



Summer schedule

The *Prairie Messenger* is now on vacation. Our next issue will be dated Aug. 30.



Newcomers

Thanks to Regina's Catholic Family Services Society, newcomers to Canada will now have additional help as they improve their English skills and learn what it takes to obtain and keep a job in their new country.

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Transitions

Now 10 years old, Transitions is a ministry aimed at supporting Christians who are struggling through the trauma of separation and divorce. The Saskatoon diocese began offering the program in the autumn of 2007.

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Solemn vows

As one Benedictine took solemn vows on July 11, another celebrated the anniversary of his own solemn profession and renewed his vows. Brother Benedict van Ginkell, OSB, is the newest member of the Benedictine community at St. Peter's Abbey, while Rev. Lawrence DeMong, OSB, has been around for 60 years.

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War films

Critics are calling *Dunkirk* the best film of the year, and perhaps the greatest war movie ever made. From the great to the not so good, Gerald Schmitz reviews five.

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Bearing burdens

Rather than fearing becoming a burden to others, isn't it time we simply accepted the glorious weight of being human? asks Edna Froese.

— page 14

Tending to wounds

Leah Perrault observes the visible changes as a body heals. "I wish it were so easy to watch the healing of grieving heart wounds."

— page 15

Christians slow to return to Mosul

By Dale Gavlak

AMMAN, Jordan (CNS) — As some Iraqi Christians make a slow return to the region around Mosul following the defeat of the Islamic State group, many say it will take time to rebuild their lives and even longer to rebuild their trust of those who betrayed them.

"The war isn't finished yet and neither is the Islamic State. There is no stability and there is still fighting in Mosul," said Patriarch Louis Sako, head of Iraq's Chaldean Catholic Church, who visited Mosul July 20, touring churches left badly damaged during the city's three-year occupation by the extremists.

"How can Christians return when there are homes destroyed and there are no services? But most important is safety. The return of Christians needs time," Sako warned, in remarks carried by Radio Free Europe.

Although Iraqi forces declared victory over Islamic State fighters in Mosul early in July, the patriarch said the region remains unstable, leaving Christians uncertain about their future in their historic homeland.

"Trust must be rebuilt because the Christians of this region have



CNS/Stringer, EPA

CHRISTIANS RETURN TO MOSUL — A destroyed building is seen in Mosul, Iraq, July 24. Some Iraqi Christians who are making their slow return to ancestral lands say it will take time to rebuild their lives and trust of those who betrayed them.

endured such abuse and violence, leaving deep wounds," Sako said.

Rev. Emanuel Youkhana, an Iraqi priest, or archimandrite, of the Assyrian Church of the East,

also warned that although Islamic State may be defeated militarily, "it doesn't mean that its mentality, ideology or culture will be ended."

Wiesner sees the church as the People of God

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — Family, friends and fellow Oblates recently gathered at Queen's House in Saskatoon to honour Bishop Gerald Wiesner, OMI, on his 80th birthday.

Raised on a farm near Denzil, Sask., Wiesner made his perpetual vows as a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate in 1959 and was ordained Feb. 23, 1963. Over the years he has served in many capacities, including as the bishop of Prince George, B.C., from 1993 until his retirement in 2013.

The birthday celebration in-

cluded a program that touched on Wiesner's prairie roots, his close family ties and love of sports, as well as his integrity, prayerful spirit, and healing presence. Speakers highlighted his passionate commitment to inspiring and supporting the laity in living their baptism as disciples of Jesus Christ.

A program during the celebration included a slide show of family photos prepared by Wiesner's nieces and nephews. Then his five siblings — James, Peter, Marie, Margaret and Vincent — presented a light-hearted question-and-answer session about their brother.

Rev. Paul Facht, OMI, spoke on behalf of the Oblates, who have

been "another family" for Wiesner for some 60 years. Wiesner has been a teacher, a theology professor, a superior and a provincial in the order, listed Facht, echoing words he once received from a Hindu faith leader: "Blessing, blessing — you are a blessing."

— BISHOP, page 4

COSA offers hope to sex offenders

By Agnieszka Krawczynski
The B.C. Catholic

VANCOUVER (CCN) — A little-known church ministry is reaching out to the most ostracized and despised criminals in the system.

Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) provides sex offenders with friendship, accountability, and help finding housing and employment the moment they step out from behind bars.

"The day I got out, I met these four people who had all read my file — and it's horrible, horrible — but they chose to love me," said Max*, who finished serving a two-year federal sentence in a B.C. prison in 2007.

The released sex offender now meets weekly with a handful of COSA volunteers who listen to his struggles and are not afraid to ask

tough questions.

"They challenge me on my thinking. They know that when I'm really struggling, I want to go into preoccupied about pornography or sex or thinking about going and buying it. I'm learning and it's really hard.

Getting out

The taste of freedom is bitter-sweet for released sex offenders.

"People think we should be in jail for the rest of our lives," said Joseph*, who only got out of a B.C. prison nine weeks before this interview. "We get out. We get out eventually, most of us. Then we have to live."

When Joseph was arrested for his sex crimes, his friends and family members cut ties and he faced a scathing backlash in the media. It wasn't any better behind bars.

"I was in prison with some bad,

really mean, people. Murderers and armed robbers. They all hated the sex offenders as the worst people on the planet," he said. "That's how the public sees us. It's warranted, a lot of it."

When he finished his sentence and got out of prison, he had no one — except a COSA group put together for him by prison ministry head Maureen Donegan.

"They are the most despised and disliked, and that's what makes me passionate about working with them," said Donegan. She handpicks an average of four volunteers for every released offender and requires them to commit to at least a year of regular meetings with that person.

They also make themselves available for phone calls throughout the week and are trained in keeping appropriate boundaries.

— COSA, page 5



Kiply Yaworski

Bishop Emeritus Gerald Wiesner, OMI

Theologians study archives of *Humanae Vitae*

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Four theologians specializing in marriage and family life are



CNS/Dennis Sadowski

WALKING STICK MINISTRY — Les Johnson of Akron, Ohio, holds a walking stick with inlaid medals and spiritual artifacts that he crafted. Johnson, who became a Catholic at age 17, said his inspiration for making more than 820 walking sticks since 1967 comes from God and Mary.

Women religious oppose Senate’s Affordable Care Act

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Sister Simone Campbell, a Sister of Social Service and executive director of Network, a Catholic social justice lobbying organization, personally delivered a letter to U.S. senators July 24 urging them to reject the Better Care Reconciliation Act and any proposals that would repeal the Affordable Care Act or cut Medicaid.

The letter, signed by 7,150 U.S. women religious, said Catholic sisters stand by their “belief that health is a universal right.” It also described the Better Care Reconciliation Act as “the most harmful legislation for American families in our lifetimes” and something that goes against Catholic faith teaching.

“As Catholic women religious, we have witnessed first-hand the moral crisis of lack of quality, affordable health care in this country. We have seen early and avoidable deaths because of lack of insurance, prohibitive costs and lack of access to quality care,” said the letter, written by Campbell.

The letter focused on the Senate’s original proposal to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, but it also included a section criticizing the Senate’s last-minute attempts to pass a bill that didn’t secure enough votes July 17 to move to debate.

The afternoon of July 25, the Senate cast a procedural vote to allow debate on a health care bill.

U.S. women religious sent a similar letter in 2010 urging the House to vote yes on the Affordable Care Act.

This summer’s letter points out that women religious “fought for the expansion of coverage in the

studying Vatican archival material with a view of telling the whole story of how and why Blessed Paul VI wrote his encyclical *Humanae Vitae* on married love.

Msgr. Gilfredo Marengo, leader of the group and a professor of theological anthropology at Rome’s Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family, spoke to Vatican Radio about the study July 25, the 49th anniversary of the encyclical’s publication.

Some bloggers, writing in the spring about the study group, alarmingly presented it as an initiative of Pope Francis to change the encyclical’s teaching against the use of artificial contraception.

Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, chancellor of the John Paul II Institute, categorically denied the bloggers’ reports.

In reply to an email, Marengo told Catholic News Service July 26 that the study “is a work of historical-critical investigation without any aim other than reconstructing as well as possible the whole process of composing the encyclical.”

“Anyone who imagined any other aim should have simply done their work and verified their sources,” he said.

In view of the 50th anniversary, Marengo told Vatican Radio, he and three other Italian professors are conducting their research

with the goal of showing the encyclical’s place among “all of the very important and fruitful things the church has said on marriage and family in the past 50 years.”

Also, he said, from a historical point of view, it is important that theologians formally examine and document the process that led to the encyclical’s publication. What Marengo called “the distinct phases” of the encyclical’s development included the work of a small committee appointed by St. John XXIII in 1963 and expanded greatly by Pope Paul. The commission’s work ended in 1966 with the leaking of a report by the majority of commission members asserting artificial contraception was not intrinsically evil and minority reports insisting it was.

Priests warned against ‘outdated habits’

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — An education that doesn’t promote a love of learning or in-depth biblical studies and an antiquated notion of the priest as a “solitary” ruler over his community are among the problems preventing the kind of conversion of hearts that Pope Francis has been calling for, said an Italian biblicist.

“A good part of the clergy, at the top and the bottom,” are sometimes guilty of an attitude of “closure, if not hostility” that is hindering “the conversion that Pope Francis wants to bring to the church,” wrote Rev. Giulio Cirignano in the Vatican newspaper, *L’Osservatore Romano*, July 23.

His article, subtitled, “Habit is not fidelity,” examines the possible reasons behind what he sees as a “disconcerting fact” — that a large part of the Catholic lay faithful have recognized the “*kairos*” or favourable occasion God is offering the church today while other Catholics, who are “closer to poorly enlightened pastors, are kept within an old horizon.”

That old horizon is marked by: practices driven by habit; outdated

In the end, Marengo said, the commission “was not able to give him (Pope Paul) what he needed to write the encyclical. Therefore, Paul VI almost had to start over alone,” but with the added complication of public opinion, including among theologians, “polarized between those favourable and those contrary” to the use of the contraceptive pill.

The encyclical itself was criticized by many — and not just by those who advocated for acceptance of artificial contraception, the priest said. “It is important to remember that in those years many still looked at the regulation of births” using natural fertility rhythms “as a ‘benevolent concession’ to couples rather than as a positive value to pursue.”

Procreation, he said, was seen by many as the primary purpose of marriage, so Pope Paul’s insis-

tence in *Humanae Vitae* that sex within marriage is both procreative and unitive was something new, as was his declaration “without uncertainty that the exercise of responsible parenthood is an objective value for Christian families” when done using natural methods.

Marengo told CNS that given “the importance the document has had in the life of the church of our times and the debates that it unleashed,” he felt it was important to ask the Vatican to set aside rules that prevent scholars from accessing Vatican archival material for 70 years.

“The competent Vatican authorities accepted my request, permitting access particularly to the collections of the Vatican Secret Archives and the archive of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,” he said.

language; and repetitive thinking that lacks vitality, wrote the priest, who is a retired professor of sacred Scripture and former member of Italy’s national association of Catholic teachers.

Like the religious authorities of the Sanhedrin criticized by Jesus, such clergy are faithful only to themselves, “rich in devout reverence to the past (which is) confused with fidelity to tradition, and poor in prophesy,” he wrote.

The possible reasons, he said, may be that, generally speaking, most priests’ knowledge of theology “is mediocre and still below that is preparation in biblical” studies.

This “deplorable state of affairs” happens when university studies, for example, don’t instil in students a love of thinking and lifelong learning, and don’t promote even the minimal use of critical thinking, he said.

Most seminary training, he said, doesn’t foster a sense of the ministry of the priesthood as “real and actual work” that requires “a mindset of effort and diligence.”

While it’s true priests are often overwhelmed by so many duties, it may be best to ask why that is so: How is it so many activities keep a priest from carrying out his true minis-

terial duty, the priest said.

“Perhaps an image from the past weighs on the priest and is no longer sustainable?” Cirignano asked — an “inherited image” of a priest seen as the head and master of his community.

It’s as if, by virtue of his state as a celibate, the priest is “compensated with sort of individual, all-encompassing role of responsibility, a sort of solitary ‘protagonist,’ ” he said.

A passive laity and poorly functioning synodality in local church institutions, however, are “no longer acceptable today,” he said.



CNS/Cindy Wooden

VATICAN TURNS OFF WATER TAPS — A boy rinses his hands July 25 in a fountain in St. Peter’s Square. While the Vatican began shutting off water to most of its fountains in response to a drought in Rome, it left one running to provide cooling relief for tourists.

Missing and murdered indigenous women honoured

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Solidarity with indigenous women played a central role in the Ontario Catholic Women’s League’s annual convention July 9 - 12 in Thunder Bay.

“Thunder Bay is highly populated by First Nations people,” said CWL Ontario’s past president Pauline Krupa, who finished her two-year term as president at the convention. Thunder Bay is a hub for indigenous people who come to the city for medical reasons, for education, for incarceration and other reasons.

“I wanted people to be aware of how many murdered and missing women there are in our province,” Krupa said.

In preparation for the convention, Wilma Vanderzwaag crocheted 400 red heart-shaped bookmarks, each with the name of a murdered or missing indigenous woman or girl from Ontario, with some from Northern Quebec and from Manitoba.

Krupa also asked Cindy Crowe,

the Lodge Keeper and executive director of the Blue Sky Community Healing Centre, to become involved in the planning.

With Crowe’s help, the convention featured a ceremony called “Walking in Spirit with Our Indigenous Speakers,” that began with each delegate placing an earring on the Tree of Life decorated with the crocheted hearts, and removing one of them.

Krupa said as the women picked names randomly off the tree, one woman picked someone with the same name, another picked one with her daughter’s name. The delegates then were “asked to keep it with them for the whole afternoon, as we journeyed through this whole thing, keeping this woman in prayer and in thought.”

Crowe and indigenous drummers then led the 250 delegates who processed on the conference grounds each carrying a vial of water from their home community.

“All brought three ounces from their homes,” said Crowe. “Some



Lisa Henry

WALKING WITH FIRST NATIONS SISTERS — Led by Cindy Crowe, executive director of Blue Sky Community Healing Centre, drummers and delegates processed around the grounds carrying a bookmark with the name of a missing or murdered indigenous woman, and a vial of water from their home communities. The walk ended in a sacred circle where a drum song, smudging, sharing by the grandmothers, gifting of tobacco and collection of the vials of water (brought by members), ended the service at this site.

had water from the Jordan, from the St. Lawrence, and different areas.”

Crowe then led a large sharing circle that also included indigenous

grandmothers who shared their experiences.

“One of the ladies who came was actually missing for four years herself,” said Krupa. Another woman shared a story of extreme abuse at home. “They really got us to understand what they had lived.”

After the ceremony, the water was brought to the McIntyre Floodway that flows into Lake Superior.

“That was very symbolic to have brought all of that water together and release it into Lake Superior,” Crowe said. “Hopefully, we helped to enlighten them. The young people being found dead are being found dead in the rivers. That’s why Spirit is bringing our attention to the waters.”

“It was extremely powerful,” she said. “They were gracious par-

ticipants. You could tell they were extremely committed to the process and really wanting to understand the situation better.”

“I’m always happy to work with the Catholic Women’s League,” Crowe said. “We’ve done some work with them before when they introduced the idea to me, they were very excited.”

“It’s education not only for the women attending the conference, but also for the women I brought with me, an education for everyone to gain a better understanding of the worldview of others.”

“That was a very large sharing circle: more than 250 women,” Crowe said. “A circle acknowledges that we’re all equal, nobody greater than or less than.”

— SHARING, page 5

Book on gratitude shares insights

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — Marissa Alarcon, a graduate of the diocesan Lay Formation program and executive assistant at the Catholic Health Association of Saskatchewan (CHAS), has written a book filled with gratitude.

The Gratitude-Driven Life is a collection of reflections and stories in which Alarcon offers thoughts, experiences and insights about gratitude related to 60 different topics, inviting readers to respond by journaling or taking small steps in their own lives to express gratitude.

“If you are grateful, I think you are able to live a happier life,” says Alarcon.

It’s not the first book she’s written; she also produced a physics textbook when she was working as

a teacher in the Philippines.

Throughout her new book, Alarcon shares insights and experiences from the culture of her home country, her experiences of family, and her life in Canada.

The book originated in a “critical conversation” event organized annually by CHAS for its member facilities. At the 2016 event at St. Paul’s Hospital in Saskatoon, Alarcon was inspired by the topic, “If you dare to ask it deeply, what makes you grateful?” to begin journaling her daily gratitude. Those reflections form the heart of the new book.

As a newcomer to Canada, Alarcon finds that she is excited and grateful for things that some may take for granted — for instance, the changing seasons or the cold and snow of winter. “When we are born with something we

tend to take it for granted,” she says.

As she observes in one entry, “When we wake up in the morning is a miracle. How babies learn to talk and crawl and walk is a miracle. How we breathe air that we don’t see is a miracle. . . . These little things are miracles. If we really open our eyes, we will see God everywhere and with everyone.”

The Gratitude-Driven Life is available at Universal Church Supplies in Saskatoon or through Amazon.

Newcomer Centre builds on successes

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — Newcomers to Canada in Regina will now have additional help as they improve their English language skills and learn what it takes to obtain and keep a job in their new country. Regina’s Catholic Family Services Society (CFSS) opened its Newcomer Centre June 28 at the request and with the help of Immigration Canada.

“Immigration Canada identified missing needs for newcomers and approached CFSS last year and requested the organization develop programs to meet those needs,” said Sandra Urban, the organization’s new executive director. Urban was appointed April 1, following the retirement of David Sax.

“Family Services was provided with a grant of \$1.4 million to get a program up and running. We are targeting folks who have lower-level English than traditional employment counselling services do, with a focus on youth and women,” she said.

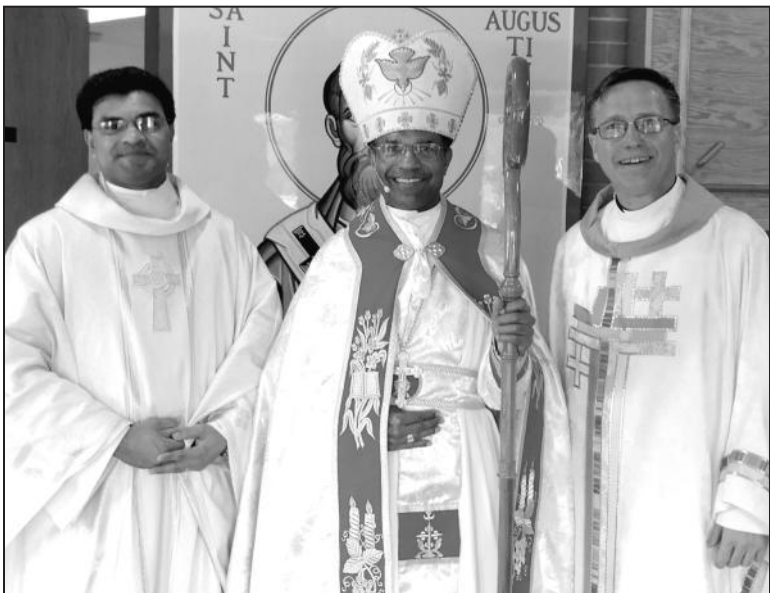
Catholic Family Services had unsuccessfully applied to Immigration Canada for other programs and their application was kept on file. So, when the department went looking for an organization to fill what was identified as a gap in services for newcomers, CFSS was approached in 2016.

“Our employment classes are unique,” said Urban. “When folks are in class, they are looking at things that would be unique in the Canadian workforce culture, something that we would take for granted, but if you’re new you wouldn’t know how to have a conversation about things like employee discipline, for example. So, we supply some cultural context. Once they leave class, the program follows them for the next six months to see if they need any help in applying for jobs, and giving them some coaching on preparing for interviews. If they have a job, we’ll work with them and their employer if there are any hiccups.”

The centre will also provide counselling and family support for newcomer families, modelling its regular services. The society sees this as a preventive measure, an upstream approach to help families become established in the community now, before they may have to become more dependent and have to access support through Social Services.

Catholic Family Services is 80 years old in 2017, and Urban said the organization is building on a successful history by opening the Newcomer Centre. The centre occupies the entire third floor of a three-storey building located just off the west side of the downtown business core.

“It’s more space than we need right now, but it gives us room to expand,” said Urban. The centre will employ one employment counsellor, two classroom teachers, a program manager, two family support workers and a counselor, plus administrative support staff.



Diocese of Saskatoon

SYRO-MALABAR PASTOR — Rev. Plogen Antony (left) recently arrived to serve as pastor to the Syro-Malabar Catholic community in Saskatoon, appointed by Bishop Jose Kalluvilil, Apostolic Exarchate, Canada (centre). Diocesan administrator Rev. Kevin McGee of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon welcomed the new priest and his bishop at a recent celebration at St. Augustine Parish in Saskatoon. The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church is one of the 22 Eastern (Oriental) Catholic Churches in full communion with Rome. It is the second largest Eastern Catholic Church after the Ukrainian Catholic Church and the largest of the St. Thomas Christian (Nazrani) denominations, with some 4.6 million members.



Frank Flegel

NEWCOMER CENTRE — Sandra Urban, executive director of the Catholic Family Services Society (CFSS) in Regina, chats with Hon. Ralph Goodale, MP for Regina-Wascana and Canada’s Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, at the opening of CFSS’s Newcomer Centre June 28.

How we see people part of evangelization: Lacroix

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Evangelization begins with the way we look at people, Cardinal Gerald Lacroix of Quebec told the Ontario Catholic Women's League convention July 10 in Thunder Bay, Ont.

In a talk that included Pope Francis' post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love), and touched on the challenges of feminism and gender theory, Lacroix, the Primate of Canada, stressed a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and learning to follow him.

"He will guide us and help us face the challenges of today's world as authentic Christians," he said.

Feminism that makes women think achieving equality with men comes "only when they erase, minimize, or reject their femininity and motherhood" and gender theory that replaces ontological realities such as the family, man and woman with social constructs, both have the desire for autonomy and independence at their root, the cardinal said.

"What the world is constantly repeating is that women are free and have the right to decide without anyone telling them what they have to do," the cardinal said. "They are masters of their own lives. They need not have any other references but themselves."

"A big mistake for women, but for all of us," he said, urging the 250 delegates not to be "submerged by the socially distorted and ideological tsunamis that come our way."

Using several Gospel stories as examples, Lacroix revealed how Jesus responded to people who were experiencing difficulties.

With Zacchaeus, he "addresses him with respect," and "sees more than his sin." With the Roman Centurion, he "welcomes the stranger," and "gives credibility to the other's faith."

With the sinful woman who anointed him with oil, again, Jesus showed that he "welcomes everyone," and "sees the love more than the sin," and "does not judge."

With the disciples on the road to Emmaus, the Lord showed he was willing to "go where people are," and to "walk with them." He proclaimed the Word of God, but did not impose it; instead he proposed it.

Amoris Laetitia offers four pastoral attitudes to help meet the frailty of many couples and family situations, Lacroix said. These are: welcoming and listening;



Lisa Henry

TREE OF LIFE — Ontario CWL member Sharon St. Jean takes the name of a missing or murdered Aboriginal woman from the Tree of Life and replaces it with an earring. Solidarity with indigenous women played a central role in the Ontario Catholic Women's League's annual convention July 9 - 12 in Thunder Bay. (See related story, page 3.)

accompanying; discerning; and integrating.

"Life is not black and white," he said. "If we want to be helpful and assist our brothers and sisters who are experiencing trials and difficulties, we need to make them feel welcomed and to take the time to listen to them attentively and with respect. We do not need to have all the answers to do that."

Lacroix said the art of accompaniment is probably one of the weakest points in pastoral ministry. "We are so busy trying to

cover all the bases, with limited human resources, that we can forget how important it is to take the time to accompany, to walk with our people."

When it comes to discerning, "no easy recipes exist," he said. "Every person, every situation requires and deserves a good discernment process. And that takes time."

And finally, work needs to be

done to integrate people into Christian community, he said.

"I am always saddened when I hear people share with me their personal stories and how they were wounded by pastors or fellow parishioners or members of their family because of their personal situation: a divorce, an unmarried couple living together, or a civilly remarried couple after a divorce, feeling excluded from their church, and unwanted, judged by the 'good Catholics,'" he said, adding ways need to be found to offer them support and accompaniment so they can grow in faith.

"The church is not a select club of perfect people," he said. "We are a community of sinners, that God loves so much that he sent his only Son to reveal his love to us and invite us to experience his mercy and love and enter into a profound friendship, a covenant with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

"We must not be surprised that in our church, we find prostitutes, unwed couples, same-sex couples, divorced men and women, sinners who have made bad decisions, hurting people who need the compassion, the love and the joy of the Gospel to continue their life journey and find the hope that Jesus brings."



Lisa Henry

SACRED CIRCLE — The walk that took place at the Ontario provincial CWL convention ended in a sacred circle where a drum song, smudging, sharing by the grandmothers, gifting of tobacco and collection of the vials of water (brought by members), ended the service at this site. To conclude the service of remembrance and honour, the collection of water was taken to the McIntyre Floodway, to be presented to Lake Superior. (See related story, page 3.)

Apology just start of healing: archbishop

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — Sorrow, regret and apologies are the natural outcome of the church's dedication to the truth whenever it confronts its history with indigenous people, says a Brazilian bishop whose diocese includes more than 20 indigenous territories and endangered cultures.

"The church should not fear the truth," said Archbishop Roque Paloschi of Porto Velho, a city in the western reaches of the Amazon near the border between Brazil and Bolivia. "The church

has to take responsibility for its past — the things that have gone well and the mistakes."

Pope Francis' 2015 apology to indigenous Bolivians has strengthened the church and the entire community in the western Amazon basin, Paloschi told The Catholic Register on a visit to Toronto.

"Asking a pardon is not the end point," Paloschi said through an interpreter. "It's a line that opens up a new way of dialogue. There are highs and lows. There is light and shadows. The church constructs relationships with everybody. . . . It (an apology) makes the church not the owner of the truth, but more

humble — seeking the truth."

Paloschi doesn't doubt that Pope Francis would willingly apologize in Canada to survivors of the residential school system. But the hard work for the church starts after the apology is accepted and everybody has to live up to new commitments.

The history of the church and colonization is more complex than just a series of oppressions, land-grabs and humiliations for Aboriginal people around the world.

"The church also took the side of indigenous people," he said. But

— PARDON, page 8

Bishop helped laity respond to their baptismal call

Continued from page 1

Kathy Hitchings and Mona Goodman — who have served as co-ordinators of the Lay Formation program that Wiesner helped to create and launch in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon in 1987 — expressed gratitude to Wiesner for his friendship and support, and for his passionate commitment to the Second Vatican Council's vision of the church as the People of God.

"I want to thank you for creating a safe place, and for encouraging spaces for the laity to fully respond to their baptismal call with complete respect for their dignity, and for your confident belief that they bring major gifts and abilities," said Hitchings.

She also noted Wiesner's tireless commitment to healing and reconciliation, recalling his participation in the Returning to Spirit process, which addresses the hurtful legacy of Indian residential schools.

As part of their healing, some indigenous brothers and sisters need a representative of the church to honour their suffering and receive their pain, said Hitchings, describing how Wiesner answered that call. "Though often exhausted and heartbroken, I witnessed you turn your face to the rage and the contempt, to the despair and the fears for as long as it took to receive every person who needed you," she said.

Goodman recalled how 30 years ago the Lay Formation program began in the Diocese of Saskatoon, developed by Wiesner, Gisele Bauche, Sister Cecile Fahl, SMS, and Rev. Don Hamel.

Wiesner "wanted the People of God to have a place where they

could come together to learn about their Catholic faith; to journey with others who had that desire to deepen community and relationship with God, others and self; and to grow in prayer and spirit," Goodman said.

Wiesner's longtime friend and colleague Susan Campbell was director of the pastoral centre in Prince George when Wiesner was bishop. "What sets Gerry apart is the way he helps us answer our call," she said.

Wiesner's friend and colleague Gisele Bauche also spoke, beginning with the words of St. Paul to the church at Philippi: "We thank God whenever we think of you, and every time we pray for you, we always pray with joy." Bauche emphasized the encouragement and confidence Wiesner gives to the laity, adding, "We have also experienced your deep compassion. We have experienced your ability and grace for forgiveness, the ability for reconciliation, and your humility, showing kindness and charity to all."

During his time as Bishop of Prince George, Wiesner worked on reconciliation, collaboration with the laity, and building relationships with indigenous people. As president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1999 - 2001, he particularly promoted the involvement of women in society and in the church.

Asked at the time of his episcopal ordination about his vision of church, Wiesner replied: "The only way I can see church is as the People of God. In the early church the mission and ministry of Jesus was entrusted to the laity, the People of God. The Second Vatican Council encourages us to return to that pristine form of church."

Strong opinions in the church are needed: Durocher

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Pope Francis has deliberately avoided precision on the issue of communion for the divorced and remarried and welcomes the ongoing debate, says the Archbishop of Gatineau, Que.

“My feeling is that he wants to see where the Spirit will lead the church in this,” Archbishop Paul-André Durocher told a Theology on Tap in Ottawa July 20. “Obviously this has led to controversy in the church and areas of strong opinions that were expressed.”

“There are still strong opinions, and the pope is saying ‘That’s OK, we’re adults, we can continue discussing this, we can continue having strong opinions on this and seek what God’s will is,’ so that’s where we are.”

The former president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCC) attended both the 2014, and 2015 synods on the family, first in his role as CCCC president, and second as part of a four-man delegation elected by the Conference.

“This issue of the pastoral care of divorced and remarried couples was a very hot issue during both synods, because there were very strong opinions on both sides,” he said.

Durocher said he would listen to one person argue “Yes,” giving all his reasons, and think, “He’s right!”

But then he’d listen to someone saying, “No,” and giving all his reasons and think, “He’s right!”

“I personally felt very, very split about it,” he said.

Durocher said he suggested during one of the discussions that maybe we could learn from St. Paul’s answer in 1 Corinthians when he was asked if it was permissible to eat the meat that has been sacrificed to the Greek gods.

“Corinth was a city of Greece, with all sorts of temples to Greek gods,” he said. “People would bring an animal to offer as a sacrifice. That meat after sacrificed to the God, afterwards the priest would sell it on the market to make money. People would buy that meat and cook it and eat it.”

Some argued it would be sacrilegious to eat the meat; others

argued the meat was not sacrificed to real gods, “what they’ve done is a kind of empty religious ritual, so I can eat it.”

St. Paul responded that while everything is permissible in Christ, “not everything is constructive,” Durocher said. “You might feel eating this meat, there’s nothing to it, there’s no harm, but the person next to you might not be at that level in that faith or might have a different approach and you are scandalizing them and you are breaking the unity of the community.”

“So it is good to do that?” he asked. “Maybe it’s permissible but maybe it’s not constructive.”

The archbishop said the overall message of chapter eight of *Amoris Laetitia* deals with accompanying and supporting people who may not be living the ideal; helping them to discern where God is leading them; and helping them to integrate into the church.

In chapter eight, the pope “kind of opens up” the possibility of communion in a footnote to a discussion on how accompaniment, typically by a priest, can help people grow in their faith, in their relationship with God, the archbishop said. The footnote says, “these can include on certain occasions access to reconciliation and communion, but the pope doesn’t say what those circumstances are; he doesn’t say what that situation would be.”

Durocher stressed that, a couple of months ago, Pope Francis said this is not a question of saying all divorced couples can now come to church and receive communion.

“So it’s at the level of a personal discernment, trying to find where the Spirit is leading us, and the pope hasn’t given more precision than that,” he said.

Asked what can be done to address the loss of a marriage culture in that province, where only a third of marriageable age adults

are married, and of those who are married, only half have married in the church, Durocher said the Quebec bishops are focused “100 per cent” on evangelization.

“The real challenge is the new evangelization,” the archbishop said. “I think we need to bring people to the Gospel before we bring people to marriage.”

“People have lost a sense of God in their lives,” he said. “We need to bring them to that if we want to help them discover their relationship as being bound up in their relationship with God.”

Durocher’s presentation covered the whole document, highlighting the parts that would be especially inspiring and encouraging for the audience of predominantly Catholics under 35.

He said the CCCC will be releasing later this year nine video clips of about five minutes in length presented by different bishops to discuss various chapters of



CCN

Archbishop Paul-André Durocher

Amoris Laetitia. Durocher said he would be presenting on chapters four and five.

Those involved in COSA least likely to reoffend

Continued from page 1

“There is something very powerful about a friend who challenges them on something as simple as your fantasies or what you’re doing with your sexuality. These are very difficult issues, and that’s why it’s hard to get really good volunteers, but when you do, you see the results.”

After Joseph had done his time,

he could not get into a halfway house, find work, or rely on his family to help him. The only place he could find to sleep had bed bugs and he would come to COSA meetings itching.

“Conditions are tough and you have to have support. That’s why COSA is the best thing that happened to me,” he said.

“My brother is back in the picture now, and so is his wife a little

lower, 73 per cent and 71 per cent respectively.

“They have the lowest recidivism rate of any offender,” said Donegan. “We’ve had the highest-risk guys. What does that tell you?”

Isolation and secrecy are big dangers for sex offenders. When COSA drives both of those away with weekly meetings and hard, honest conversations, it makes a big difference.

“With no support, you’re going to reoffend,” said Joseph. “If no one is accountable, you feel like ‘It’s just me.’ But it’s not just me. There are people who are part of the community. If I reoffend, it hurts them! It causes them anxiety, fear, and a lot of pain.”

For Joseph, COSA volunteers are the face of the community. “Because I’m accountable, I don’t want to waste their time. If I do offend, it affects them. It’s going to affect a lot more people than just me.”

Max has weekly meetings with a psychologist in addition to COSA meetings.

“Ever since I was a little boy, I used sex and pornography to cope with distress and emotional pain. It was the drug of choice. That’s what I learned from my father and my grandfather,” he said.

Emotional pain

Much of his emotional pain stemmed from feelings of abandonment. “My parents had me, but they turned around and left me. There was no nurture, there was no discipline, there was no validation. Nothing, just silence.”

When Max was 18, his mother died from suicide. He’s struggled with thoughts of taking his own life ever since. His sex crime was like “setting off a bomb,” where the “repercussions go on” long after the initial blast.

“My story is horrible, and it’s been such a tough job to undo the self-hatred and self-loathing that I feel and to not walk around with an invisible noose around my neck.”

Max said the regular meetings and his sincere belief that the vol-

unteers care for him have given him something to live for. “I can honestly say I wouldn’t be here today if it wasn’t for the COSA group.”

The low reoffend rates are good news for released sex offenders and the community at large, Donegan said. “We’re making sure there are no more victims.” Since 2005, more than 100 released sex offenders in the Lower Mainland have participated in the program.

Finding healing

Anthony* has spent a total of 12 years behind bars in the federal system. His sex crimes earned him a designation as a long-term offender.

“I never had anyone be there for me,” he said. “I have trust issues. Mostly for authority, but even for my fellow human being. It’s because of things in the past.”

Anthony also tends to withdraw from people and suppress his emotions. After he was sentenced, fellow prisoners would say he was retreating into his “spider’s web.”

“I never talked about emotions or feelings. I didn’t have any. My whole life, I spent everything inside. Eventually, it gets out and never in a good way.”

Like Max, Anthony also experienced a sense of intense self-hatred behind bars and couldn’t believe it when Donegan promised to stay in touch and form a community for him after his release. He has now been meeting his COSA group for 26 months.

At his first meeting, just like every other sex offender in COSA, Anthony had to give a full disclosure of what he did to deserve jail time.

“They got to know the good, bad, and ugly of Anthony. They know the ugly, and it’s ugly. They didn’t walk out! You don’t know how much that means. It means everything. I’ve never felt so loved in my life,” he said through tears.

“We start to be human again and know we can be loved and love ourselves.”

(*Name changed)



B.C. Catholic/Agnieszka Krawczynski

PROVIDING HOPE — Maureen Donegan heads the Archdiocese of Vancouver’s prison ministry, which includes efforts like the COSA program for released sex offenders.

bit, and that was through COSA, because they encouraged me to call them. I’m looking to get a job now and they’re helping me with resources around that. One week they gave me some toiletries, which I was happy to receive because I’m on a tight budget.”

Reoffending rate low

Finding work with Max’s or Joseph’s criminal record is a real challenge. “If you pick up any newspaper, you’d think (sex offenders) are impossible,” said Donegan. “What are you going to do with a pedophile or a rapist?”

Yet of all offenders, she said those involved with COSA are the least likely to reoffend. A 2009 study found the rate of reoffending sexually was 83 per cent lower in criminals who participated in COSA versus those who did not. The rates of reoffending violently and reoffending at all were also

consider when sentencing indigenous offenders. The resolution also highlights the marginalization, discrimination, abuse and other factors contributing to high incarceration rates of indigenous women.

That resolution and another asking the government to remove the GST from child safety products such as car seats will be submitted to the national CWL convention. A third resolution involves Ontario’s Bill 163 on First Responders that presumes exposure to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The resolution asks that nurses be added to the list.

The convention also featured a keynote address by Cardinal Gerald Lacroix, Archbishop of Quebec and Primate of Canada, who spoke on *Amoris Laetitia* and evangelization.

Sharing brings understanding

Continued from page 3

Many CWL delegates who were teachers or married to teachers, or who otherwise had contact with First Nations people also shared, she said.

“Once we as humans start sharing experiences with others we can have a greater understanding of their perspective,” Crowe said. “It worked both ways for everyone. ‘There were a lot of tears shed that day by most everyone.’”

The convention also adopted three resolutions, one of which focused on indigenous issues. That resolution calls for the implementation of the Supreme Court of Canada’s 1999 Gladue decision that recognized mitigating social and historical factors that judges should

Transitions ministry supports separated, divorced

By Blake Sittler

SASKATOON — A ministry aimed at supporting Christians who are struggling through the trauma of separation and divorce is celebrating a milestone in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon: Transitions is 10 years old.

The diocese began offering Transitions in the autumn of 2007.

The program originated in Connecticut and came to Saskatoon via the Diocese of Calgary where Saskatoon resident Sharon Powell heard about it. Powell introduced the program to the Catholic Pastoral Centre, and with the support of the bishop piloted Transitions in the diocese.

Powell emphasizes the need to offer outreach and support to those who are struggling with separation or divorce.

“People don’t come to the end of their marriage usually without a lot of pain and sometimes that pain has been occurring for many years,” says Powell.

“We have people who attend Transitions and their marriage breaks up after 40 or more years, but when we have a conversation they reveal that often 30 of those years were very painful. So there

is lots of healing that is necessary.”

Transitions has been facilitated by the diocese some 20 times and has been attended by nearly 200 people over the past 10 years. Originally, many participants came to Transitions after being separated or divorced a year or more. Recently, more people are coming to the program in the early stages of shock.

“Those going through divorce and separation are grieving the death of their relationship, and most importantly the death of their dreams,” explains Powell. “Each of our participants went into their marriage thinking they would be married forever, so when the marriage comes to an end it is devastating and it feels like their world is falling apart. This is when the person needs the most help.”

The 12-week program addresses topics such as grief, anger, self-image, stress, guilt and blame, children, forgiveness, and loneliness, as well as coping with challenges, such as how to get through the holidays. Participants are asked to be present at every session in order to maintain trust and confidentiality in the group.

When a couple gets divorced, it is one of the most painful experiences for a family. For many Catholics, the experience was doubly difficult because on top of the actual schism of the marriage, there was often a feeling of rejection or alienation from the faith community. Divorced Catholics often felt ostracized by their fellow parishioners.

In an early letter from then-Bishop Donald Bolen about Transitions, words of assurance were balm to participants: “It is important that you do not consider yourselves as separated from the church. As a baptized person you can be assured that the church is there to support you in your need.”

The diocesan Transitions team currently has nine facilitators. All of them are either separated or divorced, and have been through the program themselves.

“I had been separated two years when I went through the program,” says Judy Douglas. “What I found was a safe place, where I was not judged for saying and feeling what I felt.”

Transitions is open to people of all faiths, and to both men and women, offering balance and per-



Blake Sittler

TRANSITIONS — Transitions facilitators recently reflected on the history and impact of the 10-year-old diocesan program for those who are divorced or separated. Back row, from left: Lori Driedger, Jan Bigland-Pritchard, Bee Kirilenko; front row: Sharon Powell, Judy Douglas, Helen Zimmer.

spective, as well as support.

“As a non-Catholic, I think it is important to keep it Christian,” says Jan Bigland-Pritchard, an Anglican pastor. “The spiritual aspect is so valuable to those who

go through something so difficult.”

For information about the fall session of Transitions in the Diocese of Saskatoon, contact Sharon Powell at (306) 374-1425 or at: sharon@holyspiritsaskatoon.ca

Brother Benedict makes solemn vows

By Paul Paproski, OSB

MUENSTER, Sask. — “Since Brother Benedict is a musician, I think he wanted to provide a prelude to today’s celebration. And we had that prelude last night, orchestrated by God. What a sound and light show we had,” said Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB, in his July 11 address at the solemn vows of Brother Benedict van Ginkel, OSB. A thunderstorm the previous night lit up the sky and brought welcome rain after weeks of hot, dry weather.

The day was also special for Rev. Lawrence DeMong, OSB, who had been solemnly professed 60 years earlier and renewed his profession of vows July 11.

“It struck me that when we look back in history, St. Benedict would have been about the same age as Brother Benedict is now when he wrote his Rule at Monte Cassino. We know from the document itself that two major sources guided his Rule. The first was the Bible and the second was his own experience of living as a hermit and then living in community,” Novecosky said in Sts. Peter and Paul Church.

St. Benedict followed the same advice of St. John XXIII, when St. John served as pope and had the motto: see everything, overlook a great deal and correct a little. St. Benedict would agree that this wisdom summarizes his Rule, the abbot remarked.

Pope Gregory the Great wrote that St. Benedict saw much around him. He went to Rome as a young man to study and became disgusted by the violence and immorality. He sought refuge in a cave in Subiaco and then went to Monte Cassino where he wrote his famous Rule, a guide that changed the course of European history.

St. Benedict overlooked many things that happened around him, Novecosky commented. He lived



Paul Paproski, OSB

MONASTIC VOWS — Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB, congratulates Brother Benedict van Ginkel, OSB, on his solemn vows July 11 at St. Peter’s Abbey, and Rev. Lawrence DeMong, OSB, on his 60th year of profession as a Benedictine monk of St. Peter’s Abbey.

among many personalities in his community and he adjusted for them. He said the abbot should arrange everything to allow the strong to have something to yearn for and the weak to be free from having to leave.

Commenting on the readings, the abbot said St. Paul illustrated the wisdom of the Rule when he spoke of letting love be genuine. Love, above all, overlooks what’s on the surface and sees the deeper reality of each person. St. Paul spoke of rejoicing in hope, being patient in suffering, persevering in prayer and extending hospitality to strangers.

The central vow of St. Benedict is “conversion of life.” People may begin a vocation with a lot of enthusiasm and then find life tedious and boring. Conversion is difficult because it begins with a new vision and new possibilities.

Van Ginkel, 54, was born in Winnipeg and named Peter by his parents, August and Josephine. He has one brother and three sisters. In 1983, he began teaching piano after earning his Grade 10 on the

instrument. In 1987, he earned a BA in English and psychology at the University of Manitoba. In 1993, he earned a bachelor’s degree in music education at the University of Saskatchewan. He is also an Associate of the Royal Conservatory of Toronto.

Van Ginkel taught English to junior and high school students in Winnipeg for three years and classroom music for 19 years. In 2012, he received a diploma for teaching French immersion. He taught French for eight years, while also teaching music.

“Mom has always encouraged me to keep praying and search for peace in life,” he said. “I have many role models, including saints, who have inspired me.” Among them are Sts. Benedict and Scholastica. In 2014, he was professed as a monk at St. Peter’s Abbey, where he chose the name Benedict. He serves as the abbey organist, the accounts payable clerk in the business office and assistant in the library. He is currently studying to be a library technician.

CWL diocesan council meets in St. Boniface

By Faith Anderson

ST. BONIFACE — The 68th annual convention of the St. Boniface Diocesan Council of the Catholic Women’s League of Canada was held earlier this spring at Corpus Christi Church.

President Mavis McLaren, in her opening remarks, said that in her first year of being president she was learning, growing in faith, courage and strength and enjoying the friendship of the sisters of the league.

Archbishop Albert LeGatt in his opening remarks indicated his support to the 12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care and a reflection about the day and petition was sent to all pastors, encouraging their support.

“We are learning how to respond to the new reality in our country. One of the most important parts of this is palliative care,” LeGatt said. “The most important place where palliative care will be lived is in the family and, of course, in the parish and CWL councils where friendships have developed over the years. This is all palliative care because it’s saying, echoing the Lord, ‘I will be with you until the end of time.’ In

this case until the end of this person’s time here on earth.”

Alesa Sutherland, who holds a master’s degree in medical anthropology, specializing in aging, was the keynote speaker. Her presentation focused on elder abuse. She indicated that abuse happens at every demographic, and isolation is a big factor — whether it is culturally, because of weather, or because of family living away. In today’s society, there are all kinds of communication devices to keep in touch, and opening conversations need to take place, said Sutherland. She also indicated that if abuse is suspected one needs to step in and ask questions, even if it means being told to mind their own business.

Councils reported on their many activities, including collecting food for food banks, collecting tabs for wheelchairs, making prayer shawls, participating in “12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care,” and making lap quilts for people in palliative facilities.

The business session concluded with the eucharist celebrated by LeGatt. In his homily, the archbishop stated, “Christ is alive — it shows in your reports.”

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Dungen ordained for the Eparchy of Saskatoon

By Teresa Bodnar-Hiebert

SASKATOON — Warren Francis Dungen was ordained to the Holy Presbyterate July 20 by Bishop Bryan Bayda, CSsR, at the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of St. George in Saskatoon. Dungen completed his studies at Holy Spirit Seminary in Ottawa.

In his homily, Bayda asked the assembly to reflect on how a baby is “oblivious to the grace of God being fused into them” at baptism, and how a baby is “transformed at baptism, as a new member of the community of Christ becomes a missionary disciple.

“In that baptism you received the Holy Spirit — as prophet, as

king and as priest — the one who intercedes for other people. We are all asked to be that missionary disciple. Every one of us has that obligation, to be the prophet, to speak clearly about the presence of God, to trust in his providence.”

Bayda called Dungen forward, noting that “one of the biggest challenges of being a missionary disciple is that you have to preach the truth and you have to preach the ethical living out of that truth when you yourself know, first and foremost, that you’re probably not the best example of it.”

The Divine Liturgy and ordination was attended also by Rev. Michael Winn, rector of Holy Spirit Seminary in Ottawa, Rev. Kevin

McGee, diocesan administrator of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, Dungen’s brother-in-law Rev. Jack Michalchuk of Prince George, B.C., and Rev. Roman Rytsar, Dungen’s spiritual director at the seminary. Some 35 clergy were in attendance from Ukrainian and Roman Catholic rites across the province.

Following the ordination, a banquet was held at the Cathedral of the Holy Family in Saskatoon. Harvey Granatier spoke on behalf of the K of C Charitable Foundation, which provided assistance to Dungen on his journey to the priesthood, and Rev. Mike Bombak spoke on behalf of the seminarians.

Winn spoke of Dungen as “a

son who has answered fully to the call of the Lord to be a priest” and spoke of the joys in priesthood — using the example of confession and being the first one there to welcome someone back.

Dungen started his career in youth ministry in Calgary, where he married Lori Lou Michalchuk. He went on to serve in several dioceses in the U.S. before mov-

ing with his family to the Diocese of Prince Albert in Saskatchewan. They began the transfer process into the Ukrainian Catholic Church in 2010, and Dungen was ordained to the diaconate for the Eparchy of Saskatoon by Bayda in January 2017 in Ottawa.

Dungen will serve in the Kamsack/Norquay district of east-central Saskatchewan as of Aug. 2.



Teresa Bodnar-Hiebert

April honoured on 50th anniversary

By Kate O’Gorman

SASKATOON — A celebration was held June 25 at St. Philip Neri Parish in Saskatoon honouring Rev. Emile April on the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood.



Kate O’Gorman

Rev. Emile April

April’s ministry began at St. Philip Neri Parish after his ordination in 1967, and for the past five years parishioners have been pleased to have him back where his journey began. In the years between, April had many rich experiences serving locally and abroad.

To celebrate his golden jubilee, his 75th birthday and the eve of his retirement, he was surrounded by parishioners, brother priests,

friends, and family as they “roasted and toasted” him for his many years of service.

A large part of April’s ministry was spent in União dos Palmares, Brazil, where he served from 1972 to 1998 as a missionary. Sister Claire Novecosky, OSU, and Rev. Les Paquin both worked with April in Brazil, and shared memories of that time. Paquin explained in a letter that while in Brazil, April pastored a parish of 50,000 members, and how his focus was on building small Christian communities for the laity.

The task of caring for the sacramental and ministerial needs of a parish that large was no small undertaking. On weekends, Paquin wrote, it was not uncommon to have three sets of baptisms, each involving 30 - 40 children.

In conjunction with serving a parish, April was involved with a number of special projects, one of which was mobilizing a work bee to assist flood victims rebuild their homes. Through this project, April saw 250 homes constructed.

While Novecosky and April served in different parts of Brazil, the sister recounted how April would often visit “for a meal or a siesta.”

“We had good discussions,” she said, “where we, of course, always solved all the social, political and religious problems of the day.”

April denounced injustice and inequality, wrote Paquin. “He

loved the poor and took a stand on their behalf and at times this made him unpopular with the rich land owners.”

While in Brazil, April was involved in supporting the rights of landless farmers who were being denied access to safe and productive work. After taking steps with local authorities to help support poor workers reclaim their land rights on one farm in particular, April found himself the target of an intended assassination. “It didn’t seem to faze him too much,” Novecosky commented

April was unwavering in his work to defend the landless and the small farmers. As he himself went on to explain, the threats against his life did not materialize. “This was just one of the little ways in which God has protected, helped and supported me all these years and I am extremely grateful.”

In a tribute to his ministry at Holy Cross High School between 1969 - 1972, the school choir, under the direction of Leanne Hamm, performed two songs — “Take Up Your Cross” and “This is Not the End” — both of which had meaning for the students and resonated with April’s anniversary and retirement.

April also spent 10 years serving in the Humboldt deanery, where he was pastor in Watson, Englefeld, St. Gregor, Lanigan and Humboldt. Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB, offered words of congratulations and thanks: “Father Emile was deeply shaped by the Vatican II vision of the church. He led people to a renewed vision of celebrating the liturgy, of empowering the lay people and of working for social justice.”

The abbot went on to say that, “Father Emile is a pastor in the style of Pope Francis. Pope Francis has described the church as a field hospital and tells us to reach out to people on the peripheries of church and society.” He thanked April for spreading what Pope Francis calls “the joy of the Gospel.”

On his retirement, April plans to return to Brazil to visit friends and subsequently enjoy a year of rest. After that he affirms that Saskatoon will remain his home and he will be available to assist and minister when needed.

“These have been wonderful years, both in Brazil and in Canada,” said April. “I enjoyed the work that I did very much.”

DUNGEN ORDINATION — The newly ordained Rev. Warren Dungen stands with his wife, Lori Lou, and Bishop Bryan Bayda July 20 at the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of St. George in Saskatoon.

Archbishop celebrates many confirmations

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — May and June were busy months for Regina Archbishop Donald Bolen as he held 53 confirmation celebrations in 50 parishes throughout the archdiocese.

Bishops traditionally celebrate the confirmations, but last year the archdiocese was between bishops so parish priests looked after the services. As the new bishop in town, Bolen decided to perform all the confirmations personally because he wants to visit as many parishes as possible. Unfortunately, there are not enough weekends in the year to get to all 131 parishes in the archdiocese, plus those on First Nations Reserves; he expects that it will take three years to visit them all.

Bolen said people can always find reasons why we can be discouraged, “but when you do the confirmation runs you see a lot of positive signs of life in the church.” He suggested that some of the children who were confirmed and received first communion are in families who don’t regularly attend mass — but, he pointed out, those parents and grandparents still see the sacraments as important for the life of their children: “It’s very encouraging to see all these young people taking steps to deepen their faith.”

He talked about the differences among the various celebrations. The largest group of candidates — 90 — came from Resurrection Parish in Regina, with two other city parishes close behind. Resurrection, Holy Trinity and

Holy Family each had two classes of candidates, and in each case the celebrations were held on two consecutive evenings.

The large celebrations have a certain dynamic, Bolen said, while the small ones are like extended family gatherings. With the smaller celebrations, he tries to find a way to be easy on the candidates when he questions them. “When there are 50 kids there’s a lot of cover and you don’t have to answer questions if you don’t want to. There’s more pressure within smaller groups and I try to make it easier for them. It’s not my desire to make them feel awkward.”

The smallest number was one candidate at St. Elizabeth Parish in Killaly, and one in the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Parish in Val Marie. Killaly is in east-central Saskatchewan, about a 1.5-hour drive from Regina, and Val Marie is in the Cypress Hills area, some 3.5 hours from the capital, emphasizing the vastness of the archdiocese, which constitutes most of southern Saskatchewan. Bolen said he put about 5,000 kilometres on his vehicle during May and June.

He has a companion, a retired Knight of Columbus, who drives for him on long trips while he often takes the opportunity to work on his laptop. He also enjoys seeing the field work beginning and the greening of the prairie as the days get longer and the crops begin to sprout.

“I think, overall, it went very well,” he said. Next year, Bolen will reach out to different parishes to celebrate confirmations.



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Experts weigh in on future of the church in Canada

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — Younger, smarter, rooted in Scripture, based on tradition, more feminine, better connected with other Christians, more aware of other faiths.

These are just some of the characteristics Canadians can expect to ascribe to the church of the not-too-distant future, according to experts from a variety of subject areas — from theology to education to ethics to architecture.

As Canada celebrates its 150th year since Confederation, this is as good a time as any to gather ourselves, take a deep breath and look ahead. What will this church look like in another generation or two? Who are we becoming?

“It’s impossible to imagine it (the church) not being more feminine,” said Catholic feminist and educator Martha Crean.

It isn’t just a matter of a Vatican commission looking into the historical role of female deacons, or a few high profile appointments of women. The church is becoming more feminine because it has feminine roots, said the co-president of the deVeber Institute, a Toronto-based forum for bioethical research and education.

“We know in any church you go into, women generally outnumber men,” Crean said. “I don’t think this is new. I think this goes way back to the catacombs.”

Crean rejects a debate about women in the church that begins and ends with who gets to preside at mass.

“Feminine or masculine, it’s a question of shared authority,” she said. “Just being feminine — does that imply, necessarily, a more co-operative spirit? I don’t think so. I think it’s sometimes a shorthand for trying to talk about values that are more community-driven and are less hierarchical.”

As more administrative powers devolve into the hands of lay people, Crean believes women will exercise greater influence in Canada’s Catholic future.

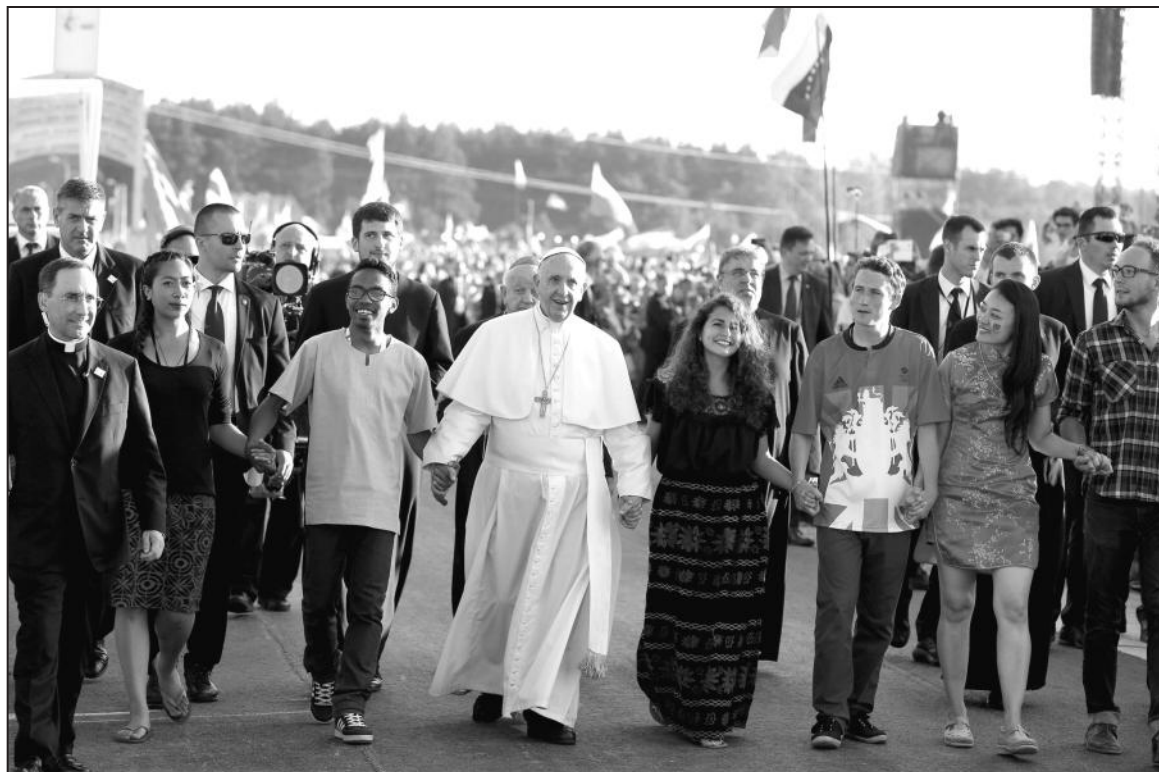
The church will also be younger, and not just in years.

Kataryna Kuzar, 25, is employed by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto to co-ordinate their youth ministry program called Faith Connections, which is focused on next year’s synod on youth in Rome. For Kuzar, a younger church isn’t defined by demographics. It is one that hears and encourages young people.

“It will be really young and very vibrant — and it will be different, too,” Kuzar told *The Catholic Register*. “The focus right now is shifting. I can see that shift and it’s very significant.”

Pope Francis talks about a church that leads with compassion and mercy. That has tempted young people to approach the church without fear, said Kuzar.

“Letting people know that we’re not called to be perfect — we’re called to strive for holiness,” she said. “When people understand that we’re not condemning people. . . . It’s a matter of approaching people with love. God loves you so much. That approach will definitely change the dynamic of the church, and it will be young.”



CNS/Paul Haring

FUTURE OF THE CHURCH — Pope Francis walks with World Youth Day pilgrims in 2016. The pope talks about a church that leads with compassion and mercy, and that has tempted young people to approach the church without fear, says Kataryna Kuzar, who is employed by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto to co-ordinate their youth ministry program. Some see the church of the future as being be younger, smarter, rooted in Scripture, based on tradition, more feminine, better connected with other Christians, and more aware of other faiths.

As Our Lady Seat of Wisdom president Keith Cassidy watches more students join his new Catholic college in Barry’s Bay, Ont., he sees a future that has left behind false notions of a tradition opposed to modernity.

“It is more meaningful to speak of a magisterial church, a church which is always new and fresh because it speaks eternal truth to a changing society,” Cassidy wrote in an email to *The Catholic Register*. “To speak in terms of being either traditional or modern is to load the rhetorical dice. In being true to its traditions, the church is simultaneously being more relevant to contemporary society than (it is to) the latest intellectual fads.”

Catholic education engaged with the world will make a smarter church in the next two generations, said King’s University College president David Sylvester.

“They are getting smarter,” Sylvester said, and he’s not just talking about intelligence aired in the classroom. Smarter means students have applied what they know in the real world on service-learning trips to the Dominican Republic, Africa, Rome and the traditional Dene lands in the Northwest Territories. Sylvester describes this sort of applied, experiential learning as “an apostolic education.”

The ace in the hand of every Catholic educator is Pope Francis, according to Sylvester.

“Francis is really showing us that faith requires a real engagement with the world,” he said. “I’m not a big fan of the church versus the world.”

Salt and light are no one’s adversaries.

“Christianity can survive persecution. Whether Christianity can survive consumerism, having all these first-world riches, our affluence — that, I think, is the bigger issue,” said Jesuit retreat master Rev. Roger Yaworski. “Spiritually, a vacuum gets created. In that vacuum there will be some call for us

to return to spirituality.”

The same may be true for our view of the Bible.

“I liken the Bible to the church’s constitutional documents,” said St. Michael’s University Scripture scholar John McLaughlin. “We have to go back to them. We have to interpret them.”

He has seen a growing interest among Catholics in acquiring the tools to interpret Scripture.

“Fifty, 60 people on a Tuesday night in a church basement to hear a talk about the Bible,” said McLaughlin.

“The old myth about Catholics being forbidden to read the Bible still floats around,” he said. “I can’t prognosticate, but my hope is that it will be a foundational document, a foundational source for us.”

“Vatican II talks about . . . the two streams of revelation — Scripture and tradition. It’s a fundamental belief of the Catholic Church that God is revealed to us in those words. If we ever lost that we would in fact have lost our way and it would cease to be the Catholic Church.”

The church will never stop building churches. As populations shift, each new community stakes a claim with buildings that are more than shelter. Architect Roberto Chiotti is hopeful those new buildings will be beautiful.

“We are a resurrection people. We are a hopeful community. We are all those things. So how do we become beacons of hope in a challenging world?” Chiotti asks. “That doesn’t mean trying to reclaim the glorious past. It’s hope to people who are struggling in the world.”

“To me, beautiful is not beautiful unless it addresses all those other things. Good design is not good design unless it respects diversity of life on the planet, it acknowledges that every life form and non-life form on the planet is a unique expression of God’s creation.”

Chiotti’s church designs aim to respect the environment by taking

less from it. His energy efficient churches have won awards. They have also been the result of ordinary parishioners talking to the architects about what they aspire to as a parish.

The future church in Canada will talk more often and more directly about how our civilization relates to the natural world, said Dennis Patrick O’Hara, director of the Elliott Allen Institute for Ecology and Theology.

“*Laudato Si*’ (the 2015 papal encyclical on the environment) was a conversation changer, there’s no doubt about it,” said O’Hara, a professor of theology at St. Michael’s University. “You can see that parishes are taking up interest in ecological justice, in having a more informed understanding of our relationship with the rest of creation. Is it revolutionary? No. But it is happening.”

Indigenous people around the world have a special place in the dialogue about our natural world, says Pope Francis.

Church asks for pardon for imposing evangelization

Continued from page 4

often that part of the church was usually not linked to imperial power, Paloschi added. “The Catholic Church has asked for pardon and will continue to ask for pardon for an evangelization that was imposed rather than offered. Today, the church has to be prophetic in the face of a culture built on consumerism, acquisitiveness, power and pleasure.”

As the president of the Brazilian bishop’s indigenous missionary council, Paloschi wrote to Pope Francis last year to explain how farming and mining interests have dispossessed indigenous.

“We live in Brazil a desperate situation, in the face of the suffering of our first inhabitants — indifference, the advance of large

“They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners,” the pope wrote in *Laudato Si*’.

Dialogue and reconciliation with Canada’s Aboriginal peoples can only help make the Catholic Church in Canada what God intended it to be, according to Victoria Bishop Gary Gordon. For Gordon, the church is enriched by the dialogue and the friendship that results from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process.

“I mean Christ is the ultimate dialogue. He enters into our mass. He abandons himself,” Gordon said. “How does St. Paul put it? He did not cling to his equality with God but rather emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave. So Christ has really performed the great dialogue and we all imitate him, or try.”

Reality also demands the church find new ways of expressing itself through ecumenical dialogue and action, said Archdiocese of Regina director of ecumenical and interfaith affairs Nicholas Jesson.

“We are no longer the majority in our community. There’s an assumption in our society now that faith is private and it’s something optional,” said Jesson. “Religious communities are increasingly identifying themselves as having views out of the mainstream. That therefore requires them to be more articulate about the reasons for their practices and convictions. That allows them to identify common ground with others.”

Catholics won’t only find allies and companions among the other Christian churches, said Archdiocese of Toronto director of interfaith and ecumenical affairs Rev. Timothy MacDonald. New relationships will help to carve out a space for all lives of faith, whether Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist or Hindu.

“Because of the diversity within our own faith community, it is sort of preparing us for those positive and harmonious relationships with others in the future. A lot more co-operation on social issues will come to the fore because of it. I think that’s already begun.”

agri-business projects, construction of large hydroelectric plants, mining and devastation of the environment in general. This has disastrous consequences for indigenous peoples,” Paloschi wrote in June 2016.

In the chaos of Brazil’s scandal-plagued government, ranchers and miners have gained new influence with the administration of President Michel Temer. That has translated into weakening legal protections for indigenous territories and the suppression of indigenous leadership that fights for land rights and the environment.

“We are living as if under a military dictatorship,” Paloschi told the Catholic News Service. “Leaders and entire peoples are being criminalized.”

From the not so good to the great summer war movies

Screenings & Meanings

Gerald Schmitz



As faraway battles continue to defeat the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, or merely contain the Islamist insurgency in Afghanistan, let's look at some recent offerings in the ever-popular genre of war movies.

You don't have to leave home to see two looking back on Afghanistan and Iraq with a jaundiced eye, *War Machine* and *Sand Castle*, both streaming on Netflix since early summer. Several others, *Churchill* and *Dunkirk*, hark back to dark days of the Second World War. Looking ahead with dystopian dread is the latest in the "planet of the apes" assault on human civilization.

Australian director David Michôd's *War Machine* is an uneven affair that draws on journalist Michael Hastings' account, *The Operators: The Wild and Terrifying Story of America's War in Afghanistan*. At the centre of the action in 2012 is U.S. General Glen McMahon (Brad Pitt), a fictional version of General Stanley Mc-

harder than "winning" the military contest. The soldiers grumble at the non-combat grunt work. Locals are needed for the project, but with an anti-occupation insurgency developing, have reason to fear reprisals for co-operating with Americans.

Ocre reaches out to an English-speaking schoolmaster and for a while some progress seems possible. Yet the fraught relationship with the community is tested by hostile acts until the movie comes to an explosive end that could serve as a metaphor for the larger failure of the war.

Being born on the eighth anniversary of D-Day, with a relative of my mother's killed in the battle of Normandy, I've long had a special interest in the Second World War. There's no better guide to the Canadian role than Tim Cook's magisterial two-volume history, *The Necessary War*, and *Fight to the Finish*. Hitler had to be defeated, but the means were often at savage cost in the air, on



Warner Bros.

DUNKIRK — Writer-director Christopher Nolan's *Dunkirk* is only the second screen account of what happened from May 27 to June 4, 1940, when hundreds of thousands of British and French troops were rescued from the beaches of the French coastal town. "A miracle was needed in 1940, and Nolan honours it with a miracle of filmmaking," writes Gerald Schmitz.

African Field Marshal Jan Smuts (Richard Durden) at his side, gets into heated rows with the top generals, Eisenhower (John Slattery) and Montgomery (Julian Wadham), who were understandably exasperated by his interference. He's shown opposing the operation as a calamity, even beseeching God to stop it, then insisting on accompanying the invasion force, only relenting on the advice of King George VI (James Purefoy). It comes off as rather pathetic; hardly the picture of a great wartime leader.

Although the screenplay is ostensibly by historian Alex von Tunzelmann, the movie is not compelling as history or cinema. The Churchill historian Andrew Roberts has written that it "gets everything absolutely wrong," calling it "a perverse fantasy that deserves to be a flop." (A much better Churchill portrait is HBO's 2002 film *The Gathering Storm*, which starred Albert Finney and Vanessa Redgrave. Later this year Gary Oldman will portray Churchill in another wartime drama, *Darkest Hour*.)

Fortunately in theatres now is a vastly superior Second World War epic that truly deserves the term. Writer-director Christopher Nolan's *Dunkirk* (<http://www.dunkirkmovie.com/>), filmed on location with IMAX cameras using 65mm cellu-

loid, is only the second screen account of what happened from May 27 to June 4, 1940, when hundreds of thousands of British and French troops were rescued from the beaches of the French coastal town of Dunkerque near the Belgian border. They had been trapped there by the speed of the German advance. The mass evacuation of some 355,000 soldiers across the Channel averted disaster, as Britain would soon be alone to face the Nazi onslaught. In a foreword to James Mottram's companion book, *The Making of Dunkirk*, Nolan pays tribute to the "Dunkirk spirit," observing: "That this event ended with neither annihilation nor surrender is the reason that it provides one of the greatest stories in human history."

The narrative is presented through three different perspectives and time frames — one week on land (focused on the beachfront breakwater known as the "Mole"), one day at sea with vessels big and small, one hour in the air as RAF Spitfires battle German Messerschmitts — intercutting seamlessly and rapidly between these. It begins with heart-pounding intensity as young soldier Tommy (Fionn Whitehead) dodges deadly sniper fire to get to the beach where he meets a French soldier (Damien Bonnard). Several other soldiers (Aneurin Barnard, Harry Styles) become the faces we follow through the desperate terrifying days that follow in which ships are sunk and huddled troops strafed by Luftwaffe bombers. The big picture is represented by Commander Bolton (Kenneth Branagh), but it is these young men that give the unfolding drama visceral power.

With large destroyers unable to get close enough to shore, the rescue had to be effected by civilian small craft. The story zeroes in on one piloted by Dawson (Mark Rylance), helped by his son Peter (Tom Glynn-Carney) and teenage friend George (Barry Keoghan). In the channel they pick up a shell-shocked survivor (Cillian

Murphy) of a U-boat attack whose demand that they turn back to England has a tragic consequence against the extraordinary feat of so many lives saved. In the astonishing scenes of aerial dogfights we are drawn to several pilots (Tom Hardy, Jack Lowden), both of whom are eventually forced to crash land, one on water, the other on sand. Although the enemy remains unseen and little bloodshed is shown, a violent fate is an ever-present threat. (In fact, about 68,000 soldiers were killed or captured.)

What Nolan does so brilliantly is to convey the enormity of what is happening while at the same time giving an audience the sense of experiencing it up close and personal. This is very much a big-screen movie — ideally watched in IMAX 70mm projection — and also an intimate one in the stories it tells. Even Churchill's famous "no surrender" speech is rendered in the halting reading of a newspaper account by a returning soldier on a train home.

I had the pleasure of listening to Nolan discuss the art of film at the 2016 Sundance film festival. He is a cinema purist who eschews digital tricks and shortcuts. As a result, *Dunkirk* benefits from an exceptional effort at authenticity that is a rarity today. Everything from the meticulous attention to detail to Hans Zimmer's immersive score combines to thrust one into the feeling of what it was like to be there.

A miracle was needed in 1940, and Nolan honours it with a miracle of filmmaking. Fully deserving of superlatives, *Dunkirk* is a definite Oscar best-picture contender.

Matt Reeves is back as director of the impressive conclusion to the 21st century *Planet of the Apes* trilogy following 2014's "Dawn." *War for the Planet of the Apes* opens 15 years after the genetic breakthrough of intelligent

— CAESAR, page 17

War Machine (U.S.)

Sand Castle (U.S.)

Churchill (U.K.)

Dunkirk (U.K./Netherlands/France (U.S.))

War for Planet of the Apes (U.S.)

Chrystal, then the top U.S. commander in the country intent on implementing a controversial counter-insurgency doctrine. McChrystal's downfall proved to be an interview he gave Hastings that ran in *Rolling Stone*, notoriously including negative comments on the Obama administration. The voiceover narration accompanying this comedy of errors is purportedly by Hastings (although the real Hastings died in 2013). Pitt plays the role as broad caricature and the movie as a whole adopts a satirical tone. It would be easier to roll with these foibles of war if Afghanistan's ongoing situation were not so dire.

In *Sand Castle*, helmed by Brazilian director Fernando Coimbra, a reluctant Private Matt Ocre (Nicholas Hoult), who joined the U.S. army reserves to earn money for college, finds himself deployed to Iraq as part of the 2003 invasion. The scenario by Chris Roessner is loosely drawn from his own experience.

Ocre doesn't share in any "mission accomplished" bravado and seems aloof from the usual macho camaraderie of trigger-happy buddies. "I don't belong here," he tells himself. Indeed he injures himself in a failed attempt to be discharged. Instead, watched by suspecting superiors, he's sent with a special forces unit to repair a pumping station damaged by American firepower, leaving a village without potable water. It's a challenge that turns out to be

land and at sea. Cook is unsparing about the horrors, observing in conclusion that over the six years of war there was an average of some 25,000 war-related deaths a day, the majority civilians.

That the Allied young men in uniform faced appalling sacrifice is a theme that runs through Jonathan Teplitzky's *Churchill*, set in the days before Operation Overlord as the D-Day invasion was codenamed. Unfortunately this version does little justice to the events of this crucial moment. Brian Cox's Churchill is a caricature of the British prime minister as an irascible bad-tempered aging bulldog who quarrels with his wife, Clementine (Miranda Richardson), and, with South



20th Century Fox

CONCLUSION TO TRILOGY — Beyond great special effects and action sequences, *War for the Planet of the Apes* takes the time in its 140 minutes to develop characters and storylines that make it one of the more satisfying movies of the summer, writes Gerald Schmitz.

After 20 years, Potter still generates conversations

By Josephine von Dohlen

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Two decades since the publication of its first book, the Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling continues to draw countless readers into its pages, gaining ground among some faithful initially put off by the much-debated themes of magic and witchcraft.

The seven novels of the Harry Potter series carry the reader through the life of the orphaned Harry Potter, an 11-year-old boy who learns of the world of wizards and magic as he heads off to study at Hogwarts School of Wizardry and Witchcraft. Each novel tells the story of another year at Hogwarts, as he discovers the history of his wizard parents and battles dark magic with his friends.

John Granger is the author of *How Harry Cast His Spell* as well as other Harry Potter commentary books and was named the “Dean of Harry Potter Scholars” by Time.com. He spends his time speaking at various universities and conferences, as well as working on his vlog, [potterpundits.com](#)

In an interview with Catholic News Service July 10, Granger spoke about the “imaginative spirit of resurrection” that is woven throughout the series.

“The most obvious and the strongest one is that every year, Harry’s journey, rather than the hero’s journey, has him going underground to fight the bad guys and he

appears, and he battles, and he loses,” Granger said. “He dies a near death, and just when he’s about to expire, a symbol of Christ appears and Harry rises from the dead.”

Granger sees the story as a “morality play” because of Harry’s dying to himself out of love for his friends that essentially is an “imitation of Christ.”

“One of the reasons that readers love it is because they are designed to love this story,” Granger said. “Sacrificial love being the

greatest power on earth, of course you love that story.”

Controversy surrounded the Harry Potter series at the time of its release, specifically among some Christian groups whose members feared exposure of their children to the themes of magic and witchcraft.

Nancy Carpentier Brown is a homeschooling mother and the author of *The Mystery of Harry Potter: A Catholic Family Guide*. Brown first became aware of the Harry Potter series when she re-

ceived two contrasting opinions on the novels from fellow mothers whom she trusted. When her oldest daughter began to show interest in the series, she suggested that the two begin to read the novels aloud together each night.

“We got lost in the story,” Brown said in an interview with CNS July 11.

While Brown read several books that tried to convince her that the Harry Potter series would be a doorway to the occult, or new age thinking, she didn’t find those concerns in the novels.

“It just didn’t resonate with me and with my experience of the books,” Brown said.

In her book, Brown explores the stories through a Catholic lens, addressing the moral and spiritual issues within the novels, as well as how parents can engage the text with their children.

While her support of the series has prevented her from speaking in some Catholic circles, she continues to support the series and appreciate its influence within her family.

“I don’t think the fears have manifested themselves in any way

that people worried about at the time,” Brown said.

Similarly, Jesuit Father William Reiser approaches the Harry Potter controversy with the comfort of Christ.

“God is present in everything, and so as a result, you don’t want to be afraid and say that well we shouldn’t go near certain things like those books because they’re pagan or superstitious,” Reiser said. “But no, anything can be a vehicle that brings people into some contact with the divine.”

Reiser is a professor and department chair in the religious studies department at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts. He teaches a course called “Defense Against the Dark Arts,” named after a subject taught at the Hogwarts school within the novels.

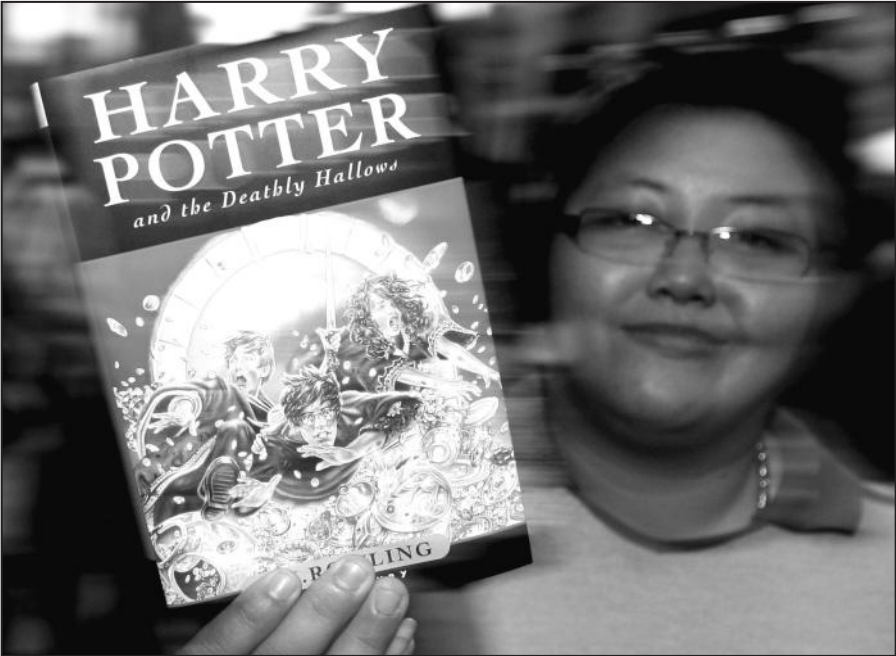
Reiser, in an interview, touched upon the fact that more of his students have read the Harry Potter series than have read the Scriptures.

“I think the novels gave them a world to step into,” Reiser said. “If you’re really going to get into the Gospel story, you’re going to have to get into the Gospel world, and that’s all about imagination.”

Reiser makes the connection of the Harry Potter books to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

“For anyone who knows the Ignatian tradition, imagination be-

— LOVE, page 12



CNS/narong Sangnak, EPA

TWENTY YEARS — A woman displays the last of a series of seven Harry Potter books by British author J.K. Rowling titled *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, in 2007. June 26 was a day to remember for Harry Potter fans old and new as it marked 20 years since the iconic *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* was first published.

A wedding dance playlist is nothing compared to the celebration of love

By Caitlin Ward

I’ve been getting songs stuck in my head lately. That’s not unusual, I suppose, but what’s stuck out to me this time is just how long they stay there. Once upon a time I’d get a song in my head for a few hours, or at most a day or two. In the last few months,

Cake by the Ocean
By DNCE

though, I’ve had songs in my head for weeks. Perhaps it’s a sign of aging — I am in my 30s now, after all — or perhaps it’s the resurgence of music that sounds like it’s from the 1970s. Those bass lines are catchy, darn it.

Or more recently, perhaps it’s because I’ve been helping one of my best friends from high school put together the playlist for her wedding dance, so I’ve been listening to a lot of music that is, by definition, catchy. A song doesn’t become a mainstay at wedding dances if it’s not, for good or for ill.

The last time I wrote about wedding dances was two years ago, around the time my sister got married. She opted not to have a DJ or a band, partially because it seemed too small a wedding to bother having a proper dance.

Ward is a Saskatoon-based freelance writer who spends her days (and most nights) working at a small Catholic college. Her less eloquent thoughts can be found at [www.twitter.com/newsetofstrings](#)

Though her wedding constituted one of the biggest ones in our family’s living memory, there were still fewer than 50 people in attendance. My parents had no one but the priest and two witnesses there when they got married. One of our cousins got married this past Canada Day weekend. It seems to have been a surprise to everyone there, except perhaps the couple themselves, and there were fewer than 10 people in attendance.

The other reason my sister and her husband opted not to have a DJ, though, is for fear that they’d play “Old Time Rock and Roll” by Bob Seger or “Jessie’s Girl” by Rick Springfield. My sister hates those songs with a passion they may or may not deserve, and I don’t like them, either. I mentioned to my high school friend who is getting married this week that I didn’t think these should be on the playlist, but apparently other people close to the wedding party love these songs for some sick unknown reason, so they’re going to be played despite her and my better judgment.

The song that’s been stuck in my head for the last two weeks, though, is not old enough to be a standard for wedding dances, if it is even ever to become one. It’s “Cake by the Ocean” by DNCE, which came out only two years ago, and for some reason took up residence in my thoughts after I heard it in a movie. I suggested the song as an option for my friend’s dance, but I’m not sure it’ll end up on the playlist, as I don’t think even the “clean” lyrics

initially come off as particularly family wedding-friendly.

But that may not be fair to the song. On the one hand, the original version has a fair number of swears in it, but on the other, the subject matter is open to interpretation. It’s suggestive, certainly, but not explicit. If you think about it for a few minutes, it’s pretty obvious that “cake” is a metaphor — frankly, a rather clumsy one, but a metaphor nevertheless. On the surface, though, it could very well just be about eating cake by the ocean. And literally, I have eaten cake by the ocean on a number of occasions: on a sunny day on the Isle of Wight as the tide went out; near a mangrove in the ruins of Panama Viejo in Panama City on one of our few days off; in a rainstorm in Swansea before my sister and I jumped into the Atlantic Ocean fully clothed. Eating cake by the ocean is a magical experience and I highly recommend doing it. That’s neither here nor there, though, as few people are willing to suspend their disbelief and decide that the song is literally just about cake, so I’m guessing it’s not going to end up on the final wedding playlist. Instead, we will have Rick Springfield and Bob Seger.

I suppose what all of this comes down to, though, more than what bits of songs stick in your head, how much your friend from high school hates Rick Springfield, or how awesome it is to eat cake by an ocean, is what a wedding means to a couple and their community.

In mainstream culture, weddings seem to be about putting on

massive events that cause no end of stress and family fights, and run the risk of bankrupting the couple. In Catholic culture, though, weddings are about celebrating a sacrament: a covenantal relationship between two people witnessed by their community and by God. It’s the thing that kept my

sister sane through her wedding preparations, and it seems to be the thing that’s kept my friend and her fiancé calm through theirs: the particular songs, the particular food, the particular venue — none of them are as important as the particular people. Even if they want you to play “Jessie’s Girl.”

No, no
See you walking 'round like it's a funeral
Not so serious, girl, why those feet cold?
We just getting started, don't you tiptoe, tiptoe,

PRECHORUS
Waste time with a masterpiece, don't waste time with a masterpiece
You should be rolling with me, you should be rolling with me, ah
You're a real-life fantasy, you're a real-life fantasy
But you're moving so carefully, let's start living dangerously

CHORUS
Talk to me, baby
I'm going blind from this sweet-sweet craving, whoa-oh
Let's lose our minds and go f-ing crazy
Ah ya ya ya ya I keep on hoping we'll eat cake by the ocean
Walk for me, baby
I'll be Diddy, you'll be Naomi, whoa-oh
Let's lose our minds and go f-ing crazy
Ah ya ya ya ya I keep on hoping we'll eat cake by the ocean

Goddamn, see you licking frosting from your own hands
Want another taste, I'm begging, yes ma'am
I'm tired of all this candy on the dry land, dry land, oh

PRECHORUS

CHORUS
Red velvet, vanilla, chocolate in my life
Confetti, I'm ready, I need it every night
Red velvet, vanilla, chocolate in my life (ah ya ya ya ya I keep on hoping we'll eat cake by the ocean)

New film highlights Pope Francis’ artistic vision

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — What do the Sistine Chapel, a used car with 299,337 kilometres on the odometer and a statue of Our Lady of Lujan made out of metal from an abandoned factory have in common?

Besides being found in the Vatican Museums’ collections, the 1984 Renault, the Renaissance frescoes and the recycled scrap all help showcase Pope Francis’ concept of art, according to museum officials.

Blessed Paul VI’s close relationship and active outreach to artists is well-known, as is St. John Paul II’s love of theatre and poetry and retired Pope Benedict XVI’s passion for music.

But not many people know about Pope Francis’ love of film, literature, music and the role he believes art can play in evangelization, social change and spiritual transformation. A new documentary produced by the Vatican Museums and Vatican City State aims to fill that void.

Titled *My Idea of Art*, the 45-minute film is based on the book of the same name, authored by Pope Francis after Italian journalist Tiziana Lupi transcribed it from a sit-down interview with the pope in May 2015.

While the book is available only in Italian, the documentary film aims for a global audience, with subtitles in six languages and yet-to-be-announced theatrical releases worldwide. The Vatican also approved plans to submit the film for the Academy Awards’ consideration for 2018.

Like the book, the film presents “the ideal art gallery” of Pope Francis, offering stunning visuals of selected masterpieces in the Vatican’s collections to colourfully illustrate the pope’s vision for art.

Using high-resolution 4K cinematography and state-of-the-art drones, filmmakers provide pano-



CNS/Vatican Museums

A BEAUTIFUL MODEL — “Belvedere Torso,” a broken marble figure from around the time of Christ: Michelangelo refused a papal request to “repair” it, believing it beautiful enough to be a model for many Sistine Chapel figures.

ramic bird’s-eye views of St. Peter’s Square, the basilica and Vatican Gardens, and close-up details of hard-to-see pieces like the hieroglyphics on the 25-metres tall Egyptian obelisk in St. Peter’s Square and the Sistine Chapel’s frescoed ceiling.

The images are layered with insight from Lupi, explanations of the artwork by Sandro Barbagallo, curator of historical collections at the Vatican Museums, and snippets of Pope Francis speaking about the culture of waste and how art and evangelization exalt the beauty of God’s creation and seek to recover what others have thrown away.

For example, one of the 11 works chosen as exemplifying Pope Francis’ “gospel of art” is the “Belvedere Torso,” from around the time when Christ lived. The contorted and damaged marble figure is missing arms, head and lower legs, which prompted Pope Julius II to ask Michelangelo to fix it.

But Michelangelo was so taken by its beauty, he dared not touch it, making it, instead, his model for the Sibyls in the Sistine Chapel, Barbagallo said in the film’s narration. Many other art-

ists saw beauty in this nude’s brokenness, too, and Auguste Rodin’s “The Thinker” was “inspired by this rejected piece of marble,” the curator said.

“The artist is a witness of the invisible,” Pope Francis says in the film’s narration, “and works of art are the clearest proof that the incarnation is possible.” Which is why, the pope says, artists can counteract today’s throwaway culture and evangelize, because art reveals “what cannot be seen; for some it’s an illusion. Instead it is hope which we all can believe in.”

“Pope Francis thinks like an artist, without a doubt,” Argentine sculptor Alejandro Marmo told Catholic News Service at the documentary’s debut at the Vatican Museums in late June.

The same way artists find beauty in and shape the materials right there before them, Pope Francis welcomes and gives form or direction to the malleable heart in his midst, he said. It’s a hands-on, artist’s approach in offering pastoral care, he said.

“He combines intelligence, humility, human labour and his closeness to people who have no power. For me, this is the way to create real beauty,” said Marmo, who got to know the pope when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires.

Then-Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio and Marmo — at the time a troubled and disgruntled young man — found they were both alarmed by the culture of waste and hopelessness in their city, which was facing severe economic and social crises, Marmo has said.

Marmo approached other church leaders with a desire to use art as a

way to have a positive impact on people and society, but Cardinal Bergoglio “was the first bishop who listened” to his angry and “abstract” rantings, Marmo told CNS.

While church leaders are usually very well-educated and cultured, “to speak with an artist, listen to his ideas is difficult, and I believe that this was what was so important for me, because he opened up the spiritual world for me,” Marmo said. He said the cardinal showed him that Jesus — broken and discarded — was present in the real world, “in the peripheries.”

The pope took Marmo, also a son of immigrants, to the outskirts where art usually has no place, and told him to create a “bridge” and dialogue with the people there. Marmo soon began the kind of initiatives he still runs today, involving young people discarded by society

to sort through and use materials thrown away by the economy and then to breathe new life into both.

After the cardinal was elected pope, he and Marmo kept in touch, with Marmo creating a crucified “Christ the Worker” and “Our Lady of Lujan” for the pope. Now in the Vatican Gardens, the two pieces were built with scrap metal culled from junk piles at the papal summer villa and farm in Castel Gandolfo.

“My testimony is a young man who once spoke with his bishop, he listened to him and he healed him of a disease called sadness, of being absent in life, of missing a spiritual life,” Marmo said.

“I believe this is the art of a bishop. Because a bishop’s art can’t be seen in an office. You see it out there,” he said, pointing to the peripheries.



CNS/L’Osservatore Romano via Catholic Press

A CHURCH FOR THE POOR — A white 1984 Renault that Rev. Renzo Zocca donated to Pope Francis in 2013 highlights the importance of “a poor church for the poor.” The Italian priest put more than 289,000 kilometres on the car, ministering to drug addicts and the poor. Pope Francis told the priest he had the same make and model when he worked in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and it “never let him down.”



CNS/Vatican Museums

ART AT THE PERIPHERIES — Argentine sculptor Alejandro Marmo’s “Our Lady of Lujan” is made out of metal abandoned near closed-down factories. Then-Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio of Buenos Aires advised Marmo to take art to “the peripheries” to help give new life to the people there, the same way he gave new life to discarded materials.

Books

Fable spans 80 years and captures the heart of sacrifice

BLACK BOTTLE MAN: A Fable by Craig Russell. Great Plains Publications, Winnipeg (<http://www.great-plains.mb.ca/buy-books/black-bottle-man/>). Reviewed by Chantelle Anderson, St. John Community School, Prince Albert. This was originally written for the Saskatchewan School Library Association and is reprinted with permission.

What would you be willing to sacrifice for the thing you wanted beyond imagination? Would you sell your soul to the devil himself? If you do, how is that debt repaid? These are the questions surrounding the book *Black Bottle Man: A Fable* by Craig Russell. A story that spans over 80 years and captures the heart of sacrifice; what people are willing to sacrifice for their deepest desire, for their family, for love, for survival.

Three Farms is located in the dustbowl of the 1920s. Three couples; two brothers along with their sister and spouses struggle to make ends meet, but happily live and work together. Children would be a welcome addition, but Rembrandt is the only child. His father’s brother, Uncle Thompson and wife Emma, and his father’s sister, Aunt Annie and husband Billy, have tried unsuccessfully for years to have children. In a desperate attempt to gain what they want most, Rembrandt’s two aunts force a deal to be made with the Black Bottle Man for a magic bottle. This breaks the family apart and forces Rembrandt, his pa and Uncle Thompson, to leave Three Farms and set off on a journey for their souls. Move every 12 days or be taken, find a champion to face the devil, and be saved.

The story weaves together through time, back and forth between present (2007) and past. Russell paints

a perfect picture of what life is like mainly in the 1920s and 30s both on the farm and on the road as the three of them move from place to place every 12 days to save their family from the Black Bottle Man.

As people struggled to make a living after the Great War and during the Depression, moving from place to place to find work, “buying a miracle,” and the power of prayer become important survival tools. Russell works those creatively, drawing the reader into the setting and crux of the story. The struggle against the times, good vs. evil and even the “coming of age” of a boy, are intertwined wonderfully to keep the reader engaged and entertained.

There is a lesson in all of this; after all, it is a fable and comes together quite craftily at the end. The novel was the Gold Medal winner of the 2011 Moonbeam Awards, and finalist in several other literary awards. It is, in my opinion, geared perhaps toward high school-aged young adults due to the complexity and maturity of the story. The length is perfect as the description and story is interesting and appealing to that age group.

Growing up on the prairies, much like the author, who is from Manitoba, helps me identify with and have a deeper appreciation of this story, its backdrop, and the lessons learned.

Vacation time means play time, especially for adults

The following editorial, titled “Vacation time” by Rev. Andrew Britz, OSB, was published in the July 19, 2000, issue of the *Prairie Messenger* and is included in Chapter 4: *The Human Struggle*, from *Rule of Faith: as we worship, so we believe, so we live*.

Many of us are foolish enough to believe we don’t need a vacation. Only the immature, we tell ourselves, need to get away. If we are truly altruistic, we proclaim self-congratulatingly, we can continue unabated in building up the kingdom given us in Jesus Christ — a Jesus, we conveniently forget, who knew how to play and party.

Yes, the Gospels tell us that Jesus was often invited to parties. That likely would never have happened had the Lord had a reputation of being a sourpuss who took his work too seriously and thus hindered party-goers from enjoying themselves.

Those of us who are too important to take time off tend to suffocate those around us as we heroically strive to prove that we are above needing a holiday.

Pope John Paul II often broke the established papal tradition. For instance, it’s hard to imagine a Pius XII or a Paul VI taking a holiday. Not so John Paul II! Throughout his pontificate he has taken holidays — usually to commune with nature. Most of his holidays have been a couple of weeks in the mountains, but he has also taken off time to go boating in Poland. While in Canada he took time off to wander alone in the forest.

Holidays are a great time to catch up on the playing we miss in our busy-ness. Play is not only for the young. Everyone must play;

the child within each of us must never be allowed to die.

Jesuit Father Karl Rahner, almost universally recognized as the best theologian at the Second Vatican Council and during the critically important post-conciliar period, “took time off” from studying traditional holy matters to write a special treatise on play.

He taught that if we remember to play as children do, as the child in us would suggest, our play will bind us together in community. Play unites the skilled and the not-so-skilled, the younger and the older, the extroverts and the introverts. In a word, it bypasses all the things adults deem important.

But play also insists on exposing something we adults often try desperately to hide. Rahner believed play is essential in exercising us for death. Play pushes us to the limits — with the distinct possibility that we will come out the loser.

Only adults who have lost the art of playing would try to teach peewees that it is great to win 17 to one. If children organize their playing, they make the sides as equal as possible.

Vacation time frees us from our bondage to usefulness, the notion that we have value only when we are doing something productive. God has planted the child within each of us precisely so we can have the wisdom to play, to be at



Maureen Weber

VACATION TIME — Holidays are a great time to catch up on the playing we miss in our busy lives. And play is not only for the young — the child within each of us must never be allowed to die.

times perfectly useless.

Such wisdom concerning play, in fact, underpins the whole of creation. In Proverbs, Wisdom declares lightheartedly about the creative process: “I was beside the master craftsman, a daily delight for him, ever at play in his presence, at play everywhere in the world, delighting in the human race” (Prv 8:30-31).

Many parents are not wise enough to play with their children. Grandparents more often are. It is not so much that grandparents suddenly have time on their hands. It is

more a matter of gaining wisdom, that precious wisdom that comes only with age, that enables grandparents to do what they failed to do as parents, to play with the younger members of their extended family.

O, the joy of being perfectly useless! One is reminded of the press conference René Levesque called after he had resigned as leader of the Parti Québécois. He was asked if the party would survive without

him. With that mischievous twinkle in his eye for which he was famous Levesque gave his answer. He said he was not sure — but there was one thing about which he was certain: On the way to the press conference, he said, he passed by a cemetery filled with irreplaceable people.

Such is the wisdom of those who know how to play, who know how to smother their pride and take a vacation!

Is the Catholic Church a capsizing ship?

By Chris Lowney
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Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI recently likened the Catholic Church to a capsizing ship.

Benedict’s use of the phrase came in an elegant tribute to Cardinal Joachim Meisner of Germany, who died recently. In it, Benedict praised Meisner’s faith and “conviction, that the Lord does not abandon his church, even when sometimes the boat has taken on so much water as to be on the verge of capsizing.”

Conservatives in Catholic cyberspace jumped all over that phrase, seeing it as Benedict’s coded critique of Pope Francis. After all, Meisner and others had cast doubts on the theological soundness of Pope Francis’ recent apostolic exhortation, “*Amoris Laetitia*,” especially its call for more robust engagement with divorced and remarried Catholics. Benedict must be agreeing! Francis is the misguided captain who is capsizing the ship!

Well, Benedict’s closest confidant, Archbishop Georg Gänswein,

immediately debunked that sinister interpretation as a “fantasy” being peddled by “stupid people.” He should know what Benedict intended: Benedict had entrusted the letter to him.

But if the faux controversy arises from nonsense, it nonetheless illustrates a very real problem that is hobbling the Catholic Church.

Yes, the Catholic ship is taking on water, as Benedict put it. Our challenges include declining participation in the sacraments, meagre engagement with young adults, clergy shortages in the developed world, and trouble conveying our message convincingly to a secular, relativistic modern world.

Gänswein recently cited Benedict as being worried that “the substance of the faith is about to crumble, above all in his homeland.” And Pope John Paul II, decades ago, proclaimed the “urgency” of finding new ways to reach out to the modern world.

Well, every modern institution faces crises in this complex, chaotic century. What differentiates great organizations is whether and how they react, specifically their ability to galvanize a robust, united response to their challenges. Faced with urgent crises, healthy organizations rally together to save the institution they love. Unhealthy organizations play the blame game.

I lived through all that as a longtime managing director in a global investment bank that was regularly racked by tumultuous change. Crises often erupted, and our first impulse was to pillory

scapegoats and attack rivals.

But in time, we invariably realized that our circular firing squad was solving nothing and weakening our collective ability to respond. Meanwhile, our collective house was catching on fire (or, to use Benedict’s image, our ship was taking on water).

Rallying together to fortify our ship became more important than tarring internal rivals. Urgency was key, as were creative solutions to new kinds of problems.

We understood that we would have to enlist colleagues further down the ranks, apprise them frankly of our challenges and quash their own blame-game tendencies: Part of any leader’s job is to lift subordinates above internecine disputes by articulating some compelling strategy that all can embrace and feel part of.

Unfortunately, that isn’t happening in the Catholic Church. The recent Benedict contretemps is not an exception but part of a long-standing, destructive pattern.

Indeed, Catholics have by now settled into their own little progressive and conservative tribes, each with their own favourite bishops, websites, religious orders, periodicals and litmus test issues.

It feels great to be able to scratch one’s ideological itch, but that hasn’t solved any of the church challenges enumerated above. Rather, those problems have continued to fester, now for decades. It’s time for us to wake up, and grow up, and to begin revitalizing the church we love.

Love is the central theme of Harry Potter series

Continued from page 10

comes supremely important,” Reiser said. “The spiritual exercises really work with imagination over and over again.”

Vanessa Zoltan is a co-host of the podcast “Harry Potter and the Sacred Text” as well as a research assistant at Harvard Divinity School. Her podcast claims the slogan, “Reading something you love as if it were sacred,” which characterizes her entire approach to the text of Harry Potter.

“Harry Potter seems to be unique in its ability to be treated as something sacred,” Zoltan said.

Her approach begins with the comfort that readers seem to find within in the series.

“We hear from a lot of listeners who for whatever reason, when going through a hard time, turn to the Harry Potter books,” Zoltan said. “The fact that the books are so popular, and so ubiquitous, is what really creates a sense of home.”

Zoltan points out the vastness of the series’ popularity. The numerous theme parks and multimedia expansions of the brand, allude to somewhat of a “churchlike” experience because of the pilgrimage of sorts that readers can undergo to further engage with the novels.

In the podcast, Zoltan and the other co-hosts use the traditional religious Scripture practices as a new way of engaging with the texts, one of which is “*lectio divina*,” a Benedictine approach to Scripture that includes steps of prayer and meditation as part of the reading.

“The idea is that it is a reading

practice that is supposed to bring you closer to God,” Zoltan said. “We are expanding upon an already beautiful practice.”

Sister Rose Pacatte, a Daughter of St. Paul, is the founding director of the Pauline Center for Media Studies, which aims to teach and train adults and catechists to engage with the media. She also is a movie reviewer for the *National Catholic Reporter* and *St. Anthony Messenger*.

Pacatte told CNS in an interview July 11 the story of some sisters in Boston who would pool their monthly “enrichment allowance” to buy the new Harry Potter books the night they each came out in the early 2000s.

“They would line up at midnight when the book would come out, and then they would draw straws to see who got the book first, and then they would take it and read it straight through and pass it on to the next sister,” Pacatte said. “And this went book, after book, after book. That’s how devoted they were, and still are, to the Harry Potter phenomenon.”

Pacatte draws upon the central theme of love within the series.

“The whole idea of love is a self-sacrificing concept,” Pacatte said. “Dumbledore says to Harry at one point, ‘Pity those who live without love.’”

Regarding controversy over the books’ subject matter, Sister Pacatte finds it “dissipated.”

“As far as the negative stuff goes, it seems to have died down,” Sister Pacatte said. “I haven’t heard of any witches or anything else arising in the name of Harry Potter.”

Chris Lowney is a lay Catholic author, speaker and leadership consultant who chairs the board of Catholic Health Initiatives, a health care/hospital system. An alumnus of Regis Jesuit High School in Manhattan, he is also a former managing director of JP Morgan. He is author of “Everyone Leads: How to Revitalize the Catholic Church.”

Developing sea legs helps us walk ahead in trust



In today's first reading we hear about the depth of encounter with God by Elijah. After defeating 850 false prophets of Baal, Elijah is on the run. Jezebel is after him to kill him. The land is evil, the people are going the wrong way, and Elijah runs to Mount Horeb (Mount Sinai) where he just wants to die.

In praying through his despair, Elijah may have hoped for a sign of power from God. But instead he heard God speak, not in a mighty wind, but in a gentle breeze. The gentleness of God's touch is found in the quiet and deep prayer of Elijah, right at the crucial time when he is at the end of his rope.

St. Paul too finds a moment to reflect on his own project of evangelization. He prays a prayer of mourning over his own people who refuse to receive his message. Much like Jesus weeping over Jerusalem, Paul is crying deeply for his people.

Leonard Cohen's last CD before he died has a powerful line in a piece called "It Seemed The Better Way":

Williston gives parish missions and is a former missionary with the Redemptorists. He is also a songwriter and recording artist.

*I wonder what it was, I wonder what it meant,
At first he touched on love, but then he touched on death
I better hold my tongue, I better take my place
Lift this glass of blood, try to say the grace.*

It is inevitable that if we love someone, we may be asked to suffer for them. Their journey through the crosses in their life becomes our journey as well. It's not easy. The pain is at times unresolvable. All we can do is love them, be with them, listen to their anguish and stay with them. Ask any parent of an adult child who is going through trials and difficulties. There is such a feeling of powerlessness, and a pain we have for the one in trouble.

In his book *A Cry For Mercy*, Rev. Henri Nouwen states: "We do this even when we can do nothing to change the situation. This is the crux of our challenge. We do profess that caring is first of all about presence to a beloved brother or sister who at this moment feels powerless. Right here, we accept in ourselves that we are not first of all someone who takes pain away, but rather someone who is willing to share it."

Nineteenth Sunday
in Ordinary Time
August 13, 2017

1 Kings 19:19a, 11-13a
Psalm 85
Romans 9:1-5
Matthew 14:22-33

I often think of Mary standing at the foot of the cross. She was powerless to stop the suffering, but unlike the disciples of Jesus, she did not run away and hide. Her standing there was her action. The fixing of her eyes of love on her son was all she could do and that she did. She shared in the cross of Jesus from the strength of her love for him.

Today's Gospel is all about faith amidst chaos. Jesus has just fed the 5,000 when, like Elijah, he climbs a mountain alone to pray. His disciples are out on a boat when Jesus comes walking on the water toward them. Just like many of

his post-resurrection appearances, the disciples mistake him for a ghost. Upon recognition, Peter ventures out to meet him. While he is walking on the water, a wind comes up that frightens Peter and he begins to sink. The Lord picks him up and they return to the safety of the boat. Peter is gently chided by Jesus for his lack of faith.

Doubt, insecurity, and fear are the things that weigh us down when we ride on the waters of life. The biblical analogy of turbulent seas is most often a reflection of the spiritual turbulence and chaos in our own lives. With a little faith, we are able to rise above the tumult, but it seems to only take a small setback to cause us panic and we begin to sink into our fears and insecurities.

It's time like this that we need the helping hand of Jesus. We need his strong presence in our life to buoy us up and keep us "walking on the water." He can see us to safety. He can still the rocky seas in our life. As the old 60s song goes: Put your hand in the hand of the man who stilled the waters. . . . *Take a look at yourself and you can look at others differently, by putting your hand in the hand of the man from Galilee.*

Here are four people of deep prayer and deep suffering: Elijah, Paul, Mary and Jesus. Each are shining examples of rising above the chaos of the moment and willing guides for us over the choppy waters of our life. We then are asked to do the same for others. We may not be able to rescue them, but we can accompany them, cry with them, laugh with them and be present in their times of trial.

On a spiritual and heart level, you might want to call this "developing your sea legs!" Those are the ones that keep us putting one foot in front of the other with a prayer of trust that God will see us through. Our "sea legs" make us move when we'd rather stay mired in our own despair.

There will be times when all we can do is trust and move ahead with life. The boat is out there somewhere and Jesus will take us to its safety.

There is a Gospel challenge to enjoy the pleasures life has to offer



Joy is an infallible indication of God's presence, just as the cross is an infallible indication of Christian discipleship. What a paradox! And Jesus is to blame.

When we look at the Gospels we see that Jesus shocked his contemporaries in seemingly opposite ways. On the one hand, they saw in him a capacity to renounce the

things of this world and give up his life in love and self-sacrifice in a way that seemed to them almost inhuman and not something that a normal, full-blooded person should be expected to do. Moreover, he challenged them to do the same: *Take up your cross daily! If you seek your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life, you will find it.*

On the other hand, perhaps more surprisingly since we tend to identify serious religion with self-sacrifice, Jesus challenged his contemporaries to more fully enjoy their lives, their health, their youth, their relationships, their meals, their wine drinking, and all the ordinary and deep pleasures of life. In fact, he scandalized them with his own capacity to enjoy pleasure.

We see, for example, a famous incident in the Gospels of a woman anointing Jesus' feet at a banquet. All four Gospel accounts of this emphasize a certain raw character to the event that disturbs any easy religious propriety. The woman breaks an expensive jar of costly perfume on his feet, lets the aroma permeate the whole room, lets her tears fall on his feet, and then dries them with her hair. All that lavishness, extravagance,

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intimation of sexuality, and raw human affection is understandably unsettling for most everyone in the room, except for Jesus. He's drinking it in, unapologetically, without "dis-ease," without any guilt or neurosis: *Leave her alone, he says, she has just anointed me for my impending death.* In essence, Jesus is saying: *When I come to die, I will be more ready because tonight, in receiving this lavish affection, I'm truly alive and hence more ready to die.*

In essence, this is the lesson for us: Don't feel guilty about enjoying life's pleasures. The best way to thank a gift-giver is to thoroughly enjoy the gift. We are not put on this earth primarily as a test, to renounce the good things of creation so as to win joy in the life hereafter. Like any loving parent, God wants God's children to flourish in their lives, to make the sacrifices necessary to be responsible and altruistic, but not to see those sacrifices themselves as the real reason for being given life.

Jesus highlights this further when he's asked why his disciples don't fast, whereas the disciples of John the Baptist do fast. His answer: *Why should they fast? The bridegroom is still with them. Someday the bridegroom will be taken away and they will have lots of time to fast.* His counsel here speaks in a double way: More obviously, the bridegroom refers to his own physical presence here on earth, which, at a point, will end. But this also has a second meaning: The bridegroom refers to the season of health, youth, joy, friendship, and love in our lives. We need to enjoy those things because, all too soon, accidents, ill health, cold, lonely seasons, and death, will deprive us of them. We may not let the inevitable prospect of cold, lonely seasons,


diminishment, ill health, and death, deprive us of fully enjoying the legitimate joys that life offers.

This challenge, I believe, has not been sufficiently preached from our pulpits, taught in our churches, or had a proper place in our spirituality. When have you last heard a homily or sermon challenging you, on the basis of the Gospels, to enjoy your life more? When have you last heard a preacher asking, in Jesus' name: Are you enjoying your health, your youth, your life, your meals, your wine drinking, sufficiently?

Granted that this challenge, which seems to go against the conventional spiritual grain, can sound like an invitation to hedonism, mindless pleasure, excessive personal comfort, and a spiritual flabbiness that can be the antithesis of the Christian message at whose centre lies the cross and self-renunciation. Admittedly there's that risk, but the opposite danger also looms, namely, a bitter, unhealthy stoic life. If the challenge to enjoy life is done wrongly, without the necessary accompanying asceticism and self-renunciation, it carries those dangers; but, as we see from the life of Jesus, self-renunciation and the capacity to thoroughly enjoy the gift of life, love, and creation are integrally connected. They depend on each other.

Excess and hedonism are, in the end, a bad functional substitute for genuine enjoyment. Genuine enjoyment, as Jesus taught and embodied, is integrally tied to renunciation and self-sacrifice.

And so, it's only when we can give our lives away in self-renunciation that we can thoroughly enjoy the pleasures of this life, just as it is only when we can genuinely enjoy the legitimate pleasures of this life that we can give our lives away in self-sacrifice.



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Consider the privilege of bearing burdens

By Edna Froese

Such a triumvirate of *memento mori* that was, all in the space of two months or less: the first the announcement of the dreaded Diagnosis (two of them, in fact, one in my husband's family and one in mine); then the request to serve as Power of Attorney and Personal Agent (albeit the requester was still in excellent health); and somewhere in-between, a book fell off the shelf into my hands — *The Good Funeral* by Thomas Long, theologian, and Thomas Lynch, funeral director. Clearly, I needed to pay attention.

Given my age and my status as the youngest in my family, I was not surprised that I should be reminded so directly and repeatedly that we are not immortal. That comes with the territory of post-retirement years. What did surprise, and continues to surprise, was a startling reversal of one of my assumptions, thanks to *The Good Funeral*. The book has much wisdom to offer on all kinds of matters, particularly the North American evasion of all reminders of death and the strange banishment of the body from all public displays of grief, limited as those displays now are. That cultural analysis I had encountered before. But I had never seriously questioned the commonly used phrase "I don't want to be a burden." Indeed, I had said it myself, if not so bluntly.

An understandable sentiment, surely an appropriate recognition of our dignity. Being a burden means becoming dependent on

Froese taught English literature at St. Thomas More College in Saskatoon for many years until her retirement. She currently works part time as academic editor while relishing the freedom to read and write for pleasure.



Janice Weber

ON BEARING BURDENS — "Just as our children were once a burden to us in the sense of needing to be fed and carried and changed and trained, so too will those children carry the weight of others as they grow older, first their own children and then their parents. . . . Of such is humanity."

others who, presumably, have better things to do with their time than care for us. The agony of giving up a driver's licence, for example, lies in the coming horror of having to ask others for rides, to the grocery store, to church, to a friend's home, unless public transit is readily available. And if physical mobility has become a challenge, then even public transit ceases to be an option. Any and all disabilities, including mental deterioration, can turn us into a "burden."

How have we come to use such language? "Burden," as a friend pointed out to me, "is such a negative word. It gathers in weight and awkwardness and struggle, all of it unwanted." Human "burdens" claim time and emotional energy — to do errands, to help with chores, to listen, make appointments, assume legal responsibilities, change bed linen. There's no

assigned contract limit for such a commitment to bear the weight of another's physical weaknesses and hold in one's mind and heart an immeasurable emotional heaviness. Patience is required, abundant patience, which is another way of saying that one's own interests and choices must be set aside.

Being afraid of making such claims on others seems understandable, yet shouldn't we think more clearly about the very nature of our relationships before insisting, instinctively, that we will not be a burden to anyone? What virulent strain of individualism has persuaded us that we can get through life without being a burden or without carrying a burden?

But then, I hadn't even questioned the concept of burdensomeness until I read *The Good Funeral*. Thomas Lynch caught my attention with his musings

about how the first human death might have been experienced: suppose the woman wakes up to find her partner unresponsive, cold — what is she to do? In a warm climate, she will soon know that the unresponsive one will have to be removed or she will have to find another cave for herself. Whether she elects to leave the body to the animals and birds or to bury it or to push it off a cliff into the sea, she will have to accompany the body to its last resting place. As Lynch imagines it, "maybe she enlists the assistance of others of her kind in the performance of these duties who do their part sensing that they may need exactly this kind of help in the future" (57, italics mine). From then on, Lynch argues, human beings are human precisely in their ritual responses to death, rituals in which people, in a community, care for the griev-

ing ones and dispose of the body with due respect.

In his incisive rejection of the concept of preplanning funerals — to avoid "being a burden to your family" — Lynch points out a simple fact I hadn't considered carefully enough: just as our children were once a burden to us in the sense of needing to be fed and carried and changed and trained, etc., so too will those children carry the weight of others as they grow older, first their own children and then their parents. Quite apart from the parent-child relationship, human beings thrive only in community and that entails taking on some burdens for others and becoming a burden to others. Of such is humanity. To pretend that we can manage our affairs so precisely that we never need the help of anyone whom we haven't already paid, for professional help, is foolish, and deprives others of their turn to practice compassion, that most human of all qualities.

As I thought about my own experiences with elderly parents and parents-in-law, I recalled that the easiest carrying out of commitments with their emotional weight occurred when those receiving the assistance were willing and gracious. The more we protest that we don't want to be a burden, and stubbornly insist on struggling to maintain ourselves, the more difficult we make it for those who will inevitably have to provide assistance anyway. It's no use trying to deny others their chance to show tenderness and fulfil their calling as part of the human family. We are connected, whether we acknowledge that or not.

Isn't it time that we simply accepted the weight of being a human being? Then perhaps we can carry that weight with all the dignity that becomes those who stand a little lower than the angels, who, we are told, know nothing of the glory of bearing burdens.

Unfinished work: churches continue to advocate for refugee rights

Journey to Justice

Joe Gunn



Many congregations have helped refugees in the past year. Some Canadians think the job is done because tens of thousands of Syrians are settling in to new lives in Canada.

They couldn't be more wrong.

In July, the Canadian Council of Churches joined Amnesty International and the Canadian Council for Refugees in a court challenge to the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA), a deal which endangers the

lives of asylum-seekers (see story, PM, July 19). Under the STCA, a refugee who presents themselves at a Canada/U.S. border post, seeking entry to Canada, is denied access to the Canadian refugee system and immediately returned to the United States. The STCA has been a cause for the increase in irregular border crossings in places like Emmerson, Man. In winter 2017, refugees risked their lives to make secretive crossings to avoid border posts. These irregular crossings are more common as a direct result of President Donald Trump's anti-immigrant pronouncements.

Churches advocating for the rights of refugees is not new. Faith communities have lobbied to help refugees throughout Canadian history.

The Catholic Immigrant Society was founded in 1928 and headquartered in Winnipeg. In 1948, the Canadian Catholic Conference (of bishops, established in 1943) sent a Catholic priest to get refugees and war orphans out of post-war Europe. Catholics mobilized to welcome refugees who arrived in special movements from Hungary in the 1950s, Czechoslovakia in the 1960s, and even Uganda in the 1970s. Canada only ratified the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1969.

After the *coup d'état* by the bloody military regime of General Pinochet in Chile in 1973, national churches pressured the Liberal government to bring those in danger to Canada. Ottawa was loathe to accept people of the political left as refugees. Revs. Buddy Smith, SFM, and François Lapierre, PME (later to be named bishop of St. Hyacinthe), travelled to Santiago to facilitate selection of people imprisoned and tortured by the *junta*. In his history of Canadian refugee policy, Gerald Dirks lamented that time when "ideological considerations replaced racial criteria as a discriminatory factor

in determining Canada's refugee admissions policy."

The federal government released a contentious "Green Paper" on Canadian immigration policy in 1975. Refugees were seen as a burden, especially those who exhibited "novel and distinctive features" — i.e., not white. National churches worked together in the Inter-Church Project on Population to decry the fact that government "... examines what it calls the 'costs of more people,' their impact, but does not equally examine the costs to people of many current social disorders and their causes, and their impacts on people. It is as if we can somehow afford waste, profiteering, ruthless competition and self-seeking but cannot afford more people."

In March 1979, the Mennonites signed the first Master Agreement with Ottawa to facilitate the private sponsorship of refugees. A new book, *Running on Empty: Canada and the Indo-Chinese Refugees*, written by former immigration department bureaucrats, recounts how, by the end of August, 28 national church organizations and Catholic or Anglican dioceses

had signed master agreements. By March 1981, this total had reached 47. Many continue today.

The Catholic bishops released pastoral letters on refugee matters in 2006 ("Canada Must Demonstrate Every Effort to Welcome Immigrants and Refugees with Dignity") and October 2015 ("I Was A Stranger and You Welcomed Me"). And a resolution passed at the bishops' 2015 plenary assembly took up Pope Francis' call to assist refugees by asking each parish to sponsor a family.

The Council of Churches' decision to challenge the STCA required all 25 member churches to agree on this course of action. One small church originally opposed the consensus, which held up the council's ability to proceed. This occurrence exhibits a structural weakness in the *modus operandi* of the "forum model." To push ahead, the council's Commission on Justice and Peace met and fully supported participation in the court action. Finally, the Governing Board meeting in Ottawa at the end of May was able to concur.

— WAIT TIMES, page 17

Gunn is the Ottawa-based executive director of Citizens for Public Justice, www.cpj.ca, a member-driven, faith-based public policy organization focused on ecological justice, refugee rights and poverty elimination.

Tending to the wounds of a broken heart

Barefoot and Preaching

Leah Perrault



Wounds are strange teachers. Ten days ago I sliced through the tip of my left ring finger trying to pry leftover ice cream cake off the cardboard. (Don't worry; I assured my inquiring brother-in-law that the cake was unharmed.) The sting was worse than the blood. And the days of tending to the sensitive finger were worse than the stitches.

Watching wounds heal is a sort of miracle. A clean cut with three neat stitches, wrapped carefully. Each unwinding revealed a change. Skin resisting being held together. The formation of a scab. Body and stitches working healing together. The wound pulling away from the knots and lines. Stitches laying on the table and scales of scaly skin flaking away to reveal tender new skin holding a scar. It all looks amazing — if messy — and it feels weird and unfamiliar.

I wish it were so easy to watch the healing of grieving heart wounds. I can feel the pulls of the necessary staples and stitches, hasty explanations and supports put in place to keep the heart beating through the breaking. Memories and absence tug on a damaged

heart that is tender with the work of healing. The pulls measure how far I have come, and how far I have left to go. The finger makes it easier to see what is happening beyond the reach of my eyes.

All the understanding of what led to Abbie's death will not restore her to her life here with us. The beauty of the celebrations, as much as they sewed stitches, pales in comparison to sharing laughter with her. Meals and laundry help made it possible for me to breathe for two whole months. Though help continues in different forms, I am breathing on my own more easily now. The stitches and staples are gradually giving way to reconnected muscle, wounds bruised and aching, but healing.

And still I am surprised how often a physical movement takes my breath away or a memory makes my chest ache. Our family went to the lake for the long weekend, an annual tradition, and I sat teetering on the edge of making new memories and resisting the urge to run away. I want to ignore the grief. Changing the dressing exposes the wounds, and I see death again. It is painful to witness the healing; moving forward takes me further away from the last time I got to hug her and hear her voice.

Broken hearts, unlike fingers, are stitched up with our emotions,

Perrault is a wife and mom, a grateful employee of Emmanuel Care, and a speaker, writer and consultant at www.leahperrault.com



Leah Perrault

in what we hoped for and what is lost. But if I didn't go for stitches, change the dressing, and keep the finger clean, the finger would rot and fester, eating up a lot more of me than a fingertip and a slower typing speed. Tending to the broken heart also requires time and effort. The grief is both easier to ignore, and harder to sit with.

My head knows that wounds move either toward healing and new life or toward destruction and death. I can feel myself sitting on the edge. Not choosing is a choice for decay. Moving on is not an option because the statement belittles the loss. Moving forward or back is before me. One of my favourite

passages in Deuteronomy, paraphrased: "I have set before you life and death. Choose life, so that you and your loved ones may live" (30:19). God has stitched my wounded heart in ways I will discover for the rest of my life. Do I want to tear them out and bleed, or will I learn from the scar?

I have been practising leaning into the memories that bring on tears. I am eating the crackers she left in my pantry the last time she came. When I get ready for the day, I wear her earrings — even when they feel a bit ridiculous. I am noticing when the stitches break, and feeling deeply the pangs of guilt that come with my heart getting stronger. Abbie has

whispered into my joy that she shares it with me still, even though I would rather a world with joy that has her beside me in the flesh.

Just days before I cut my finger, a friend sent me the most bewildering and beautiful drawing. It's an anatomical human heart sewn together with golden stitches, with flowers growing out of the veins and arteries. The picture deserves a perfect place to hang, but for three weeks it has been sitting right in the middle of the counter I cook on. I cannot bear to move the frame from the place I set it when I opened the box, ironically right beside the knife block. "*Beauty instead of ashes*," it whispers . . .

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Temple Mount conflict is complicated

By Mark Silk
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If you want to understand the Palestinian mini-uprising that has followed Israeli authorities' installation of metal detectors at entrances to the Temple Mount, you need only take a short walk west, to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The place where Jesus was supposedly laid to rest sets the rules for holy sites claimed by competing religious communities in Jerusalem's Old City.

Faced with competing claims by different Christian groups, Ottoman Sultan Abdülmecid I issued a decree in 1853 apportioning control over different parts of the church and its surroundings.

Under what's known as the "Status Quo," the Greek Orthodox have the biggest share, with substantial portions also placed under the custody of the Roman Catholics and Armenian Christians. Lesser zones of control belong to the Coptic, Ethiopian, and Syriac Orthodox.

The emblem of the Status Quo is the so-called "Immovable Ladder," which has stood above the facade of the church since the middle of the 18th century. The understanding is that no representative of one of the six controlling

religious groups can move, rearrange or alter any piece of property without the consent of the other five.

In the 21st century alone, violence has broken out several times: when a Coptic monk moved his chair from the agreed spot into the shade (2002); when a door to the Franciscan chapel was left open (2004); when a Greek monk was ejected from the building by a rival faction (2008); when a Greek monk occupied what Armenian monks consider their space during the Feast of the Cross (2008).

You get the picture.

Like the Holy Sepulchre, the Temple Mount — known to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary — is governed under a complicated Status Quo of its own. When the metal detectors were set up in response to three Israeli Arabs gunning down two Israeli Druze guards outside the Al-Aqsa Mosque, that was considered a violation. Ergo, violence.

Of course, there are many holy sites in the world whose violation causes devotees to rise up in anger. But only a few are claimed by rival religious communities.

The Old City of Jerusalem is dominated by such sites. If you want another example, think of the Western Wall, where violence reg-

ularly breaks out between ultra-Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews. Just last month, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reneged on an agreement to change its Status Quo by providing a space for mixed-gender prayer.

And that's not to mention the Jewish activists who are agitating for a new Temple to be built on the Temple Mount itself.

So on July 24 Netanyahu, with an assist from King Abdullah II of Jordan, ordered the metal detectors removed. This has not mollified the other side, however.

Two days later, a senior Muslim cleric said that "mass prayer protests would continue until the gates of the compound are opened, metal railings and an iron bridge removed and newly installed cameras taken down," according to The New York Times.

"What's next?" asked longtime Jerusalemite Guy Stroumsa, emeritus professor of comparative religion at the Hebrew University. "There are people on both sides who won't stop before a full-fledged religious war starts."

A full-fledged religious war is not what most Israelis and Palestinians want. But given the rising religious passions on both sides, restoring the Status Quo is going to be no picnic.

From conflict to communion: a fall commemoration

Challenge of Ecumenism

Thomas Ryan, CSP



We are just a month away from the fall season in which the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation will be commemorated on Oct. 31. Each earlier centenary commemoration has been shaped by church and political agendas that reflected the cultural and political context of the time.

In 1617, for example, the first observance of the 100th anniversary of Martin Luther's posting of the 95 theses helped to stabilize and revitalize the common Refor-

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mation identity of Lutherans and Reformed at their joint commemorations. Lutherans and Reformed (followers of John Calvin) demonstrated their solidarity through strong polemics against the Roman Catholic Church. And three centuries later, in 1917 amidst the First World War, Luther was portrayed as a German national hero.

Like earlier centenary commemorations, the year 2017 will have its own unique context as well. It will mark 50 years of Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue and thus be the first commemoration of the Reformation taking place in an ecumenical age in which Lutherans and Catholics have been able to reinterpret their theological traditions and prac-

tices, recognizing the influences they have had on each other.

Because past commemorations were mostly oppositional, they often intensified the conflict between the churches and even at times led to open hostility.

In the mid-16th century, the context was one of hardening mutual alienation. At the end of the 20th century, by contrast, it was one of increasing mutual rapprochement, powerfully added by an ecumenically committed pope and a Lutheran commitment to wide-ranging ecumenical dialogue, not only with Catholics but also with Anglicans, Reformed, and Methodists.

In our time, the international Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity has produced its latest report, titled: "From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017." The intertwining of these two anniversaries — that of the Reformation and that of the dialogue commission's healing work — appropriately invites us to plan some joint events. This is the first

centenary commemoration of the Reformation marked by a real desire on both sides to come together for its observance. And toward that end, some excellent materials have been provided for our reading, discussion, and prayer.

For reading is the International Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity's latest report, "From Conflict to Communion." It is the first attempt by both dialogue partners to describe together at an international level the history of the Reformation and its intentions.

As the Commission says in the Foreword, "the text describes a way 'from conflict to communion' — a way whose goal we have not yet reached. . . . We invite all Christians to study the report of our Commission both open-mindedly and critically, and to come with us along the way to a deeper communion of all Christians."

To promote study and discussion, "A Study Guide: From Conflict to Communion" has been written by a committee of the Diocese of Pittsburgh and the Diocese of Greensburg, the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Pittsburgh, and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

The study guide is designed to increase mutual understanding between Catholics, Lutherans, and other Christians. It is a catalyst for healing and reconciliation both communally and individually. "The goal of our mutual commemoration," writes the committee, "must include remembering our history and continuing our movement toward the unity that Christ wills for his followers." It is distributed by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in booklet form and is also available online.

For prayer together, the Lutheran World Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, in co-operation with a group of noted theologians, have jointly developed a communal liturgical guide entitled "Common Prayer: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017."

Based on the study report "From Conflict to Communion,"

the prayer booklet is structured around the themes of thanksgiving, repentance, and commitment to common witness. It includes materials that can be adapted to local liturgical and musical traditions of churches in the two Christian traditions. The booklet stresses the shared beliefs between Roman Catholicism's 1.2 billion members and the 75 million Lutherans around the world. It suggests that the ecumenical services have two presiders, one

Reactions vary to denominational transition



Double Belonging

Rev. Marie-Louise Ternier

God is not afraid of new things! That is why he is continually surprising us, opening our hearts and guiding us in unexpected ways. He renews us: he constantly makes us "new." A Christian who lives the Gospel is "God's newness" in the church and in the world. How much God loves this "newness!"

(Pope Francis, homily, Oct. 19, 2014)

Just like those who shook their heads at the biblical Ruth as she made her uncommon choices, members of the abandoned faith community may well shake their heads also. Except, for some personal confidantes, few people were initially aware of the deep intrapsychic process I experienced in contemplating the denominational move. There is a time delay between the shifting of tectonic plates at the bottom of the soul's ocean, and the waves appearing on the surface of the water.

In my case, once the Anglican door opened both externally and internally, my mind and heart went "on retreat." I literally fell silent for six months (a small taste of Zechariah's silence during Elizabeth's pregnancy!) while I prayed and consulted trusted mentors. By the

time external signs of the move appeared, an extensive inner process of letting go and redefining had already been well underway.

As the beckoning to new life in another tradition grew stronger, a mental, emotional and spiritual reorientation gathered momentum. Sometimes a temporary living outside of any denomination occurs before a new denominational affiliation becomes possible, a liminal space of sorts to establish solid spiritual ground under one's feet outside of a denominational identification. Eventually a sustained and informed movement in mind-heart-spirit "toward" something new and full(er) replaces the focus of moving "away" from the old.

Once I fell into a heartfelt yes, inner peace, clarity and joy released new energy and courage for the task ahead. A heartfelt encounter with the risen Christ in the new liturgical and ecclesial context sealed my decision, after Mary Magdalene's example. Once Mary let go of how she knew Jesus on earth, her heart opened to welcoming the new risen Jesus as she exclaimed "I have seen the Lord" (Jn 20:18).

Those who have no personal experience of a crisis of meaning, and who have never had to question their denominational affiliation, may find it nigh impossible to understand another's need to move

to a different religious expression. Disbelief, judgment, denial and rejection may be heaped upon the one breaking denominational ranks. These feelings will be particularly strong in those with a denominational self-understanding of superiority with exclusive and absolute claims in faith and doctrine.

Others show support and understanding because they live their own struggles of faith vicariously through the departing person. They may doubt their own denominational affiliations, but are afraid or simply incapable of contemplating being elsewhere. One friend reduced contact because "Your denominational exploration is too close for comfort; you are raising all the questions I am trying hard to keep at bay so I can stay. I get very nervous every time I talk to you."

Finally, many genuinely understood, respected and supported my denominational move. Many of these were well-grounded and secure in their faith and denominational identity; some had experienced similar transitions with a heart that could appreciate a diversity of expressions with joy and peace. Such friends remain a vital source of affirmation and support, embodying the continuity between my past-present-future.

In order to express continuity in my spiritual and vocational pilgrimage, and before the formal reception into the Anglican Church took place, I marked the denominational transition through a creative liturgical ritual with elements from both Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions. It was an unforgettable event with numerous family members and friends from at least seven different Christian traditions present. This ecumenical celebration was not only a powerful sign and instrument of Christian unity, it also facilitated the notion that the past goes with us into the future as a valuable resource and a treasured legacy. For the past is never gone and life has only changed, not ended.



Brent Kostyniuk

TRANSFIGURATION — The transfiguration of Christ took the disciples totally by surprise, said Andrew Britz in a 1990 editorial. "The evangelists, in recounting the event, did not stress the apostles' surprise on witnessing the divinity of their Master. What flabbergasted Peter, James and John was the glory the Father had instilled in the human flesh of Christ. Jesus, in showing the disciples his true glory, revealed to them their own vocation, the weight of glory to which they were called. The great teachers in the early eastern tradition of the church went even further. They seldom failed to note that the glory seen in Christ's flesh was a sign of the true meaning of all creation. Christ was the pattern for all created things (see Col 1:15-16) and thus everything was meant to be a sacrament of God's presence." The Feast of the Transfiguration is Aug. 6. (Transfiguration window from St. Basil the Great Ukrainian Catholic Church in Edmonton.)

Catholic and one Lutheran, with readers from both churches.

What will congregations in your area do as this noteworthy anniversary approaches? The resources are literally available-to-hand. One can find and download all three of these resources by simply going online and typing in: "From Conflict to Communion."

Rev. Marie-Louise Ternier is now an Anglican deacon, serving the Anglican and Lutheran parishes in Watrous, Sask. In her spare time she serves on the programming team at Queen's House in Saskatoon. Marie-Louise is also a published author and spiritual director, retreat leader and conference speaker. This column is co-published with the Saskatchewan Anglican. Marie-Louise blogs at <http://graceatsixty.wordpress.com>

One’s past can be a continuing source of surprise

Around the Kitchen Table

Donald Ward



You reach a certain age and it’s natural to look back on your life and reflect on whether any of it’s been worthwhile at all, or if it’s all been “gossip and trickery,” as Norm Macdonald would say. Macdonald is a stand-up comedian whose Netflix special, *Hitler’s Dog, Gossip and Trickery* is profane but funny.

“What if you woke up one morning and realized you had been wrong about everything you’ve ever believed?” he asks.

I’ve had mornings like that: more than usual lately. I turned 65 in February, and I’m just coming to grips with the fact that I’m collecting Old Age Security and the Canada Pension — and I’m still not sure what I want to be when I grow up.

“The past is a foreign country,” wrote the British novelist L.P. Hartley; “they do things differently there.”

That may sound profound, but it contradicts my personal experience. My own past seems intimate and familiar, and it is a continuing source of surprise. It can be a dangerous place, too, though, with old wounds waiting to be opened, disappointments and broken hearts, promises yet to be kept and memories best left hidden.

The Swedish writer Henning Mankell was closer to the mark when he wrote, “History isn’t just something that’s behind us, it’s also something that follows us.”

Indeed, it followed me all the way from 1967 a few weeks ago. A friend happened to remark that he

remembered Canada’s centennial as if it were yesterday — all the preparations and the celebrations and the relentless political posturing. As for me, I have a particular reason to recall July 1, 1967.

It was a sunny afternoon, with a light breeze off the South Saskatchewan River. Saskatoon was celebrating in distant parks and grandstands, but a friend and I had chosen to take a quiet walk on the riverbank. A couple of men in a boat landed by the freeway bridge a few metres ahead of us. One of them, an older fellow missing several teeth, started to curse volubly. His attack was completely unprovoked. His language was crude and his imagery was savage, and he made it clear that he disapproved of me, my friend, and everything we stood for.

“What have you ever done for your country?” he demanded.

I had no answer for him; I was 15 years old. Eventually I invited him politely to descend to the eternal fires, and we walked on.

Within weeks my friend’s father had spirited his family away to the West Coast in an attempt at what Alcoholics Anonymous calls “the geographic cure” — the idea that you can fix things by moving away. Of course it doesn’t work. You take your troubles with you, and her father was soon drinking again. He died, tragically and unnecessarily, when someone who could have saved him from drowning chose not to.

My friend wrote a couple of weeks before Canada Day and

caught me up with her dysfunctional family. They have not turned out well. Her younger brother and sister had been planning to kill her for some reason; her older sister was drinking heavily and often not making sense; her mother, now 90, was descending into dementia, which at least meant that she was no longer abusive; and her uncle was continually having to bail her brother out of jail. The younger sister is hospitalized with bone cancer, but before that she had been promising to come for a visit and bring Viagra so she could continue to commit adultery with her sister’s husband.

You can’t make this stuff up.

Through it all, my friend has managed to make a life for herself. She owns a horse ranch with her estranged husband — she doesn’t divorce him for fear of losing half her property — and she has a lovely daughter (after having been assured by specialists that she would never be able to bear children). She has surrounded herself with animals — horses, dogs, cats, llamas and donkeys — and has grown comfortably con-

servative in her views.

The last line of her letter read: “I am always grateful for you and your family for taking me in and teaching me that there are good people in this world.”

My parents welcomed her because that’s the sort of thing they

did. “Be not neglectful of entertaining strangers,” wrote St. Paul, “for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

That’s the way I was raised, and it’s the way I have tried to live. It’s a small thing, perhaps, but it’s better than “gossip and trickery.”



Anne Wicks

ON HOLIDAYS — “In the name of God, stop a moment, cease your work, look around you.” — Leo Tolstoy. *The Prairie Messenger* is on vacation.

Caesar is a compelling character

Continued from page 9

chimps and viral outbreak deadly to humans portrayed in “Rise.” Through the magic of motion capture Andy Serkis again excels as Caesar, the wise leader of the ape colony, as they shelter in northern woods beside a great waterfall. (It looks like the Northwest Territories’ Virginia Falls on the Nahanni River, which I have paddled and portaged around. Much of the movie was shot in B.C.)

Caesar speaks perfect English, which the rest understand while communicating in subtitled grunts.

He has overcome a warlike rival, Koba, but now faces a hostile surviving paramilitary human force commanded by a fanatic American “Colonel” (a Kurtz-like Woody Harrelson, shaved head and all) and aided by rebel apes called “donkeys.” After a bloody skirmish Caesar releases several captured humans and offers peace. A betrayal later, the Colonel responds instead with a nighttime raid, killing Caesar’s wife and older son. The younger Cornelius is saved and sent with the main body of apes in search of safety and a new home. Caesar goes after his nemesis, accompanied by three others on horseback including the faithful orangutan, Maurice (Karin Konoval). Unexpected incidents result in the addition of two more travellers — a little mute girl (Amiah Miller, the only female human character) who will prove crucial to the end game, and a talking “Bad Ape” (Steve Zahn), a pint-sized former zoo chimpanzee who provides a comic touch to the grim events to come.

Coming upon the humans’ wintry encampment, the party of five is horrified to discover that the other apes have been attacked, imprisoned, chained and enslaved, forced into building a wall of rock. A few have been tied to wooden Xs like a crucifixion. When Caesar is captured and subjected to such treatment he becomes an almost Christ-like figure. It turns out that the wall is actually a defence against an invasion by other humans. The homicidal Colonel fears them and infection at any cost.

The story builds to an epic confrontation of wills and conflagration in which we find ourselves sympathizing with Caesar and his followers. There’s a liberation, an exodus, and a promised land; just don’t expect a resurrection.

Beyond great special effects and action sequences, *War for the Planet of the Apes* takes the time in its 140 minutes to develop characters and storylines that make it one of the more satisfying movies of the summer.

Wait times still too long

Continued from page 14

Beyond the hard work of receiving and settling newcomers, our faith communities must continue to advocate for improved governmental policies related to refugees. Wait times are still too long, stretching over six years for sponsorship applications from some parts of Africa. The backlog for processing asylum seekers here in Canada is often atrocious, with “legacy claimants” waiting over five years. But settling refugees here is never enough — most refugees are harboured in some of the world’s poorest countries. So, the Trudeau Liberals’ refusal to increase the international assistance

budget is extremely shortsighted.

Refugees, asylum-seekers and displaced people now number more than 65 million, according to the UN. Migration issues are starkly present in Europe, where Pope Francis constantly challenges political leaders to respond with biblical charity and openness. A global economic system that breeds inequality is hugely responsible for forced migration, but in addition, climate change and other environmental factors have caused today’s disasters to be twice as likely to cause displacement compared to the 1970s.

Obviously the moral voice of faith communities is more necessary than ever before.

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Enjoy your vacation

This issue of the *Prairie Messenger* will be the last before the staff takes a three-week holiday. The next issue will be dated Aug. 30.

Canadians take vacation time for granted. It is written into our legal codes and the human benefits of leisure and time away from work are appreciated. However, concern is being raised over how difficult it is for some people to take a vacation, given that the computer and smartphone make it too easy to continue one's work schedule.

"Keep holy the Sabbath Day," the Ten Commandments recommend. The Lord rested on the seventh day, the Bible tells us. And we are urged to do the same. Rest from ceaseless labour is written into our DNA.

Canada provides a good environment for a vacation. Tourists delight in our natural assets. Canada boasts of the Rocky Mountains. We have the Great Lakes and Niagara Falls. We have endless forests and lakes. We have more fresh water than any other nation. We have a wide variety of wild animals and birds. There is so much we can be thankful for.

A recent visitor from Vietnam was asked what he liked about Canada. His immediate reply was "the fresh air." He came from a city of 10 million

people and its pollution.

Even our winters have their benefits. I once asked some visitors from the east and west coasts of Canada why they came to Saskatchewan in February to attend a two-week workshop. They said, "Because you have sunshine!" Their own climate was milder but also featured constant clouds.

We can easily take our natural resources for granted because "that's how it always has been."

In addition to our geographical diversity, we also live in a peaceful country. Canada has never suffered the ravages of war, as have most other countries. Yes, our soldiers have taken part in wars in other parts of the world, but we don't have to worry about landmines or buried bombs in our backyard.

The *Messenger* has informed our readers of the dire situation residents of many countries face today. This week, among other items, we can read about the horrible effects of the war in Iraq. Christians used to live in harmony with their Muslim neighbours. Now, ISIS has destroyed any semblance of civilization and it will take years for Christians to return to cities like Mosul, once an historic and thriving centre.

"The war isn't finished yet and neither is the Islamic State. There is no stability and there is still

fighting in Mosul," said Patriarch Louis Sako, head of Iraq's Chaldean Catholic Church, who visited Mosul recently. He was touring churches left badly damaged during the city's three-year occupation by ISIS extremists. "How can Christians return when there are homes destroyed and there are no services?" he asked. But most important is safety, he added.

The Central African Republic is another case in point where conflict and violence make any normal life impossible, as reported in this week's *Messenger*. Catholic aid workers report that there is a worsening crisis in the country, as church centres are attacked and armed groups fight over territory and resources. They are also attacking international aid organizations. Conditions are deteriorating dramatically as conflicts multiply, aid workers report. At least 100,000 people have been displaced by fighting since April, and close to a million people have left.

Refugees are more numerous today than at any other time in history. The same is true for the persecution of Christians. Trafficking of human beings is also a scourge many nations face.

As Canadians enjoy their holidays, we have much to be thankful for and celebrate. We also have to be on guard that we don't lose what we can easily take for granted. — PWN

Mystery of the Divine illustrates inadequate capacity of humans

Soul Mending

Yvonne A. Zarowny



"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing . . . you will know them by their fruits." — Matthew 7:15-16

"A new commandment I give to you, love one another . . ." — John 13:34

The common sacred scriptures of the world's three Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) state that Divine Mystery is beyond human capacity to adequately name or understand.

What if our Divine Beloved so loved us and this Mystery has been in-breaking into all our histories and consciousness since time immemorial? What if, due to our inadequate capacity to comprehend and name the Divine, it is we humans who created the differences while obfuscating common ground?

If so, how are we to discern that of the Divine and that of "false" prophets and gods?

I invite you to deeply ponder this.

I am a *critical* educator and practitioner. That means I educate and assist people to gain the skills to read the "signs of their times" for themselves then evaluate their

realities according to *explicitly* stated criterion.

If realities are not consistent with their *stated* values, hopes and dreams, strategies to effectively engage their worlds to bring it more in line are designed and implemented. With this process, our understanding of the realities and the strategies implemented are continually reassessed according to actual outcomes.

This is particularly true if the desired results are not achieved.

With this approach, there is no evaluation of something being "good" or "bad" without an *explicit* statement of criterion for determining what is "good" or "bad," "of God" or not.

It is a non-ideological, non-partisan, non-theoretical approach for unpacking our realities through engagement to achieve explicitly stated goals.

This process is a variation of what some of you may remember as the Pastoral Spiral developed in the 1980's by two Jesuits Joe Holland and Peter Henriot. It was developed to assist parish groups to ferret out and constructively engage social concerns in order to transform them.

If the anticipated or desired results are not achieved, then both the initial understanding of the situation and the strategy to address them are re-examined.

For example, if after 17 years of the War on Terror, we are still experiencing terrorism and Christians being persecuted, we might want to reconsider our understanding of the root causes of this "social concern" and our strategies for remedying it.

Jesus tells us we are to discern what is of our Divine Beloved by the fruits or realities produced.

According to Jesus, we know God is Goodness and Love and we are to love Love/Goodness with all our whole being.

Jesus also commands us to love one another, for the love of our Divine Beloved.

The Divine Incarnate in Jesus told us 2000+ years ago "the Way" is Love. We have an unprecedented number of people at risk of dying of famine in the Horn of Africa; we have perpetual warfare; we have an unprecedented number of refugees forced from their homes; and we are desecrating God's creation so much we are putting Earth's capacity to support us at risk.

Does this sound to you as if we are realizing God's dreams for us as revealed by Jesus?

God loves diversity — as is evidenced in our Beloved's creation — of which we are part.

In response to the tragedy of 9/11, in November 2001 members of UNESCO *unanimously* passed The Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity as an alternative to the "Clash of Civilization"

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— CULTURAL, page 19

Satisfaction comes with sharing other people's joy

By Gerry Chidiac, Prince George

Having worked in education for more than 30 years, I consider myself one of the luckiest people on the planet. I look forward to continuing in my profession until I'm in my 70s.

What is it about what I'm doing that gives me such joy? How does one achieve professional satisfaction?

Stanford University psychologist Kelly McGonigal may have found the answer in her study of positive empathy, which is basically sharing other people's joy.

As a teacher, this is very easy to do. Children are full of joy, laughter and curiosity. When we share these with them, we feel happy as well. It could be something as simple as wishing a child a happy birthday, complimenting them on a success or sharing the joy of a moment of enlightenment. In class discussions, for example, I regularly find that students come up with insights that have eluded me and that's always a thrill.

One of the greatest joys of teaching is running into former

Chidiac is a champion for social enlightenment, inspiring others to find their personal greatness in making the world a better place. www.troymedia.com

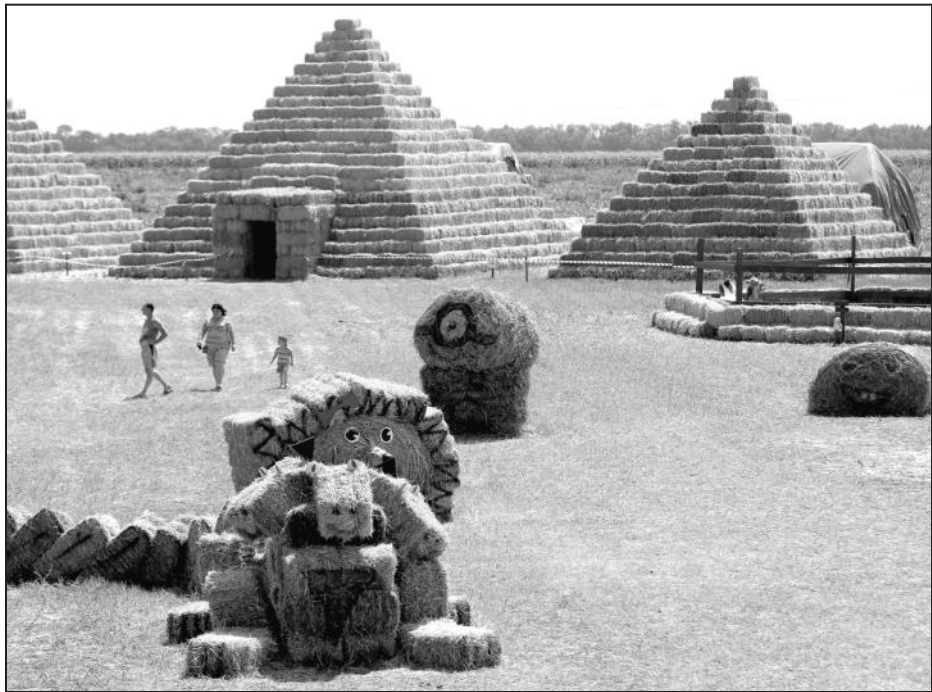
students who tell me what they're doing in life and about their accomplishments. I often tell my classes how I look forward to hearing their own stories, because I know I will.

I witness the good in my students on a regular basis and I've learned to point it out. They do so many kind things for each other. They admit when they make a mistake. They persevere when dealing with challenges. They're inspirational and I allow myself to be inspired.

It was very affirming for me to read that these are also some of the key findings in McGonigal's research. They explain why through many years in a very challenging profession — one filled with budget cuts, long hours of marking and planning, ever-changing curriculums and numerous other stress points — I still look forward to going to work every morning.

Humans also feel the pain of others. We cringe when we see someone getting injured. We naturally respond empathetically when we see others in stressful situations. These are all good, especially when they motivate us to help others. They can, however, have a detrimental impact on us if we're not careful. Some suggest consciously blocking the negative

— POSITIVE, page 19



STRAW AMUSEMENT IN RUSSIA — People visit an amusement park made of straw on a melon and pumpkin farm near Krasnoye, Russia.

Prairie Messenger shared with many friends

The Editor: It was with sadness that I read of the *Prairie*

PM an inspiration

The Editor: I am so sorry to hear of my beloved *Prairie Messenger* passing away.

It has inspired me and challenged me and made me a better person. Thank you for your dedication in your God-work. — **Diane Waldbillig, Saskatoon**

Messenger's decision to close in 2018. However, your reasons are sound, so I hope and pray that God will continue to grant you, the staff, the contributors, and all subscribers many graces.

I visited St. Peter's last summer the week of the feast of St. Benedict and had a wonderful time. A year later, I'm still raving about my trip to family and friends.

While visiting, I took out a

subscription to the *Messenger* and have thoroughly enjoyed it. It's been great learning about the Catholic happenings in a part of the country that doesn't make many headlines where I live. Also, old issues haven't gone to waste — I've had plenty of takers for my "previously loved" copies.

May God continue to bless you and everyone who passes through St. Peter's. — **Marie Nigro, Ottawa**

Syrian boundaries may divide Christians

Continued from page 1

by Batnaya because it is not possible to return to Batnaya due to huge damage," Youkhana said.

"Life is regained, markets are open, the church is functioning and hoping the schools will be open there as well by the beginning of the school year," he said.

Christians have expressed concerns that the current military line dividing the once predominantly Christian Ninevah Plains region will harden to become a de facto political/administrative line, dividing their numbers. In the north are towns like Telaskov and Batnaya, and the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Kurdish peshmerga fighters hold sway. Towns south of the line — where Qaraqosh, Bartella, and Karmles are found — are now under the control of the Iraqi army and Shiite militias.

Youkhana's CAPNI organization has been able to rehabilitate more than 180 houses and properties and 17 schools north of the military line, where there is greater

stability.

He expressed concerns especially for towns south of the military line, like Qaraqosh, once the biggest Christian town of 50,000 before the Islamic State takeover in August 2014.

"The Shiites are now trying to monopolize it and other towns. We have the challenge about how to keep them. We believe there will be a Christian town of Qaraqosh. The question is: Who will rule it? Questions also arise about the physical connectivity of Qaraqosh to other Christian towns in the Ninevah Plains given the different political and military sides that control the divided area.

Youkhana also shared a fear expressed by Christians that the victims of Islamic State extremists such as themselves, the Yezidis and other religious minorities will again become victims in the reconstruction process.

"Our people are concerned that Arab Sunni Muslims who hosted and joined Islamic State and helped the extremists against us

will be given priority in reconstruction of Mosul, perhaps from the Iraqi government and the Arab Gulf states," he said. "The victims will be ignored and neglected."

Christians are calling on the international community, along with the Iraqi government, to help them and other citizens from religious minority backgrounds. Often, Youkhana said, there are unfair expectations that all the help will come from Christians themselves or the Western churches.

"It is the government and the international community that should commit to support these people," he said.

"To rehabilitate a house is not enough to return. Beyond the politics, the security, there is the livelihood of how families can survive. When 30 families are coming to a neighbourhood in Qaraqosh, they need a grocery, a bakery, jobs," he said.

"We fled in one night from the Islamic State; we may take one or two years to return home," he added.

Cultural diversity widens range of options

Continued from page 18

theory that formed and still forms our response.

Originally written by a Muslim scholar, Article 3 states:

"Cultural diversity widens the range of options open to everyone; it is one of the roots of development, understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence."

This is consistent with what has been encouraged by our church since the Second Vatican Council and modelled by all popes since, particularly St. John Paul II and now Francis.

Why is it not promoted in all Catholic media?

Since 1945, Indonesia — the world's largest Muslim-majority nation-state — has been striving to achieve this. It developed practical strategies as a way of realizing peaceful co-existence in a very multi-cultural, religious, eth-

nic, linguistic, far flung nation.

One strategy was the national motto: "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*" meaning "unity in diversity" or literally "many, yet one." Another was the *explicit* statement of the five principles identified to form the foundational philosophy of the Indonesian state.

These are called the *Pancasila* — Sanskrit for "five principles."

First among these principals is that the Divine is ultimately one. Another is social justice. All are consistent with Jesus' Love Commandment.

I learned this from a member of our social justice team, originally from Indonesia. She gave me a poster: "One Light — Many Lamps."

It shows God as the One Light and has symbols representing Indonesia's six major religions including Christianity and Judaism.

She educated me about Indonesia in response to my asking her opinion of Stephen Kinzer's Boston Globe article "Saudi Arabia is Destabilizing the World."

(<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2017/06/11/saudi-arabia-destabilizing-world>)

Apparently factions within the Wahhabi absolute monarchy of Saudi Arabia, a NATO ally, are financing a multi-faceted, persistent campaign to destabilize not only Indonesia but the world.

According to Kinzer "By refusing to protest or acknowledge this far-reaching project, we finance our own assassins — and global terror."

Why are we selling billions in weapons and signing huge investment deals with the regime most responsible for exporting terror, religious intolerance and persecuting Christians? Does this make sense to you?

Is this consistent with Jesus Love Commandment and his revelation of the Divine's Will?

A reassessment of our understanding and strategies for addressing "terrorism" and religious intolerance, including the persecution of Christians, is needed NOW!



Design Pics

A Song of Being

the light of God is here
and now
and is mirrored
in the suspended dragonflies
emerald segments and turquoise wings
prism and crystallize
in a labyrinth of bloom
beautiful complications
that suggest a wonderful symmetry
and the transparency
of my own loveliness

By Jan Wood

Closing of Messenger brings sadness

The Editor: We are very upset with the closure of the *Prairie Messenger*. Now where will we get our information and know what is happening in our province, as well as on the national and international scene?

I agree with the letter to the editor of June 28. Is it too late? We

will have a huge void in our Catholic life now.

We just returned from holidays in the Republic of Ireland. The news in Tralee noted the closure of another church and a priest retiring at age 75. We are sad. Where is our church's future? — **Joan Petracek, Esterhazy, Sask.**

Thanks for a wonderful, inspiring paper

The Editor: I am so sorry to hear, because of financial matters, that you are forced to discontinue publication of your wonderful, inspiring paper, the *Prairie Messenger*. I thought that would never happen.

I am grateful that the number of copies I have kept over the years will grow another year.

With my gratitude of the past and sympathy of the future. — **Elizabeth Ryan, Agassiz, B.C.**

Positive empathy energizes

Continued from page 18

emotions of others, especially in the workplace.

However, McGonigal emphasizes that "positive empathy" also keeps us energized. The challenge is that it doesn't necessarily happen as automatically as feeling the negative emotions of others; it needs to be consciously cultivated. There are several ways this can be done.

One of the most effective ways is to spend time with children, allowing ourselves to embrace their joy and laughter. This would certainly explain why many teachers and childcare workers are so happy in their professions.

We can also enjoy the playfulness of animals. We can appreciate the beauty of art and athletics simply for the joy of seeing them done

well. We can allow others to do nice things for us, not just for the satisfaction that it brings to us but for how happy it makes others to give to us.

Finally, we can make a conscious effort to see the good in others. Sharing compliments makes us feel good. Sometimes we may feel a pang of jealousy, but if we can progress through this and share a sincere compliment, we begin to develop a positive habit that often leads to progress in our own lives.

Some professions, like teaching, lead more easily to developing positive empathy. But it's an attribute within everyone's grasp. It has more to do with how we interact with others than what we do in our work.

As the proverb states, "A joy that is shared is a joy made double."



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Crisis worsens in Central Africa Republic

By Jonathan Luxmoore

OXFORD, England (CNS) — A Catholic aid worker warned of a worsening crisis in the Central African Republic, as church centres are attacked and more armed groups fight over territory and resources.

“Perhaps the situation is better in Bangui, the capital, but elsewhere conditions are deteriorating dramatically as conflicts multiply,” said Christophe Droeven, country representative for the U.S.-based Catholic Relief Services.

“At least 100,000 people have been displaced by fighting since April, and the number here and abroad now totals close to a million. Non-governmental organizations are being increasingly targeted, and it’s becoming harder to help those in need,” he told Catholic News Service July 24.

He said aid organizations had evacuated their representatives from Bangassou to escape “looting and harassment” by a mainly Christian militia, Anti-Balaka. He said troops with the UN peacekeeping force, MINUSCA, had been unable to protect aid convoys.

“Although the peacekeepers are doing what they can, there aren’t enough of them,” said Droeven, who has headed CRS projects in Africa for 18 years. “They’re overstretched and under-resourced, and there are too many obstacles and difficulties now for aid to reach the most deprived.”

Bangassou became a flashpoint when heavily armed rebels attacked its Muslim quarter May 13, cutting telephone lines and leaving 115 dead, including six

MINUSCA soldiers, according to the International Red Cross.

In a July 24 statement, MINUSCA said the city’s Catholic cathedral, which is currently sheltering more than 2,000 displaced Muslims, had been attacked and robbed, and neighbouring homes burned, when fresh clashes erupted July 21. It added that a Moroccan soldier had been killed and three others wounded when a UN water convoy was ambushed by Anti-Balaka fighters.

Droeven told CNS he believed violence reflected attempts by rival armed bands to control the Central African Republic’s mineral resources, including diamond and gold, rather than political disputes.

He added that Anti-Balaka had periodically allied with the country’s Muslim-dominated rebel Seleka movement “for certain objectives,” but said many armed groups were now outside the control of either.

“Small bands now often claim to control the same territory, and we have to pass them all to gain access to the local population,” said the CRS representative.

“Since they don’t recognize each other, this is complex and risky, as we try to explain our work and underline our neutrality. If one group isn’t informed and controls the road we’re using, we can quickly find ourselves in trouble,” he said.

The Catholic Church’s nine dioceses make up a third of the 4.5 million inhabitants of the Central African Republic, one of the world’s poorest countries. Seleka rebels seized power in early 2013 but were



CNS/Tanya Bindra, EPA

CENTRAL AFRICA REPUBLIC DETERIORATING — A woman sits in St. Joseph Cathedral in Bambari, Central African Republic, in this 2014 file photo. A Catholic Relief Services official says the situation in the Central African Republic is worsening, as church centres are attacked and more armed groups fight over territory and resources.

driven back after the January 2014 deployment of 13,000 French and African peacekeepers.

Catholic parishes and dioceses have been praised for sheltering displaced people around the country.

However, Bishop Juan Aguirre Munoz of Bangassou told the Vatican’s Fides news agency July 24 half the city’s 25,000 inhabitants had fled the latest violence, many to the neighbouring Congo.

He confirmed his cathedral had been damaged and burned by “young Muslim extremists,”

who also temporarily seized employees of Caritas and their families.

“Some 2,000 Muslims have been welcomed in the cathedral’s fenced area, defended by MINUSCA’s Moroccan military,” the Spanish-born

bishop said. “But the Anti-Balaka are raging in Bangassou, hitting Muslims and trying to kill them, and preventing them from finding food, water and wood for cooking. The clashes are continuing and causing deaths on both sides.”

Russia, West must settle differences to achieve peace

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Peace and an end to violent conflicts around the world should be placed above any national interests when it comes to the relationship between western countries and Russia, Cardinal Pietro Parolin said.

Ahead of his visit to Russia at the end of August, the Vatican secretary of state said that differences between Russia and the West are often highlighted “as if they were different worlds, each with their own values, their own interests, a national or transnational pride, and even their own concept of international law to oppose others.”

“The effort to understand each other does not mean the yielding of one to the position of the other. It is rather a patient, constructive, frank, and at the same time, respectful dialogue,” Parolin said in an interview with *Il Regno*, an Italian Catholic magazine, published July 27.

Calm, persistent efforts to promote understanding, he said, are “even more important on the questions which are at the origin of current conflicts and on those that risk provoking a further increase in tension.”

While recently “there has been a period of uncertainty” regarding Russia’s position on various issues, including on Syria, Parolin said efforts to reach mutual understanding and discovering solutions

to various world crises should “be placed above any national or, in any case, partisan interest.”

The Holy See, he added, will continue to encourage Russia and western countries to engage in respectful dialogue instead of indulging in special interests which are a characteristic of “this age of a return to nationalisms” that distracts from averting “the possibility of catastrophe.”

“I am convinced that it is part of the Holy See’s mission to insist on this aspect,” Parolin said.

The interviewer also asked the cardinal about the Holy See’s view of President Donald Trump. Parolin said that the Trump administration is “so different and unique” that it will need “time to find its own balance.”

As for the Vatican’s view of his presidency, “time is needed to judge; you cannot be in a rush,” he said. “Any judgment now is hurried, even if sometimes the show of uncertainty itself can surprise.”

However, Parolin expressed his hope that the United States and other countries will not change course “from their international responsibilities” on important global issues, especially the commitment to addressing climate change.

“Reducing global warming means saving the common home in which we all live and reducing the inequalities and poverty that the warming of the planet continues to produce,” he said.

Legal paths will help stop trafficking

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Stopping criminal networks of human traffickers will require the creation of “safe, legal and responsible migration pathways” so that vulnerable migrants and refugees do not feel forced to turn to smugglers to reach their destinations, said a group of Catholic organizations.

Catholic humanitarian groups, religious orders and coalitions of women religious who have a long history of helping trafficking victims appealed for government and community action in advance of

the UN’s World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, July 30.

“People are trafficked within local settings as well as across international borders for domestic servitude, sexual and labour exploitation, begging, forced marriage, organ removal, surrogate wombs and criminal acts,” said the statement, which was distributed by the International Union of Superiors General, the organization representing the heads of Catholic orders of women.

“While estimates of the number of victims of human traffick-

ing remain in the tens of millions, worldwide convictions of human traffickers are fewer than 10,000,” the statement noted.

One of the Catholic groups’ requests was that national police approach the crime of trafficking using intelligence gathering rather than “the witness-based approach that exists at present.”

And while trafficking exists in every country and the poor are particularly vulnerable to the false promises of traffickers, migrants and refugees are most at risk for exploitation “both during their journeys and when they arrive in their countries of destination,” the statement said.

In addition to ensuring legal pathways to migration are available, the groups called for more government and private collaboration in efforts to educate people at risk on the most common ruses used by traffickers, to run programs in refugee camps on the dangers of human trafficking and to advise migrants on how to protect themselves.

The groups signing the statement included Caritas Internationalis, Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans, Dominicans for Justice and Peace, Franciscan International, Jesuit Refugee Service, Talitha Kum — the Worldwide Network of Religious Life against Trafficking in Persons, and the World Union of Catholic Women’s Organizations.



CNS/Mussa Qawasma, Reuters

PROTEST IN BETHLEHEM — Palestinian protesters run for cover from tear gas fired by Israeli troops during clashes in the West Bank city of Bethlehem.

To speak gratitude is courteous and pleasant, to enact gratitude is generous and noble, but to live gratitude is to touch heaven.

— Johannes A. Gaertner