



Words and action

Words must be met with action if the Christian community wants young adults to become interested in church life, says Frank Mercadante, executive director of Cultivation Ministries in Chicago.



Lonely nation

For the first time in Canada's 150 years, the biggest single category of households is people living by themselves. For the church, this 21st-century reality is raising new pastoral challenges, writes Michael Swan.

FacetoFace

FacetoFace Ministries reaches out to Catholic youth across Western Canada. Founded in 1999, the team, currently led by Jon Courchene, ministered to some 27,000 Catholic youth last year.

Parish reports

A summary of the Regina archdiocesan parish reports confirms the obvious: fewer people are regularly attending mass. But it also contains a positive surprise in the growth of youth ministry.

After suicide

It's incumbent on us, the living who love those who have died by suicide, "to redeem their memories, . . . to not let the particular manner of their deaths colour and taint the goodness of their lives," writes Ron Rolheiser, OMI. "Suicide is the least glamorous and most misunderstood of all deaths. . . ."

Vatican II 'irreversible'

The Catholic Church must continue to work to understand the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council and why they were made, rather than rethinking them, Pope Francis said. "After this magisterium, after this long journey, we can affirm with certainty and magisterial authority that the liturgical reform is irreversible."

Parolin visits Kirill, Putin in Russia

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Although he said planning a papal trip to Russia was not on the agenda, the Vatican secretary of state said his visit to Moscow was designed to build on the meeting Pope Francis and Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill had in Cuba in 2016.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the secretary of state, visited Moscow Aug. 21 - 24 and met with the patriarch and Russian President Vladimir Putin, as well as with leaders of Russia's Catholic community.

The list of topics for the meetings ranged from ecumenical dialogue and inter-religious co-operation to current world affairs and climate change, he said in a series of interviews before leaving Rome.

Parolin and Putin spent about



CNS/Paul Haring

Cardinal Pietro Parolin

an hour together Aug. 23 at the president's residence in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, according to the Vatican press office. The

meeting included "an exchange of views on various themes, both international and relating to bilateral relations."

Opening the meeting, Putin told the cardinal, "I am very pleased to see that the dialogue continues between our churches," and he expressed his pleasure that Parolin had met Kirill.

"There is no doubt that the common humanitarian values that the Holy See and the Russian Orthodox Church defend form the foundation for relations between the two churches and between Russia as a state and the Vatican," Putin said in his remarks.

Parolin told Putin, "I see a new dynamic that has emerged over the recent months and years in relations between the two churches. I hope that all participants in this process will continue working in this direction in order to

expand our co-operation and bring us even closer together."

After a long morning meeting Aug. 22, the cardinal and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov held a brief news conference, telling reporters they had discussed ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, the Holy Land and Venezuela.

Parolin said his meetings with government officials were designed to share "Pope Francis' interest in bilateral relations between the Holy See and the Russian Federation as well as his concerns in the sphere of international affairs."

"Obviously," the cardinal said, "the meeting offered an occasion to discuss some concrete questions regarding the life of the Catholic Church in the Russian

— SOVIETS, page 13

Jesuit, indigenous paddlers form bonds to 'last a lifetime'

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Despite physical exhaustion, storms, rough waters, food shortages and waking up to slip into wet socks some mornings, Jesuit paddlers said a more than 800-kilometre canoe pilgrimage fulfilled all their expectations and more.

The group of about 50 paddlers completed a 26-day odyssey along a historic river route travelled four centuries ago by explorers and Jesuit martyrs, including St. Jean de Brebeuf. They arrived Aug. 15 at a First Nations reserve near Montreal.

The pilgrimage was "definitely

tougher" than the paddlers thought it would be, said Erik Sorensen, a Jesuit scholastic who directed the pilgrimage. The pilgrims quickly learned to pray for sunshine.

"It would rain (some days), everything would be wet, your gear wet, your clothes wet and nothing would dry for a couple of days," Sorensen said. "Putting on wet socks in the morning is not a pleasant experience."

But enduring those challenges helped give purpose to the pilgrimage and strengthen bonds among the diverse group, which included Jesuits, indigenous peoples, religious and laypeople, he said.

"One of my biggest hopes for the pilgrimage was (to develop) a sense of deep connection between the paddlers," said Sorensen. "That was there in spades in the end."

They forged "deep relationships" and formed "bonds that will last a lifetime," he said.

— PILGRIMAGE, page 4

Holocaust designed by sane, educated men

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — Four Regina Catholic School Division teachers took part in a summer course and tour of the infamous Holocaust concentration camps in Germany and Poland.

One of the participants, Ada Paez, teaches history at Archbishop M.C. O'Neill Catholic High School in Regina. "I always thought they had to be mad, insane, but they were ordinary, intelligent men who sat down at breakfast in Wannsee House and methodically planned what do about 'the Jewish problem.' It was shocking. You look at these men: they had PhDs, they were smart, they were not idiots, and they came up with this plan. It makes you wonder: how?"

Paez has a degree in European history and had previously visited Dachau, one of the more infamous of the extermination camps. "I thought I knew it all — I knew the names, I knew the facts, and I knew the places — but I never imagined how organized everything was. That was the most shocking thing: to be in the room in that beautiful mansion where these men sat down over breakfast, brainstormed and came up with that."

Wannsee House is now a museum, one of several the group visited along with some of the concentration camps.

Paez, Michelle Phair, Milos Menhart and Patrick Reed made up the group of four from Regina. It was part of a course of study originally set up by the York, Ont., Catholic School Division. The Regina Catholic School Division

— WIESENTHAL, page 7



CNS/Dominik Haake, courtesy of the Canadian Canoe Pilgrimage

CANOE PILGRIMAGE — Canadian Jesuits organized the Canadian Canoe Pilgrimage from the end of July to mid-August as a means of reconciliation with people of the First Nations. The pilgrims paddled from Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons, in Midland, Ont., and ended at Kahnawake Mohawk Territory on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River. This photos shows them on a foggy day, Aug. 8.

KCs focus on families at international convention

By PM staff

ST. LOUIS, MO — A family from Austin, Texas, that has shown special care for the homeless was named the Knights of Columbus International Family of the Year for 2017 during the Knights' 135th annual international convention Aug. 1 - 3 in St. Louis.

The Knights also pledged to raise \$2 million to assist families in returning to their homes in Karamdes, a mostly Christian town on the Ninevah Plain in Iraq. Knights CEO Carl Anderson announced their pledge at the convention.

In 2014, the Islamic State removed hundreds of families of religious minorities from their homes in Karamdes. Just over two years later, the town, also known as Karemash, was liberated.

"The terrorists desecrated churches and graves and looted and destroyed homes," Anderson said in his annual report. "Now we will ensure that hundreds of Christian families driven from their homes can return to these two locations and help to ensure a pluralistic future for Iraq."

The Knights are following the example of the Hungarian government, whose new spending bill allowed for \$2 million to be sent to the Archdiocese of Irbil in Iraq, assisting with the rebuilding of a Christian community near Mosul, Iraq.

Families who were previously displaced from their homes were able to return to their homeland

because of the government of Hungary. This example served as proof to the Knights of the impact of returning families to their homes.

The cost of resettling one family is around \$2,000, the amount the Knights are encouraging councils, parishes and individuals to donate.

"These Christian communities are a priceless treasure for the church," Anderson said to the Knights attending the convention. "They have every right to live."

The Knights have actively sought to provide humanitarian aid to Christians in Iraq, as well as Syria and the surrounding areas, donating over \$13 million.

International Family of the Year Larry and Beth Odom and their 10 children typically carry supplies with them when they go out to give to those in need they encounter. When fire destroyed the home of a single mom and her four children, the Odoms took them into their home for five months.

"Larry and Beth have taught their children to serve selflessly," said the application nominating the Odoms for the award. "Serving others is, for them, a privilege, not a burden."

"It's a lesson I learned from my parents," Larry said in an Aug. 3 statement. "I remember on more than one occasion, people stayed with us when I was a boy."

Larry, an engineer for Silicon laboratories, has been a Knight for 10 years. Beth teaches for a home-school co-op and serves on the bishop's Committee for Home-



CNS/Knights of Columbus

KNIGHTS FAMILY OF THE YEAR AWARD — Supreme Knight Carl Anderson, CEO of the Knights of Columbus, Texas State Deputy Douglas Oldmixon, third from right, Bishop Joe S. Vasquez of Austin, Texas, and Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori, far right, pose Aug. 2 with Larry and Beth Odom and their 10 children during the Knights' annual international convention in St. Louis. The Knights named the family from Austin as International Family of the Year for 2017 for the special care they have shown for the homeless.

schooling in the Diocese of Austin.

Larry described the award as humbling and a tremendous honour.

"We're happy for the recognition and excited and happy to be

able to serve," he said.

Other awards given during the convention to Knights of Columbus councils included recognition for community service, fundraisers, and family and church activities:

The church activities award was won by Winnipeg St. John Brebeuf Council 1107 for its Nativity float in a local parade. For the past five years the council has led the effort to design and

construct a unique Christ-centred float for the local Santa Claus parade. Each year, a council member opens his farm's heated shop where Knights from local councils and assemblies, in addition to local families, work together for hundreds of hours. This year, they constructed an illuminated Nativity float led by a group of 35 Knights. The council won the prize for best float in the parade.

With files from CNS.

Pope stands firm on euthanasia

By Simon Caldwell

MANCHESTER, England (CNS) — Pope Francis has given a Belgian religious order until the end of August to stop offering euthanasia to psychiatric patients.

Brother Rene Stockman, superior general of the order, told Catholic News Service the pope gave his personal approval to a Vatican demand that the Brothers of Charity, which runs 15 centres for psychiatric patients across Belgium, must reverse its policy by the end of August.

Brothers who serve on the board of the Brothers of Charity Group, the organization that runs the centres, also must each sign a joint letter to their superior general declaring that they "fully support the vision of the magisterium of the Catholic Church, which has always confirmed that human life must be respected and protected in absolute terms, from the moment of conception till its natural end."

Brothers who refuse to sign will face sanctions under canon law, while the group can expect to face legal action and even expulsion from the church if it fails to change its policy.

The group, he added, must no longer consider euthanasia as a solution to human suffering under any circumstances.

The order, issued at the beginning of August, follows repeated requests for the group to drop its new policy of permitting doctors to perform the euthanasia of "non-



CNS/L'Osservatore Romano

POPE OPPOSES EUTHANASIA IN BELGIUM — Pope Francis greets Brother Rene Stockman, superior general of the Brothers of Charity, at the end of a 2016 meeting of the Union of Superiors General at the Vatican. Pope Francis has given the Brothers of Charity, which runs 15 centres for psychiatric patients across Belgium, until the end of August to stop offering euthanasia to psychiatric patients.

terminal" mentally ill patients on its premises.

It also follows a joint investigation by the Vatican's congregations for the Doctrine of the Faith and for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

Stockman, who had opposed the group's euthanasia policy, told Catholic News Service the ultimatum was devised by the two congregations and has the support of the pope.

The ultimatum, he said, meant the group's policies must be underpinned by a belief that "respect for human life is absolute."

Stockman told CNS that if the group refused to bow to the ultimatum "then we will take juridical steps in order to force them to amend the text (of the new policy) and, if that is not possible, then we have to start the procedure to exclude the hospitals from the Brothers of Charity family and take away their Catholic identity."

The Brothers of Charity was founded in 1807 in Ghent, Belgium. Today, the group is considered the most important provider of mental health care services in the Flanders region of Belgium, where they serve 5,000 patients a year.

Pope saddened by 'perfect' Catholics who despise others

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — God did not choose perfect people to form his church, but rather sinners who have experienced his love and forgiveness, Pope Francis said.

The Gospel of Luke's account of Jesus forgiving the sinful woman shows how his actions went against the general mentality of his time, a way of thinking that saw a "clear separation" between the pure and impure, the pope said Aug. 9 during his weekly general audience.

"There were some scribes, those who believed they were perfect," the pope said. "And I think about so many Catholics who think they are perfect and scorn others. This is sad."

Continuing his series of audience talks about Christian hope, the pope reflected on Jesus' "scandalous gesture" of forgiving the sinful woman.

The woman, he said, was one of many poor women who were visited secretly even by those who denounced them as sinful.

Although Jesus' love toward the sick and the marginalized "baffles his contemporaries," it

reveals God's heart as the place where suffering men and women can find love, compassion and healing, Pope Francis said.

"How many people continue today in a wayward life because they find no one willing to look at them in a different way, with the eyes — or better yet — with the heart of God, meaning with hope," he said. But "Jesus sees the possibility of a resurrection even in those who have made so many wrong choices."

Oftentimes, the pope continued, Christians become accustomed to having their sins forgiven and receiving God's unconditional love while forgetting the heavy price Jesus paid by dying on the cross.

By forgiving sinners, Jesus doesn't seek to free them from a guilty conscience, but rather offers "people who have made mistakes the hope of a new life, a life marked by love," the pope said.

The church is a people formed "of sinners who have experienced the mercy and forgiveness of God," Pope Francis said. Christians are "all poor sinners" who need God's mercy, "which strengthens us and gives us hope."

New census data shows increasing social isolation

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — For the first time since Confederation, the number of lone-person households now exceeds the number of families composed of couples with children and has become the most common type of household in Canada, Statistics Canada reported Aug. 2.

The new census data underscores a host of new challenges for government policy, churches and other social institutions, said experts.

The data shows a trend toward increasing family instability and social isolation, particularly for seniors, warns Peter Jon Mitchell, a senior Cardus researcher.

Not only will there be additional stress on adult children, who are also aging, but also on government-assisted home care, end-of-life care and social assistance programs, he said.

“People living alone are going to require more assistance,” he said.

Lone-person households comprise 28.2 per cent of all households in Canada, up from 7.4 per cent in 1951 and up from 25.7 per

cent in 2001. Statistics Canada reports this level is about the same as that of the United States and the United Kingdom, but lower than France (33.8 per cent in 2011), Japan (34.5 per cent in 2015), Norway (40 per cent), and Germany (41.4 per cent in 2015).

The rise in lone-person elderly is especially important to address now that physician-assisted suicide is legal, said Michel MacDonald, executive director of the Catholic Organization for Life and Family.

“How are we as a society going to respond to that? How are we as a church going to accompany these people?” he asked. “We really do have to reach out. These are people on the periphery, these are people right in our church, but they are on the periphery — the lonely in our parishes.”

MacDonald believes data reveals challenges the Catholic Church must address.

“We live in a culture where our physical needs are met for the most part,” MacDonald said. “We have all of the good things of life. But St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata talked about the spiritual poverty of the West. It’s not material poverty, but loneliness.



CCN/D. Gyapong

Michel MacDonald

“For good reasons, our churches are focused on families and family ministries, but we have to be very aware of this current trend of people living alone, people who are unattached and how our communities of faith are engaging those folks as well,” he said.

Not all the lone-person households are elderly, however.

“People are getting into marriage later,” Mitchell said. “We might have more young people who are living alone, especially as people are seeking more post-secondary education or working to establish themselves a bit more.”

In addition to one-person households, the number of couples without children is growing faster than couples with children, Mitchell pointed out. “Only 51 per cent of couples have children, but that number is declining.”

The number of couples that cohabit rather than marry is also rising (at 21.3 per cent), though married couples still represent the majority at 78.7 per cent of couples, the census shows. The highest number of cohabitating couples are in Quebec and Nunavut. In Quebec, the number is twice as high as the Canadian average at 39.9 per cent of couples. In Nunavut, however, 50.3 per cent of couples live common law.

“Fortunately, marriage still remains the most common form of relationship for couples,” said Cardus Family director Andrea Mrozek. “But the trend is toward less stable relationships. That implies more breakups, more drastic changes in domestic life, and more turmoil — things that can harm physical and mental health, not to mention any children who may be in the picture.”

The research is abundantly clear that children do best in stable families with two parents, so it’s encouraging not to see a rising proportion of kids in single-parent homes,” says Mrozek. “It would be even better if we could see that proportion decline — something that could happen if Canada could raise its marriage rates.”

Mitchell pointed out there’s been a “shift from marriage as a starting point to build a founda-

tion,” then having children, then buying a home. People are “flipping that life script,” by getting established in their careers and buying a home first, before they get married, he said.

“Generally we see fewer people being committed to marriage,” said MacDonald. “What’s the cause of that? Why is this? Are they afraid of commitment? Is it because they themselves are coming from broken families? How do we respond to that?”

“Obviously the statistics are telling us something,” he said.

MacDonald pointed to Pope Francis’ words in his recent post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, where he calls for “encouraging openness to grace” rather than simply stressing doctrinal issues.

“We find it difficult to present marriage more as a dynamic path to personal development and fulfilment than as a lifelong burden,” the pope wrote.

“I think that’s key,” MacDonald said. The answer, is found in #40 of the document where Pope Francis writes: “We need to find the right language, arguments and forms of witness that can help us reach the hearts of young people, appealing to their capacity for generosity, commitment, love and even heroism, and in this way inviting them to take up the challenge of marriage with enthusiasm and courage.”

“We can’t moralize or wag our finger, but we really have to live the gospel in such a way that people are attracted to it,” said MacDonald.

“It comes down to fear of commitment, fear of seeing this is going to last, this can last,” he said. “People don’t see a value in marriage. They see a value in their relationship, but they don’t see a value in making that public. Marriage is a public act, and as a public act there’s a strength to it.”

For Mitchell, healthy marriage requires positive role models.

“Institutions like the church can provide examples of functioning, healthy marriages within the community,” he said.

Words must be met with action

By Paul Paproski, OSB

MUENSTER, Sask. — Words must be met with action if the Christian community wants youth and young adults to become interested in church life, Frank Mercadante of Chicago said to 45 attending a retreat at St. Peter’s Abbey, Aug. 17 - 19, sponsored by the Ukrainian Catholic Church of Canada.



Paul Paproski

Frank Mercadante

Words do not have the same meaning or value among millennials as previous generations. The millennials of today are a “show-me generation” which has been formed by the inundation of information from the media, Mercadante, youth ministry worker and spiritual author, said. They must see what we believe through our relationships to them.

A survey of 250 churches among the leading denominations in the United States asked millennials what they liked about church life. The survey involved 10,000 hours of research and 1,300 interviews. The research found that a welcoming atmosphere was valued the most. The second most popular impression

was good relationships with others. Christian hospitality is very important, Mercadante said, making it imperative that parishioners step outside their familiar boundaries and become welcoming.

“Are we willing, as believers, to take on awkwardness so others don’t have to feel awkward?” he asked. “We need to give people positive experiences of Christians, and that means we need to develop a reputation for love,” he said, referring to a Gospel passage (John 13:35) which explains that Christians will be known by their love. The first Christians knew the love of God and it was natural for them to understand that love of God and love of others goes together. Their attitude about the Gospel impressed many who converted to Christianity through the good example of Christians.

“I am called to love” is a mission statement for every Christian, he remarked. The greatest commandment says to love God with all our heart and to love our neighbour as our self (Matthew 22:34-40).

People were created by God in love and the first relationship always begins with God who will sustain all other relationships, Mercadante commented. He and his wife, Diane, have six children and their relationship with God has sustained their marriage of 36 years. This relationship will help build a solid foundation for those in church ministries, he remarked.

“It wasn’t until I experienced failure that I realized a lot of my identity was based on my success. That failure was my greatest success. When I was building my youth ministry I lost my first love. I wasn’t paying attention to God,” he remarked.

It is so easy to get caught up in work and lose sight of the first call to Jesus. Married couples often get so busy with activities that they forget their relationship

and it becomes strained. Children are happier when their parents are in love. Children feel more secure when parents love one another.

The authentic love of God automatically flows to the spouse and children, he said. Growth in spirituality brings one to see Jesus in others. St. Augustine felt an emptiness inside that he knew could only be filled with God. He is famous for saying that his heart would always be restless until it found rest in God.

Pope Paul VI, in his encyclical, *On Evangelization in the Modern World*, said evangelization embraces living fully as a Christian. A Christian becomes a witness when he or she is proud to proclaim the name of Jesus and live the promises of a new life in the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. Jesus told his first followers to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20).

The idea of evangelizing may sound awkward, even frightening. However, there are many ways to live as a Christian witness. Everyone can love in little ways. Mercadante remembers his parish priest, Fr. Bob, doing small acts of kindness for others that were remembered many years later.

Mercadante is the executive director of Cultivation Ministries. He is a spiritual author and has designed and written youth ministry training manuals. He spoke at St. Peter’s Abbey to a gathering of young adults attending “Unity,” sponsored by the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada and hosted by the Eparchy of Saskatoon.

Unity is held every three years for young adults, 18 - 35, from across Canada and the United States who gather to better understand, embrace and celebrate the Byzantine Catholic faith. The theme of Unity 2017 was “Into the Horizon: Focus on Faith.”

Bishops press Trudeau for action on mining practices

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — In a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops president Bishop Doug Crosby has accused Canadian mining companies of “unethical, unjust and irresponsible ways of mining” in Latin America.

“We have heard stories of how threats, violence, extortion and even murder have been used to advance the progress of big business and industry to the detriment — both human and economic — of the poor,” said Crosby. “We cannot accept the unethical way Canadian mining companies have been operating in Latin America.”

The Aug. 9 letter was prompted by the government’s non-answer to another letter from the Latin American church and civil society

organizations which demanded Canada rein in mining companies embroiled in conflicts with local and indigenous communities throughout Latin America. The Prime Minister’s Office has not yet replied to the April 25, 2016, letter from the Churches and Mining Network endorsed by 200 Latin American bishops and signed by dozens of Latin American organizations.

Global Affairs Canada has not responded to emailed questions from *The Catholic Register* about the government’s correspondence with the Churches and Mining Network.

“By sending our letter, we are expressing solidarity not only with our brother bishops in Latin America, but with all those negatively impacted by companies registered in our own country,” said

As more live alone, church still welcoming community

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

Have we become a lonely nation?

For the first time in Canada's 150 years, the biggest single category of households is people living by themselves. For the church, this 21st-century reality is raising new pastoral challenges.

Households consisting of mom, dad and the kids are no longer the norm, according to the 2016 census (see story, page 3). One-person households comprised 28.2 per cent of Canada's 14.1 million private households last year. That compares to 26.5 per cent of all households that had couples with children.

It isn't just Canada. Around the world advanced nations report that more and more people live alone. In France, 33.8 per cent of households contained just one person. In Japan, 34.5 per cent live alone. In Norway 40 per cent, Germany 41.4 per cent.

In Canada, a bare majority of 51.1 per cent of all couples live with their children — the lowest share ever.

But living alone doesn't necessarily mean people are lonely, said Nora Spinks, CEO of the Vanier Institute of the Family.

"They may be living alone in a single-person household but may be very actively engaged in their community or very much connected," Spinks told *The Catholic Register*. "You have to layer on top of that the technology we now have access to, the public transportation we now have access to. We can't jump to the conclusion that because 28 per cent of households are one-person households that they are necessarily alone."

Although many people have



Maureen Weber

NEW CHALLENGES — Have we become a lonely nation? asks Michael Swan in his feature on the challenges for the church in a society in which more people than ever before are living alone. "For the first time in Canada's 150 years, the biggest single category of households is people living by themselves. For the church, this 21st-century reality is raising new pastoral challenges."

the social skills and networks to be content while living alone, loneliness is a rising pastoral issue in parishes, said St. Francis Xavier pastor Msgr. Edgardo Pan. "You find it in many parishes," he said. "It's really a challenge."

Pan recently received a letter from a parishioner who wanted to start up an outreach to the lonely of St. Francis Xavier's Mississauga neighbourhood.

"The name of the group would be 'Someone Cares.' It's for people who really feel neglected," said Pan.

Pan's parish has already run programs for newcomers, gathering individuals who have come to Canada to work. These parishioners remain in touch with their

families mainly by Skype and telephone. The parish also hosts regular outreach to seniors. But the unmet need is ever present, Pan said.

Rev. John-Mark Missio, a pastoral and liturgical theology expert at St. Augustine's Seminary, believes the epidemic of loneliness is much broader than the numbers suggest.

"We live in a time in human history when more people live alone than ever have in human history," he said. "That's striking. It's disturbing. It's really thought provoking."

The census numbers only confirm a reality most Canadians already have sensed, he said.

"This isn't just a theoretical

reality. It's what we actually live now. The church does offer the best solution because the church is a community, a body of believers," said Missio.

For St. Patrick's Brampton pastor Rev. Vito Marziliano, the numbers are a reminder that the parish has to remain open, welcoming and available.

"If we are welcoming — I think that's the key word, hospitality," he said. "I think the focus is to keep finding opportunities and be welcoming when, for whatever reason, they knock on your door."

People living alone may be the most common type of household, but the fastest growing category is homes comprising at least three generations of one family. The overall percentage is small — just 2.9 per cent of households — but it represents 403,810 households nationwide. That's an increase of 37.5 per cent since 2011 and means 6.3 per cent of Canadians live in a home where grandparents, parents and grandchildren share the same bathrooms and kitchens.

Multigenerational living arrangements are most commonly found among immigrant and Aboriginal Canadians.

"There's no question in some cultures that the grandparents are

going to live with their children," said Spinks. "For some, it's a pooling of resources."

It isn't just a tight budget that pushes some families into the multigenerational model. The resources and workload to be shared can include childcare, elder care, even running a family business.

"In some cases it's a very positive experience. In others, it can be extremely stressful," said Spinks.

Pan often spends time with older parishioners stressed out by life with Canadian-born grandchildren.

"The difference in culture — in conservative countries you don't hear young people shouting at the elderly. Here they do that," Pan said.

As immigration continues at record levels, language remains a pastoral reality — particularly in Canada's big cities. More than 13 per cent of us (7.75 million people) claim a mother tongue other than English, French and the Aboriginal languages. More than three quarters of those people live in six metropolitan centres — Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, the national capital region, Calgary and Edmonton.

Among the fastest growing languages is Tagalog — the Filipino language heard in parishes from coast to coast. Ranked number seven in 2011, Tagalog is now the number four immigrant language, with more than half a million native speakers.

Among immigrant languages historically associated with Catholic parishes, Dutch, Ukrainian, Italian, German and Polish

— CHURCH, page 5

Pilgrimage was dedicated to reconciliation

Continued from page 1

"What was unexpected was the sincerity and the depths we were able to go in the month. I knew there was going to be sharing and great participation, but this went even further than I thought it was ever going to be," he said.

The pilgrimage, organized to mark Canada's 150th anniversary, was dedicated to the cause of reconciliation with First Nations people. It launched July 21 from Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons, in Midland, Ont., and ended at Kahnawake Mohawk Territory on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River.

Through shared struggles during their travels, a sense of camaraderie and understanding developed among the paddlers, said Kevin Kelly, a Jesuit scholastic and trip organizer. Being in a position of shared "vulnerability where you are struggling" helps people learn about each other and "understand how similar we are, even when we come from very different places," he said.

"It really does help you put yourself in the other person's shoes."

Sorensen said that while he had a good intellectual understanding of the history of Canada's discred-

ited residential schools policy and the harmful impact of those schools on indigenous peoples, listening to fellow paddlers share personal stories about generational trauma raised his understanding to a new level.

"To have someone whose mother was impacted, whose family is still working through impacts of residential schools, to hear how their own lives have been, about healing from those experiences, it was really moving," Sorensen said.

The pilgrims were supported along the route by several parish, First Nations and religious communities, who welcomed the paddlers and provided food and a place to rest.

Although Kelly said the generosity "exceeded all expectations" and the communities were "unbelievably welcoming and incredibly hospitable," not everything went as planned. For instance, many communities underestimated how much food 40 - 50 paddlers would need each day, he said.

"By the skin of their teeth, they would make enough food," Kelly said.

But on some days, organizers had to figure out where to get more food, or how the available

food could be stretched for paddlers expending thousands of calories a day, he said. There were complicated scenarios every day, and every day things worked out in the end, Kelly said. It took about two-thirds of the trip before they trusted things would work out each day.

"Coming to that sense of trust was really important," Kelly said.

As for the physical challenges, Sorensen said not only was paddling all day extremely demanding physically, being constantly wet on some days was a trial.

"The weather is always a big one," said Sorensen. "We were really blessed with really good weather (but) we had rainy and stormy days."

One day, they thought it was safe to depart, but after a couple of hours the wind picked up, whipping up waves and forcing the paddlers to take cover, Sorensen said.

"You realize how powerless you are when you are out in nature like that, how attuned and attentive you have to be to nature to be in harmony with it."

Sorensen said he does not think he'll do another 26-day canoe pilgrimage, but he'd like to share this experience with others — on pilgrimages of four or five days.

Continued from page 3

Archbishop Don Bolen, chair of the CCCB's Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace.

The bishops have "corresponded with Canadians, including Catholics, involved in the extractive industry" prior to sending the hard-hitting letter, said Bolen. "However, there was no specific consultation with the mining industry on this particular letter."

The bishops did not intend to imply that all Canadian miners in Latin America are unethical, Bolen told *The Catholic Register*.

Mining Association of Canada president and chief executive officer Pierre Gratton insists the Canadian bishops don't know what they're talking about.

"This narrative that the bishop is repeating, that the NGOs have conjured up, that somehow Canadian companies are flagrant violators of human rights and engender conflict and are worse than everybody else is actually empirically false," said Gratton. "We're actually doing a better job than other multinationals at indigenous relations and community relations. This whole narrative is not supported by the evidence."

For many bishops, the narrative

is supported by the findings of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. In March 2015 Bolen and other North American bishops were present at hearings in Washington where some of the worst failings of Canadian mining companies were condemned. The IACHR findings largely supported a 2014 report by MISEREOR, an advocacy organization funded by Germany's Catholic bishops.

MISEREOR looked at 22 Canadian mining projects in nine countries and found the Canadians responsible for "serious environmental, economic, social and cultural harms . . . as well as the violation of various rights of the neighbouring communities, including the right to life, humane treatment, health and property."

Crosby also cited the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace's 2013 Voice for Justice Campaign which sent more than 80,000 signatures to Ottawa asking that Canadian mining companies be held to Canadian legal and regulatory standards when operating abroad.

The bishops are asking Trudeau to fulfil a campaign promise to place an independent ombudsperson in charge of investigating complaints against Canadian companies.

Former AFN CEO optimistic about reconciliation

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — A key player in the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) says he is optimistic about reconciliation.



CCN/D. Gyapong

Bob Watts

“I’m very hopeful; I’m very pro-reconciliation,” said Bob Watts, former CEO of the Assembly of First Nations, speaking at a fundraiser Aug. 10 for the Canadian Canoe Pilgrimage for 30 paddlers — Jesuits, indigenous peoples and others canoeing an old trade route from Midland, Ont., on Lake Huron, to Montreal (see related story, page 1).

“The canoe is a powerful, powerful vehicle of reconciliation,” Watts said.

Reconciliation comes through “looking at each other in a way to see each other’s humanity,” he said. “We’re all related. We’re all brothers and sisters in this boat together.”

He praised the canoe pilgrimage for meeting “metaphorically” the challenges of reconciliation, through “bursting myths and stereotypes” to “figure out a way to paddle together.”

The paddlers, who arrived in Montreal Aug. 14, had completed 80 per cent of their journey when

they arrived in Ottawa Aug. 9. Inspired by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) Calls to Action, the paddlers also marked Canada’s 150th anniversary by following a similar canoe pilgrimage in 1967 on Canada’s 100th.

The fundraiser at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club in Gatineau not only raised money, but, through a KAIROS blanket exercise and Watt’s address, also raised awareness of the injustices indigenous peoples in Canada have suffered.

“Admitting there is “a lot of ugliness in terms of our joint history,” Watts said he sees many good people standing up for justice and participating in the spiritual process of reconciliation and healing.

“It took a long time to get to the place we’re at now,” he said. “A lot of healing work needs to be done.”

While more needs to be done at the level of government, Watts said he is gratified to see “civil society, spiritual leaders, civilian leaders taking ownership of reconciliation, regardless of what governments are doing.”

“Reconciliation isn’t just the purview of the government, but of communities, individuals, church groups, NGOs and other civil society groups deciding they want to work together to build a different future,” he said.

A residential school survivor recently told Watts he had finally said, “I love you,” to his daughter. Because of his being forcibly separated from his parents at the school, he didn’t know telling his children he loved them was part of parenting, Watts said.

When former AFN National Chief Phil Fontaine began to talk about his experience of being sexually abused at a residential school, “a lot of people were upset with him,” said Watts, who served as his chief of staff. “They thought he should leave well enough alone.”

“Others said it was good he was doing it” because many of

the pathologies plaguing indigenous communities, such as high rates of suicide, addiction and violence, could be “traced back to residential schools,” he said.

As the 2000s began people started to ask, “what are we doing to do about the residential schools,” and the first class action lawsuit was certified, he said. The lawsuits began to grow until there were 10,000 individual lawsuits and seven class action suits.

The AFN, the Government of Canada, and the churches involved in running the residential schools came to the 2013 IRSSA, the largest class action settlement in Canadian history.

Watts, who teaches now at Queen’s University, said he has

noticed people go through three stages when they learn about the residential schools. Though most have heard of them, “when they understand the depth of the tragedy, they are shocked,” he said. They ask, “How could this happen?”

Residential schools are “not an ancient history,” because the last one closed in 1996, he said. The legacy is “with us right now and it’s going to be with us for a long time in the future.”

The second reaction is people get angry, he said. “They get ticked off at their parents, their schools, their churches for not teaching this. ‘How could this have happened and we were not told about it?’”

The third reaction is: “We’re going to do something about it,” Watts said.

Whether what they choose to do “nudges this forward” or “takes big steps in the reconciliation process,” Watts said, “maybe even just thinking about doing something is doing something.”

“Thinking, reflecting, changes the way they think about society, about indigenous people, and how to get past the settler/indigenous people paradigm,” he said.

Watts said he believes Canada needs a “national condolence,” to “lift the country’s spirit,” to “wipe away tears,” and “clear the ears to hear better,” “wipe the eyes to see better,” to “wipe the heart, to make our hearts work better.”

Seal of confessional remains ‘inviolable’

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — The seal of the confessional for Roman Catholic priests operating as military chaplains remains inviolable, says Canada’s Chaplain General.

For Catholic priests, according to Canon 983.1, “It’s a crime for a confessor to betray a penitent in any manner or for any reason,” said Brig.-Gen. Guy Chapdelaine.

“When it’s a confession, it’s different from a person coming to speak to me,” the Chaplain General said. “We have to make sure that it’s clear; it’s a confession.”

Chapdelaine, the first Roman Catholic priest to serve as Chaplain General, issued a 2015 directive in response to “Operation Honour” meant to deal with sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces.

The directive outlined three circumstances under which confidentiality “is not applicable”: when a person poses a threat to others or to him or herself; when abuse of a minor is involved; or when ordered by a court of law.

The directive applies to Catholic priests when they are counselling outside of the confessional, Chapdelaine said. “It has to be clear the person wants to confess. When the situation is clear that it’s a confession, I have the responsibility to protect the seal of confession.”

The two-year-old directive came into the news recently after a CBC news report on federal documents revealed some chaplains are concerned about “potentially breaching confidentiality of those receiving spiritual care.”

The report also coincided with news from Australia that its Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has recommended making it a criminal offence to fail to report child sexual abuse with no exemption for the confessional.

Chapdelaine said he could not comment about the news in Australia, but in Canada he does not see any “sign of change,” when it comes to the seal of the confessional.

“It’s a crime for us to (violate) it,” he said. “It’s excommunication from the church. I would put the emphasis on the freedom of religion and on the

specific situation.”

Chapdelaine said he had read about the Supreme Court of Canada upholding solicitor-client privilege.

“I’m confident it will be respectful of privileged religious communication between a minister and a military person who comes to see him or her.”

“For Catholic priests, confession is very, very specific,” the Chaplain General said. “It’s not something I see often. I have a lot of communication with people, but will not be under the seal of confession.”

“When I was deployed, on my daily ministry, it’s very exceptional that people will come to see me and say this is a confession, and I would like to speak about a specific situation,” he said. “It happens of course, but it’s not something common.”

Despite reports about concerns, Chapdelaine said he has never seen a court in Canada ask a chaplain to violate confidentiality, whether inside or outside the confessional.

The Chaplain General said the CBC article made it look “like we don’t respect confidentiality.”

“We take seriously confidentiality and the trust of the person coming to us,” he said. “The three situations that I gave you are very unusual.”

“I don’t see these situations happen often,” he said. “We need compassion, we need to build trust with the person and they know of course we have some obligations.”

“If they tell us they will commit suicide in the next couple of hours, we have a responsibility to do something,” he said. The first thing is to “convince them to report themselves,” or to seek further help.

We don’t want the members of the Canadian Armed Forces not sure about confidentiality,” he said.

“We have some areas where we have no choice; they are very specific and unusual.”

For Col. Martine Belanger, a lay Catholic chaplain, the directive is clear and has not posed a problem for her or for other chaplains. “Personally for me, I am not aware of any chaplains or colleagues that don’t feel comfortable with this,” she said, noting

all the chaplains were consulted in the issuing of the directive.

“We have a unique role,” she said. “It is to journey with the person, when a person is coming to seek our advice, to seek our support.”

On the issue of sexual misconduct, unless it involves a minor, there is no duty to report, she said.

“We provide direct pastoral support to the affected members,” she said. “We are not judging, we are not forcing the person, we are really there to support, to journey. We offer that space and that time,” she said.



CCN/D. Gyapong

Chaplain General Brig.-Gen. Guy Chapdelaine

The chaplain’s role is to provide “a ministry of presence,” she said. “When we are in the counselling session, it is the human being in front of us, whatever the person, the rank.”

The chaplains will encourage people to seek further help and make them aware of help available, she said.

Depending on the issue, “we will inform” the person of the extent of confidentiality, she said. “We need to have this clear conversation, clear boundaries,” she said.

“Usually, very often, chaplains are the first line of intervention,” she said. “People will come to us, in crisis, to vent, they really need to have a first ear.”

From there they may be referred to a support group, or other sources of help and support, she said.

Church strategies for welcoming have evolved

Continued from page 4

are all in decline. Across Canada, Italian speakers declined by 30,260 — a 6.9 per cent drop.

The Canadian church’s strategies for welcoming immigrants and accommodating their languages have evolved, said Marziliano.

“It’s far more than just language,” said Marziliano, who has pastored both Italian and multi-ethnic parishes. “It also has to do with culture. Even someone who may have surpassed their difficulty with language still worships in their culture.”

The face of the church and the face of the nation is becoming more Asian. It’s not just the Filipinos on the rise. The No. 1 non-official language in the country is now Mandarin, which leapfrogged from number nine in 2011. Number two is Cantonese.

The two main Chinese languages are spoken by 1,204,865 people.

A census is just numbers. The pastoral reality of any parish is always more than that, because God calls us by name, not by number.

“What I see is a kind of wonderful United Nations that’s emerging in all of our parishes,” said Missio. “I think we’re actually reflecting that reality already.”

“I don’t think we’re going to hell in a handbasket and I don’t think we’ve achieved nirvana,” said Spinks. “I think what (the 2016 census) does reflect is how families adapt and how families adjust. They are the first to respond to changes in society and economy and environment.

“If we pay attention to those changes and understand those changes then we will all benefit. If we try to fight against it . . . we may risk less positive outcomes.”

FacetoFace reaches out to Catholic youth

By Darlene Polachic

SASKATOON — Jon Courchene and his team ministered to some 27,000 Catholic youth last year. Courchene is executive director of FacetoFace Ministries, a ministry that reaches out to Catholic youth across Western Canada.



Darlene Polachic

Jon Courchene

The ministry had its beginnings in 1999 when a parish youth minister, Ken Yasinski, organized a weekend retreat at St. Walburg, Sask. The retreat went well and Yasinski was invited to hold similar retreats in other locations. By 2003, he was doing it full time as FacetoFace Ministries.

Courchene first heard about

the organization when his parents urged him to attend a retreat. “I brushed them off,” he says, “but in 2005 I became a parish minister and learned that a FacetoFace retreat was booked for my area. I saw immediately it was a legitimate ministry, and I was impressed with the team that led it, and the retreat which really kick-started our youth group.”

Courchene began volunteering with FacetoFace while attending the University of Saskatchewan, becoming executive director in the fall of 2012.

The ministry has always been based out of Saskatoon. In 2006, it received registered charity status, and the following year began branching out with more programs.

One popular program is Ignite Summer Camp which is held for a week each summer at St. Therese Institute of Faith and Mission in Bruno, Sask. Some 100 youth come together for the camp, that includes three teaching sessions a day along with group games and prayer.

“Ignite is a chance for youth to grow in their faith. Everything we do goes back to our vision: that all people would encounter Christ and embrace the call to be saints. Our mission is to live and proclaim the fullness of the Catholic faith,” Courchene says.

“How do we facilitate this? God is always reaching out to us, and we have the opportunity to

respond. We try to ‘prime the pump’ by getting kids ready for the encounter, then staying out of the way and letting God do the work.”

Three daily sessions at Ignite involve praise and worship, hearing a testimony from a volunteer team member and a teaching from a guest speaker, plus involvement in small groups to unpack it all.

Courchene says the week also provides plenty of time for fellowship. “We want youth to connect and grow and see that there’s a bigger church out there than their local community. Often the highlight of the weekend is eucharistic adoration, which involves sitting in silence with the Lord.”

FacetoFace regularly holds weekend youth retreats, but one of the biggest aspects of the ministry — and the one that keeps staff and volunteers busiest — is school retreats. The team does 80-plus school retreats across Western Canada each year for elementary, junior high and high school students.

Often, Courchene says, these are repeat visits. “A Catholic school division will book us for a whole week and assign us to various schools. In large divisions, we may go to half the schools one year and the other half the next.”

In elementary schools, retreats start with a large group assembly at the beginning of

the day, then break into different age-grouped activities, followed by an assembly at the end of the day.

FacetoFace also runs an annual summer bus pilgrimage to the United States. Students go to Steubenville, Ohio, to a weekend conference run by the Franciscan University of Steubenville. Some 2,000 Catholic youth hear top speakers and great bands, describes Courchene. They also do mission work in soup kitchens or elsewhere to serve people in need.

The biggest event of the year for FacetoFace is the United Conference that is held at Holy Family Cathedral in Saskatoon in November. This is a youth conference with an adult track that draws about 350 people.

“The conference is youth-focused, but we had so many parents saying, ‘My kid’s been trans-

formed. How can I get that, too?’ that we’ve opened it to adults,” Courchene says.

Besides four full-time staff, FacetoFace typically employs two summer students to help facilitate the summer program. “Plus, we have a whole bunch of amazing volunteers. An Ignite Camp will involve as many as 35 young adults volunteering their time to make a difference in someone else’s life.”

Funding for FacetoFace comes from individuals and a monthly donor base, which supplements what isn’t raised through event registration. Courchene says donor giving makes the program affordable. For more information, visit www.f2f.ca.

This article was previously published in the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix.



Kendra Volk

OUR LADY OF FATIMA — Parishioners at St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Fox Valley, Sask., gathered Aug. 5 to welcome the international pilgrim statue of Our Lady of Fatima, part of an international tour of the statue that included stops in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon and surrounding area at some 15 parishes, at a local community centre, and at an annual pilgrimage held in Rama, Sask. The tour is being held to mark the 100th anniversary of the appearance of Our Lady of Fatima to three shepherd children in Portugal, between May 13 and Oct. 13, 1917.

Eparchy of Saskatoon continues Cana family camp

By Teresa Bodnar-Hiebert

DUCK MOUNTAIN PROVINCIAL PARK, Sask. — The Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon held its third annual Cana Continues! Family Retreat Camp Aug. 13 - 19 at St. Michael’s Camp, nestled in Duck Mountain Provincial Park in southeastern Saskatchewan.

There were daily opportunities to encounter Christ in simplicity: families preparing meals, eating, and doing dishes together. There was a focus on sacrament through daily Divine Liturgy, with opportunities for confession and spiritual direction. Vespers were held on the docks of Madge Lake, at a camp fire, and at the statue of St. Michael the Archangel.

The retreat framework is based on the “Cana Colony” family program at Madonna House in Combermere, Ont. *Nazareth Family Spirituality: Celebrating Your Faith at Home* with Catherine Doherty, compiled and edited by Rev. Blair Bernard, was the core resource explored during the daily parent sessions. Participants searched through their own situations and shared experiences.

Cana 2018 is tentatively set for Aug. 12 - 18. Cana Continues! Family Retreat Camp is funded through the Annual Eparchial Appeal. Registration begins in January 2018 and more information can be found at <http://skeparchy.org/flo/ministries/our-cana-camp/>



Teresa Bodnar-Hiebert

CANA CONTINUES — Vespers is said at the dock during the third annual Cana Continues! Family Retreat Camp held in the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon.

Regina annual report ‘a good start’

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — For the first time in recent history the Regina archdiocese has produced an annual report; it was made public at an annual meeting at the archdiocese offices.

“We are doing two new things here,” said Archbishop Donald Bolen in speaking with the *Prairie Messenger*. “First, we’ve produced a good report, not a comprehensive view of where we are as an archdiocese, but an honest overview. Reports have been produced in the past but they haven’t been made public. Second, holding an annual meeting is a new initiative. A number of people came out and I think as we face current challenges, next year more people will come out. I think it’s a good start.”

About a dozen people plus staff were in attendance. One of the attendees questioned how the meeting had been advertised, suggesting more people would have attended had they known about it. The notice was on the website, was the response, but more

avenues and communication vehicles will be used next year.

“What we really need is not just people coming out to meetings but to be engaged in the challenges we face as a church and work together,” said Bolen.

Brief verbal reports were given by the archbishop; Robert Kowalchuk, executive director for pastoral services; Eric Gurash, co-ordinator for lay ministry and evangelization programs; youth co-ordinator Michelle Braden; and Chief Financial Officer Deacon Barry Wood.

“We decided we needed to communicate much more with all of our faithful. We need to be much more transparent with all the people in the archdiocese. It’s something we’ve talked about for a long time,” said Kowalchuk.

Simply titled *Annual Report*, it is available on the archdiocese’s website, <https://archregina.sk.ca/>. It contains more details of the various ministries and includes some bare-bones financial information with explanatory notes that show revenues declining and expenditures increasing.

The financial situation is one of the challenges the archbishop referred to. “We have major financial challenges but we are not in a state of crisis. We’re just in a time of challenge. Much of the church’s history has been lived in a time of challenge. Many of our parishes are in a time of challenge and when our parishes are financially challenged, so is the archdiocese.”

Bolen also referred to declining attendance at mass — and especially young people not being visible in the church. “Perhaps it shows we are not working closely enough with Catholic schools.”

There are signs that the archdiocesan church is spiritually healthy: 10 seminarians, the most since the early 1950s, are at various stages in their journey to the priesthood. Nine of the 10 permanent diaconate candidates (one withdrew because of health problems) are completing their third year in the four-year program, and 550 Lay Ministry Formation alumni are actively serving the archdiocesan church.

Report has implications for Regina parishes

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — A summary of the Regina archdiocesan parish reports confirm the obvious — fewer people are regularly attending mass — but it also contains a positive surprise in the growth of youth ministry.

“Ten years ago, four of the 134 parishes in the archdiocese had youth ministry programs and

there are now 27,” said director of pastoral services Robert Kowalchuk, who compiled the summary. “That’s a growth rate of 800 per cent.”

The archdiocese has always collected data from parishes, and in 2003 switched to electronic data collecting which allowed for more detailed information and the ability to do some long-term data analysis and develop trend lines.

“It has led us to a pretty robust discussion on how the church is changing and what the responses are for the church,” said Kowalchuk. He also noted that while the response to the original requests sent to parishes and deaneries in 2016 was higher than previous years, there are still some parishes that either do not have the data or did not report.

The archdiocese annually

requests data in 16 categories, but this year it focused on seven: youth ministry, bereavement, the indigenous community, faith formation, lay information and evangelization, and ecumenism and stewardship. The report illustrates the changes that have occurred over the 13-year period.

The number of households has declined by 27.2 per cent; the number of parishioners is down by 11.8 per cent, funerals have increased by 20.7 per cent, and mass attendance has dropped by 39.1 per cent. These numbers should not be read as predictors of the future due to a margin of error in data collection.

As noted, youth ministry has grown by 800 per cent. Parishes are supporting their youth in attending youth rallies and youth-related projects in foreign lands; most of the growth occurred in urban centres.

In bereavement, parishes responded with the number of people over 65 and what is being done to support their faith life. Responses included home visits, funeral planning, praying with the families, and referring to existing bereavement services. The archdiocese frequently receives requests for a Catholic-based bereavement service. Regina’s Holy Trinity Parish supported the work of two individuals who have developed such a service and have presented it to three Regina parishes that are developing

their own program.

There are 28 indigenous reserves in the Regina archdiocese. Fifteen parishes reported awareness of the Truth and Reconciliation Report (TRC) or were creating awareness of the report. The archdiocese has both rural and urban indigenous ministry focusing on building relationships.

In lay ministry and evangelization, there are 500 alumni of the Lay Ministry Formation program but only 140 were identified as involved in parish ministry.

In ecumenism and stewardship, two questions were asked and the responses clearly showed that parishes are active in these areas.

The continuing trend of urbanization has taken its toll on rural parishes. Kowalchuk pointed out that many of the 134 parishes are small, some with as few as a couple of dozen families who continue to support their church.

The 2016 Canadian census reported 131,000 self-identified Catholics in the Regina archdiocese but the archdiocese has about 60,000 registered, a difference of about 70,000.

The report is now in the hands of the six deaneries and their parishes. The report ends by noting the numbers have significant implications for the health of deaneries, parishes, and the archdiocese, inviting a discussion about how best to keep the church alive and well.

Priesthood Urquico’s childhood dream

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — “It was my childhood dream to be a priest,” said Rev. Arpee Sacramento Urquico in an interview several days after his June 30 ordination, but his dream took a convoluted route to his goal.

Arpee was born in a community about two hours south of Manila, in the Philippines. In 1991 Mt. Pinatubo erupted, burying his village in ash and mud. The villagers were evacuated to another village near Manila, and this is where Urquico grew up and completed his elementary and high school education.



Rev. Arpee Urquico

ence the world. He went back to university to finish a philosophy degree. While there he met a girl. They talked about a future together, going to law school, but the thought of the priesthood never left him: “It was always there in the back of my mind.”

Then one day his girlfriend called and said she did not want to be committed but just to continue what they had. “I said no, that is not me,” and he took it as a sign that he was supposed to be a priest.

He completed his philosophy degree, then did a year of studies toward a master’s in education, majoring in guidance and counselling; he then took a job teaching in a Catholic high school.

Two of his friends were invited by a priest to visit a monastery high in the mountains on a weekend and invited him to come along. People came to mass Sunday morning after walking two and three hours to get there. He was impressed, and wondered if God had wanted him to see that to convince him to be a priest and minister to these people. He returned to the seminary.

It was then that his uncle in Prince Albert suggested he come to Canada. He applied, and within a few months arrived in Regina, where he was ordained to the priesthood June 30 (see PM story, July 19, page 6).

shopping but afterward she herded them into the seminary. “My first step inside, I felt different. I felt peaceful,” Urquico recalled. “I thought, ‘What is it that I am feeling?’ Maybe it was the Holy Spirit. You know you’re in the right place when you and everyone around you is happy, and I was happy.”

After graduation from high school he entered the seminary. He would try it for “just one year,” he said. “But I fell in love with it.”

After two years he was advised by the formation team to take some time away from the seminary, get a job and experi-

His mother attended daily mass and took him and his two older brothers with her. His father worked as a mechanic in Saudi Arabia. Urquico became involved in his parish as a youth and met seminarians who came to his church for their internship.

“I want to be like them,” he thought, but it wasn’t until high school that the idea of becoming a priest became more firmly implanted in his hand, mostly through the efforts of a Dominican nun: “She kept bugging me about being a good priest, and came to my home to visit my parents. One time she tricked me and two friends into visiting the seminary.”

She had offered to take them

Three seminarians instituted as acolytes

By Frank Flegel

KRONAU, Sask. — Aug. 13 was a special day for seminarians Reed Miller, Christopher Juchacz and Andrew Lindenbach. All three were instituted as acolytes as a congregation of several hundred participated and prayed for them.

The installation took place in

the grotto of the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Peter’s Colony. The several hundred in attendance were there for a two-day pilgrimage, a celebration of the grotto’s centennial.

Regina Archbishop Donald Bolen installed the three seminarians at the end of his homily on Sunday, the second day of the celebration. Each seminarian



Frank Flegel

ACOLYTES — Seminarians Reed Miller, Christopher Juchacz and Andrew Lindenbach were instituted as acolytes in the grotto of the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Peter’s Colony, near Kronau, Sask., Aug. 13 as a congregation of several hundred participated and prayed for them.

received a chalice and paten from the archbishop, who told them they have a special role in the church’s ministry: “The summit and source of the church’s life is the eucharist, which builds up the Christian community and makes it grow. It is your responsibility to assist the priests and deacons in car-

rying out their ministry.”

They were told they should seek to understand the deep spiritual meaning of what they do and daily offer themselves to God. “Bear in mind that, as you share the one bread with your brothers and sisters, so you form one body with them.”

Bolen reminded them to be obedient to the Lord’s command: “Love one another as I have loved you.”

The three will return to St. Joseph’s Seminary, Edmonton for their final year of study prior to their internship year. If they continue to move toward priestly ministry, they will be ordained to the transitional diaconate at the end of their internship year, followed by one last year of studies, culminating in ordination to the priesthood.

Bolen introduced several other seminarians in the congregation, commenting that the archdiocese is blessed with a large number of seminarians. The archdiocese directory lists nine seminarians: seven at St. Joseph’s, one at St. Philip’s, Toronto, and another studying in Rome.

Simon Wiesenthal Centre helped sponsor tour

Continued from page 1

director of Education, Domenic Scuglia, came to Regina from the York division and suggested the summer course.

The Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies helped sponsor the trip along with the Regina school division and the participants themselves. Twenty-seven Ontario students along with some Ontario teachers made up the full group for the two-week tour of the camps in Germany and Poland. They also toured the sites of the Warsaw and Krakow uprisings.

The trip started in Toronto where they attended classes in which teachers from York Catholic School Division were teaching the course, titled, “The Holocaust in History and Living Memory.” They also met several Holocaust survivors who gave them sealed letters which were to be opened when the group visited Auschwitz-Dachau. Paez said the letter she received from Anita Ekstein told of her childhood memories and of being saved by a Polish friend of her father.

Paez said there isn’t much left of the camps, as the Nazis tried to destroy the evidence before the Allied troops arrived. One exception was the Madjanek Camp in Poland.

“Russian troops got there

before the camp could be destroyed. It’s complete and could be up and running again within a couple of weeks.”

Paez described a round memorial building within which is a



Frank Flegel

HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR — Holocaust survivor Anita Ekstein stands with Regina teacher Ada Paez.

mound of victim’s ashes. “I have a photo showing the students on the other side of the mound. You can see it was quite heavy for them.”

The four Regina teachers are now working with superintendent Kathleen Ehman to develop a course of study which they hope will win the approval of the Ministry of Education and be offered as a summer course.

Remembering Roger Ebert, a beloved film critic

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By Pamela Hill Nettleton

He was perhaps North America’s most beloved film critic, but that is not what Roger Ebert thought he wanted to be.

The way Ebert tells it, he imagined a career as a columnist, something along the lines of being a Mike Royko, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Chicago Tribune* columnist who covered the city’s political scene. Instead, Ebert’s boss at the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Bob Zonka, announced in 1967 that Ebert would replace the paper’s

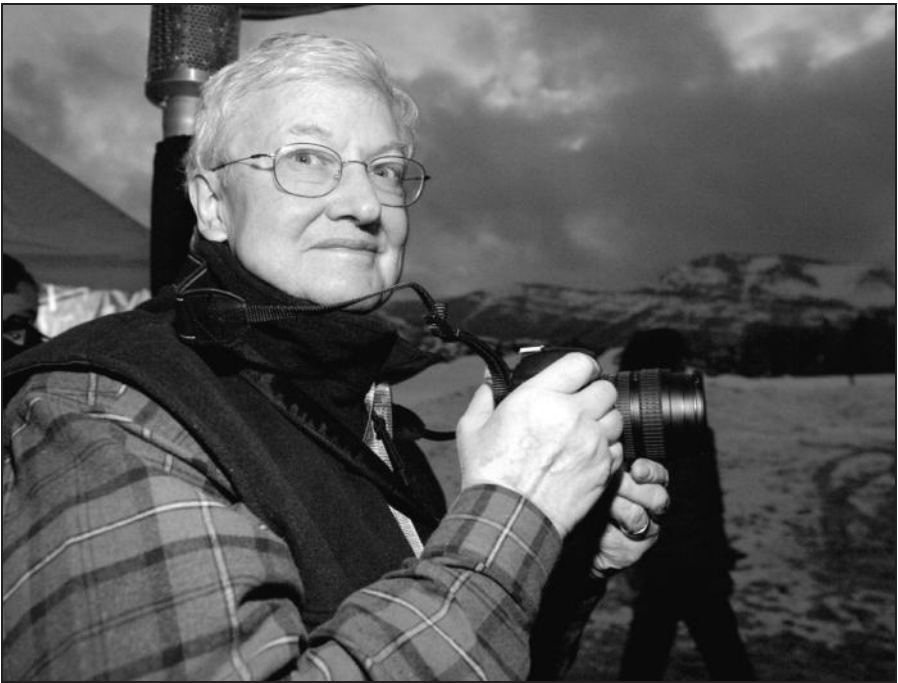
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retiring film critic, Eleanor Keen. Ebert’s life course was set.

From that day until his death in 2013 from cancer, Ebert filed review after review and wrote book after book, relentlessly chronicling American filmmaking over six decades. In 1975 he won the Pulitzer Prize for criticism for his film reviews of 1974, a year that included *Chinatown*, *The Godfather Part II*, and *The Great Gatsby*, of which he wrote, “It would take about the same time to read Fitzgerald’s novel as to view this movie — and that’s what I’d recommend.” It was also the year of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, which earned this bon mot: “I can’t imagine why anyone would want to make a movie like this, and yet it’s well-made.”

His 1994 review of *North* is legendary, not only for its repetition but also for its marked absence of commas: “I hated this

movie. Hated hated hated hated this movie. Hated it. Hated every simpering stupid vacant audience-insulting moment of it.” Here (and in many other reviews) he is fearless in expressing his values; he reveals his spirit of utter integrity. He suffered no fools, but somehow his prose never felt precisely mean. He appeared to love what film could be, could do, and could say, and when he was disappointed by a script or a director, his was the crestfallen outrage of an 11th-grade English teacher facing a poor performance by a promising student. About the massacre at *The Dark Knight Rises* premiere in Aurora, Colorado, he wrote in his 2013 *Movie Yearbook* that “the



CNS/Mario Anzuoni, Reuters

REMEMBERING A MASTER WRITER — Beloved film critic Roger Ebert is seen in 2006 at the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah. “As his thyroid cancer treatment and surgeries robbed him of his ability to speak, he turned to the keyboard and journalled online to a growing audience of newcomers to his famous wit and his fearless and keen-eyed commentary on not only popular culture but also on life itself.”

Certain words represent more serious issues

By Caitlin Ward

So two days ago I sent this text to a friend of mine: “what are your thoughts on white people saying the N word in the context of singing a song?”

She needed clarification before she could answer this question: “as in, a white person wrote the song with that word in it, or a black person wrote the song?”

I meant the latter. I’ve been listening to a couple of rappers lately who say the N word a lot in their music, and I have this sometimes impressive but sometimes annoying habit of picking up all the words to a song very quickly. I wasn’t sure how I should be singing along to these songs in my car.

Long Live the Chief

Jidenna

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_AQFnqMY3E

I know. I’m alone in my car. No one can hear me. I would never say that word outside of the context of singing along to a song, let alone say it and mean it as an insult. This is probably one of those times when people will accuse me of being too neurotic about these things. I will likely be thought of as more neurotic when I tell you that I prefaced the question with an apology for asking, because I felt it wasn’t entirely fair. This friend is mixed race (half black, half white), you see, and I wanted her opinion as a thoughtful person who cares about words, but I also wanted her opinion as a person of colour. But in asking, I also wanted to

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

remind myself that no one person is in a position to represent the feelings of an entire cultural group. It’s not her job to answer all of my questions on race relations, and it’s also easy to forget that getting her personal opinion on the matter is not the same as having a definitive answer.

Yes, I easily get tied up in knots. But in my defence, it has taken me a lot longer to write this out than it did to think about it in the moment, so it’s not as if I spent half the day obsessing over the two texts I sent to her. But these are the things that swirl around in my head much of the time. I think about words a lot. I think about intentions a lot. I think about what both of those things mean in the context of my

friendships and also the larger world. A lot.

I also think about how superficial many of these things can be, though, and how important it is not to get too bogged down in minutiae. I also know that people — especially white people — can get a little overzealous about the issue, probably because they’re afraid of offending people. I will never forget, for example, one time when I said someone was Chinese. One of my students swiftly corrected me to tell me the person I was referring to was Asian. Which, yes, she is — but she is also Chinese. In the sense that her parents are Chinese, she adheres to Chinese religious practices, and she’s from China.

Now, I do know that the word “Chinese” is sometimes incorrectly used as a shorthand for anyone from south-east Asia, but I’m not sure the situation warranted such a swift and sure correction. In this case, it was particularly funny,

considering the person I was talking about literally is Chinese, but even if it had been a misstep I’m not sure publicly challenging a well-intentioned person for using a potentially questionable turn of phrase would have been the most useful thing to do. It’s because of moments like this that the whole debate around language doesn’t always get taken very seriously.

Last night I had a conversation with my father and my sister on words that boiled down to this: language is powerful, but it is powerful because it holds the weight that we give it. That’s not to say, of course, that we can individually decide what words mean and how they can be used, but rather that we need to recognize that certain words often represent larger and more serious issues. That means these words need to be paid much mind, but we also need to acknowledge that these words are not the issue in and of themselves.

The N word itself as a word does not hold some special magic weight, but that word’s history and use means that saying it invokes a whole world of prejudice, power, and protest that must be acknowledged. And depending on who says it and how, it invokes different things. So when I listen to Jidenna alone in my car, knowing from watching interviews with him how strongly he feels about white people using that word, I’m not sure if I’m being sensitive or overly scrupulous when this whole philosophical quandary comes up in my head with the first line of “Long Live the Chief”: “Ni***s fighting over rings . . .”

The only real conclusion I have been able to draw is this: if I need to choose between defending my right to use a particular word and hurting someone with the use of that word, I’ll err on the side of not hurting someone. We may have freedom of expression in Canada, but I refuse to be obsessed with my right to offend people.

decay of standards in movies may be related to the decay of standards in our society. I can’t prove it. But I fear it.”

Starting in 1975, he and Gene Siskel co-hosted public television’s *Sneak Previews*, a program of film reviews that rendered famous their trademarked phrase “Two thumbs up!” They moved to commercial television in 1982, and the program name changed to *At the Movies with Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert*. Their on-air arguments were hilarious master classes in critical thinking about media and storytelling. They freely disagreed and seemed to genuinely respect each other’s perspectives — a democratic quality much missed in current politics and media. After Siskel’s death in 1999, the program continued on with lesser sparring companions, and once Ebert was diagnosed with thyroid cancer, he left the show in the hands of other hosts in 2006.

Ebert’s were the go-to reviews for films, and his annual published collections — and his not-to-be-missed compilations of his most scathing evaluations of dreadful movies — were beloved. His writing is first person and often autobiographical, yet in unassuming and rather modest ways. As his thyroid cancer treatment and surgeries robbed him of his ability to speak, he turned to the keyboard and journalled online to a growing audience of newcomers to his famous wit and his fearless and keen-eyed commentary on not only popular culture but also on life itself. He faced the challenges of his illness and impending death with great humour and transmuted what surely must have sometimes been fear into frank, transparent explorations of the soul. He wasn’t sappy about this, but his love of being human was palpable and his desire to share the human experience with anyone who cared to read what he wrote was generous. He became a teacher, of sorts, as he let us watch him wrestle with the big issues.

In these blogs and in his autobiography *Life Itself* (Grand Central

Publishing) — also the name of a documentary on Ebert — he is at his most magnetic and satisfying. His storytelling is, in turns, funny, poignant, and telling. His thinking is well-structured, clear, level-headed, and logical. Like a good friend, he offers the gift of transparency about family difficulties, his membership in Alcoholics Anonymous (he stopped drinking in 1979), his marriage at the age of 50 to the great love of his life, Chaz, and the health challenges he faced in the last years of his life.

In his memoir, he says he was raised Catholic, attended Catholic grade school, and brought that tradition and sensibility to his work. His essay, “How I Believe in God,” is a delightful memoir of a second grader’s adventures in spirituality and walks through his lifetime of seeking answers to impossible questions. His conclusion in 2009, four years before his death: “I am not a believer, not an atheist, not an agnostic. I am still awake at night, asking *how?* I am more content with the question than I would be with an answer.”

I read Ebert as a fan and as a dazzled fellow writer. His words have that marvellous ease on the page that comes only from a fine mind, applied with integrity and intention. Reading Ebert, I felt I was in the company of a truly decent human being. I didn’t have to always agree with him to enjoy my time with his words. He was no one’s sycophant, and I doubt he would have tolerated one. His writing is a joy because he was so at home with himself while he wrote it — he was unapologetically Ebert, and he knew himself well.

That is the task of life, it seems to me — to fully grow one’s self up, from whatever soil in which we find ourselves planted, into actual maturity. Everyone ages. Not everyone matures.

Over the years, Ebert did. His early work didn’t feel nascent; it was as open and frank as his later reviews. But his person, that first person in his work, was someone he respected — hence, so did his readers. He thought

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August movies: from the memorable to the mediocre

Screenings & Meanings

Gerald Schmitz



The lazy hazy days of summer are not generally a time when big important pictures get released. Air-conditioned theatres offer a more likely escapist inducement. But it's worth noting at least three exceptions, and I'll start with the one that connects to the smoky haze I experienced on Vancouver Island earlier this month.

With a warming planet, the threat from forest fires is expected to increase, as are the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. (In contrast to B.C., Ottawa set rainfall records in each month from April through July.) Despite Trump administration denials, the scientific evidence of human-caused climate change continues to mount, as confirmed this month by a leaked draft national climate assessment

ing population that soon crashed. In 1978 an excavation behind Diamond Tooth Gertie's Gambling Hall unearthed hundreds of reels of old nitrate film that had been stored and forgotten in what had been a swimming pool under an ice-hockey rink in a recreation centre. Nitrate celluloid is highly flammable but, preserved by permafrost and thanks to the efforts of several local conservators, what could be salvaged formed the basis for an extraordinary film archive. Given that an estimated 75 per cent of silent-era films have been lost, it's been called the King Tut's tomb of silent cinema.

Morrison previously earned acclaim for *Decasia* (2002), a meditation on the transitory and transcendent using decaying film images set to a symphonic score.

- An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power (U.S. 2017)
- Dawson City: Frozen Time (U.S. 2016)
- Detroit (U.S. 2017)
- The Dark Tower (U.S. 2017)
- The Glass Castle (U.S. 2017)

report compiled by 13 U.S. federal agencies. Some inconvenient truths cannot be suppressed.

Last January's Sundance Film Festival opened with the timely documentary *An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power* (<https://inconvenientsequel.tumblr.com/>) that centres on the global climate change activism of former U.S. vice-president Al Gore in the decade since 2007's Oscar-winning *An Inconvenient Truth*. Notwithstanding President Trump's decision to withdraw from the 2015 Paris Climate Accord since that premiere, at which Gore spoke with conviction, he has reason to remain optimistic. Not only have other countries reaffirmed their climate commitments, many American states and cities have done the same. What may be more significant is the clean energy revolution that is underway as renewable alternatives to fossil fuels become increasingly available and affordable.

Released during summer's heated political climate south of the border, one hopes this pointed sequel will spark challenging conversations.

Writer-director-editor Bill Morrison's *Dawson City: Frozen Time*, which premiered at the Venice Film Festival a year ago, is a must-see "only in Canada" documentary that starts with an incredible story. In the late 1890s hundreds of thousands of "stampeders" attempted to join the Klondike gold rush in the Yukon, and what had been a tiny indigenous settlement was explosively transformed into Dawson City with a balloon-

In *Frozen Time* he combines a fascinating historical narrative with a flickering feast of recovered bits of found footage from films made in the first decades of the 20th century when Dawson City was the end of the distribution line. The history includes striking period photographs and the archival montages are accompanied by a haunting score. Dawson City was at the root of some storied fortunes — among them the Guggenheims, and Hollywood theatre tycoons Sid Grauman and Alexander Pantages. There's even a Trump connection. His German immigrant grandfather, Frederick Trump (anglicized from Drumpf), was among those who "mined the miners" through gambling, booze and brothels.

Highly revealing about a forgotten era and a cinema thought lost in time, Morrison has fashioned what Glenn Kenny of *The New York Times* rightly calls "an instantly recognizable masterpiece."

I saw *Detroit* on the same day an Aug. 14 headline in *The New Yorker* asked: "Is America Headed for a New Kind of Civil War?" In the wake of the Charlottesville tragedy it's certainly troubling to have a president who draws support from white supremacists and neo-Nazis. Still, America has long been prone to spasms of racialized violence. During the civil rights era of the 1960s some of America's cities exploded in violent protests on a far greater scale.

Director Kathryn Bigelow's timely drama recalls events that took place in America's motor



A MASTERPIECE — Bill Morrison's *Dawson City: Frozen Time* is a must-see "only in Canada" documentary, writes Gerald Schmitz.

city a half-century ago. It begins with an animated prologue observing how millions of African Americans from the south were drawn to job opportunities in northern cities, and how a flight of whites to the suburbs created inner-city ghettos in which "the promise of equal opportunity turned out to be an illusion."

Working from a script by longtime collaborator Mark Boal (*Zero Dark Thirty*), Bigelow then thrusts us into the sequence of events that began in Detroit on July 23, 1967, after an aggressive raid by an all-white police force on an unlicensed after-hours bar in a black neighbourhood sparked street protests that escalated into days of rioting, looting and arson in what was then America's fifth largest city. It was a cry of frustration and

rage in which black people and business owners were the main victims of both the destruction and the aftermath as Michigan state police, the National Guard and army troops were called in to impose an uneasy control.

Bigelow zeroes in on the charged circumstances behind a particularly tragic and revealing incident, inserting bits of archival footage to add to the gripping realism with which she recreates this true story. A central character is aspiring soul singer Larry Reed (Algee Smith), a member of the Motown group The Dramatics, whose breakout performance gets cancelled by the unrest. Caught up in the chaos, he and a friend seek refuge by getting a room in an annex of the Algiers motel where they mingle with others,

including a black Vietnam War veteran and several young white women vacationing from Ohio. A stupid prank with a toy leads to a night of horror to which another key African American figure, Melvin Dismukes (John Boyega), moonlighting as an armed security guard at a nearby grocery store, acts as a silent witness.

Suspecting possible sniper fire, several police officers barge into the hotel demanding answers about the gun and the shooter. There to provoke, not protect, they are led by the youngest officer, Krauss (Will Poulter), who has earlier been reprimanded for shooting a fleeing robbery suspect in the back. The blonde, pale Krauss looks like he could still be

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Books

Dust-ship Glory: a 'graphic' take on a strange prairie story

DUST-SHIP GLORY By Elaine M. Will. Cuckoo's Nest Press, ©2016; \$19.95. The book is available for order on Will's blog: blog.e2w-illustration.com and at McNally Robinson in Saskatoon. Reviewed by Maureen Weber.

Some of you may be familiar with the story of a man who built a ship on the Saskatchewan Prairies in the 1930s. His intention was to use it to sail to his native Finland. Until I read *Dust-ship Glory*, Elaine Will's new adaptation of this story, I wasn't completely sure if this legend of the prairies was true.

Tom Sukanen was a Finnish Canadian pioneer who in his youth in Finland learned to build the components of wooden ships. He also had some nautical skills. As a young man Sukanen sailed to America to find a steel-working job, but circumstances led him to take up farming. He married and he and his wife had four children. Farm life was not successful where they lived in Minnesota, so he decided to explore opportunities in Canada. He made his way to Saskatchewan on foot in search of his brother, who was already farming somewhere between Saskatoon and Swift Current. Sukanen hoped to obtain free farm land and eventually immigrate to Canada with his family.

During the time he established his homestead, Sukanen became known in the area for his mechanical genius, his robust size and incredible strength. But tragedy ensued when he travelled to Minnesota to gather his family and bring them back. Returning alone, he took up his dream — or obsession — to build a ship to sail back to Finland.

Will's *Dust-ship Glory* takes the form of a graphic novel adapted from the 1987 novel of the same name by Andreas Schroeder. The story begins in 1934 with the hull of the ship well underway and nosey, cruel neighbours calling out insults and even trying to vandalize Sukanen's work. The local priest brings children to witness someone he believes to be "possessed."

Tom has one friend, Vihtori, who provides what support he can as Tom becomes further isolated and ridiculed. Vihtori may not understand, but he is present. Their friendship is sensitively told.

Will has found a unique way to tell the story, moving back and forth in time, from Tom's early life with his family in Minnesota beginning in 1906, and as he continues to work on his ship throughout the 1930s and into the '40s.

Will's acclaimed first book, *Look Straight Ahead*, is the autobiographical account of a journey through mental breakdown. *Dust-ship Glory* is an entirely different project, but Will's exceptional artistic talent brings this story to life. From the opening pages she effectively illustrates Sukanen's immense size and difficult disposition. We are drawn into the story as the illustrations capture the action, the characters and the desolation of the Dirty '30s landscape. Depression needs no words in the two-page spread of a prairie dust storm.

Will's illustrations present us with a man of determination, anger, brute force, stoicism, at times optimism and gentleness, intelligence, grim obsession and resignation. Despite the fantastical nature of Sukanen's project, this is not the story of a weird, possessed man, as most of the neighbours see him. It is a compassionate account of someone broken by circumstance who deals with his hardships in a way he alone can understand.

Only Elaine Will could take a true prairie legend from the Dirty '30s and, through her artistic gifts, tell it in the form of a graphic novel. For those who are not familiar with the genre, *Dust-ship Glory*, and *Look Straight Ahead*, would be excellent introductions. I look forward to more of her work.

Revised image: getting to know our Grandmother God

Breaking Open the Ordinary

Sandy Prather



A few years ago a friend of mine became a grandmother for the first time. She had waited a while for this to happen and took to it with delighted joy. She is now grandma to a four-year-old girl and her 16-month-old brother. Since the children live out of town, my friend has become a travelling grandma, driving three hours one way most weekends to be with them. She counts as nothing the hours logged in her car compared with the privilege of sharing her grandchildren’s lives.

On any given weekend she can be found crawling under tables to

Prather, BEd, MTh, is a teacher and facilitator in the areas of faith and spirituality. She was executive director at Star of the North Retreat Centre in St. Albert, Alta., for 21 years and resides in Sherwood Park with her husband, Bob. They are blessed with four children and 10 grandchildren.

make forts, racing around trees playing tag, dressing dolls, or snuggled in bed with a child on either side as she reads, yet again, *Goodnight Moon*. Her grandchildren are still young, but a foundational relationship with their grandmother has been set. In her they find steadfast love, gentle presence and a champion who never fails to take delight in them.

For Mother’s Day this year the children’s mother crafted special cards for each of the children’s two grandmothers. The personalized cards consisted of a series of questions asked of the four-year-old about her Grandma and Nana and the results are as cute and funny as one would expect. When asked, for example, how old her Grandma was, the little girl thought she was probably 16 years old. Nana fared a little better: she was thought to be only 14.

However, the best responses came with the question, “What is it that Grandma/Nana says to you



Leigh Weber

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE — Can we believe in a God who loves us like a doting grandmother and, gazing upon us, says “I love you”? What might change for us in our relationship with God if we truly were to believe that is so?

the most?” Grandma’s most frequent comment, as reported by the little girl, was “I love you.” Nana’s most repeated statement was declared to be a pragmatic: “Don’t knock your brother over.”

Truth be told, the children’s Nana is equally as doting and wonderful as my friend is, but delightfully for us, in this instance, the practical came to the forefront.

It’s the juxtaposition of the two statements that we find funny. We

identify all too easily with the two polarities represented: affirmation of unqualified love on one hand, and admonishment to good behaviour on the other. Having experienced both and said both, I’m sure, it encourages some interesting self-reflection. If the people in our lives were polled about what we say most often to them, what would the answers be? Are we high on the affirming, loving scale, or are our comments critical and disparaging?

Do the people around us bask in our approval, or shrink from our judgment? Is it a loving gaze they encounter, or a disappointing one? It’s enlightening to consider the answers as we realize we might not always express the love we feel for those around us.

It’s even more enlightening when we take the question and apply it to our relationship with God. Our response to the simple question “What do I most often hear God saying to me?” can be revelatory of our deepest belief about the nature of God. In our prayer, our “conversations” with God, what do we hear God saying to us most frequently? Is it affirmation, “I love you?”; or is it an admonishment, “Don’t,” and a list of prohibitions. Do we feel we are held in God’s loving gaze, or more that we are being monitored for infractions?

I expect our response will often be that we hear the latter, the “don’t” comments. We have long had a theology that focused on behaviour more than the dispositions of the heart. As a result, for too many people, God is not a loving presence, but a strict taskmaster and a calculating judge who has to be obeyed and appeased in order for one to be welcomed, accepted or loved. God’s love has to be earned through good behaviour, and equally, can be lost through bad behaviour. This merit-based system has permeated our spirituality.

Yet it is surely more scriptural and truer to revelation to hold “I love you” as God’s most frequent comments to us. The Bible comes to us as God’s love story to humankind where God acts in history to form a people beloved of God. Steadfast, compassionate, merciful and kind: these are the attributes of God extolled by the prophets and revealed through God’s actions. They become incarnate in Christ and revealed in God’s words of blessing to Jesus: “This is my beloved in whom I am well pleased.” These words shape Jesus’ life, giving him the freedom to act as a child of God. Love is the starting point and all God’s actions flow from this affirmation.

What it would be like to live with that ringing in your ears! Truly Jesus invites us into the same realm of relationship with God that he knows. We come to it in the Spirit, where, given the courage to call God “Abba,” we too know ourselves to be the Beloved.

It begins with a declaration of love. A four-year-old offers us the insight, with a simple, beautiful question, “What does Grandma say to you most often?” and a simple, beautiful answer, “I love you.” Can we live in such a way that others might give that answer about us? Furthermore, can we believe in a God who loves us like a doting grandmother and gazing upon us, says the same thing? What might change for us if we truly were to believe that is so?

More films worth seeing before the end of summer

Continued from page 9

in high school, but his profile and racist fervour are suggestive of someone who would have eagerly joined the Hitler Youth. Abetted by officers Flynn (Ben O’Toole) and Demens (Jack Reynor), Krauss’s interrogation turns into a serial terrorizing of hotel guests, including the two girls, involving verbal and physical abuse plus mock executions. Other security forces come on the scene but back off, although one soldier allows a detainee to escape. It takes a dim-witted actual murder to end the police power-tripping that leaves three young black men dead at their hands.

What follows is almost as shocking. Dismukes, who would probably have been killed had he tried to stop the homicidal officers, was hauled in by police as a suspect. Although Flynn and Demens confessed to their role in the killings, backed by the police union they and Krauss were let off by an all-white “justice” system that essentially exonerated racially motivated murder. Black lives were ended, and many more scarred. Larry, whose friend was among the dead, abandoned a promising career, salvaging some solace with a local church choir.

The city Detroit has since fallen on hard times, losing much of its population and economy as probed in documentaries like *Detroit on Fire* and *Detropia*. The movie *Detroit* speaks to a deeper affliction of race-based hatred that continues to trouble the soul of America. It’s a compelling reminder of what happens when justice is denied and of why the struggle for rights must carry on.

Danish director Nikolaj Arcel’s adaptation of the Stephen King eight-book series, *The Dark Tower*, disappoints, soon to be forgotten as a slight and silly sci-fi horror fantasy in which a dark tower, the anchor of universes, is threatened by demonic forces preying on the minds of children. New York City adolescent Jake Chambers (Tom Taylor) sees them in visions and plasters images on his walls including of a “gunslinger” who turns out to be “Roland” (Idris Elba), and a “man in black” who turns out to be the sorcerer, “Walter” (Matthew McConaughey), a sort of supreme demon. As the city shakes from earthquakes, mom and stepdad (Jake’s dad died fighting fires) call in the shrinks. Jake isn’t crazy, but a seer who absconds, finds a portal from “keystone earth” into “mid-world,” there to meet Roland, whose saving mission is to van-

quish Walter. The condensed narrative doesn’t do justice to the source material. As child versus monster stories go, it’s creepy and underwhelming.

The Glass Castle, directed and co-written by Destin Daniel Cretton, is adapted from a 2005 memoir by Jeannette Walls who is also at the centre of this true story of a highly unusual family, both as a child (Ella Anderson) and adult (Brie Larson). Jeanette’s parents, two sisters and brother live an anarchic nomadic existence on the margins. Mom Rose Mary (Naomi Watts) indulges her passion for painting, while chainsmoking dad Rex (Woody Harrelson), a drunk as well as a dreamer, indulges his fantasy of building a solar glass house. After settling near hillbilly relations in West Virginia, Rex briefly dries out and gets a job, but generally



CNS/Annapurna Pictures

DETROIT — John Boyega stars in *Detroit*, a film by Kathryn Bigelow. The film throws us into the sequence of events that began in Detroit on July 23, 1967, after an aggressive raid by an all-white police force on an unlicensed after-hours bar in a black neighbourhood sparked street protests that escalated into days of rioting, looting and arson in what was then America’s fifth largest city.

ch a o s reigns. The children have to make it largely on their own w i t s . Jeanette joins sister Lori in escaping to New York. Still, the past follows her when the rest of the family

migrates there.

The movie shifts back and forth between childhood scenes and Jeanette’s career as a fashionable magazine writer, juggling being engaged to slick financial analyst David (Max Greenfield) with the reality of having anti-establishment parents living as homeless squatters. Through all the twists and melodramatic episodes Jeanette can’t shake a soft spot for the irresponsible dad who calls her “mountain goat.” There’s a final reconciliation and, as her life takes a new turn, she holds on to family, underscored by some affectionate closing images of the real Jeanette, her parents and siblings.

While there’s some dramatic exaggeration, and Harrelson’s portrayal verges on caricature, the performances by Watts, Anderson and Larson are strong. This is a family movie of the disturbing kind.

A few last recommendations:

Quebec director Christian Duguay’s *A Bag of Marbles*, a Canada-France co-production, is a stirring second screen adaptation of Joseph Joffo’s autobiographical Holocaust novel about how two Jewish boys, brothers in Nazi-controlled France, survive through much pluck and luck while pretending to be Catholic and Algerian.

The heist thriller *Logan Lucky*, propelled by a pair of brothers, marks a welcome return to filmmaking by director Steven Soderbergh.

Taylor Sheridan’s award-winning *Wind River* is a taut drama of crime and justice on a Native American reservation.

Love as fraternal correction, forgiveness and worship



Liturgy and Life

Sylvain Lavoie, OMI

How would you summarize the Bible in one sentence? The answer by St. Paul in the second reading is simple: “Love your neighbour as you love yourself.”

It is clear that our No. 1 priority must be to love sincerely. However, there are many ways to express love. Today’s readings highlight three key ways — fraternal correction, forgiveness and worship.

Fraternal correction isn’t mentioned or talked about very much in either the church or our society these days. Ezekiel, in the first reading, writes about fraternal correction as a mandate given to him directly by God. As a prophet called to speak the truth, unpleasant as that truth may be, he was appointed by God to be a sentry to the House of Israel, to point out their fault, to warn them to renounce their sin and infidelity, to change their ways.

If Ezekiel does this, even if they do not repent and change, he will have saved his life. But if he does not do this, then he is told that he will be responsible for the consequences of the other’s wrongdoing. This is a heavy burden laid on Ezekiel, and on us as well. We also share the burden of fraternal correction — of warning our brothers and sisters when they stray from the teachings of Jesus and are doing wrong.

Sylvain Lavoie, OMI, Archbishop Emeritus of the Archdiocese of Keewatin-The Pas, is chaplain at the Star of the North Retreat House in St. Albert, Alta. He continues to live out his motto, Regnum Dei Intra Vos (the kingdom of God is among you), which is his overriding focus and passion.

Bob, a member of a religious community, was beating himself up for having resigned from an important position in his community. A friend who witnessed this felt concern for him, came up to him and told him, “Your refusal to forgive yourself is worse than anything else you have ever done.” That one statement of fraternal correction was enough to nudge Bob toward finally forgiving himself, and it made a huge difference in his life.

This kind of fraternal correction is one way that we are being asked to express love to others. Another is through forgiveness.

The gospel today is actually a mini-manual on how to forgive. It is also probably one of the most critical yet least appreciated passages in the Bible. In it, Jesus is giving us a very simple formula on how to forgive. All we have to do, when hurt by someone, is to go to that person alone and share our feelings with him or her. If the abuser will not listen, then we can take others with us. If they still don’t listen, then we are to treat them like tax collectors or gentiles.

The key to understanding that last phrase is to realize that, in the Gospel of Matthew, the tax collector is Matthew himself. And in the Gospel of Matthew, we are

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time September 10, 2017	Ezekiel 33:7-9 Psalm 95 Romans 13:8-10 Matthew 18:15-20
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told to go to all the gentile nations and teach them to keep the commands of Jesus, to love and forgive one another. What Matthew is saying is to treat them like Jesus treated him — he forgave him and called him to discipleship. We are to forgive and keep on forgiving.

Retreat master and spiritual writer Paula D’Arcy lost her husband and daughter in an accident caused by a drunk driver. That loss devastated her life. For months she was like a zombie. It took her years to cope with her loss. In the process, she ended up in court one day face-to-face with the young man who caused the accident. Somehow, perhaps because of her strong faith background, she felt surging within her a powerful force of forgiveness. What happened to her was visible to her lawyer when he saw how she looked at the defendant on the stand. She could

only say that she saw Jesus in that young man’s eyes, understood him and no longer felt anger toward him, even if he lied on the stand and expressed no remorse. Such was the power of her love that she forgave just as Jesus forgave on the cross.

Jesus adds an important teaching — that when we forgive someone here on earth, that forgiveness happens in heaven as well. To forgive someone else is to help build up the reign of God here on earth and also in heaven. To refuse to forgive someone is to hold back the growth of the kingdom of God here on earth, and in heaven as well.

John decided to live out today’s gospel by writing a letter to his deceased father as a way of trying to forgive him for the hurtful way his addicted father had raised him. He poured into that letter all his emotions that he had never shared with his father while he was still alive, read it to a pillow, and shed a few tears. A week later his counselor asked if it felt more like an adult-to-adult relationship with his father now. John was startled. That was it — he was no longer the kid and his father the big daddy. They were now friends!

John was moved to the depths of his being as he realized that if he was healing in his relationship with his father, then his late father was healing in his relationship with him. The words “what is loosed on earth is loosed in heaven” suddenly took on profound meaning. He was experiencing the communion of the saints!

In the last line of today’s gospel, Jesus adds another way we can express our love, this time for him, and that is through worship. When two or three are gathered in his name, he is there among us. When we gather together to pray or to worship, there is a special presence of Jesus among us. What great motivation for us to celebrate and worship as we are doing now — for Jesus is truly among us.

The eucharist is in itself an experience of forgiveness. Through word and sacrament, we are forgiven, healed and transformed into the Body of Christ who is forgiveness. We are then commissioned to go out and practise that same forgiveness.

So, inspired by the Word of God today, let us continue building up the reign of God through love expressed by fraternal correction, forgiveness and worship.

After suicide it is important to redeem the memory of a loved one



In Exile

Ron Rolheiser, OMI

One year ago, virtually everyone who knew him was stunned by the suicide death of the most prominent American Hispanic theologian that we have produced up to now, Virgilio Elizondo.

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

Moreover, Virgil wasn’t just a gifted, pioneering theologian, he was also a beloved priest and a warm, trusted friend to countless people. Everyone dies, and the death of a loved one is always hard, but it was the manner of his death that left so many people stunned and confused. Suicide! But he was such a faith-filled, sensitive man. How could this be possible?

And those questions, like the muddy waters of a flood, immediately began to seep into other emotional crevices, leaving most

everyone who knew him with a huge, gnawing question: What does this do to his work, to the gift that he left to the church and to the Hispanic community? Can we still honour his life and his contribution in the same way as we would have had he died of a heart attack or cancer? Indeed, had he died of a heart attack or cancer, his death, though sad, would undoubtedly have had about it an air of healthy closure, even of celebration, that we were saying farewell to a great man we had had the privilege to know, as opposed to the air of hush, unhealthy quiet, and unclear grief that permeated the air at his funeral.

Sadly, and this is generally the case when anyone dies from suicide, the manner of that death becomes a prism through which his or her life and work are now seen, coloured, and permanently tainted. It shouldn’t be so, and it’s incumbent on us, the living who love them, to redeem their memories, to not take their photos off our walls, to not speak in guarded terms about their deaths, and to not let the particular manner of their deaths colour and taint the goodness of their lives. Suicide is the least glamorous and most misunderstood of all deaths. We owe it to our loved ones, and to ourselves, to not further compound a tragedy.

So each year I write a column on suicide, hoping it might help produce more understanding

around the issue and, in a small way perhaps, offer some consolation to those who have lost a loved one in this way. Essentially, I say the same things each year because they need to be said. As Margaret Atwood once put it, some things need to be said and said and said again, until they don’t need to be said any more. Some things need still to be said about suicide.

What things? What needs to be said, and said again and again about suicide? For the sake of clarity, let me number the points:

1. First, in most cases, suicide is the result of a disease, a sickness, an illness, a tragic breakdown within the emotional immune system or simply a mortal biochemical illness.

2. For most suicides, the person dies, as the does the victim of any terminal illness or fatal accident, not by his or her own choice. When people die from heart attacks, strokes, cancer, and accidents, they die against their will. The same is true in suicide.

3. We should not worry unduly about the eternal salvation of a suicide victim, believing (as we used to) that suicide is the ultimate act of despair. God’s hands are infinitely more understanding and gentler than our own. We need not worry about the fate of anyone, no matter the cause of death, who leaves this world honest, over-sensitive, over-

wrought, too bruised to touch, and emotionally crushed, as is the case with most suicides. God’s understanding and compassion exceed our own. God isn’t stupid.

4. We should not unduly second-guess ourselves when we lose a loved one to suicide: *What might I have done? Where did I let this person down? What if? If only I’d been there at the right time!* Rarely would this have made a difference. Most of the time we weren’t there for the very reason that the person who fell victim to this disease did not want us to be there. He or she picked the moment, the spot, and the means precisely so we wouldn’t be there. Suicide seems to be a disease that picks its victim precisely in such a way so as to exclude others and their attentiveness. This is not an excuse for insensitivity, but is a healthy check against false guilt and fruitless second-guessing. Suicide is a result of sickness and there are some sicknesses which all the love and care in the world cannot cure.

5. Finally, it’s incumbent upon us, the loved ones who remain here, to redeem the memory of those who die in this way so as to not let the particular manner of their deaths become a false prism through which their lives are now seen. A good person is a good person and a sad death does not change that. Nor should a misunderstanding.

HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE

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On the ‘awe-full’ bosom of Mother Earth

By Edna Froese

I am a dual citizen on planet earth. As a lifelong prairie dweller, I made my peace long ago with a difficult landscape. When visiting family mock Saskatchewan as the land that God forgot, I defend not only the clichéd delights — crocuses, meadowlarks waving wheat fields, the scent of sage, sunsets and sunrises — but also fierce winter blizzards, the spectacular percussion of summer storms, the utter lack of boundaries in the sky.

Nevertheless, when, as a young woman, I lived in the Rocky Mountains for a summer, I gave my heart to their sublime and awful beauty as if I had been in exile until then and had only just discovered my true home. Becoming a lifelong vacationer in the Rockies seemed as natural as breathing. There I could forget the prairie’s harsh narratives of grasshoppers and drought, and my own small stories of grief. The mountains felt clean, uncontaminated by human failures (although I knew they were not); I could breathe here, I could feel the voice of the Divine.

By the time I first read about the correlation between the essential human spiritualities and the primary landscapes — forest, plains (or desert), water, and mountains — our family had been tenting and hiking in the Rockies

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.



Edna Froese

Sunset over the Milk River valley in Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park.

for many years. Those vacations had always been so soul-restoring for me, that it took no great act of discernment to know that mountains were my spiritual home. There I was often caught up in worship, speechless and ecstatic in the face of a beauty both exquisite in its changeable colours and terrifying in its physical demands. This terrain is not to be taken lightly. Rocks may be ancient and solid; they are also unforgiving and moveable in dreadful ways. Yet I loved it all, and felt loved within it.

This summer, our family camped in Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park. Above the gash of the coulee, where the Milk River flows past the hoodoos, lay the prairies, shimmering with heat, drawing the eye skyward to eterni-

ty. Apart from the trees along the river, this was closer to desert than anything we’d known before. Among the sage and grasses and prickly pear cacti lived prairie rattlesnakes and cottontail rabbits; on the sides of immense hoodoos near the river nested cliff sparrows in great colonies and pack rats in their untidy holes.

Writing-on-Stone has been sacred territory for indigenous peoples for hundreds of years. Their stories are etched on the rocks in symbolic pictures. On the barren tops of hoodoos vision quests were held and, even now, recent sacred offerings left for the Creator are mute testimony of a strong human relationship with the earth.

Such a powerful spiritual place we were visiting, yet I felt only

curiosity and wonder. My soul remained unmoved, as if it knew that I was an outsider, one whose heart had been given elsewhere and couldn’t be truly present here.

Then came the night when heat made sleep impossible. Under an almost full moon, I needed no light to walk the campground road. A scant breeze ruffled state-ly cottonwoods into soft sibilant music. Could I ever learn to love this place? The moonlight on the nearby Sweet Grass Hills across the border in Montana was — tender? No, wrong word. “Cool” was more like it, with its old meaning of chilly distance.

Back in the tent, I still couldn’t sleep, although I lay quietly now. Then I felt it. The very soil — so close under me, less than two inches of human-made substances between me and it — rose and fell in a rocking motion that nearly stopped my heart in fear. Those 30 seconds of earth movement were no dream. A sudden scatter of agitated voices nearby asking “what happened?” told me it was real. For the next half hour I waited, alert now,

before feeling again two or three slight shiftings, then all was still.

In the morning I discovered that of the six adults in our group, all of us tenters, I was the only one who had felt the earth move. My story was greeted with courtesy but unspoken skepticism — until the next-site neighbour told us that her trailer had been shaken violently enough to wake her, and she wondered if mischievous teens had come through our site as well. When I told her what I had felt, she assumed that human hands had shaken our tent (I knew that was wrong). Later I heard other campers whose trailers had been rudely shaken wonder who the culprits had been. All who had layers of human construction and several feet of air between them and the earth had experienced the tremors as a mechanical event of human agency.

Then came news that an earthquake in Montana (5.8 on the Richter scale) had sent tremors even farther north than Writing-on-Stone. My “I told you so” satisfaction gave way abruptly to a reverent gratitude that I had been “chosen” to feel those tremors against my body. What was a rattling disturbance for everyone in trailers was, for a tent sleeper, an intimate pressure gentle enough not to wake anyone. If I had been sleeping, would I have awakened or would it have become part of my dreams? What does it really mean to be at one with the earth?

The next day we hiked up through the hoodoos to seek refuge from the heat in the excellent Visitors Centre. After a futile effort to absorb information, I volunteered to take my turn to stay outside with the dogs. Since they were content to pant beneath the picnic table, I was left alone with the land, from the grasses and sage at my feet to the towering hoodoos nearby, from the Milk River below me to yonder Sweet Grass Hills. This, this was the land that had moved and had moved me with it.

Every work of art opens conversations



Figure of Speech

Dr. Gerry Turcotte

“I have filled him with divine spirit, with ability, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, to devise artistic designs.”*
(Exodus 31:3)

In Calgary a recent unveiling of public art has once again reignited the debate on the value of tax-payer-funded projects. In particular, the launch of “Bowfort Towers,” a rusted metal and rock installation said to mirror the region’s mountains and echo Blackfoot culture, has once again triggered visceral opposition. For some the “consultation” with elders appears questionable and unlikely. Many are furious that the project went to New Yorkers when local artists are crying out for work; still others balk at the \$500,000 price tag when city art groups are desperate for funding.

Needless to say, many have

Turcotte is president of St. Mary’s University in Calgary.

countered that public art *should* be controversial and generate conversations, citing the fierce opposition to the Eiffel Tower as a case in point. As Don Braid pointed out, “in the late 1800s the Eiffel Tower project tore Paris apart. . . . Writers, painters, sculptors and architects vowed ‘to protest with all our strength and all our indignation . . . against the erection . . . of the useless and monstrous Eiffel Tower. . . .’”

I will go out on a limb here and suggest that the latest Calgary project is unlikely to become a beloved cultural symbol for the city. And I will admit to a personal dislike both of the design and the cultural appropriation of the work itself. However, it would be a pity if a fraught work undermined an otherwise admirable initiative, which is to populate public spaces with art. Creative works entering the public domain is always important, not just as a trigger for healthy dialogue and conversation, but also as an acknowledgment of

the power of art to actually transform society itself.

It is surely in recognition of this that so many of our popes have spoken on the importance of art, including our last three pontiffs. For John Paul II: “Society needs artists . . . who ensure the growth of the person and the development of the community.” For Benedict XVI: “Dear artists . . . you are the custodians of beauty: thanks to your talent, you have the opportunity to speak to the heart of humanity, to touch individual and collective sensibilities. . . .” And in speaking to the Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums, a group whose work is dedicated to the restoration of treasured works, Pope Francis noted, “In every age the church has called upon the arts to give expression to the beauty of her faith and to proclaim the gospel message of the grandeur of God’s creation, the dignity of human beings made in his image and likeness.”

It may be a stretch to suggest that public art lays claim to such lofty goals, but it shouldn’t be. Every work of art opens a conversation that connects us to our shared humanity, and reminds us of the need for beauty in a blighted world. As Pope Paul the VI put it in 1965: “this world in which we live needs beauty in order not to sink into despair.”



Edna Froese

View from Illecillewaet Glacier near Rogers Pass

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Of garbage and the albatross around our necks

Soul Searching

Tom Saretsky



In 1798 Samuel Taylor Coleridge published the poem “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.” The idiomatic expression, “wearing an albatross around your neck,” originated from this poem. It’s an expression that suggests how guilt becomes an obstacle to success. According to maritime superstition it is considered unlucky to kill an albatross — a graceful large white sea bird. In the poem, the mariner

Saretsky is a teacher and chaplain at Holy Cross High School in Saskatoon. He and his wife, Norma, have two children, Nathan and Jenna.

kills an albatross. When their ship is becalmed near the equator and the crew runs out of water, his shipmates, in anger and frustration toward the mariner, force him to wear the dead bird around his neck. It’s a fascinating expression that should resonate throughout our world today because we, as residents of this planet, are collectively wearing an albatross around our necks. Not long ago, the CBC Radio program “As It Happens” featured an interview with the director of a new documentary film called *Albatross*. The film hopes to attract attention to the alarming calamity of dead and decomposing albatross

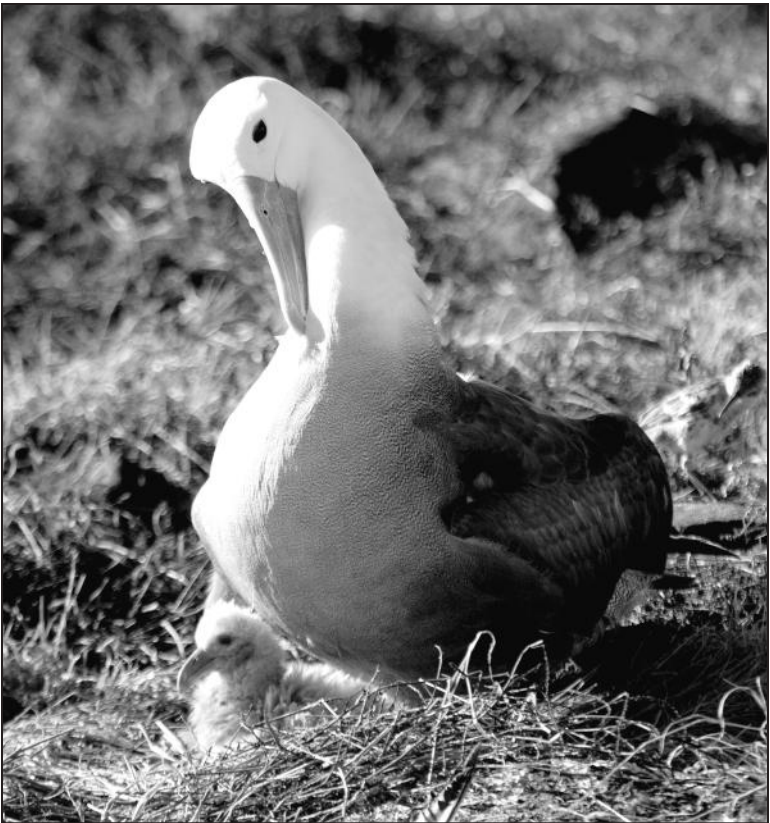
chicks on the remote island of Midway Atoll in the northern Pacific. The birds are being fed plastic by their parents, who soar out over the sea collecting what looks like food to bring back to their young. On a diet of plastic garbage, tens of thousands of albatross chicks die on this island every year from starvation, toxicity and choking. The carnage is horrifying. In the midst of decomposition, the plastic retains its vibrant colour. The plastic could still be reused. The dead chicks, not so much.

It is incomprehensible that tons of garbage ends up in the bodies of albatrosses on this island every year. Piles of our bottle caps, plastic bags, toothbrushes, cigarette lighters, find their way to the stomachs of baby birds on one of the most remote islands on earth.

Because of this calamity we must ask the question, are we harming our planet’s ability to support life — including our own? Is the message conveyed by these dead and dying creatures alarming enough to awaken us to a more sensible relationship with the earth? If the answer is no, then what more will it take to awaken us?

Environmental clubs, organizations and public awareness campaigns exist to raise awareness for environmental concerns. Unfortunately, the stigmatization of those who champion environmental causes remains. They’re either branded as “tree huggers,” or dismissed as irrelevant, because “pollution is simply the price you pay for progress.” It’s insane that this mindset still exists despite the overwhelming climate-altering, species-vanishing, habitat-destroying evidence that continues to pile up.

Unless we literally change the way we are living, we are head-



Design Pics

DIET OF DEATH — A graceful albatross with her chick. The plastic we discard ends up in the ocean where these magnificent birds mistake the particles for food, feed them to their chicks, and the chicks die. All because we can’t be bothered to alter our wasteful lifestyles.

Ebert was always himself

Continued from page 8

deeply about his topics, and neither his logic nor his writing were sloppy. He was his own life project, and he took responsibility and care with it. He made himself into a good man. He didn’t lecture readers about this, but it was right there in every word.

I didn’t read him (and read him still; his ongoing website of greatest hits is a comfort — <http://www.rogerebert.com/rogers-journal>) just for the thumbs up or thumbs down of film reviewing — any old snark can pen a sarcastic insult and get Yelped. I read him for the purity of Roger in his words. That is the writer’s great

task, and it takes more skill and bravery than many possess: Be yourself on the page. For that to work, you must first be someone interesting and worth knowing. Ebert was both, and he let his readers get to know him.

He was a master. As a professor, I use his writing to teach students, not only those studying how to write arts criticism, but those studying, you know, life.

In 2006, Ebert wrote about *Crash*, “I believe that occasionally a film comes along that can have an influence for the better, and maybe even change us a little.” He made us believe that about film, and art, too. And about ourselves.

ing toward an environmental catastrophe. Plastic in the stomachs of dead birds on a remote island in the Pacific — dead albatrosses around all of our necks.

The words of Elizabeth Tapia, Philippine environmental missionary, say it best:

“I believe in the sacredness of the earth, the integrity of the whole of creation and dignity of all people and creatures. We believe in a gracious God who created humankind — male and female, and gave them the responsibility to take care of the earth. We need to care.

“I believe that when we destroy the earth, we eventually destroy ourselves. We must protect and

preserve the earth not only for our own survival, but for the sake of our mother earth. The time to change is now. I believe we need to change our ways, values, lifestyle and ways of relating with creation. We need to live in the sense of people and creation. For I believe in the inter-wovenness of life. Creator and Creatures. Cosmic and Individual. West, North, East, South. Rest and Prayer. Food and Freedom. Theology and Ecology. I therefore commit myself, together with you, to take care of mother earth. To advocate for peace and justice. To choose and celebrate life. Amen.”

Perhaps we should adopt these words as our new creed.

Soviets have not returned churches they confiscated

Continued from page 1

Federation, including the difficulties that remain in obtaining work permits for non-Russian religious personnel and the restitution of some churches, which are needed for the pastoral care of Catholics in the country.” Many church buildings were confiscated by the former Soviet government and never returned.

Regarding international affairs, Parolin said he and Lavrov discussed several ongoing conflicts, including the war in Eastern Ukraine and the war in Syria.

In situations of war, he said, the Catholic Church often is directly involved in promoting humanitarian aid for the victims, but it also works on a diplomatic level to promote a negotiated peace with guarantees of “justice, legality, truth” and the safety of civilians.

The Russian foreign ministry posted online the first minutes of the working meeting between Parolin and Lavrov.

The foreign minister told the cardinal, “We see that our positions are close on a number of current issues, including the peaceful set-

tlement of crises, fighting terrorism and extremism, promoting the dialogue among religions and civilizations and strengthening social justice and the role of the family.”

And, he said, it is important that the strengthening of Vatican-Russian relations is “complemented by the dialogue between religions, which was launched during the historical meeting between Kirill and Pope Francis in Cuba.”

Parolin began his visit to Russia with a meeting with Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of external relations for the Russian Orthodox Church.

After the meeting, he told reporters their time together was very constructive, and that even though there are “thorny issues,” there also is a great desire to overcome them. As an example of an ongoing difficulty, Parolin said the existence of the Ukrainian Catholic Church “remains for the Russian Orthodox Church an obstacle.”

In the evening Aug. 21, Parolin presided over a mass for Moscow’s Catholics in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Before mass, he had met with the country’s Catholic bishops.

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Judging the past

CBC's "Cross Country Checkup" on Aug. 20 explored the events of Charlottesville and asked, "Could Charlottesville happen in Canada, and how should it be handled?"

Charlottesville was the scene of a "Unite the Right" rally on Aug. 12. It was labelled the largest gathering of white nationalists in a decade. Neo-Nazis, Klu Klux Klan members, skinheads and members of various white nationalist factions clashed with counter-protesters. During the violence, a car rammed the demonstrators, killed a 32-year-old woman and injuring more than two dozen. The rally featured opposing opinions about the legacy of the American Civil War and the removal of statues and plaques honouring Confederate leaders who supported slavery and racism.

At a subsequent rally in Arizona, President Donald Trump criticized the removal of such memorials. He said, "They're trying to take away our culture, they're trying to take away our history." His comments stirred up further controversy.

Should monuments to heroes of the past be removed or torn down? Ontario's public elementary school teachers think so. The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario passed a motion at its recent annual meeting calling on all school districts in Ontario to rename schools and buildings named after Sir John A. Macdonald.

They want the name change because of what it calls Macdonald's role as the "architect of genocide against indigenous peoples." Macdonald was prime minister when the federal government approved the first residential schools in the country.

The teachers' motion has also stirred up opposing opinions on how to deal with leaders who were honoured for one cause in the past, but have since become maligned for supporting other ignoble causes.

This brings up an interesting parallel in church circles.

Many churches, for example, are named after St. Peter and St. Paul. One was an apostle of Jesus, and named "the rock" by Jesus himself. Yet, it was Peter who denied Jesus three times. Can there be anything worse than that?

Paul was a devout Jew who persecuted Christians. On his way to Damascus one day, he had a conversion experience and became a fervent disciple of Jesus.

Over the course of history, both men have been honoured with monuments and buildings named after them. St. Peter's Basilica in Rome features a prominent statue of him with the keys of the kingdom. St. Paul's Basilica in Rome likewise features a statue of the apostle with a sword, indicating the manner of his martyrdom.

Both apostles are honoured for the good they eventually accomplished. Paul became an apostle to the gentiles. Peter became head of the church. However, they also had some major flaws from their past. One denied Jesus at a critical time in his life and the other led a major persecution of Christians.

While we don't condone the evil people do, we don't agree people can be fairly judged by the norms of a different age and culture. A hundred years from now, another cultural shift will have happened. Some of today's heroes will be the villains tomorrow. — PWN

People of the Western Arctic celebrate a thanksgiving jamboree



Life In Canadian Arctic

Jon Hansen, CSsR

I am in Paulatuk where the people have gathered for "Iqalukpik," the annual Arctic Char Jamboree; a thanksgiving celebration for the abundance of fish and wildlife which sustains the community throughout the year. It is a homecoming event and people from across the region have returned to join the festivities.

As I look at the many faces and families who have congregated I ponder the questions of who these people are, where did they come from and how did they find their way to this beautiful but remote part of the world?

Evidence shows that the Canadian Arctic has been populated by human cultures for more than 4,000 years. The earliest known group were the Pre-Dorset who migrated eastward from Siberia and the area we now know as Alaska, and across the northern regions of present-day Canada. These people survived for a time in the difficult conditions of the north but did not flourish and signs of their presence in the western Arctic show that they disappeared from here about 2,500 years ago.

The next wave of migration was the Thule people who also made their way east from Alaska about 1,200 hundred years ago. The Thule followed the seasonal path of the bow whale which slowly extended eastward as the Arctic warmed and soon the people found themselves settling and adapting to the new environment. It was from this small group of nomadic hunters that the modern-day Inuvialuit evolved and began to thrive in the region of the western Canadian Arctic.

Today the communities of Paulatuk, Tuktoyaktuk and Ulukhaktok hold on to this culture and lan-

guage and collectively are known as "Siglit," people of the coast.

Contact with outsiders first began as rumours of "Tan'ngit," strangers coming from the east and west by land and sea. These strangers were the early European explorers searching for trade routes through the Northwest Passage. It was not until the early 19th century that formal introductions took place when an expedition by Captain John Franklin, to the mouth of the Mackenzie River and the nearby coasts, revealed the Inuvialuit people to the rest of the world for the first time.

News of the expedition spread quickly and inspired many other voyages and contact between the Inuvialuit and European explorers, fur traders and missionaries would quickly increase. For better or for worse, the people from these disparate cultures would be

strangers no more.

Trading among the Inuvialuit was a long-standing tradition between neighbours but with the arrival of European fur traders and whalers the nature of trading changed. New commodities were introduced into the communities that would make life easier, such as steel tools, traps and firearms. Along with these goods came unwanted and harmful baggage like new diseases and alcohol.

Following the traders, missionaries arrived. At the time, religious tradition in the Arctic included animism, a belief that all animals had spirits that could be angered and

appeased, as well as shamanism in which certain individuals in a community were seen to harbour supernatural powers. One story tells that, when a Christian missionary taught that Jesus could raise people from the dead, the people were not surprised because their own shaman did those kinds of things all the time.

Christianity was received slowly but had an effect over time bringing changes to traditional practices such as marriage which had not existed except as a practical partnership, often arranged by parents and recognized by the community. Ironically, with many

communities devastated by diseases introduced by foreigners, belief in traditional medicine and practices fell out of favour and reliance on the medicine of the Tan'ngit became more acceptable along with his religious practices.

For a time, there was a harmonious relationship between the Inuvialuit and the church with many communities offering large pieces of land for the opening of missions. The balance of power soon began to shift, however, with control of the people's lives coming more and more under the influence

— WELCOME, page 15

Statues tell a story people need to hear

By Gerry Bowler, Winnipeg

Frantic officials in the American south are joining with the Taliban and Islamic State as the latest group to destroy memorials to the past. Specifically, they are tearing down statues in praise

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of the Confederacy.

We might well examine the racist speech of Civil War-era politicians to see what motivates the iconoclasts of today to act against stone images. Here's an example to consider:

"There is a natural disgust in the minds of nearly all white people to the idea of indiscriminate amalgamation of the white and black races. . . . A separation of the races is the only perfect preventive of amalgamation, but as an immediate separation is impossible, the

next best thing is to keep them apart where they are not already together. If white and black people never get together in Kansas, they will never mix blood in Kansas."

Here's another:

"I am not, nor ever have been, in favour of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races; I am not nor ever have been in favour of making voters or jurors of Negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people . . . there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I, as much as any other man, am in favour of having the superior position assigned to the white race."

Those statements — offensive to modern ears — emerged from the lips of Abraham Lincoln, whose monument in Washington, as of this moment at least, remains untouched and whose portrait still adorns America's \$5 bill.

The supreme expression of sculpted American shrines is Mount Rushmore in South Dakota, with its giant heads of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt. Two of those were slave owners, one was in favour of deporting black Amer-

— HISTORY, page 15



Jon Hansen

DRUM DANCE — Residents of the western Canadian Arctic came to Paulatuk for "Iqalukpik," the annual Arctic Char Jamboree. It is a thanksgiving celebration for the abundance of fish and wildlife which sustains the community throughout the year. It included a drum dance for participants of all ages. It is a homecoming event for people from across the region.

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Colonialism needs to be tackled in all its faces

The Editor: I support the calls for Pope Francis to come to Canada to apologize if it is for Catholics’ participation in historical colonialism and to stop their participation in neo-colonialism.

In a May 9 interview with the French *La Croix* Pope Francis stated: “The duty of Christianity is that of service. There is no room for colonialism.”

The research done for the 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples documents subsequent federal governments *intentionally* underfunded the Indian residential schools.

It is incorrect to blame only the church charities and religious orders operating them for the conditions many experienced there.

This research also documents siblings were sent to different schools in different parts of the country operated by different

denominations. This was an *intentional* strategy to destroy traditional indigenous families, cultures and governance structures so the colonizers could more easily “develop” resources in a manner that suited them.

The resulting intergenerational harm kills and denies people life with dignity to this day.

Catholic business executives, politicians and voters who value profit over life or understand our continuous pro-life ethic only in terms of anti-choice legislation were involved in the making of these decisions, as they are in ones about neo-colonialism today.

Given all the apologies, including the 2008 one by Prime Minister Harper, have not resulted in substantive change, the Catholic Organization for Life and Family (COLF) has an important role to play if we are to co-create

authentic cultures of life.

COLF, a joint venture of the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus and the CCCB, is well funded with access to the Knights national network of volunteers.

KAIROS, an underfunded ecumenical organization with few volunteers, has an excellent experiential tool called The Blanket Exercise. It positions the residential schools in their colonial context.

In preparation for the pope’s apology, if COLF sponsored this introductory exposure to the original sin upon which Canada was founded, substantive change could finally be realized.

And perhaps Jason Kenny would not dismiss inclusion of colonialism in Alberta’s social studies curriculum as “ideology” or “political correctness.” — **Yvonne Zarowny, Qualicum Beach, B.C.**

Is there any way to save the *Prairie Messenger*?

The Editor: I have been reading the letters to the editor and note that there are many subscribers who would be willing to pay for a large increase in yearly rates if that would keep the paper alive. I know several of my friends who have not written but would like to see the *Prairie Messenger* continue past May 2018. I would pay up to \$100 a year for this special paper.

There is no other source that I am aware of that will give me the up-to-date information on the Catholic Church. Neither do I know of any other paper or magazine that has such a variety of writers with thought-provoking articles. It has already been said by many that the *Prairie Messenger* is an invaluable source of information and spiritual direction.

Have you considered asking our

bishops to recommend the paper to all parishioners in their dioceses? There are some sites on the Internet that give comments on Scripture but I have not found any that are as all-inclusive as the *Prairie Messenger* with reports on our religion and other faiths around the world .

Is there any hope of saving the *Prairie Messenger*?

A concerned and sad reader. — **Naden Hewko, Macklin, Sask.**

Welcome guest at the Arctic jamboree

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of the church and of government.

This is perhaps best reflected in the residential schools which were opened across the north, the negative effects of which we are now trying to heal across our country.

Today the Inuvialuit are regaining their autonomy. In 1984,

after a long and arduous process, the Inuvialuit Claims Settlement Act, known as the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, was signed into law ensuring the self-determination for the Inuvialuit about the future of their culture, the stewardship of their environment and their participation in the Canadian government, society and economy.

As I participate in the activi-

ties of the Jamboree weekend I find myself a welcome guest amid a people who are proud of their heritage, culture and traditions. I represent a church which they love but which has also caused them pain. As we journey and embrace the work of reconciliation and healing it is my hope that we can continue writing the next chapter of the story together.

History surfaces uncomfortable statements

Continued from page 14

icans to Africa, and the other spoke of native Americans as “squalid savages” whose lands had to be taken by the white race.

You could fill volumes with the uncomfortable statements uttered in the past by people whom we now revere. Mahatma Gandhi objected to people of his race sharing a railway compartment with the black African whose sole ambition, he thought, was “to collect a certain number of cattle to buy a wife with and, then, pass his life in indolence and nakedness.”

Liberal icon Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed a former member of the Ku Klux Klan to the Supreme Court and once told

his attorney general who was seeking to talk to him about a racial incident in the south, “I warned you not to call me again about any of Eleanor’s n—s. Call me one more time and you are fired.”


Saskatchewan Premier Tommy Douglas, subject of a laudatory statue in Weyburn, in the same year that Adolf Hitler passed Nazi eugenics legislation stated that the immoral and the feeble-minded of Canada should be prevented from breeding and that a test of genetic fitness should be required of all those seeking a marriage licence.

Louis Riel, honoured by two statues in Winnipeg, committed the now-unforgivable act of teaching in an Indian residential school and opined that the Blackfoot and

Blood First Nations “were nothing but savages.”

The past is a foreign country, it has been said, and they do things differently there. We commit the historical fallacy of “presentism” when we insist that figures of bygone days be judged by our prejudices. Those who object to the statues to Robert E. Lee or Stonewall Jackson see them as bronzed hymns to slavery; those who wish to keep them erect see them as honouring their sense of rootedness in a distinct culture.

Society is better served by using such controversial images as teaching points, juxtaposing these memorials with displays discussing the issue. As citizens, we must keep communicating with each other and with the past.



G. Schmitz

Damascus Road

I know Paul, how the road felt as it came up to meet your face.
Yours was stones and clay
the stuff of Adam and new creation.
Mine was snow and ice, water, the stuff of death and birth
So Paul how long did it take you
to stop cursing the weather,
the road,
the dust up your nose and
the stubborn, stupid animal
the causes of your downfall?
How long did it take to realize
who was the stubborn animal on that road
and see the hand of God?
I understand it took you only a few days.
but then of course you are a saint and I —
I am only me

By Jo Oliver

PM is read cover to cover

The Editor: I am sorry to hear that the *Prairie Messenger* will not be available after May, 2018.

I have subscribed since the late '50s and have recently started reading the *Messenger* in total each issue. It is our only reliable source of religious-related information throughout the world. — **Eugene Thera, Saskatoon**

Thanks for offering different world view

The Editor: I am deeply saddened that your are terminating this publication. For some reason I was not aware of your financial situation.

Your articles have been greatly helpful to me over the years that I have been a subscriber. It has also been enjoyed by other family members and friends.

Your publication is one of the few available in Canada, if not the only one, which offers such varied content and differing opinions on so many current issues.

Thank you for enriching my spiritual life. Thank you for offering a world view different from so many views offered by the media outlets which so constantly assail all our senses.

God bless you and keep your light shining for all his pilgrims — **Noella Dumesnil-Nuttin, Saskatoon**

PM has been a longtime friend, mentor

The Editor: The *PM*, my longtime friend/mentor/formation (teacher) regarding my Catholic religion, will be discontinued. How sad!!

But, like so many others, I have pondered on the idea that the *PM* could be published every two weeks as the paper is packed with so much important information and even if it was published only once a month, it would still be a consolation.

Fortunately, over the last few years I have kept all the copies, meaning to go back and reread some fact-filled and/or meditative articles. I, as others, would be willing to pay double or \$100 per year for a subscription. We need the *PM*’s brilliant journalism and its factual, uplifting and impartial reporting.

My question is: has publishing the *PM* biweekly or monthly ever been considered and could it be a possibility? This could be an option to keep the journal viable. — **Odette Fafard Ste-Marthe, (Rocanville) Sask.**

Scientists tinkering with DNA an ethical issue

By Dennis Sadowski

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Catholic observers and others are raising ethical questions about the work of an international team of scientists who report that they were able to edit the DNA in human embryos to correct a health disorder.

The questions focus on two concerns: the creation of human embryos for scientific experimentation and then destruction, and the still-unknown effect that changing DNA will have on future generations because the changes could become a permanent part of a family’s genetic line.

The success reported by the scientists in work funded by the Oregon Health and Science University worries observers, who said that it could lead to the development of “designer babies” with traits that make them seem superior.

“Now we’re specifically manufacturing human embryos solely for

the purpose of doing lethal experiments on them. I think the public needs to be well aware of that and hopefully horrified by that reality,” said Gregory Schleppenbach, associate director of the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington.

“Certainly there should be concerns about genetically modifying human beings in a way that we don’t really know what effect that will have to subsequent generations,” he told Catholic News Service.

The focus of such concerns is a report that appeared online Aug. 2 in the journal *Nature*. Scientists said they were able to edit the DNA in human embryos without introducing other harmful mutations that have plagued other efforts.

The particular experiment involved gene editing to correct a genetic defect that causes a heart disorder known as cardiomyopathy, which affects the heart’s abil-

ity to pump blood.

Shoukhrat Mitalipov, director of the Centre for Embryonic Cell and Gene Therapy at the Oregon Health and Science University, is a leader of the team. He said the effort may lead to the ability to edit genes to correct other debilitating diseases.

Supporters of the research hailed the breakthrough, saying it could lead to similar efforts to prevent cystic fibrosis, Huntington’s disease, an inherited form of Alzheimer’s disease, and perhaps breast and ovarian cancer caused by mutation in BRCA genes, which produce tumour-suppressor proteins. “BRCA” stands for “breast cancer gene.”

In their work, the scientists obtained sperm from a donor carrying the heart disorder mutation and used the sperm to fertilize dozens of eggs from healthy women. At fertilization, the researchers also injected a gene-editing tool known as CRISPR-Cas9. The scientists reported that of the 58 embryos

used in the work, 42 showed the gene correction, a rate of more than 70 per cent.

Mainstream scientists were buoyed by the high rate.

The fact that none of the em-

bryos were used to create a baby is problematic, however, for Catholic ethicists, who say the destruction of human life violates the basic premise of church teaching that all life is sacred.



CNS/Nancy McNally

SOUTH SUDAN FACES HUNGER — Women carry bags of sorghum and split yellow peas in Pajut, South Sudan. Up to 20 million people in South Sudan, Yemen, Somalia and northeast Nigeria face the prospect of famine this year.

Euthanasia of psychiatric patients forseen

By Jonathan Luxmoore

OXFORD, England (CNS) — Recent increases in euthanasia and assisted suicide deaths among psychiatric and dementia patients reflect the concerns church officials expressed years ago, said a Dutch cardinal.

Cardinal Willem Eijk of Utrecht, Netherlands, said psychiatrist Boudewijn Chabot was right to complain that doctors were now ignoring legal requirements that a patient requesting death should be “suffering unbearably and without prospect.”

Writing in the *NRC Handelsblad* daily, Chabot, a pioneer

of the Dutch euthanasia law, said he fully favoured “self-determination” and was unconcerned about the increase in euthanasia deaths. However, he added that he was alarmed by euthanasia’s extension to psychiatric patients, as well as to dementia sufferers, 141 of whom were killed in 2016, compared to just 12 in 2009.

In an Aug. 1 statement to Catholic News Service, Eijk, who heads the Dutch bishops’ medical ethics commission, said, “Chabot is now complaining about a development he himself initiated.”

“Of course, it’s good to read that an initiator and early advocate of euthanasia and assisted

suicide is now concerned,” the cardinal said. “But the Dutch bishops’ conference has warned from the beginning against violating the intrinsic dignity of human life through euthanasia or assisted suicide, because it is never ever allowable to violate intrinsic values, and because in doing so you put yourself on a slippery slope.”

“But was it not naive, when he started this in the 1990s, to suppose that ending life for psychiatric disorders would remain limited to a few cases only?” the cardinal asked.

The Netherlands became the world’s first country to legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide in 2002 and has since witnessed a rapid increase in related deaths, with 20 now occurring daily, according to a May report by the Regional Euthanasia Commission.

The report said 6,672 euthanasia deaths had been registered in 2015, compared to just 150 from assisted suicide, while 431 patients had been killed without explicit consent.

Eijk said euthanasia had originally been permitted only “at the explicit request of a patient in the terminal stage of an incurable somatic disease,” but had been steadily extended and was now accepted “before the terminal stage of life.”

“When one breaks the principle that human life is an essential value, one steps on the slippery slope,” the cardinal added. “Dutch experiences teach that we will be confronted time and again with the question whether the ending of life shouldn’t also be possible with less serious forms of suffering.”

In a landmark case in the early 1990s, Chabot was found criminally guilty, but spared punishment, for assisting the suicide of a 50-year-old healthy woman suffering “existential distress.”

However, in a January 2017 petition, he and 200 other Dutch doctors warned that legal protections were “slowly breaking down,” with many dementia and psychiatric patients being killed “without actual oral consent.”

Vatican II liturgical reform ‘irreversible,’ pope confirms

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Catholic Church must continue to work to understand the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council and why they were made, rather than rethinking them, Pope Francis said.

“After this magisterium, after this long journey, we can affirm with certainty and magisterial authority that the liturgical reform is irreversible,” Pope Francis told participants in Italy’s National Liturgical Week.

The pope’s speech to the 800 participants Aug. 24 was the longest and most systematic talk he has given as pope on the theme of the liturgy since Vatican II.

Instead of reconsidering the council’s reforms, he said, priests and liturgists should work on “rediscovering the decisions made” in reforming the liturgy, “internalizing its inspirational principles and observing the discipline that governs it.”

The National Liturgical Week is sponsored by the Liturgical Action Centre, which organizes liturgical training as well as national, regional and diocesan conventions to “disseminate and promote liturgical pastoral guidelines proposed by the Italian bishops’ conference,” according to its website.

After congratulating the organization on its 70th anniversary, Pope Francis said the church has lived through “substantial and not superficial” events throughout its history, including with the Second Vatican Council and the subsequent liturgical reform.

Citing the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, “*Sacrosanctum Concilium*,” the pope said the reform responded to “real needs and the concrete hope for a renewal,” which would offer a living liturgy where the faithful were no longer “strangers or silent spectators.”

For this reason, he added, the

church must continue to rediscover the reasons for the reform and “overcome unfounded and superficial readings, partial revelations, and practices that disfigure it.”

Reflecting on the week’s theme — “A living liturgy for a living church” — Pope Francis said the liturgy is “alive” through the living presence of Jesus. Liturgical signs, including the altar, direct the gaze of the priest and the faithful to “Christ, the living stone, who was discarded by men but has become the cornerstone of the spiritual edifice in which we worship.”

“The liturgy is life for the entire people of the church,” he said. “By its nature, the liturgy is ‘popular’ and not clerical, because it is — as the etymology teaches us — an action for the people, but also of the people.”

The liturgy, he continued, unites church members through prayer, and it “gathers in prayer all those who seek to listen to the Gospel without discarding anyone; it summons the great and small, rich and poor, children and elderly people, healthy and sick, just ones and sinners.”

“In the image of the ‘immense multitude’ celebrating the liturgy in the sanctuary of heaven,” Pope Francis said, “the liturgical assembly overcomes through Christ every boundary of age, race, language and nation.”

The liturgy is “not an idea to understand,” but rather a “source of life and light for our journey of faith,” he said. Therefore, the rites and prayers become “a school of Christian life” for the faithful “by what they are and not by the explanations we give them.”

“This is still the commitment I ask of you today: to help ordained ministers as well as other ministers — cantors, artists, musicians — co-operate so that the liturgy may be the source and culmination of the vitality of the church,” the pope said.



CNS/Vatican Philatelic and Numismatic Office

EASTERN CHURCHES STAMP — The Vatican Philatelic and Numismatic Office is marking the 100th anniversary of the Congregation for Eastern Churches with a stamp featuring details from the chapel in the congregation’s office. The stamp will be released Sept. 7.

The mind creates the abyss, the heart crosses it.

— Sri Risargadatta