian communists. Pope John himself penned the line that distinguished between adherents of an errant ideology and the ideology (Marxism) itself. *Pacem in Terris* cleared the way for a new relationship with the communist governments of eastern Europe and the re-establishment of the Catholic Church in the East. But even with shifts in the policies of the People's Republic, that opening to communists has not been accepted by intransigent elements of the underground church. Might it not be time to apply John's teaching to relations with the Chinese government? Why should China be an exception to world Catholicism's *aggiornamento* in church-state and political relations?

Chinese culture and the Gospel: Pope Francis has his own theological rationale for a rapprochement with Beijing, whose policy is to "Sinicize" religion — that is, to give it a Chinese character. A cornerstone of his apostolic exhortation "Joy of the Gospel" is that each culture produces its own unique synthesis with the Gospel.

The forward movement on relations that has Pope Francis' support indicates he is inclined to accept the idea of Chinese Catholicism rooted in the world's most ancient civilization.

Because Pope Francis is a Jesuit, moreover, who has sponsored events with the Chinese in honour of the 17th-century Jesuit and Servant of God Matteo Ricci, whose methods of evangelization respected Chinese culture, Beijing has reason to trust the genuineness of this pope's initiatives. Ricci is revered in China still. Why, then, should the Catholic faith in China be tied to the forms of 19th- and 20th-century Roman Catholic culture while enculturation takes place in other cultures across the world?

Tension in the underground: Finally, one factor that led to Pope Benedict XVI's 2007 letter was tension in the underground church. There were internal rivalries and factions in various dioceses. Bishops held onto office beyond retirement; sometimes they re-asserted their authority after a younger bishop had been appointed. For the benefit of Catholics themselves, the church had and still has an interest in establishing order in

China's local Catholic churches. With these tensions internal to the underground church in mind, it is easier to comprehend why the Holy See seems to regard the ecclesial common good as requiring unity among the Chinese bishops and diplomatic relations between the Vatican and Beijing. There is a belief in Rome that locals could be assisted in dealing with these troubles with an apostolic delegate or nuncio residing in Beijing.

Over the years, there have been frequent reports that Beijing and

Rome were close to concluding an agreement, but no breakthrough occurred. So people should not let their hopes, or their fears, grow too high. China has been tightening regulation on nearly every group, and every week formerly trusted political leaders fall in anti-corruption campaigns that consolidate power at the top. Nothing is certain. But all the same, the Holy See seems to be preparing for the day when the Catholic Church, united once again, will enjoy a normal existence in the China of today and tomorrow.



CNS/Robert Carrubba, Reuters

CONGO MASS FOR SLAIN PROTESTERS — Priests celebrate mass for citizens killed in recent protests at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Congo in Kinshasa, Congo, Feb. 9. Political unrest in and around the capital, Kinshasa, is just the latest malady to afflict the Congolese citizens, said Chiara Nava, an adviser to the AVSI Foundation, an aid agency focusing on education and child protection and inspired by Catholic social teaching. "The political situation is not good at all," she told Catholic News Service. "There are lots of public demonstrations, especially in the capital." Layered on top of the upheaval is ethnic fighting. Nava said there are 4.5 million internally displaced people in the country.

No youth should feel excluded from pre-synod meeting

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — As the Catholic Church prepares to welcome youth from around the world to a preparatory meeting for the Synod of Bishops on youth, Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri said the church is using every means of communication available to listen to young people from all walks of life.

Speaking to journalists Feb. 16, Baldisseri, the general secretary of the Synod of Bishops, said social networks such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter will allow young people to follow and interact "with their peers in Rome" attending the March 19 - 24 pre-synod meeting.

"In short, even through the new technologies of communication, the pre-synod meeting wants to broaden as much as possible the audience of young people involved so that no one should feel excluded," Baldisseri said.

Announcing the pre-synod meeting last October, Pope Francis said he hoped Christian and non-Christian young people from around the world would attend so the church could listen to the hopes and concerns of all young men and women.

"Through this journey, the church wants to listen to the voices, the sensibilities, the faith as well as the doubts and criticisms of young

people. We must listen to young people," Pope Francis had said.

The theme chosen by the pope for the Synod of Bishops, which will be in October, is: "Young people, faith and vocational discernment."

The 300 young people invited to the pre-synod meeting in March were chosen to represent national bishops' conferences, the Eastern Catholic churches, men and women in consecrated life and seminarians preparing for the priesthood.

The gathering also will include representatives from other Christian communities and other religions and experts in the fields of education, culture, sports and arts, who "are involved in helping young people discern their choices in life," according to the synod office.

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops announced in January that their two-person delegation would include a French Catholic woman and a member of one of Canada's indigenous communities, who participates in a variety of Christian activities but told The Catholic Register he identifies more with his Cree spirituality. The bishops of India said Feb. 14 that they had chosen three Catholics involved in youth ministry as well as a young Hindu and a young Sikh.

"In this pre-synod meeting, we

will listen to youth 'live' to better understand their situation: what they think of themselves and of adults; how they live their faith and what difficulties they find being Christian; how they plan their lives and what problems they face in discerning their vocation; how they see the church today and how they would like to see it," Baldisseri said.

The pre-synod meeting, he added, also will include young men and women from what many consider the margins of society, particularly young victims of human trafficking and prostitution.

During an Oct. 12 meeting at the Vatican with adults and teenagers who had taken part in a reflection on human trafficking, Pope Francis said he hoped some survivors of trafficking would address the Synod of Bishops to share their stories and "call the church to action."

"It is my great desire," he said, "that young people representing the 'peripheries' would be the protagonists of this synod."

Baldisseri said the pope's suggestion was taken to heart, and he

confirmed three young survivors would be present at the pre-synod meeting.

Filippo Passantino, a young Italian who will attend the pre-synod meeting, said a group of young people are helping develop the meeting's social media and use it as an "open forum for all."

They plan to open a WhatsApp messaging group so that young people from around the world can send messages, questions and concerns during the pre-synod meeting, he said.

"We are trying to open various doors so that many more than the 300 people invited can enter the pre-synod meeting hall," Passantino said.

Stella Marillene Nishimwe, a young woman from Burundi also attending the gathering, told journalists she hoped the synod will be a new era in the church's dialogue with "all young people, not just Catholics."

"Who knows what fruit this synod will bring? What I am sure of is that everything will depend on our participation," she said. "The ball is in our court."

Christiansen is former editor-in-chief and president of America and now distinguished professor of ethics and global development at Georgetown University and a senior research fellow at the Berkley Centre for Religion, Peace and World Affairs. His commentary on the controversy over recent Vatican negotiations with China was published in America magazine Feb. 12.

How did the rose ever open its heart and give to this world all of its beauty? It felt the encouragement of Light against its being; otherwise we all remain too frightened.

— Hafiz