

Squeaky wheel

Spiritual care workers were urged to be “the squeaky wheel” in regard to major cuts to spiritual care services in Saskatchewan health care facilities. At a meeting held at Saskatoon’s Cathedral of the Holy Family Oct. 3, chaplains, pastors and volunteers were encouraged to call the government to account.
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HPV vaccinations

A letter from the Saskatchewan bishops cautioning parents about their children receiving the human papilloma virus vaccination has been clarified and updated in a new letter issued Oct. 5. The previous letter was 10 years old and “should never have gone out,” according to Regina archdiocesan theologian Brett Salkeld. “It contains outdated and inaccurate information.”
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World Food Day

Professor, farmer and community organizer Nettie Wiebe was the keynote speaker at an Oct. 16 gathering in Saskatoon held in recognition of World Food Day. Participants examined local food security initiatives and food sovereignty around the world.
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Time to act like true disciples

Pope Francis says that one of the great sins of the church is its infantilizing of the laity. “It is time for the laity to educate themselves, speak out and act like true disciples of Christ in spreading the joy of the gospel,” writes Thomas Reese, SJ.
— page 13

Seamless garment

In laying down a challenge to U.S. Catholics on the death penalty, Pope Francis highlights a deeper Catholic vision of what it means to protect human life — the notion that there is a “seamless garment” to what the church says about abortion, the death penalty and non-violence.
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Women, girls face multiple obstacles

UNITED NATIONS (CNS) — Conditions in many parts of the world force women and girls to bear the burden of carrying out everyday chores for their families and communities, keeping many of them from getting even a basic education, the Vatican’s UN nuncio said Oct. 6.

Females are often the victims of sexual and other violence, which prevents them from improving life for themselves and their families, said Archbishop Bernardito Auza, the Vatican’s permanent observer to the United Nations. Migrant women and girls are particularly vulnerable to these situations, he added.

He addressed the issue of women’s advancement during a session at the United Nations of the Third Committee, which focuses on social, humanitarian and cultural issues.

“Young women in rural areas are disproportionately involved in unpaid domestic work and especially bear the greatest burden when access to clean water and sanitation is not readily available,” Auza said. “They are forced to spend considerable time and effort collecting water for the community, and in doing so, their access to basic education is often

thwarted, not to mention that, in many isolated places, they are also exposed to risks of violence.”

Failure to achieve “that basic human right” of universal access to safe drinkable water “can undermine other human rights, as it is a prerequisite for their realization,” he said.

Pope Francis in his encyclical “*Laudato Si*” points to “the abandonment and neglect . . . experienced by some rural populations which lack access to essential services,” Auza said, quoting the document. In many areas, the pope noted, “some workers are reduced to conditions of servitude, without rights or even the hope of a more dignified life.”

Women and girls often bear “the heaviest burden from these deprivations,” the archbishop said.

Regarding education, “significant progress has been made toward parity between boys and girls from families of relative wealth or decent economic standing,” the archbishop said, but women and girls who live in poverty lack schooling, literacy skills and opportunities for adult education.

Adolescent girls “are at the greatest risk of exclusion from education due to social and eco-



CNS/Alaa Badrneh, EPA

PALESTINIAN WOMAN HARVESTS WHEAT — A Palestinian woman harvests wheat by hand on a farm near Salfit, West Bank, in 2016. Education is essential in enabling women in every country “to become dignified agents of their own development,” said Archbishop Bernardito Auza, the Vatican’s permanent observer to the United Nations Oct. 6 at UN headquarters in New York.

nomie hardships,” Auza said. “Whenever young women and girls do not have access to education, they are hindered from becoming dignified agents of their own development.”

To change this reality, the “basic material needs of every school-age girl living in rural areas must be addressed,” Auza said. One initiative that has “proven efficient,” he said, is providing school meals to reduce girls’ absenteeism. Such efforts should be encouraged “to guarantee access to education to each and every girl,” he added.

LeGatt releases *ad limina* document

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

Bishops’ *ad limina* visit to Rome March 25 - April 2.

In what may be a first for transparency in the Canadian Catholic Church, St. Boniface Archbishop Albert LeGatt has publicly released a 108-page report on the state of his bilingual diocese in Manitoba.

LeGatt’s report was written in response to questions posed by the Vatican’s Congregation for Bishops in advance of the Assembly of Western Catholic

Reports by bishops covering everything from basic statistics (Catholic population, annual baptisms, marriages) to the challenges and prospects for the future of the church are used to inform and guide meetings between bishops and Vatican officials during their once-every-five-year visits to Rome.

While these reports have typically been shared only with the Vatican, there’s nothing secret about them, said LeGatt.

“It just came to me that this is, in terms of communication, a very complete reflection of where the diocese is,” LeGatt told *The Catholic Register*. “Since that’s what we’re trying to communicate all the time with our faithful and our priests, why not use this? We need to report to the Congregation for Bishops and to the Holy Father. But to report is really to reflect what the state of the church is here.



CNS/L’Osservatore Romano

REPORT RELEASED — St. Boniface Archbishop Albert LeGatt is greeted by Pope Francis at the Vatican during the spring *ad limina* visit to Rome. LeGatt has publicly released a 108-page report on the state of his bilingual diocese in Manitoba.

Why not do that for the faithful?”

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— FOOD AID, page 15

Groups call for national anti-poverty strategy

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — On Oct. 17, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, 80 groups in more than 30 communities across Canada called for a national anti-poverty strategy.

They called for a comprehensive plan based on human rights and fully funded in the next federal budget, through participating in the fifth Chew on This! campaign to call attention to the estimated 850,000 people who visit a food bank each month, and the 4.8 million Canadians who live below the poverty line.

“Canada needs to develop at all levels a plan to address poverty,” said Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) executive director Joe Gunn. Chew on This! is organized by the Dignity for All Campaign, a joint venture of CPJ and Canada Without Poverty.

The campaign included 22,000 lunch bags containing a snack such as an apple, a magnet, and a postcard saying “We Need a Plan to end poverty, food insecurity,

and homelessness in Canada.”

Gunn and a team from CPJ were on Parliament Hill handing out lunch bags and encouraging passersby to mail the postcard to Minister of Families, Children and Social Development Jean-Yves Duclos.

To help equip the groups who took part, CPJ published its annual October analysis of Canada’s poverty levels in Poverty Trends 2017.

Based on the latest Statistics Canada figures from 2015, the report shows one in seven Canadians, or 4.8 million people, live in poverty.

“It allows people to have a snapshot in mind of what poverty looks like when handing out a postcard or an apple,” Gunn said.

Most people in Canada think of poverty in terms of the “urban poor man sleeping homeless on the streets,” Gunn said. “The report points out most poor people are actually working,” but at “precarious jobs,” with few hours, with no benefits and no protections.

— POVERTY, page 4

Catechism a guiding light in a changing world

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — As the church marks the 25th anniversary of the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, promoting it as a means of teaching the truth about faith remains a challenge and a priority.

Since its publication in 1992, the catechism has been translated into 50 languages, including Swahili, Japanese and Gaelic, and it is also available in braille, video and digital editions.

Nevertheless, in today’s digital age, when people have limitless access to information with the click of a mouse or the swipe of an app, opinions and even “fake news” can either inform or misinform Catholics on the principles of the Catholic faith.

“Society is changing in a very massive way, and it’s much more difficult to reach people,” especially in the digital age, Katharina Karl, professor of pastoral theology and religious education at the Philosophical-Theological Univer-

sity in Münster, Germany, told Catholic News Service Oct. 11.

This ongoing challenge was what prompted the Catholic Church a quarter of a century ago to create a go-to reference that synthesized church teaching and serve as a guide for the faithful.

The idea of a compendium of Catholic doctrine was one of the fruits of the 1985 Synod of Bishops marking the 20th anniversary of the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council.

After requests from participants for a point of reference “for the catechisms or compendiums that are prepared in various regions,” St. John Paul II accepted their proposal, “considering it as fully responding to a real need, both of the universal church and of the particular churches.”

“The presentation of doctrine must be biblical and liturgical. It must be sound doctrine suited to the present life of Christians,” St. John Paul wrote in his Apostolic Constitution “*Fidei Depositum*” (“The Deposit of Faith”) Oct. 11, 1992.

Entrusting this task to 12 cardinals and bishops, St. John Paul chose Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger,

the future Pope Benedict XVI, to lead the commission responsible for the drafting of the catechism.

While the need for a text that clearly explained the church’s teachings was welcomed, some criticized it for being too static or dogmatic and not in line with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council.

“It was said that the catechism failed to take into account the theological developments of the last century, particularly exegetical developments; it was not ecumenical; it was not dialogical” as it made affirmations as established beyond dispute, Ratzinger said Oct. 9, 2002, during an address commemorating the catechism’s 10th anniversary.

The future Pope Benedict responded to those opinions by seeking to explain “what a catechism is and what is its specific literary genre,” as well as its proper purpose and doctrinal relevance.

The catechism is “a proclamation of faith,” of witness, for the teaching of the faith, he said. It presents a “given that precedes us,” but whose doctrinal formulation develops in the church, he said.

After his papal election, Pope Benedict continued to urge Catholics to use the Catechism of the Catholic Church as a handbook to rediscover the truths of faith and a deeper knowledge of church teaching.

“Read the Catechism of the Catholic Church and rediscover the beauty of being Christian, of being church, of living as part of the great ‘we’ that Jesus formed around him to evangelize the world,” Pope Benedict said in 2012.

In his speech marking the 25th anniversary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church Oct. 11, Pope Francis said the catechism is not only an important tool for believers to understand the faith, but also provides concrete answers to new challenges.

Just as the challenges people face evolve, so does the Christian response since “the word of God cannot be preserved in mothballs as if it were an old blanket to protect against insects,” he said.

In fact, “the word of God is a dynamic reality that is always living, that progresses and grows, because it is stretched toward a fulfillment that men and women cannot stop,” Pope Francis said.



CNS/Michael Roytek

BOY SCOUTS ACCEPT GIRLS — A Scout receives communion during mass July 23 at the Boy Scout Jamboree in Glen Jean, W.Va. The Boy Scouts of America’s board of directors unanimously agreed Oct. 11 to allow girls into the Cub Scout program next year and let older girls become Eagle Scouts. The leaders of the National Catholic Committee on Scouting said they “accept and work with the new membership policy of the Boy Scouts of America.”

Christians are never weak, pessimistic or resigned: pope

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Christians are never pessimistic, resigned or weak, thinking life is an unstoppable train careening out of control, Pope Francis said.

Throughout history, every day is seen as a gift from God and “every morning is a blank page that Christians start writing on” with their good works and charity, he said Oct. 11 during his weekly general audience.

Continuing his series of audience talks on Christian hope, the pope reflected on a reading from the Gospel of St. Luke, in which the disciples are asked to be like faithful and vigilant servants, who stand ready for their master’s return — the day Jesus will come again.

Jesus wants his followers to never let down their guard and to be on their toes, ready to welcome “with gratitude and amazement each new day God gives us,” the pope said.

Even though “we have already been saved by Jesus’ redemption,” he said, the people of God are still awaiting his second coming in glory when he will be “all in all.” Nothing in life is more certain than that — that he will come again, the pope said.

This time of expectant waiting, however, is no time for boredom, but rather for patience, he said.

Christians must be perseverant

and life-giving, like wellsprings to irrigate a desert.

For that reason, “nothing happens in vain” and no situation is “completely resistant to love. No night is so long that the joy of dawn is forgotten,” he said. In fact, the darker the night, the sooner the light will come, he added.

By staying united with Christ, nothing can stop the faithful, even “the coldness of difficult moments do not paralyze us.” And no matter how much the world preaches against hope and predicts “only dark clouds,” Christians know everything will be saved and “Christ will drive away the temptation to think that this life is wrong.”

“We do not lose ourselves in the flow of events to pessimism, as if history were a train out of control. Resignation is not a Christian virtue. Just like it is not Christian to shrug your shoulders or lower your head before a seemingly unavoidable destiny.”

Having hope means never being submissive or passive, but being a builder of hope, which demands courage, taking risks and personal sacrifice, he said.

“Submissive people are not peacebuilders, but they are lazy, they want to be comfortable,” he said.

At the end of the general audience, the pope reminded people that October was World Mission Month and the month of the rosary.

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Like the Catholic Church’s newest saints, Christians are called to live their faith as a love story with God who wants a relationship that is “more than that of devoted subjects with their king,” Pope Francis said.

Without a loving relationship with God, Christian life can become empty and “an impossible ethic, a collection of rules and laws to obey for no good reason,” the pope said during mass Oct. 15 in St. Peter’s Square.

“This is the danger: a Christian life that becomes routine, content with ‘normality,’ without drive or enthusiasm, and with a short memory,” he said during the mass.

At the beginning of the mass, Pope Francis proclaimed 35 new saints, including: the “Martyrs of Natal,” Brazil, a group of 30 priests, laymen, women and children who were killed in 1645 during a wave of anti-Catholic persecution; and the “Child Martyrs of Tlaxcala,” three children who were among Mexico’s first native converts and were killed for refusing to renounce the faith.

Tapestries hung from the facade of St. Peter’s Basilica bearing images of the martyrs as well as pictures of Sts. Angelo da Aciri, an Italian Capuchin priest known for his defence of the poor, and Faustino Miguez, a Spanish priest who started an advanced school for girls at a time when such education was limited almost exclusively to boys.

An estimated 35,000 pilgrims — many of them from the new saints’ countries of origin — attended the mass, the Vatican said Oct. 15.

In his homily, Pope Francis reflected on the day’s Gospel reading from St. Matthew in which Jesus recounts the parable of the wedding feast.



CNS/L’Osservatore Romano

SPECIAL OLYMPICS AUDIENCE — A young girl sits next to Pope Francis during an audience with Special Olympics athletes participating in the Unified Football tournament, at the Vatican Oct. 13.

Noting Jesus’ emphasis on the wedding guests, the pope said that God “wants us, he goes out to seek us and he invites us” to celebrate with him.

“For him, it is not enough that we should do our duty and obey his laws,” Pope Francis said. “He desires a true communion of life with us, a relationship based on dialogue, trust and forgiveness.”

However, he continued, Jesus also warns that “the invitation can be refused” as it was by those who “made light” of the invitation or were too caught up in their own affairs to consider attending the banquet.

“This is how love grows cold, not out of malice but out of preference for what is our own: our

security, our self-affirmation, our comfort,” the pope said.

Despite constant rejection and indifference, God does not cancel the wedding feast but continues to invite Christians to overcome “the whims of our peevish and lazy selves” and to imitate the church’s new saints who, he said, not only said yes to God’s invitation, but wore “the wedding garment” of God’s love.

“The saints who were canonized today, and especially the many martyrs, point the way,” Pope Francis said. “The robe they wore daily was the love of Jesus, that ‘mad’ love that loved us to the end and offered his forgiveness and his robe to those who crucified him.”

Spiritual care workers facing major budget cut

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — Hospital chaplains, pastors, and spiritual care volunteers gathered Oct. 3 for a meeting about the elimination of government-funded spiritual care services in Saskatchewan health care facilities.

Information and concerns about the new reality in the Saskatoon Health Region were provided at the meeting held at the Cathedral of the Holy Family in Saskatoon, along with suggestions about provincial advocacy and moving forward.

As part of the 2017 provincial budget announced March 22, funding for “pastoral care services” was eliminated from provincial health care, for an estimated annual savings of some \$1.5 million. The impact of the announcement became reality at Saskatoon City Hospital and Royal University Hospital on Sept. 27 with the elimination of the spiritual care department in the Saskatoon Health Region (SHR). Spiritual care services continue to be offered at St. Paul’s, since it is funded through a legacy from the Grey Nuns.

The situation in other long-term care facilities and hospitals across the province varies, with some facilities like Parkridge Centre Special Care Home without spiritual care services, while others — especially faith-based facilities — continuing to offer it.

Various faith groups are striving to continue offering pastoral and spiritual care to their members, but without the support and co-ordination previously provided by the SHR spiritual care department.

But patients who do not declare a faith affiliation — some

50 per cent of those admitted to SHR facilities — will no longer receive the support that was provided before funding was cut.

At the information meeting, Simon Lasair — a former spiritual care practitioner who presently serves as the Saskatchewan Regional Admitting Chair of the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care — provided an overview of what spiritual care consists of, and what the elimination of government funding means for patients, staff, denominational chaplains and volunteers.

Every human being has a spiritual dimension, and spiritual care is a crucial form of care within public health care, said Lasair. When patients or their families face a crisis, they often need to explore spiritual questions, regardless of whether they have a formal faith affiliation, he stressed.

In addition to patients and families, spiritual care professionals in the province’s hospitals and long-term care facilities also provided support to staff who are often dealing with trauma, loss or other crises, he said. “Many times in my own practice, I would have a conversation with a staff member who was experiencing an issue, and I was able to provide support.”

Spiritual care is sometimes called a “ministry of presence,” said Lasair.

“In times of crisis, spiritual care practitioners are skilled at offering emotional and spiritual support. Spiritual care practitioners who work in hospitals or long-term care are able to bear witness to the pain and suffering of the person to whom they are providing care.”

Other health professionals



Kiply Yaworski

SPIRITUAL CARE — Lutheran denominational chaplain Rev. Ron Bestvater, diocesan ecumenical co-ordinator Celeste Woloschuk, spiritual care practitioner Simon Lasair and Catholic hospital chaplaincy co-ordinator Jacqueline Saretsky (from left), were among those speaking at an information meeting about changes to spiritual care in the provincial health care system with the elimination of government funding.

might be sensitive to the spiritual concerns of patients and their families, but no other health care providers are trained to care for these needs explicitly, Lasair stressed.

Certified spiritual care practitioners undergo extensive training, and have achieved at least a master’s level of academic study in theology, divinity, or the equivalent, and have acquired some 1,600 hours of specialized training in clinical pastoral education, plus an additional 1,000 hours of preparation through a certification process, Lasair said. As part of the hospital accreditation process, the national non-profit Accreditation Canada body recommends that professional spiritual care be an integral part of

health care teams.

“As a result of this decision, this specialized knowledge, this specialized practice is no longer available to patients and their families in many Saskatchewan hospitals,” Lasair said. In addition, other health care professionals who already have a myriad of tasks must now operate without the support of a spiritual care practitioner.

Professional spiritual care improves health care outcomes, with research showing that it reduces the likelihood of secondary stress-related health concerns, as well as expensive interventions at the end-of-life, the gathering heard.

The elimination of the spiritual care department in the SHR means that many patients and

families will no longer have 24-hour, on-call access to spiritual care. “There were times when I was called out in the middle of the night because there was someone in the intensive care unit who was in crisis, the family was needing support — that service will no longer be available to patients and their families,” said Lasair.

Various denominations, clergy and volunteers will continue to provide some support to some patients, Lasair said, but many more patients will not receive the support they need.

“Under privacy legislation, denominational clergy are not permitted to be contacted by hospital personnel unless there is a specific request, or unless the person requesting support belongs to their denomination. Given that there are, on any given day in the health care facilities, at least 50 per cent of people, patients, families who have no stated religious affiliation: those people are not going to get access to any spiritual support.”

The infrastructure surrounding the professional practice of spiritual care in hospitals and other care facilities has been eliminated — something which affects the pastoral and spiritual care being provided by churches and faith communities.

There is a vacuum when it comes to the connection between SHR facilities and various denominations wishing to be contacted about parishioners who are in hospital and need support — something that is particularly troublesome for smaller faith groups that do not have a regular program of patient visiting.

It was the spiritual care department that provided lists of congregation members in hospital to visiting clergy and volunteers, always operating within the bounds of privacy legislation. Without the spiritual care department to co-ordinate that service, privacy concerns may make it more difficult for hospitals to offer the service. This has already made visits by clergy and volunteers more difficult, and adds to the possibility that patients in crisis are being missed.

The spiritual care department also provided orientation and information to local clergy and volunteers around such matters as infection control and privacy legislation. Church representatives and volunteers will now have to travel to St. Paul’s Hospital for registration and paperwork.

Other services have also been lost as a result of the elimination of government funding for spiritual care departments.

“The departments, through their administrative support, were able to facilitate the provision of religious services within health care facilities on a regular or on-demand basis,” said Lasair. This included recruiting and organizing clergy to assist with services or ceremonies. Although Roman Catholic mass continues to be provided at Saskatoon City Hospital and Royal University Hospital (organized through the diocesan office of hospital chaplaincy, funded by the Bishop’s

— WORKERS, page 6

Ottawa pro-life demonstrators unfairly blamed: organizer

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — A pro-life organizer in Ottawa disputes claims that pro-life demonstrators are guilty of harassment, spitting and aggression.

Reports of these activities have prompted the tabling of bubble zone legislation in the Ontario legislature to keep protesters away from abortion facilities.

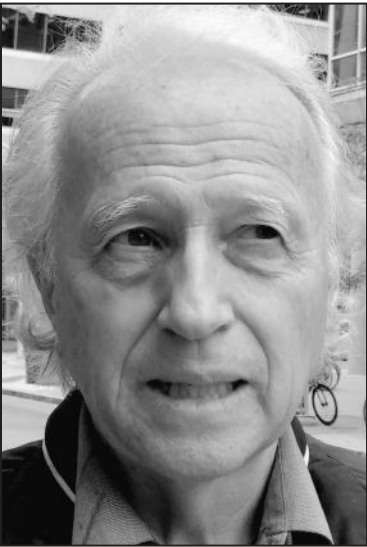
Wanda Hartlin, co-ordinator of the 40 Days for Life prayer vigil outside the Morgentaler abortion facility in Ottawa, said it is those praying who have been “spat on, sworn at, and yelled at.”

“I have never seen anyone do anything to the people going into the abortuary,” she said.

The annual 40 Days campaign that runs this year from Sept. 27 to Nov. 5 has a permit from the city, uses non-graphic signs urging people to pray for an end to abortion, and its participants sign a “statement of peace” that they will “abide by the rules, pray silently and not be confrontational,” Hartlin said. They also agree to pray across the street from the facility.

There are others, however, who are not part of the official campaign, who come as individuals, said Hartlin, who is affiliated with Campaign Life Coalition.

Earlier this year a young man, whom Hartlin described as “young, passionate” and “very enthusiastic,” entered the clinic



CCN/D. Gyapong

Cyril Winter

twice and sprinkled holy water there. “He thought it would help the cause. He did this on his own without any prompting from us.”

Another regular at the facility is Cyril Winter, 70, who wears a sandwich board with graphic anti-abortion signage. He stands right next to the door of the Morgentaler facility. Hartlin says he is not part of 40 Days for Life.

“He states his own opinion,”

Hartlin said. “People do speak with him. I’ve seen people shout at him.”

Winter said he has experienced a “hail of spit” since an April column in a Toronto newspaper talked about aggressive, sandwich-board wearing protesters. But Winter said he is the only protester on the same side of the street as the abortion facility, and has been coming at least three times a week for the past four-and-a-half years.

He said he has never spat at, shouted at or harassed people coming and going from the abortion facility.

He said he does not initiate conversation with the clinic’s clients, though he does have a mantra, “Love the babies in Jesus’ name,” and if they talk to him he will respond.

Winter, a retired tradesman, was spit at twice during the course of a five-minute CCN interview with him Oct. 10, first by a woman who aimed at the sidewalk near his feet, then by a man, whose spit connected with Winter’s body. Winter shot after him, yelling he had committed assault and calling him a coward. A man also shouted and swore at him during that time.

Not all reaction to Winter or to 40 Days is negative, Hartlin said.

People do come to talk with them and thank them and “tell us we are doing a good job.” Some even come to tell their abortion stories because “they need someone to talk to.”

On Oct. 4, Ontario’s government introduced legislation that would create a “buffer zone” around abortion facilities, hospitals of at least 50 metres and up to 150 metres, and 150 metres around abortion providers’ homes.

The Morgentaler people have called police from time to time, but so have the pro-life groups.

“We have had the same response from the police the people in the clinic have had,” Hartlin said. The police tell them, “They have just as much rights on the streets as you do,” she said. “The police are being impartial, treating both the clinic and us in the same way.”

If they get a complaint, they come to speak with us, speak with Cyril, but if we’re not doing anything illegal, they leave. “I feel the police have been very fair to us.”

Hartlin posted on the 40 Days website that the buffer zone law is still before the legislature and does not affect this year’s campaign, which runs to Nov. 5. How the buffer zone law will affect future campaigns remains to be seen, she said.

Church mulls question of transgender godparents

By Philippe Vaillancourt

QUEBEC CITY (CNS) — Andrea was baffled when her friend asked her to be the godmother of her newborn baby. She would have said yes right away, but things are not that simple for her. She has been a woman for only a little more than a year.

Andrea prefers to keep her last name secret out of respect for her friend's privacy. Born a man, the woman from Quebec City officially began her sexual transition in 2013. In addition to a hormone treatment, the Quebec public records office accepted her sex change in April 2016.

Vaillancourt is editor-in-chief of Presence info, based in Montreal.

She kept her Catholic faith along the way. When she was younger, she received all of the Christian initiation sacraments.

"Many transgender people reject faith. There is an unwritten rule between the church and us to exclude each other," Andrea said. "But I cannot do that. To truly be me, I cannot walk with one arm ripped off, the arm being my faith."

But the request of her friend left her wondering: Could she be allowed to become a Catholic godmother?

This once-theoretical question is now on the doorstep of the church in Quebec, where the number of baptisms is declining. In the early 1970s nearly nine out of 10 newborns were baptized. There was a slow decline until 2000, when the drop became steeper.

Today, fewer than 40 per cent of newborns are baptized. There has been a slight increase in adult baptism, however.

A case similar to Andrea's arose in Spain in 2015. Bishop Rafael Zornoza Boy of the Cadiz and Ceuta then sought the advice of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The answer was clear: "impossible" because a transgender person does not conform to the Catholic faith, the congregation said.

"If we look at how (Canadian) society is evolving, the question could come up more often," said Chantal Labreche, assistant professor of canon law at St. Paul University in Ottawa.

She said that even though Andrea legally is a woman, Canadian law could not compel the church to accept her claim on grounds of discrimination because being a godmother is not a right. Moreover, Andrea could not become a godfather either, as she gave up her right to identify herself as a man. In any case, it would be "far from the spirit of canon law," Labreche said.

Rev. Francesco Giordano, vice-chancellor of the Archdiocese of Montreal, believes the church's criteria for becoming a godparent already are well defined.

"In this particular case, one can easily go through the checklist: being baptized, having lived the sacraments of initiation and being 16 years old. But we can trip on the last item on the list: Does she live her faith in a way that is consistent with the church?" he said.

"For a transgender person, this is a problem because there is an inconsistency between biology and self-identification. That being said, if a transgender (person) is able to live her faith and continues to assume her biological sexual identity, this person can meet the criteria to become a godparent," he explained.

Last winter, in Montreal's St. Peter the Apostle Parish, in the heart of the city's gay neighbourhood, pastoral minister Yves Cote accompanied a transgender person who was asked to be a godfather. However, the baptism never happened and the question remained unresolved.

"I believe the issue will emerge in the upcoming years," Cote said. "We'll get asked this question. What will we do then?"

For Cote, the church should consider accommodating gender change when there is an official legal sex change. "On the other hand, I know that the church is very. . . ." He stops and takes a

few moments to find the proper words. "It's a big boat that's hard to turn around," he said.

Andrea believes that the question deserves to be looked at carefully by the church. In the meantime, she continues to explore her faith as she prays.

"I ask God to show me the way. What arguments can I bring to show them that I am not an abomination?" she asked.

She invited the church to question her and see if she actually lives accordingly with the Catholic faith. "I'll answer and we'll see if I'm a good person. But because I am a transgender, there is no possible discussion," she said.

"My gender identity lies inside me. I cannot omit it from myself," she said in response to the idea of "enduring" her biological sex.

Giordano said it will be the duty of chanceries everywhere to show sensitivity and understanding for such requests.

"What I tell transgender people is this: 'Come and talk to us. If you have any questions, we will be happy to answer them. It's not easy, it's a novelty (for us).' But the answer of the church is quite clear regarding godparents: They must be ready to assume a Catholic life, and what constitutes Catholic life is well established."



M. Weber

AUTUMN MOMENTS — "I was drinking in the surroundings: air so crisp you could snap it with your fingers and greens in every lush shade imaginable offset by autumnal flashes of red and yellow." — Wendy Delsol

Alpha program enjoying a boost in popularity

By Agnieszka Krawczynski
The B. C. Catholic

VANCOUVER (CCN) — Alpha is enjoying near-unprecedented popularity in the Archdiocese of Vancouver.

Corinna Siy, archdiocesan Ministries and Outreach co-ordinator, counts 13 parishes hosting the evangelization program right now, and there could be more. "I don't think we've ever had this many parishes running Alpha before," she said.

The video-based introduction to faith, featuring Anglican founder Nicky Gumbel, asks basic questions about the meaning of life and the existence of God. Siy attributes its inflated popularity among Catholics this year to several factors.

"Alpha Canada has certainly been running more promos lately,

and . . . there may be less resistance or misconception that it is a 'Protestant' thing."

The Christian organization recently revamped the video series, and a handful of new shorts include quotes from Pope Francis and interviews with preacher to the papal household Rev. Raneiro Cantalamessa.

That's not all. When Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB, named Get Closer to Jesus one of four priorities for the archdiocese, he urged parishes to use Alpha as one of their major tools.

The fire has caught on. Msgr. Gregory Smith ran Alpha several times at Christ the Redeemer Parish over the years with varying levels of success. This year, he promoted it in several homilies (including at Christmas) before

— ALPHA, page 5

Most living in poverty are the working poor

Continued from page 1

"Certainly anyone working full time in all provinces of Canada but on minimum wage would be counted as living in poverty," Gunn said.

The CPJ report showed 70 per cent of those living in poverty are working poor. "Youth 15 - 24 and women are over-represented in precarious work, along with racialized people, indigenous people, immigrants, people with disabilities, and older, working-age adults," the report says.

"Child and family poverty persists at high rates, particularly in single-parent households (32.4 per cent), in spite of a commitment made in Parliament in 1989 to end child poverty in Canada by 2000,"

the report said. Single-parent families are often led by women.

The report showed 25.3 per cent of Canada's indigenous people live in poverty as "part of the continued legacy of colonization" including the "legacy of residential schools, forced migration and intergenerational trauma."

It noted the desperate need for safe water and housing in some indigenous communities, as well as the high rates of food insecurity, especially in the North. In Nunavut 46.8 per cent of the predominantly Inuit population experiences food insecurity, the report said.

Twenty-three per cent of people with disabilities aged 25 - 64 live in poverty, the report showed. Refugees and refugee claimants are also vulnerable to poverty

once sponsorship and government supports end, it said, noting "34.2 per cent of new immigrants and refugees live in poverty."

"Chew On This! provides an opportunity to reflect on poverty issues in Kingston and across Canada," said Tara Kainer, of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul's Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office, in a release. The Sisters of Providence in Kingston, Ont., joined groups from Vancouver to Yellowknife to St. John's in the campaign to "raise awareness about poverty's impact on health, income and food insecurity, precarious jobs and unemployment, as well as the lack of affordable housing and the need for quality early childhood care and education," Rainer said.



Art Babych

ERADICATION OF POVERTY — At the press conference on Parliament Hill in advance of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty Oct. 17 are, from left: Joe Gunn, Leilani Farha (at microphone) Tim Richter, Laura Neidhart, Stephan Corriveau and Anglican Bishop John Chapman.

Euthanasia deaths show rapid rise, says report

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Euthanasia deaths in Canada could soon exceed the rates of such deaths in Belgium and the Netherlands, warns the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition.

Reported euthanasia deaths rose by 46.8 per cent in the second half of Canada's first year of legalized euthanasia and assisted suicide, according to an interim report released by Health Canada Oct. 6.

The report said 1,179 "medically assisted deaths" occurred between Jan. 1, 2017, and June 30, 2017, rising to 0.9 per cent of all deaths in Canada during that time period.

As of June 17, 2017, the first anniversary of the law legalizing so-called Medical Aid in Dying (MAiD) in Canada, Canada has seen a total of 2,149 MAiD deaths. That figure includes euthanasias that took place in

Quebec since Dec. 10, 2015, when Quebec's separate law came into effect.

Health Canada reported the euthanasia and assisted suicide figures are in line with those of other jurisdictions where MAiD is legal — with rates falling between 0.3 per cent and 4.6 per cent of all deaths. Alex Schadenberg, executive director of the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, said on his blog, however, that the number "is high when compared to Belgium where there were 235 reported assisted deaths in the first year (2003), 349 in the second year and 393 in its third year after legalization." Belgium's population is about one third of Canada's.

"Based on the number of reported assisted deaths, it is possible that Canada will quickly surpass the Netherlands and Belgium," he said.

Also, the Canadian figures

could be much higher than those reported, he warned.

"Canadian governments have established a self-reporting system, meaning the doctor who carries out the death is the same doctor who reports the death (no oversight of the law), therefore it is possible that under-reporting and abuse of the law occurs," Schadenberg wrote.

The vast majority of Canada's MAiD deaths involved euthanasia, the deliberate killing of a patient by a health professional, usually a physician. Only an estimated five cases of assisted suicide were reported, where the lethal drugs were self-administered. Quebec's law does not permit assisted suicide; other jurisdictions are uncomfortable with patients self-administering without medical supervision; and some smaller jurisdictions declined to report for privacy reasons, the Health Canada interim report said.

Though "assisted deaths" occurred across the legal age of consent spectrum (from 18 to 91+) the average age of those euthanized was approximately 73, the Health Canada study reported. The most common underlying condition prompting the request for MAiD was cancer-related (63 per cent), and that is consistent with findings in other jurisdictions, it said.

Other underlying conditions included neuro-degenerative illness, and circulatory/respiratory illnesses.

Health Canada reported a slight increase (eight per cent) in assisted deaths taking place outside a hospital setting, from 50 per cent in hospital for the first six months, to 42 per cent in the second six months.

"It is still too early to determine whether this is the beginning of a longer-term shift attributable to improved system integration and policies designed to facilitate home-based assisted death, which international research suggests many individuals prefer, or may be due to other factors such as barriers to providing medical assistance in dying in hospitals in some jurisdictions or lack of infrastructure for providing this service in institutions in some smaller communities," Health Canada's report said.

Canada is the only jurisdiction in the world that allows nurse practitioners to administer euthanasia drugs. The Health Canada report shows there were fewer than seven cases of nurse practitioners involved in assisted dying in the first six-month period, but the number rose to 38, or 4.3 per cent of cases in the second six-month



PM file

Alex Schadenberg

reporting period. The increase may have been helped by Ontario's passing legislation to allow nurse practitioners to prescribe controlled substances, the report said.

Health Canada also reported that in jurisdictions where the information on requests was available, about one third of those who requested MAiD had their requests declined, with the most common reasons being "loss of competency (51 per cent) and that death was not reasonably foreseeable."

The report also shows about 24 per cent of those requesting MAiD died before the request could be carried out.

The federal government left open to further study whether to allow MAiD for those with dementia through advanced directives; for mature minors under the age of 18; and for those with mental illness whose death is not foreseeable.

Mustard Seed spreads welcoming message

By Meggie Hoegler
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — Sister Gwen Smith is singing about shoo-fly pie and apple pan dowdy.

It's Whimsical Women's Wednesday at the Mustard Seed outreach centre. While Smith sings, women paint with watercolours and a volunteer kitchen staff prepares lunch: miniature quiches and apple pan dowdy for dessert.

"It's nice to have a day just for women where they can express themselves and feel welcomed," said Smith, 87, the ministry director at Mustard Seed since it opened in 2000.

Nestled in the heart of Toronto's Riverdale neighbourhood, Mustard Seed is part of the Fontbonne Ministries founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph Toronto. It offers social programs for local residents, everything from making pan dowdy to computer training to sewing to performing pantomime. It's especially busy during Thanksgiving season.

"We get a real mix of patrons here," said Smith. "I used to work in Parkdale (in west Toronto) where we saw a lot of people with untreated mental illness. Here, we have more patrons who are medicated. We also have a lot of working poor and seniors with very limited pensions."

The watercolour painters are a mix of the individuals Smith described. Some are regulars who greet Smith with the warmth and friendliness of a best friend. They move on from painting to a stretching activity before lunch.

"A lot of the people who come are very sedentary," said Smith. "We try to get them moving as much as possible."

Smith also likes to get the patrons outside when the weather permits, taking them on nature walks or painting in the sunshine.

"This is my favourite," said Smith, referring to a large painting hanging on a wall in the basement. It is a life-sized tree, but its leaves are a kaleidoscope of handprints in all different colours. "We



Meggie Hoegler

MUSTARD SEED — From left, Elizabeth Redegeld, Serena Chong and Sister Joan Lewis prepare lunch for women taking part in programs at Mustard Seed.

took patrons to Allan Gardens to do this. You can tell we had artists of all ages, some of the handprints are bigger than mine and some belong to children. It's a mosaic of everyone who comes here. They just loved having fun with paint outside on a beautiful day."

Although Mustard Seed offers free meals to its patrons, its primary focus is providing social interactions and fulfilment beyond basic needs.

"Think Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs," said AnnMarie Marcolin, interim manager at Mustard Seed, referring to Abraham Maslow's psychological theory of human fulfilment. "On a basic level, humans need food, water and shelter to survive. But our next level of needs are social. At Mustard Seed, everyone is accepted. We listen to what our patrons have to say and we celebrate their gifts."

Smith knows that the holidays can be difficult for the poor and isolated, so she goes to great efforts to ensure the centre is festive and cheerful. The walls of the sun-lit rooms are lined with artwork and crafts created by participants. The lunch room smells of freshly brewed coffee. The glass windows offer participants a view of the changing leaves as they dine.

The food served at Mustard Seed is economically sourced.

The kitchen is stocked with surplus supplies from food banks and from the sisters' own reserves. They also receive fresh fruit in the summer through Not Far From the Tree, a volunteer organization that picks fruit from trees and bushes across Toronto.

"The Wednesday following Thanksgiving will be a themed Whimsical Women's Wednesday," said Marcolin. "Even though it doesn't fall on the actual day, we will serve a Thanksgiving lunch. We also do a community kitchen every Tuesday night so next week's theme will also be around the concept of Thanksgiving."

Smith says fulfilling secondary needs — socialization and emotional purpose — are necessary to ensuring participants a good quality of life.

"I always start every activity by asking everyone, 'How do we come today?' " said Smith. "It's important to know how everyone is feeling so I can respond to them in the best way possible."

Mustard Seed also helps its patrons by finding practical solutions to real problems. "Just the other day we had a woman come in who had been living in a shelter with her children. She was having some issues with her current living situation so I helped her draft an advocacy letter to the shelter," said Marcolin.

Alpha fall launch has had strong response from parishes

Continued from page 4

launching it this fall. About 160 people turned up to the first meeting — the largest Alpha his parish has ever seen. "We've never had such a response!"

Alpha's Catholic church coordinator, Josh Canning, confirmed that this season of Alphas in Catholic parishes is the largest in recent memory.

"There is a beautiful springtime happening in Vancouver," Canning told The B.C. Catholic.

He said of a 150-member Facebook group for Catholics who run Alpha across Canada, "by far it's the Vancouver and Victoria dioceses that are the most active in sharing ideas and asking questions."

He said Alpha staff were thrilled to learn Miller speaks highly of their evangelization tools. "It excites us hugely. It really does. It's just wonderful," he said.

"It shows an alignment. We have the same kinds of goals. As Alpha, we just want people to get to know Jesus. I know the amazing adventure it is to be a Christian and join the church."

It's not the first "springtime" for Alpha in the Archdiocese of Vancouver, however. Longtime

evangelist Vernon Robertson said a conference held in July of 2000 had a similar effect.

"We decided to have Nicky Gumbel come over from England" and lead an Alpha conference for 1,500 Christians across North America at the McPherson Centre in Burnaby.

"After that conference, we started to train teams to run Alpha." Within one year, he guessed 15 local Catholic parishes ran the evangelization program. Some high-hitters included St. Joseph the Worker and Holy Cross Parish.

"It was a season of the spirit where the fruit was falling off the tree."

Now, Robertson, who has been in the field since at least 1994, warns "spiritual climate change" has made evangelization more difficult.

"Alpha is wonderful. It works. The problem is getting people to run it," he said. In the years after Gumbel's conference, thousands of Catholics participated in Alpha. Then, participation dropped off.

"Evangelization is not a sprint. It's a marathon," said Robertson. "You have 13 parishes running it now. The test is: how many of those parishes are running it five years from now?"

Workers urged to call government to account

Continued from page 3

Annual Appeal), other Sunday services are no longer being offered, because of the elimination of the infrastructure needed to organize them.

At times, when patients were unable to attend significant family or life events, the spiritual care department would assist in organizing such things as weddings or funerals at the hospital chapel. "This is no longer going to happen, because there is no one to oversee what is happening in the chapels, there is no one to facilitate the services for these people who are needing to have these significant life events while in hospital."

Jackie Saretsky, co-ordinator of Hospital Chaplaincy for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, described how the whole of spiritual care has fallen on the shoulders of denominational chaplains and volunteers, and described some of the changes in procedure that are happening.

Saretsky encouraged the pas-

tors, ministers and volunteers in the room to make sure they get their health region clearance tags, necessary paperwork and checks done to reassure staff and patients. Another step would be to get clinical pastoral education training, she added. "We have been called to a specific and important and worthy ministry, and we are professionals at what we do."

Now that the spiritual care department has been eliminated, churches need to take the initiative to make sure that the names of designated chaplains are on the health region lists for both City Hospital and RUH, so that the correct, up-to-date information will be available at the switchboard, to nurses' desks, at emergency and in the intensive care unit, to ensure that staff know who to call "to get the right chaplain to the right patient," she said.

As the health care system in Saskatchewan undergoes other fundamental changes, with the planned elimination of health regions and the creation of a single provincial authority, church

leaders and denominational chaplains are also looking ahead, hoping to develop a new spiritual care affiliation agreement with the new authority, Saretsky noted.

Rev. Ron Bestvater of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada reported that only a few faith groups have negotiated an agreement with the Saskatoon Health Region for the provision of denominational spiritual/pastoral care, including the United Church, Anglicans, Lutherans, and Roman Catholics.

The creation of a province-wide health region will call for serious ecumenical engagement and co-operation to ensure that people are cared for. "If your denomination isn't included in the affiliation agreement, start making noise and get that process going, so that the affiliation agreement gets expanded to include all of us who need it," Bestvater said. "Volunteers — you cannot be fired, and if you show up, somebody will have to make a decision about what to do with you. Nobody knows who

that somebody is going to be right now, but what I am saying is: be the squeaky wheel."

There is still a willingness in the region for spiritual care, but the support of an actual department is gone, he stressed.

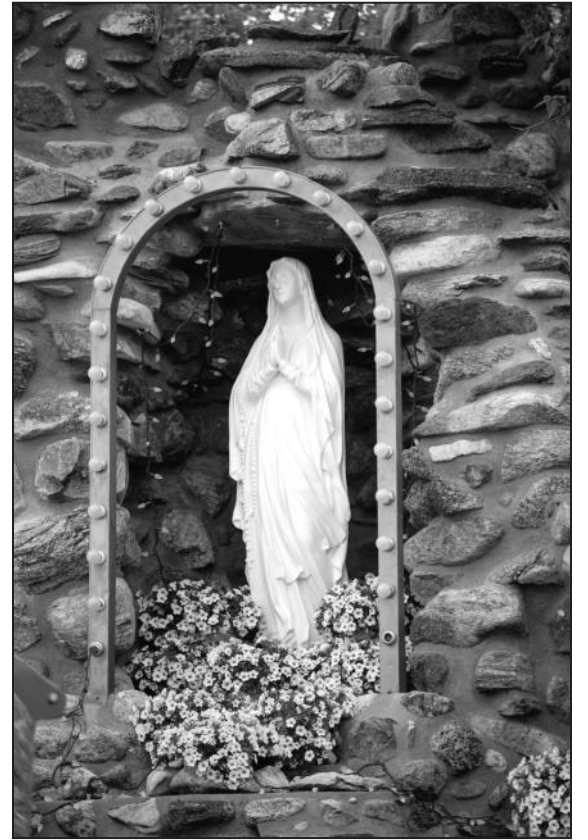
In the discussion that followed, it was again noted that the presence of denominational chaplains still does not answer the needs of the 50-some-per cent of patients who do not belong to a faith community. They may not have an affiliation, but that doesn't mean they do not experience fear, or a need to talk to someone about existential questions, or the experience of dealing with illness, suffering or dying.

Ways to advocate for publicly funded spiritual care in the provincial health system were discussed, with participants noting the need to stress the health benefits of spiritual care, which in turn bring financial savings. There was also a question raised as to whether the elimination of publicly funded non-denominational spiritual care is a violation of the rights of patients with no faith connection.

The days when volunteers and non-professionals can handle this outreach on their own has passed, one speaker suggested, comparing it to how a growing community moves beyond a volunteer fire department to a professional, paid department when the complexity, size and challenge of providing the service becomes too much for volunteers.

Parish Nurse Ethna Martin of St. Philip Neri Parish suggested the issue must be talked about in local churches, and spoken about from the pulpit in order to raise public awareness about a cut to spiritual care services that many are not aware has happened. Those who require spiritual care for themselves or family members may now have to be more active in requesting that support, others noted.

It was also suggested that with both the Saskatchewan Party and the New Democratic Party engaged in leadership races in Saskatchewan, this is a good time to raise the question with leader-



GROTTO — It was Rev. Anthony Sylla, OMI, who chose the site for a grotto to be built on a hill near the village of Rama, Sask., when the Second World War broke out. He felt there was a need to pray for peace in the world. Thousands of fieldstones were hauled in wagonloads, washed and blessed, and then set in place. Sylla, an architect, designed it as a replica of Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine in France, after which it was named. The first pilgrimage took place in 1941. Since then there have been many additions: the fountain, the Stations of the Cross, and numerous statues, including St. Gianna Beretta Molla, Sylla himself and, this summer, St. John Paul II and St. Mother Teresa. There is also a relic of John Paul II, received from his private secretary, Cardinal Stanislaus Dzwicz from Krakow, Poland.

ship hopefuls about their position on restoring funding to spiritual care in the health care system, as well as raising the issue with local MLAs.

"As people of faith we are called to a loving response, a compassionate response to decisions that we deeply disagree with," Lasair said, urging those concerned about the issue "to call the government to greater love, to greater compassion, to greater peace."

Lasair encouraged those in attendance to move beyond anger and frustration to work with each other and with government to address the issue, and to call government to account — but also calling them to a place of deeper love and compassion, as part of becoming "a more loving and inclusive society, a place where people of all faiths, of all religions, and all ethnicities can co-exist and call one another brothers and sisters."



Marilyne Yager

HOLY CROSS REUNION — Members of the Holy Cross Catholic High School founding class (1963 - 1967) gathered recently for a 50th anniversary reunion. Back row, from left: Pat Mulligan Korpan, Johnny Horsley, Marilyn Hunter Whitehead, Terry Greenaway Preston, Mary Molloy, Bob McEwen, Ron Klein, Bob Foret, Allen Schaan, Scott Gordon. Middle row: Val Kostyna Davis, Diane Lucyshyn, Judy Creswell Pasitney, Betty Lou Keenan McDonald, Sally Sader Ciepliski, Elsie Betz Merz, Cheryl Lefebvre Stewart. Front row: Jackie Flitchel Fernet, Frances Rush Murphy, Sharon Schneider Hill, Lorraine Plischke Belak, Joanne Horsley Pinder, Marilyne Bandet Yager.

Technology makes sharing report possible

Continued from page 1

LeGatt posted French and English versions of his report to the Vatican on the archdiocesan website about two weeks before his visit to Rome with the other Western Canadian bishops. In the six months since then he's had phone calls and letters from some of the more engaged members of his church, thanking him for the bird's-eye view of bilingual Catholicism in Winnipeg and the surrounding farm country.

"These would be people who are more intimately involved with the life of the church," said LeGatt.

While there are no other examples of Canadian bishops giving their faithful the same document they gave to the Vatican, other bishops did report back to their people on their experience in Rome.

Halifax Archbishop Anthony Mancini posted videos of himself made in Rome. Gatineau Archbishop Paul André Durocher blogged about his experience in French. The Assembly of Quebec Catholic Bishops posted a summary of their week in Rome and the Assembly of Western Catholic Bishops posted a 1,400-word summary along with a photo diary on their website.

"Sharing the *ad limina* report is inviting the faithful of the diocese into a sense of what the church at this time, in this place, is called to be — which is evangelizing," said LeGatt.

It's the technology that makes this level of sharing possible, the archbishop said.

"Would I have printed 10,000 copies of a 120-page report? Of course not. But since we have the website — it's free, it's easily

accessible. The means are there. Why not use the means at our disposal for the advancing of the life of the church and the kingdom of God?" LeGatt said.

Throughout his report, LeGatt emphasizes the search for new and better ways for ordinary Catholics to share their faith both with each other and with friends and neighbours outside the church. From Catholic Christian Outreach's efforts on university campuses to Alpha programs in parishes, LeGatt is encouraged whenever Catholics sit down, share a meal and talk about their faith.

"All those efforts to bring people together, to hear the Word of God, to hear the teaching of the church, to connect it to their own lives by sharing it with other people — that's how the faith is transmitted and received in our day," he said.

Small packages

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Bishops clarify position on HPV vaccinations

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — Saskatchewan Catholic Schools started the school year with some controversy over a letter included in the information package that all students received. The letter was from the Saskatchewan bishops and cautioned parents with regard to their moral obligations and their right to choose to have their children vaccinated with the HPV vaccine. The letter has been part of the student information package for the past 10 years and had not been updated with current studies of the human papilloma virus vaccine and the advantages to children, both female and male, in receiving this vaccine.

The report of a protest in Saskatoon of this outdated letter prompted an aggressive media call for an explanation by the Regina archdiocese and the director of education. The offending letter had been written as advice to Catholic parents and stated that the vaccine could create a false sense of security and encourage risky sexual behaviour.

The letter also stated that the vaccine prevents 70 per cent of infections that could lead to cervical cancer and that the long-term effect of the vaccine on young children is unknown. It argued that parents should have the final say on whether their children are vaccinated and encouraged them to review the evidence in order to make an informed decision. The letter also promoted the church’s teaching on chastity and abstinence from sexual activity before marriage and a faithful, monogamous union in marriage as the surest way to good health.

Regina archdiocesan theologian Brett Salkeld, with the approval of the bishops, responded publicly to the protest and said, in part, “That letter should never have gone out. It contains outdated and inaccurate information.”

An updated letter referencing the HPV vaccine was issued from the Saskatchewan bishops, dated Oct. 5, and said the bishops sincerely regret the confusion caused by the outdated letter that was

part of the student information package. They referred to recent conversations with health professionals and concerned parents and current research documents that describe the effectiveness of the HPV vaccine against cervical and other forms of cancer, notably throat cancer in boys, which has been on the rise in recent years. The bishops reiterated their original advice to parents and responsible adults that they inform themselves by consulting the evidence and make a decision according to their conscience and

their faith. A link to those studies is provided in their letter.

The bishops stated that they were encouraged by research findings that showed there was no increase in risky sexual behaviour among those children who have been vaccinated with the HPV vaccine. As was stated in the original letter, the bishops’ position on parental choice and the virtue of chastity did not change with their learning of newer science. The letter stressed that chastity is and always will be a virtue worth proposing and mod-

elling for young people, stating, “It is a way of life that brings value and joy.” The bishops stated they were grateful for the unconditional love modelled by parents for their children and would strive to support their best decisions.

The vaccine has been available for Grade 6 girls in the province since 2008. This year the vaccine was made available to Grade 6 boys. It is usually administered when the child is in Grade 6 which, it is believed, is an age before sexual activity might begin.

Groups gather for World Food Day in Saskatoon

SASKATOON — Saskatoon citizens and organizations came together on Oct. 16 in recognition of World Food Day and to learn about local food security initiatives and food sovereignty around the world.

The event featured a keynote presentation by author and activist Nettie Wiebe on switching the menu from land-grabbing, migration and food insecurity to food sovereignty. Wiebe is a university professor, an organic farmer, and a community organizer. She farms near Delisle, Sask., and recently retired from teaching at St. Andrew’s College at the University of Saskatchewan.

the Future of Migration: Invest in Food Security and Rural Development.”

Higher temperatures and erratic weather patterns attributed to climate change, including both flooding and drought, are affecting food security around the world. Agricultural adaptation to climate change is vital to combating poverty and hunger now and in the future.

By adopting sustainable agricultural practices tailored to local contexts, farmers around the world can increase both their productivity and their income, while also increasing their resilience. By learning about the impact of the food we eat and choosing more sustainable options, citizens can



Nettie Wiebe

PM file

The evening also featured groups working for local food security and global food sovereignty, sharing ideas and opportunities for Saskatoon citizens to get involved in supporting ethical food options at home and around the world. Discussions showcased the role of local, small-scale agriculture in achieving health, nutrition, environmental sustainability and global food security.

Wiebe was available in advance of the event for interviews with the media and to discuss her thoughts on World Food Day and the importance of local production in achieving global justice. She also spoke with groups and citizens who are working on projects in Saskatoon.

The event was sponsored by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, CHEP Good Food Inc., Engineers Without Borders, Fair Trade Saskatoon, the National Farmers’ Union, the Saskatchewan Council for International Co-operation, the Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre, the Saskatoon Food Council, Slow Food Saskatoon, and USC Canada.

The event was held in response to the United Nations 2017 World Food Day call to action: “Change

substantially reduce the harmful effects of agriculture and food production on the planet.

As Canadians become more aware of their power as consumers, they are choosing to make a clear statement with the products they buy. By purchasing fair trade, organic, and locally produced goods, they show support for the environment, local and global communities, and farming families around the world.

Appeal goal set at \$1.575 million

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — Parish leaders and volunteers across the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon are once again sharing the importance and impact of ministries supported by the Bishop’s Annual Appeal, which was recently launched in local parishes and online. The goal of the 2017 appeal is to raise \$1.575 million to support a range of ministries and outreach programs in the diocese and beyond.



Tim Yaworski

The theme of this year’s appeal is “Let Your Light Shine,” with a focus on Our Lord’s words about salt and light in the Gospel of Matthew: “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

CHAPLAINCY — Co-ordinator of Hospital Chaplaincy Jackie Saretsky spends time with a patient who is far from home. Hospital chaplaincy is one of a range of ministries supported by the Bishop’s Annual Appeal, which is once again underway in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

“Gifts to the Bishop’s Annual Appeal ensure we can continue these vital efforts to let our light shine as followers of Jesus Christ,” says diocesan administrator Rev. Kevin McGee, who wrote this year’s letter to the faithful about the appeal before the Sept. 12 appointment of Saskatoon’s new bishop.

During a recent visit to the diocese in preparation for his installation as Saskatoon’s eighth bishop on Nov. 23, Bishop Mark Hagemoen took time to reflect on the importance of stewardship and the impact of the diocesan appeal. His comments were added to a video about the appeal shown in parishes and posted online.

the Bishop’s Annual Appeal both “reach out in love” and “build up the church” and include outreach and faith development programs such as hospital chaplaincy, youth ministry, Lay Formation, Marriage and Family Life, Aboriginal parish ministry, Justice and Peace, Catholic prison outreach (Restorative Ministry), the Catholic Deaf Ministry, ecumenism, communications, Christian Initiation and Catechetics, vocations promotion and the education of priests and future priests.

patients from out of town, especially those from farther away.”

Another important role for Saretsky is recruiting, training, and supporting a team of volunteers who assist with hospital visiting. “Training volunteers well is important, so that they feel supported, so that they feel comfortable and oriented to the hospital,” Saretsky says. “Volunteers play a huge role. We are called to serve; we are called to support those in need, to offer comfort, to offer compassionate care.”

“Light is a powerful way in which we are blessed and receive the light of God, and it is a very important metaphor around the light of Christ and his salvation for the world,” noted the bishop, who is presently serving in the northern diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith, where light’s impact is greatly felt in the changing seasons.

As one of the ministries supported by the BAA, hospital chaplaincy is vitally important to patients and families faced with illness or treatment decisions, who may be dealing with uncertainty or pain, physical or spiritual suffering, as well as death and dying, says Rev. Rhéal Bussière, who works with diocesan hospital chaplaincy co-ordinator Jackie Saretsky, who oversees Catholic chaplaincy in both Royal University and Saskatoon City Hospitals.

Another ministry that has an ongoing impact in the diocese is vocations promotion and the education of priests and future priests. Gifts to the Bishop’s Annual Appeal support seminarians in their studies, points out Rev. Daniel Yasinski, who along with Rev. Colin Roy, serves as a vocation director in the Diocese of Saskatoon.

“Good stewardship is so important in the life, work, and mission of Christ and his church, and the support of the mission is something I very much look forward to,” Hagemoen added. “This is a diocese that has done a lot of good work in many ministry areas.”

Gifts to the BAA also go toward spiritual care at St. Paul’s Hospital. “Hospital chaplaincy is one of those ministries where we really rely on the participation of the people of the Diocese of Saskatoon,” notes Bussière. Whether it involves compassionate listening, offering prayer or providing sacraments, the compassionate presence of hospital chaplaincy is making a difference. “It is essential that we be there for those in our hospitals.”

“The Bishop’s Annual Appeal builds up the church by actually putting priests in our parishes,” Yasinski says. “It funds the formation of our priests.”

The incoming Saskatoon bishop expressed his appreciation for the ministry support that so many provide through donations to the Bishop’s Annual Appeal, and he said he is looking forward to serving alongside the people of God in the Diocese of Saskatoon.

Ministries supported by gifts to

This presence is particularly important for those who are far from home, or without any other support, adds Saretsky. “I think one of the most important parts of my vocation is connecting with

He reflects on how gifts to the Bishop’s Annual Appeal have permitted him to serve as a priest — right now as pastor for parishes at Kerrobert, Major, Dodsland, and Luseland, Sask. In the 2017 BAA video, Yasinski and recently ordained diocesan priests Rev. Edward Gibney and Rev. Michael Yaremko all express their gratitude for the support they received from the people of the diocese through the Bishop’s Annual Appeal.

For more information see www.dscatholicfoundation.ca or contact Cathy Gilje at (306) 659-5891.

Remembering the friendship of a beloved priest

Around the Kitchen Table

Donald Ward



Rev. Mario D’Souza, CSB, began religious life as a Jesuit. While a novice in the Irish Province, he once told me, he stayed at a retreat house on the coast. The journey from Dublin had been tiring, and he and his confrères retired early in preparation for the rigours to come.

“Gentlemen,” the novice master had told them, “the Lord has given me your wills for two years, that I might *crush* them and mould them to his own.”

Sleep eluded Mario. He turned on the light — a bare bulb in the ceiling — and began reading a P.G. Wodehouse novel. Eventually he decided to turn out the light anyway, reasoning that lying motionless in the dark might bring some of the benefits of slumber. But the light would not turn off. He flicked the switch a dozen times, but all the bulb did was sputter and fade, then return to full power. He returned to bed and stuck his head under the pillow.

It wasn’t long before he noticed that the light seemed to be growing brighter. He peered out from under the pillow just in time to watch the whole fixture crash to the floor. At the same time, the power failed.

“At least now I might get

some sleep,” he thought.

It was not to be, for a merry blaze sprang up where the light fixture had landed on the rug. Mario leapt out of bed. He couldn’t stamp it out because he was barefoot, and he didn’t want to smother it with his blanket. He needed water, and something to carry it in. The washroom was down the hall. The flames were spreading. On an impulse, he reached under the bed, and his fingers closed around the curved handle of a chamber pot. Vessel in hand, he burst out of the room.

By one of those inexplicable meetings of fate and whimsy whereby the great God seasons our humours, there happened to be both a full moon and a clear sky that night — two events that might coincide once a decade in Ireland — so Mario was not entirely in the dark. Even so, he slammed doors, crashed into walls, and dropped the chamber pot.

With the vessel full, he burst out the washroom door, spilling water as he went, and made his way back to the fire. Looking up, he saw a black-robed apparition bearing down on him, skirts flying, cadaverous visage white in the moonlight. The young novice did what any rational person

would have done: he shrieked and emptied the chamber pot in the apparition’s face.

The apparition, who turned out to be the superior of the Irish Province, later took comfort in the fact that it was only water, but at the time he was not to know. He had come to investigate the noises coming from the hallway and found himself apparently doused with cold urine. He slipped on the wet floor, collided with Mario in a lunatic pirouette, and the pair of them collapsed in the hallway.

The moonlight soon revealed a half-dozen novices who had gathered at the sounds of the contest. The superior, now looking like a drenched buzzard, rose with what dignity he could and demanded an explanation. Mario provided one, and only then did anyone think to investigate the fire, which by that time had burned itself out. The priest pointed to the sink in Mario’s room and asked, not unreasonably, why he had not simply filled the chamber pot there.

This may have been a deciding factor in Mario’s religious formation. He soon left the Jesuits.

Originally from Karachi, the D’Souza family came to Canada after Mario’s father passed away and it became clear that Christians would soon not be welcome in Pakistan. His mother and brother settled in Calgary, and Mario worked in the chancery office there until he joined the Congregation of St. Basil. He did his novitiate in Saskatoon under Rev. James Hanrahan, CSB, then president of St. Thomas More College. This was where we met him.

For most of that year, Mario

came for supper every weekend, and we would share conversation and wine and pots of curry and rice and dhal, and every day I would see him coffee at St. Thomas More College. He became a dear friend. My daughters Caitlin and Brigid, then three and five, were smitten. When the Basilians moved Mario to Toronto to pursue a theology degree in preparation for ordination, he was sorely missed, though I often travelled to Calgary in the summer to visit him at the local Basilian house, where he stayed while visiting his family.

When Mario was ordained in 1991, we all went to Calgary for the celebration. Colleen and I read at the mass while Brigid and Caitlin watched from the pews. They both wept with emotion. That was 26 years ago.

Mario died in Toronto on Sept. 26, after a brief illness. As I write, I have known about it for two hours. The enormity of the tragedy hasn’t hit me yet. I will go to mass in the morning and pray for his soul.

Beloved Basilian, rest in peace.



Maria Bohe, National Geographic

THE STORY OF US — Morgan Freeman is pictured with villagers during the Ethiopian Peace Ceremony in Omo Valley in a scene from the documentary series “The Story of Us.” The series is on cable’s National Geographic Channel.

In new series, Morgan Freeman explores the human condition

By Aysha Khan
©2017 Religion News Service

Morgan Freeman wanted to understand how people who have lived through conflict can make peace.

So last May, the Academy Award-winning actor visited Rwanda’s Kigali Genocide Memorial, which commemorates the country’s brutal civil war between the Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups.

Sitting across from him were a Tutsi woman who lost her family — and the Hutu man who had killed them during a genocide that left around 800,000 people dead.

And seated next to them was the bishop who had introduced the pair, as part of an ambitious reconciliation program.

Offering forgiveness was no easy task, the woman told Freeman. “But the Word of God was helping me to take the step and pardon the killers.”

Now, the two live as neighbours.

That scene, in the second episode of Freeman’s new *National Geographic* series, left a deep impression on his team.

“I mean, how does someone do that?” executive producer James Younger asked. “Seeing these conversations taught me the incredible power and resourcefulness of the human spirit.”

The six-part docuseries “The Story of Us” explores big-picture

questions about life and the human condition. Each hourlong episode zooms in on one topic: freedom, peace, love, division, power and rebellion. The first episode aired Oct. 11 at 9 p.m. Eastern on the National Geographic Channel, with the others to follow weekly.

The show follows up on last year’s “The Story of God,” in which Freeman explored faith in 20 cities around the world. After that experience, he and the producers realized how well audiences were receiving their genre of explorational storytelling.

“People do get something out of learning about other cultures,” Freeman told RNS in an interview. “And how so many of the differences pointed out to us are just from someone else’s imagination.”

When he was in Rwanda, for example, he saw no discernible difference between the Hutus and the Tutsis. “Showing that common thread is going to help us all,” Freeman said.

For him and his producers, the take-home message in “The Story of God” was really the commonality in the world’s diverse communities.

Often, producing partner Lori McCreary told RNS, it was faith that motivated groups to unite. In the second episode, Freeman travels to Southern Ethiopia, where villagers who’d been in a long-

standing land rivalry came together with a peace ceremony. “When we come together and we pray to God, of course he will give us peace,” one elder said while hugging his former enemy.

But just as “The Story of Us” shows faith as a motivator for unity, it has examples of the deep, often deadly, division it can spark. The same episode takes viewers to Northern Ireland, where Freeman met a Roman Catholic man and a Protestant woman who’d struck up a dangerous friendship despite the nation’s denominational tensions and segregation. (The woman, who’d been driven out of her home and onto the streets because of threats, was made unidentifiable.)

In an episode exploring the world’s increasing polarization, Freeman meets a granddaughter of Westboro Baptist Church’s founder. Megan Phelps-Roper was an outspoken member of what the Southern Poverty Law Center calls “arguably the most obnoxious and rabid hate group in America.” But she left in 2012 — thanks to educational dialogue with strangers she met on Twitter.

“We wanted to really lean into (Freeman’s) ability to get to the core and soul of people, and have him pull out from them the truth,” McCreary said.

The series veers clear of heavy academia, instead focusing on compelling stories of life. “First, we thought we’d do the story of

man,” Younger explains. “But we didn’t want to do the whole archaeology thing. We want to show culture in its whole flowering.”

The result is what the team describes as human culture, told in a series of vignettes.

The show offers an antidote to those tired of all the poisonous political and media climate. Freeman uses his charisma and non-divisiveness to present a non-combative message at a time when discussions of freedom and peace are fraught with tension, political and otherwise.

The subjects are often hard-hitting — homelessness, incarceration, war, genocide, murder — but come as a gentle reminder of what makes us human.

In an interview with RNS last year, Freeman said filming “The Story of God” didn’t change his own view of God.

So did “The Story of Us”

change his view on us?

Not at all, Freeman says.

“It deepened my understanding, perhaps. But as for what my views are, I’m about as confused as you.”

One of the many lessons is that people, whether they’re in the Westboro Baptist Church or 1994 Rwanda, nearly always believe they’re acting for the good.

“When you believe something, it is the truth,” Freeman said. “If you encounter me and I don’t believe it, you have three choices: walk away, stay and try to convince me that your truth is the truth, or eliminate me because I represent a danger to that belief system.”

The question, he says, is how we learn to interact with people who don’t necessarily believe what we do. And he’s hoping “The Story of Us” can provide insights at a critical time.

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Enthralling sci-fi epic has a Canadian connection

Screenings & Meanings

Gerald Schmitz



By far the best thing in theatres, best seen in IMAX where available, is Quebec director Denis Villeneuve’s enthralling sci-fi epic *Blade Runner 2049* (<http://bladerunnermovie.com/>) which opened wide on the Friday before the Canadian Thanksgiving long weekend. On a personal note, that date was the 110th anniversary of my dad’s birth in Iowa. Giving age its due, let me also pay tribute to the late great actor Harry Dean Stanton who died a month ago at 91. His final role was among his best — as “Lucky” in John Carroll Lynch’s terrific South By Southwest festival selection (<http://www.luckythefilm.com/>) about a no-nonsense nonagenarian taking life’s journey on his own terms. *Lucky* includes an appearance by maverick veteran director David Lynch, the return of whose idiosyncratic “Twin Peaks” series to TV screens after a 27-year absence previewed at SXSW.

The art of making a successful sequel is a challenge, especially when the original has achieved an iconic status that many will doubt can be replicated. That last word is particularly applicable to Sir Ridley Scott’s futuristic *Blade Runner*, released in 1982, about a hunter of bioengineered humanoid robots called “replicants.” Although the original theatrical version was not greeted with much critical or commercial success, later versions, leading to a definitive 2007 final 2007 cut, grew in reputation to be regarded as a cult masterpiece. Villeneuve, who proved his mastery of the science-fiction genre with last year’s *Arrival*, proves to be up to the task of bringing the story forward three decades from the 2019 setting of the first film that drew on Philip K. Dick’s 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* In addition, Scott was brought in as an executive producer and original screenwriter Hampton Fancher worked on the script.

Blade Runner 2049 opens with a brief explanation setting up the narrative that takes place in a noirish dystopian California pelted by rains and snows (climate change meets nuclear winter?). The first replicants were manufactured by Tyrell Corporation to serve in off-world colonies. Some went rogue becoming fugitives to be “retired” (i.e. eliminated) by police agents known as blade runners. Then Tyrell went bankrupt. Data records were lost in a great blackout. A mysterious new master, Niander Wallace, has taken over, producing a new model of replicant and determined to possess knowledge that will assure his supremacy.

Enter the replicant blade runner “K” (brilliantly played by Canadian Ryan Gosling), a member of the Los Angeles Police

Department. Known only by his serial number, KD3:6-7, he’s regularly tested to ensure “baseline” reliability. Stoic and unshaven, K lives in a spartan apartment amid the sea-walled city’s dark Orwellian towers, garishly lit advertisements and amusements (the very antithesis of the sunny-romantic *La La Land* of Gosling’s 2016 song-and-dance role). Offering comfort and support, to be summoned at his control, is a holographic “girlfriend,” Joi (Ana de Armas).

Blade Runner 2049
(Canada/Hungary/U.K./U.S.)

The connection to *Blade Runner* 1982 is soon established. In that movie the protagonist member of the LAPD was Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford) who defected and has been missing for three decades. More than his existence poses a threat to the new order. K is assigned by his steely boss Lt. Joshi (Robin Wright) the job of finding and retiring that risk. First he takes his futuristic flying vehicle into the surrounding desolate landscape, locating an older replicant, Sapper Morton (Dave Bautista), farming “protein” (grubs). One down, but not before Morton speaks of a “miracle,” and K finds an ossuary and a cryptic inscription hidden beneath a dead tree stump.

Back at headquarters the examination of the bones reveals it to be those of a pregnant female replicant. Could there be a child? If replicants could procreate, might these android slaves be able rise up against their human creators and controllers? That dangerous possibility must be eliminated. When K muses why, “to be born is to have a soul, I guess,” Joshi retorts, “you don’t need one,” as she sends him on a search and destroy mission.

This is where matters become increasingly complicated for K. He visits a girl in a bubble, a memory-maker who has him recall a childhood memory involving a little wood-carved horse bearing an inscription. Is it just implanted in his software? If real, is it his? Joi tells him she always knew he was “special” and gives him the name “Joe.” At the same time, Wallace (a creepy dead-eyed Jared Leto) has picked up the scent. He must possess the secret, sending his right-hand woman, Luv (Sylvia Hoeks), as a lethal weapon to find it.

K is both pursuer and pursued as he makes his way through a lurid radioactive apocalyptic environment. When he tracks down the aging Deckard, a grizzled hermit and his dog, holed up in an abandoned casino, it will be a fateful encounter for both that, occurring at the 100-minute mark of an almost three-hour movie,

builds to an astonishing sequence of showdowns and revelations.

I’ll say no more — and there’s much more — except prepare to hold on to your seats!

Blade Runner 2049 displays a level and scale of virtuoso craftsmanship from director Villeneuve and from ace cinematographer Roger Deakins that should surely win the latter an Oscar (after 13 nominations, including last year for Villeneuve’s *Sicario*). Much of the film was shot at Origo and Korda studios near Budapest, along with aerial footage from Mexico City, Spain, Iceland and Nevada. The production design and visual effects are truly exceptional (the work of a huge team as the end credits acknowledge). Every element comes together to serve the story, which Villeneuve allows space to unfold and invests with a rare emotional intelligence that affects how we see the characters whether android or human.

There’s nothing robotic or formulaic about this *Blade Runner*. You might say it’s science fiction with a soul, which the 75-year-old Ford, reprising his role as Deckard, urges watching only on the big screen: “When you’re all sitting in the dark with all of this stimulation — visual, aural, intellectual, emotional — it’s like you’re attending to your common humanity. It’s like going to church: you don’t want to be the only one around when they ask you to stand and start singing. You want to know there are other believers out there.”

Is there anything else worth noting? Beyond the usual action thrillers — a lame *Kingsman* sequel, a lamer and ludicrous *American Assassin*, the respectably spry Tom Cruise vehicle *American Made* — recent weeks



Warner Brothers

BLADE RUNNER 2049 — “By far the best thing in theatres, best seen in IMAX where available, is Quebec director Denis Villeneuve’s enthralling sci-fi epic *Blade Runner 2049*,” writes Gerald Schmitz. Ryan Gosling and Harrison Ford are seen in this photo from the film.

have seen a fair number of middling selections from the Toronto film festival arrive at the multiplex: *Stronger* about the recovery of a double amputee from the Boston marathon bombing; the 19th-century British imperial period drama *Victoria & Abdul*; *Battle of the Sexes* about the 1973 tennis showdown between Billie Jean King and male chauvinist Bobby Riggs. There’s also the first English-language production from Palestinian director Hany Abu-Assad, *The Mountain Between Us*, a plane crash survival ordeal turned love story — starring Kate Winslet, Idris Elba and a canine — that I unfortunately found wholly unconvincing even if the wintry mountain

vistas (B.C. imitating Colorado) are impressive.

Better, if on the satirical slight side, is Mike White’s *Brad’s Status*, a Toronto Platform selection, in which Ben Stiller plays an annoying middle-aged father who, while accompanying his accomplished college-bound teenage son, indulges in self-pity over a perceived relative lack of material success until the young folks set him straight.

Best of all is Sean Baker’s *The Florida Project*, an eye-opening story of growing up poor in America and life on the margins. It’s a reminder that fantasy worlds can be great to escape to for a few hours, but you can’t live there.

Books

Fans of Jesuit author will find surprises in collection of his works

James Martin: Essential Writings, selected and with an introduction by James T. Keane. Orbis Books (Maryknoll, New York, 2017). 245 pp., \$22. Reviewed Mitch Finley.

No matter how many of the bestselling books authored by Jesuit Father James Martin you have read, a great deal of what’s in this book — a volume in the publisher’s “Modern Spiritual Masters Series” — is likely to be unfamiliar. While it includes some brief excerpts from his most popular books (*The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything*, *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*, *A Jesuit Off-Broadway* and *Between Heaven and Mirth*), most of what you’ll find here comes from articles by Martin that appeared in various periodicals including *America* (over 200 to date), the *Tablet*, *Huffington Post* and *Portland*, the University of Portland’s alumni magazine. James T. Keane does the author’s many fans a service, then, by presenting them with material they might otherwise never know about.

Keane gathers this book’s 40-some articles into four categories titled: Motions of the Soul: Spirituality and Prayer; God in All Things: The Divine in Daily Life; The Care of Souls: Solidarity with the Suffering and the Wounded; and More by

Deeds than by Words: Models of Holiness. Article titles many readers will find particularly appealing are “Reflections on Chronic Illness and Pain, Among Other Things,” “Holy Dirt” (about sacramentals), “Six Stupid Things I Never Want to Do Again,” “Don’t Be a Jerk,” “Lourdes Diary,” “Why Stay in a Church So Clearly Flawed” and “The Saint of the Sock Drawer” (about St. Jude).

In his introduction, a short biographical essay about Martin, editor Keane make a solid case for his comparison of Martin to the great 20th-century Trappist monk, author, social critic and poet Thomas Merton. Martin most likely dismisses any such comparison. Still, Keane writes: “James Martin, SJ, the Jesuit priest who is perhaps American Catholicism’s most prominent public figure, was a lukewarm, non-practising Catholic on the fast track to executive riches at General Electric.”

While this is certainly true, one may be justified in observing that there are, undoubtedly, many regular Catholics with similar backgrounds who returned to being Catholic or joined the church and did not go on to become priests or nuns, but went on to live their faith in admirable, even heroic ways without becoming well known in the pattern of Merton and Martin. One may hope for a book, one day, that presents the inspiring stories of just such ordinary Catholics.

All the same, *James Martin: Essential Writings* is a solid, inspiring and informative book. Read up!

Finley is the author of more than 30 books on Catholic themes, including *What Faith is Not* (Sheed & Ward) and a new revised and updated edition of *The Rosary Handbook: A Guide for Newcomers, Old-Timers, and Those In Between* (Word Among Us Press).

When life gets tangled, look to the ‘Undoer of Knots’

Breaking Open the Ordinary

Sandy Prather



It seems as though I’ve been undoing a lot of knots lately. I’m back to crocheting and, at some point, that inevitably means dealing with snarled yarn. I sit with the mess in my lap and, not too patiently, attempt to pull the strands apart, trying to loosen the tangles. Weaving the free end in and out, creating gaps and holes, is a time-consuming process, but I know if I get impatient and pull too hard, everything tightens up and it becomes harder and sometimes impossible to unravel.

I’ve been doing the same thing with a gold chain that came out of my jewelry box twisted and jumbled. I’ve spent considerable time picking delicately at the various knots, trying to loosen and work them apart. It’s painstaking work but again, I know if I pull prematurely or too hard, I’ll ruin any chance I might have of repairing it.

I wish I could transfer such patience to my life. There are a few too many “knotted” situations where people I love are involved in complicated circumstances. For some it is family relationships; for others, money

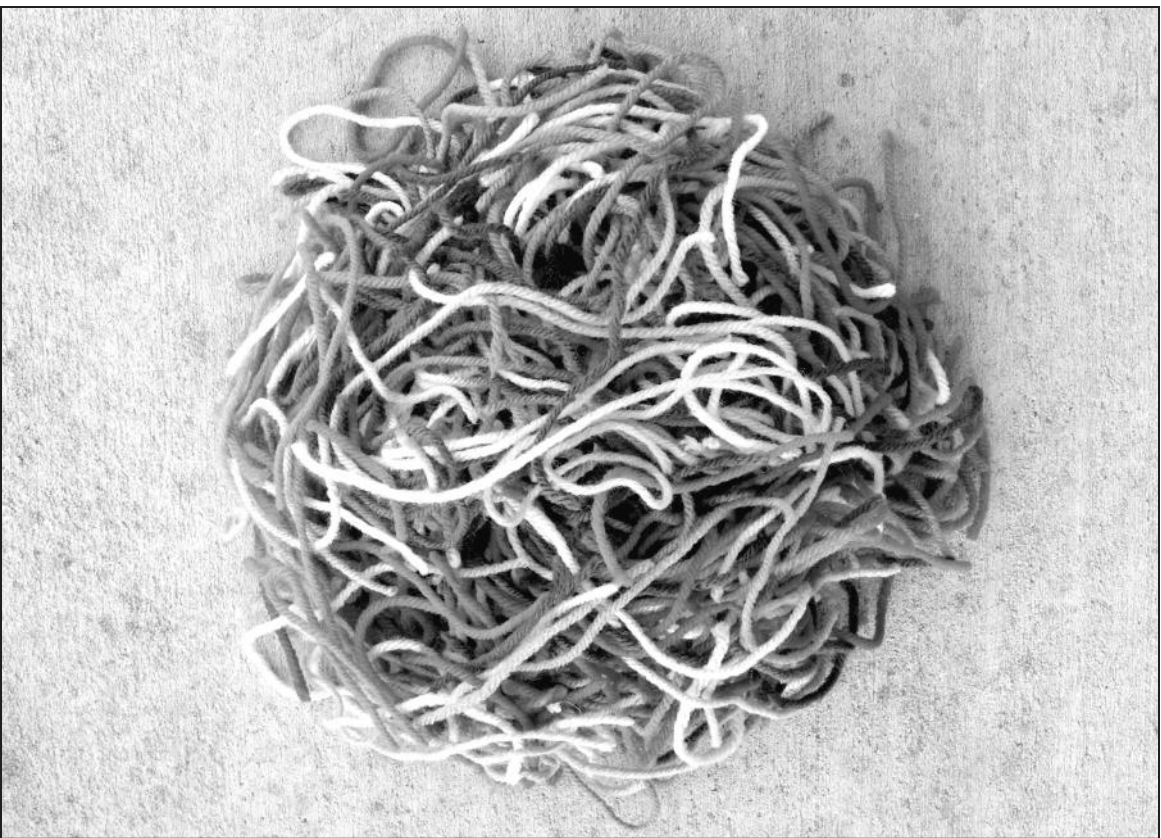
Prather, BEd, MTh, is a teacher and facilitator in the areas of faith and spirituality. She was executive director at Star of the North Retreat Centre in St. Albert, Alta., for 21 years and resides in Sherwood Park with her husband, Bob. They are blessed with four children and 10 grandchildren.

and work problems, while some are struggling with health issues. In every case, it seems that the options are limited and every choice would only make things more difficult. Often the individuals involved feel trapped, caught in a tangled weave. Not understanding and not seeing what to do, they are either frozen, unable to act, or they act impulsively and end up making things worse; the knots tighten. Watching and caring, my helplessness leaves me with an aching heart.

Where to turn? What do we do when faced with seemingly intractable, difficult situations that leave us tied up in knots? Perhaps we could learn from Mary, a woman who faced many an inexplicable event and troubled circumstance in her life. Scripture will tell us that, faced with situations she couldn’t understand, Mary’s response was “to ponder.”

The Greek word used in the Scriptures for her action is *sym-ballein* and it means to puzzle things out, to toss them together until they make sense. It’s derived from the action of untangling yarn or rope: you toss it gently to loosen the tangles so you can free the strands, and it’s what Mary does when faced with the inexplicable.

Perplexed by the angel’s announcement of a possible pregnancy, Mary “ponders” what its meaning might be. When the shepherds show up at the stable with an surprising message about her babe, she not only treasures



THE UNDOER OF KNOTS — When it comes to the “knotted” situations where people are involved in complicated circumstances, a comforting and helpful image is Mary’s pondering — her unravelling of knots. Amongst other titles, Mary is now becoming known as the “Undoer of Knots,” writes Sandy Prather.

their words, she also ponders them. At Simeon’s prediction, upon losing and then finding Jesus in the Temple, and whilst standing under the cross, Mary ponders what is happening. She tosses the facts about, seeking to unravel their meaning. She metaphorically picks away at the knots, trying to release the tension, trying to understand what God is doing in her life and in her son’s, and what her next steps might be.

It’s a comforting and helpful image, Mary’s pondering that unravels knots. It’s also become a popular devotion. Amongst other titles, Mary is now becoming known as the “Undoer of Knots.” A Baroque painting dating from the 1700s in a church in Augsburg, Germany, shows Mary with a

skein of knotted rope in her hands, which she is gradually untying. As a student, Pope Francis saw it while in Germany and he carried the veneration into Argentina and then spoke about it as pope. The image has flourished and icons, novenas and shrines dedicated to Mary as the Undoer of Knots have sprung up. People, along with their prayers, often leave pieces of knotted rope at the shrines.

We all have times when life gets tangled and stuff gets tied into knots. There are two dangers then. The first is that we feel so

tied up that we freeze. Since we can’t see a good way out, we are afraid to act and so we drift. As the situation continues unchanged, we are tempted to despair and life darkens.

The second danger moves us into impulsive, ill-considered action. Still without seeing a clear way, we flail about, thinking that any action is better than none. Regretfully, we often end up making things worse, complicating things even more and effec-

— MARY, page 11

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Two commandments: both need equal emphasis



Liturgy and Life

Sylvain Lavoie, OMI

Are you living the total gospel? Live both commandments and walk in balance: Love God, and love your neighbour as you love yourself

By rabbinical count, the *Law* consisted of some 613 commandments. The Jewish religion could easily slide into a slavish, impersonal keeping of laws which had been finely tuned by the rabbis. They taught that there were 248 parts of the human body, and had a law for each part. There are 365 days in the year, and they had a law for each day, totalling 613. The thinking was that this way they covered the whole human person as well as all of life. There were also 248 positive laws, and 365 prohibitions. They also made distinctions between light and heavy laws, some being much more important than others. Such was the Jewish religious reality at the time of Jesus.

According to Flor McCarthy, the question as to which commandment was the greatest was one frequently discussed among the rabbis. Jesus was asked to name one but responded by naming two. That is because, for him, the second followed directly and necessarily from the first. Love of neighbour arises out of love of God.

The Jerome Biblical Commentary adds to that insight. Jesus is presented here as having the power to interpret, and even restate the Law. His answer quotes two Old

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.

Testament texts that form the foundation of the new morality of the Gospels (Deuteronomy 6:5 “Love God with all your heart, strength and mind” and Leviticus 19:18 “Love your neighbour as yourself”). Deuteronomy 6 is part of the Jewish *schema* or profession of faith.

The novelty here is in placing Leviticus 19 on the same level as the schema, making it equally “heavy.” There is no parallel in Jewish literature to this arrangement of the two commandments so that they become effectively one, thereby the “newness” of this commandment. Nowhere else are they stated as the two greatest commandments of the Law, nor are they so explicitly given equal weight. For Jesus, helping strangers, giving to the poor and being compassionate to all is just as important as prayer, worship and loving God. Matthew alone adds that the Law and prophets hang on these two commandments — that is, the entire revelation of the Old Testament.

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time October 29, 2017	Exodus 22:21-27 Psalm 18 1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10 Matthew 22:34-40
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There is a very human danger as life unfolds to emphasize one commandment to the detriment of the other. A naturally prayerful, pious person may spend hours in prayer for another person, yet neglect the necessity to try to be the answer to that prayer by loving actions toward that person.

On the other hand, a person inclined to work for social justice may exhaust him or herself in frenetic activity on behalf of some just cause, forgetting to renew their own personal resources with prayer and forgetting that ultimately it is God who will give the fruit. The great command to love God has as its inseparable counterpart the command to love neighbour. One cannot first love God and then, as a second task, love one’s neighbour. To love God is to love one’s neighbour, and vice versa. The challenge is to walk a balanced life and live both these commandments to the full.

Corbin Eddy adds an interesting commentary. He notes that Jesus misquotes Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and substitutes mind for might. This is significant, for *mind* and *might* are

very different energy sources. Perhaps Jesus is suggesting that a human person’s response to the law of God is not mindless nor simply rote effort to memorize many laws. Obedience, justice and love are not exercised without discretion. Just the contrary is true. The two great commandments engage our whole humanity in an ongoing conversation with God and with each other. To keep them well requires a passionate, heartfelt, soulful and mindful commitment to the God of the universe and to God’s created world.

Jesus is inviting us to commit with our whole being. There is nothing mechanical, boring or humdrum about being a “law-abiding citizen” — at least not according to Jesus. It is a passionate love affair with God and the whole of humanity.

Mary Vogrinc, a 46-year-old motivational speaker, is an exceptional example of someone who is living today’s readings. She and her husband have fostered 53 children and adopted two of them, in addition to raising three of their own biological children. She shares the story of one of the most difficult children they fostered, a teenager named Charlene. She had a history of abuse; her face was covered with a rash, and had terrible teeth. She and her brother proved to be a handful from the first. One night she lost her tooth, and was told to put it under the pillow for the tooth fairy. When she discovered a dollar’s worth of change there in the morning, she could hardly believe that she could do what she wanted with the money, even buy candy. However, that day they went to church. When the collection basket came around, Charlene asked what that was for. Her foster parents told her that it was for those who were less fortunate than they were. They noted that she carefully put most of her change in the basket, kept only a dime and said, “I think I will just keep a little for myself.” Mary was moved to tears by this parable of the widow’s mite being lived out by her most difficult foster child.

The eucharist is an experience in itself of living out this gospel. Certainly, we are here to love God back. We are also here to grow in our love for each other and to gain confidence and self-esteem for ourselves in living this way of love that Jesus has given us.

So, let us live the total gospel and walk in balance in our lives, by loving God, and loving our neighbours as we love ourselves.

Language is becoming devoid of depth, thereby closing our minds

In Exile

Ron Rolheiser, OMI



Thirty years ago the American educator Allan Bloom wrote a book titled *The Closing of the American Mind*. This was his thesis: In our secularized world today our language is becoming ever more empirical, one-dimensional, and devoid of depth, and this is closing our minds by stripping us of the deeper meanings inside our own experience. For Bloom, how we name an experience determines to a large extent its meaning.

Twenty years earlier, in his rather provocative essay, “The Triumph of the Therapeutic,” Philip Rieff had already suggested something similar. For Rieff, we live our lives under a certain “symbolic hedge,” namely, a language and set of symbols within which we interpret our experience.

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this through the work of Carl Jung and a number of his disciples, notably James Hillman and Thomas Moore, who have helped us to understand more explicitly the language of the soul and how that language uncovers deep archetypes within us.

We see the language of soul, among other places, in some of our great myths and fairy tales, many of them centuries old. Their seeming simplicity can fool you. They may be simple, but they’re not simplistic. To offer one example, the story of Cinderella. The first thing to notice in this story is that the name, Cinderella, is not a real name but a composite of two words: *Cinder*, meaning ashes; and *Puella*, meaning the eternal girl. This is not a simple fairy tale about a lonely, beaten-down young girl. It’s a myth that highlights a deep structure within the human soul, namely, that before our souls are ready to wear the glass slipper, be the belle of the ball, to marry the prince, and to live happily ever after, we must first spend some necessary time sitting in the ashes, suffering humiliation, and being purified by a time in the dust.

Notice how this story speaks in its own way of our spirituality of “lent,” a season of penance, wherein we mark ourselves with ashes in order to enter a desert of our own making.

Cinderella is a story that shines a tiny light into the depth of our souls. Many of our famous myths do that, though nothing

shines a light into the soul as deeply as does Scripture, the Bible. Its language and symbols name our experience in a way that both honours the soul and helps us plumb the genuine depth inside our experiences.

For example: We can be confused, or we can be *inside the belly of the whale*. We can be helpless before an addiction, or we can be *possessed by a demon*. We can vacillate in our prayer lives between fervour and dark nights, or we can vacillate between *being with Jesus “in Galilee”* or with him in “*Jerusalem*.” We can be paralyzed as we stand before a globalization that’s overwhelming, or we can be *standing with Jesus on the borders of Samaria in a first conversation with a Syro-Phoenician woman*. We can be struggling with fidelity and with keeping our commitments in relationships, or we can be *standing with Joshua before God, receiving instructions to kill off the Canaanites if we are to sustain ourselves in the Promised Land*. We can be suffering from arthritis, or we can be *sweating blood in the garden of Gethsemane*.

The language we use to understand an experience makes a huge difference in what that experience means to us. In *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom uses an earthy but highly illustrative example to explain this. He quotes Plato, who tells us that during their breaks his students sit around and tell wonderful stories about the meaning of their immortal longings. My students, Bloom laments, sit around during their breaks and tell stories about being horny.

We are losing the language of the soul and we are poorer for it.

Bring our knots to Mary

Continued from page 10

tively tightening the knots. Neither response is helpful.

Mary’s way of pondering life’s knotty realities invites us to something different. We want to untie the knots, not by frozen inaction nor by impulsive action. Like her, we want to loosen everything by tossing things about, mulling them over and seeking to understand what God might be doing in our lives. It’s a prayerful, reflective stance of holding the com-

plexities of a situation even as we try gently to unravel it.

As such, there’s great comfort in bringing the knots in our lives to Mary. It’s a great reminder that, just as God was at work in all the circumstances in Mary’s life, so God is in ours. Even in the worst tangles, God’s presence is to be sought. When we ponder such mysteries, like Mary, we help to unravel them. Mary serves as both companion and intercessor in this: we can turn to her and say, “Mary, Undoer of Knots, pray for us.”

The Energy East pipeline and Christian ethics

Journey to Justice

Joe Gunn



In the first week of October TransCanada announced it would no longer pursue the Energy East oil pipeline that would have carried unrefined product from Alberta and Saskatchewan to New Brunswick.

Reaction was swift, predictable, diverse and loud.

Montreal Mayor Denis Coderre called the abandonment of the project “a major victory,” while Premier Brad Wall declared, “It’s a bad day for the West.” Federal Conservative politicians blamed the “disastrous energy policies championed by Justin Trudeau.” Liberal politicians countered that the company was merely making “a business decision.” For their part, environmental campaigners gleefully claimed success.

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

It is hard to know what Christian leaders may have thought. They were silent.

Christians might think their leaders have nothing to say, and their faith has nothing to do with such major public issues. Yet, Catholics may recall that, in 1975, their bishops released a pastoral letter titled “Northern Development: At What Cost?” Then, the bishops specifically called for a moratorium on the proposed McKenzie Valley Pipeline. And Citizens for Public Justice took a case to the Supreme Court then (and won), arguing that the chair of the National Energy Board should not judge that pipeline’s worthiness, since he previously headed one of the companies vying to build what was at that time Canada’s largest infrastructure project.

Today, what are some ethical considerations for Christians considering pipeline politics?

Resource development economics

On the day in August 2013 when TransCanada introduced the

Energy East pipeline project, the price of oil was US\$107 a barrel. Canadian oil production was expected to double in the next 15 years to more than 6.5 million barrels per day — so pipelines seemed to be desperately needed.

Today, oil prices are less than half what they were in 2013.

Besides the economics, several other considerations make massive resource projects publicly contentious.

Ethical considerations of economic matters are traditionally centred on who would benefit, and who would lose. Today, ethicists also ask if such massive developments are even necessary — do they strengthen over consumptive societies that threaten Creation itself, or assist those without energy to improve their lives?

Climate change

The federal government’s “Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change” is designed to “meet Canada’s emissions reduction target and grow the economy.” The federal government is encouraging the replacement of coal-fired electricity generation, introducing



CNS/Larry Smith, EPA

PIPELINE CONTROVERSIES — “Ethical considerations of economic matters are traditionally centred on who would benefit, and who would lose,” writes Joe Gunn. “Today, ethicists also ask if such massive developments are even necessary — do they strengthen over consumptive societies that threaten Creation itself, or assist those without energy to improve their lives?”

a carbon-pricing benchmark for all provinces, and will soon outline new clean fuel standards.

Nonetheless, in late 2016 the federal Liberals approved two other pipeline projects: Enbridge’s \$7-billion Line 3 project (from Alberta to Wisconsin), and Kinder Morgan’s \$7.4-billion Trans Mountain pipeline (from Alberta to Burnaby, B.C.). It is almost impossible that the (already too feeble) federal emissions reduction target will now be met. Worse, these large developments lock our country into a carbon-intensive future.

Development and Peace — CARITAS Canada has quoted the International Energy Agency’s research to say, “In terms of energy, there is no alternative but to transition to a world free from fossil fuels. In order to contain temperature rise as far below 2° C as possible, more than two-thirds of currently commercially viable fossil fuels will need to remain in the ground.”

TransCanada was encumbered by the National Energy Board’s recent decision to require consideration of all the carbon emissions from a pipeline. In other words, not only emissions related to the pipeline’s construction would be measured, but from all the oil extracted, refined and transported (upstream) and burned (downstream). Environmental Defence reported that, “Preliminary estimates suggest that Energy East would enable upstream GHG emissions of the equivalent of operating 68 coal plants.”

This did not sound like adherence to Pope St. John Paul II’s call in 1990 for an “ecological conversion,” echoed in Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si’* (#217.)

Human rights

Some politicians argued that the Energy East project was needed to avoid importing oil from countries like Venezuela, Saudi Arabia and Algeria. Ethically, Christian consumers would not want to support violators of human dignity and rights — but more than half of Canada’s oil imports come from the United States, with Venezuela

not even among the top 10 countries. Nonetheless, as the Canadian bishops’ recently released guide *Living Out Laudato Si’* argues, Christians must be concerned about human and environmental rights: “Bishops of Latin America, the Philippines, and the Democratic Republic of Congo have denounced the actions of some Canadian extractive companies for their impact on people and the local environment.”

If politicians want to take authentic action against human rights violations overseas, both Development and Peace and the bishops have recommended we should start by appointing an ombudsman to report and act on reported violations of Canadian companies.

Indigenous rights

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended that the United Nations’ Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) be used to concretely move reconciliation forward. Free, prior and informed consent of indigenous communities is the basis of that declaration and its application to massive resource development projects. The ecumenical social justice organization KAIROS reported that 59 First Nations are opposed and 51 groups express support for the Trans Mountain pipeline. Some 22 municipalities have joined First Nations groups who oppose the project.

Canadian churches (including the Catholic bishops in March 2016) expressed support for adoption and implementation of the UNDRIP. Ensuring adequate consultation with, and hopefully consent from, indigenous peoples before large projects are undertaken is a fundamental ethical consideration.

Christians can interpret current events based on their religious values. Resources for ethical discernment are available in the stated reflections of their various faith communities — even on complicated issues like major development projects.

Be still when faced with life’s traps

Outlooks from the Inner Life

Cedric Speyer



“Get into a state of passive volition, which means unintentionally pursuing one’s intention.”

— Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan

“You need not make any effort. Simply surrender to the Lord seated in your heart. Then you will see how beautiful this life span — in dealing with people, your relationships — how beautiful it will become.”

— H.W.L. Poonja

I don’t know whether dealing with fruit flies infesting the kitchen this summer qualifies as a beautiful relationship, but they certainly seemed to have a beautiful relationship with the compost bin. Then I discovered something at the hardware store that led to their demise: fruit fly traps — little enclosed plastic cups with a small hole on top.

The package comes with a squeeze bottle containing a sickly sweet liquid, which goes in the traps. On the back of the package: “The fruit fly traps employ a powerful attractant to draw the flies into the trap. Once inside the trap,

the fruit fly eventually touches the liquid attractant and drowns. Each trap is effective for up to 30 days.”

Well, it worked. So many of them fell for it that the traps ended up thickly spotted with casualties. And apparently none of them learned from the example of previous feckless fatalities.

In this human life there are traps that are effective for up to 30 years, and more! The seven deadly sins are called deadly for a reason and they all have their sickly sweet “attractants.” Yet what distinguishes us from the fruit flies is the gap, the pause, the choice point between stimulus and response. We have the capacity to quiet the rapacious mind. We can access the inner freedom it takes to disengage from habitual reactions such as envy, anger, judgment, fear, lust, greed, and all manner of inordinate attachment. We can awaken the witness; that which simply observes the interflow between the inner and

outer worlds, like the natural course of the in-breath and out-breath.

Then when it comes to leading us not into temptation, we can be still and know the presence of a divine intention residing within. It’s like taking the hook out of a fish you are throwing back into the water. Except that you are the fish, surrendering all to the will of the fisher.

At this stage of evolution, sometimes it seems we are like fruit flies with the added ability to say “Should I or shouldn’t I?” before taking the dive. Except for some adepts, yogis, and spiritual masters among us, most of us cannot always control the vagaries of emotion and mind. Yet we can give them direction, paradoxically by surrendering to how we are being directed. That takes practice. The practice is variously called meditation, mindfulness, or contemplative prayer. It’s the daily retreat to the “closet” Jesus was talking about. That’s where we become aware of the screen of consciousness and not just the movies playing on it. That’s where the past and future are brought together in the present. That’s where the mind descends into the cave of the heart. That’s where the raindrop contains the ocean.

Most human action is the result of tension, contradiction, a search for self-fulfilment, and the conceit of self-will. It’s no good to set out to be good. If you try to cultivate humility, good luck with that. It’s not about you. Meditation is the breeze that comes in when you leave the window open for the beyond to make itself known to just where you’re sitting.

Speyer is a Benedictine Oblate as well as an author, subject matter expert for e-therapy, clinical consultant and director of InnerView Guidance International (IGI). Connect with Cedric on <https://www.facebook.com/cms94> or via cms94@hotmail.com

Fear not in the implementation of *Amoris Laetitia*

By Thomas Reese, SJ
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Major papal documents often get limited media coverage when they first appear and later are forgotten except by scholars and church leaders. The really important documents are studied in seminaries and incorporated into religious education textbooks. Ideally, the ideas in the documents influence sermons and trickle down to the faithful, but that depends on the interests of individual pastors.

Some documents are remembered because of their controversy. *Humanae Vitae* (Of Human Life), Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical that banned any use of artificial birth control, was one of these. This encyclical was criticized by theologians and even some bishops and ignored by the vast majority of the faithful.

Pope Francis' document on the family, *Amoris Laetitia* (Joy of Love), received wide coverage both in the Catholic and secular media when it came out in 2016. The apostolic exhortation was the product of the pope's thinking after two synods of bishops on the topic of the family.

Most of the attention in the media was focused on its opening the possibility of divorced and remarried Catholics receiving communion, in Chapter 8. Traditionally, only those remarried Catholics whose first marriages had been annulled (declared invalid by a church tribunal) were allowed to go to communion.

A small but vocal group of conservative commentators, and even some bishops and cardinals, felt this was an unacceptable breach with church teaching. The faithful, on the other hand, overwhelmingly (62 per cent) favoured communion for divorced and remarried Catholics without an annulment, according to a Pew Research Center poll conducted even before the papal document was issued.

Recently a group of theologians and bishops met at Boston College to reflect on how *Amoris Laetitia* has been received by the church and what might be done to improve its reception. These were all papal loyalists who believe that Francis has been a blessing for the church. The conference was con-

Rev. Thomas J. Reese, a Jesuit priest, is a senior analyst at RNS. Previously he was a columnist at the National Catholic Reporter (2015 - 17) and an associate editor (1978 - 85) and editor in chief (1998 - 2005) at America magazine.



CNS/L'Osservatore Romano

THE JOY OF LOVE — Pope Francis greets family members during an audience at the Vatican. The reception of *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis' document on the family, has been positive from the laypeople who have actually read the document or experienced programs based on the document. People have found it realistic in its description of the challenges facing families, writes Thomas Reese, SJ.

vened by Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago and Rev. James F. Keenan of Boston College's Jesuit Institute. A video of the conference talks will be placed online and the papers will be published.

In general, the reception of *Amoris Laetitia* has been positive from the laypeople who have actually read the document or experienced programs based on the document. People have found it realistic in its description of the challenges facing families. Chapters 4 and 5, which Francis described as the heart of the document, are experienced as inspiring, hopeful and helpful.

Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego described the highly successful diocesan synod that he held on the document, which resulted in practical programs to help parishes minister to their families. Hispanic and black theologians described how the document's ideas resonate in their communities.

But everyone quickly acknowledged that more needs to be done. *Amoris Laetitia* entered the world in a time of crisis for families. The opioid crisis and unemployment are destroying families. The poor are less likely to get married and more likely to get divorced than those in upper incomes. In a highly mobile society, extended families are not present to help couples. Single parents cannot find daycare. And young people are abandoning religion in droves.

Parishes need to be more welcoming to families, especially families in difficulties. Rather than greeting them with a list of rules to be followed, the document encourages "listening" as the first response. "Accompanying" was another key word in *Amoris Laetitia*, which connotes accepting where people are and then travelling with them in their journey toward God.

But who is going to do this accompanying? The lack of a positive reception of *Amoris Laetitia* by many priests and even bishops was seen as a major problem for the document.

Young priests, who were trained by conservative moral theologians during the papacies of John Paul

and Benedict, are often suspicious of the document. They were trained to enforce rules that excluded people rather than welcomed them. Many are confused; some are outright antagonistic.

Alienated Catholics, who are encouraged by the papacy of Pope Francis to give the church another try, often do not meet Francis in their parishes. When they experience condemnation and exclusion, they leave, never to return.

Until seminary faculties and administrators change, there is little hope that new priests will be open and welcoming. Converting the current priests is an even greater challenge.

Likewise, the participants saw little hope that the U.S. bishops' conference would be a leader in implementing *Amoris Laetitia*. Until more new bishops in the

Francis mode are appointed, there will be little action by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Bishops were encouraged to focus on their own dioceses.

Both bishops and theologians expressed concern about those dissenting from the teaching in *Amoris Laetitia*. Bishops especially are concerned about unity in their dioceses. Although Chapter 8 dealing with conscience, discernment and communion for divorced Catholics is the most controversial, bishops reported enthusiasm even among conservatives when discussing other parts of the document. But the vitriol from some opponents of Pope Francis is discouraging to them.

After hearing constantly from the critics, perhaps the best outcome of the Boston College conference was to encourage the par-

In all things, the saints have us covered



Figure of Speech
Dr. Gerry Turcotte

Contribute to the needs of the saints. — Romans 12:13

It's been said that Catholics have a saint for virtually every situation, event or possibility. Some of the more unusual include a saint for fireworks, unattractive people and dysentery (Saints Barbara, Drogo and Smyrna in that order)! Without being disrespectful, it is hard to imagine being the saint of hangovers, oversleeping or caterpillars, but yes they do exist. There is even a patron saint of beer (St. Arnulf of Metz). On the cool but strange side of the spectrum, St. Hubert of Liege is the patron saint of the fear of werewolves, while

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

St. Columbanus is the patron saint of motorcyclists. I will leave it to another time to muse on how Saint Isidore of Seville, who died in AD 636, is the patron saint of the Internet!

For all of the more unusual saints there are of course those most widely embraced and understood, from St. Valentine to St. George, St. Francis of Assisi to St. Joan of Arc. It's also fair to say that many saints are invariably connected to a particular culture, from St. Mary MacKillop in Australia, to St. Kateri Tekakwitha for the First Nations in Canada, to St. Patrick in Ireland.

One of the most popular events at St. Mary's University in Calgary is our annual hosting of our September Ghost Tour, an event that opens the campus to the com-

munity, that re-enacts scenes from our history, and that helps to mark our anniversary. As a Catholic university I often field questions from the media about why we are celebrating Halloween, and I am always at pains to point out that we are, in fact, celebrating the stories of the institution's founding, and not the feast so popular in October.

As a child, however, I was always confused that Halloween preceded All Saints' Day and wondered how they were connected. Needless to say I eventually learned of the rich thread that linked All Hallows' Eve (Oct. 31), to All Saints or Hallowmas (Nov. 1) to All Souls' Day (Nov. 2), and I grew to look forward to the celebrations that acknowledged the saints that have transformed our faith life throughout the ages. Despite this long tradition, it remains a mystery to me how some saints have come to represent their particular attributes. Perhaps it's enough to know that whatever befalls us, the saints have us covered!

And now, if you'll excuse me, I need to say a prayer to St. Francis de Sales, patron saint of writers and journalists.

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Pope ‘kills’ death penalty

Pope Francis has made a major statement regarding the death penalty. He said no matter how it is carried out, “it is, in itself, contrary to the Gospel.”

He made the statement Oct. 11 on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Vatican correspondent Christopher Lamb said, “It was a historic shift given that the death penalty has, until now, been allowed by the church in certain circumstances.”

It is not the first time the church’s teaching on capital punishment has evolved. Pope Francis noted the church has taught that the death penalty was “a logical consequence of the application of justice.” There are consequences to any crime.

The death penalty was on the books in the Papal States — the lands controlled by the papacy from around the eighth century until the late 19th. However, it was not acted on since 1870. It was only in 1969 that Pope Paul VI formally banned the penalty.

Pope Francis explained that the church’s position on the death penalty is an example of how church teaching is not static, but grows and deepens along with a growth in faith and in response to modern questions and concerns. Both Pope John Paul II and

Pope Benedict XVI condemned the use of the death penalty, although they stopped short of making any change to official teaching.

The first edition of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, published by Pope John Paul II in 1992, recognized “the right and duty of legitimate public authority to punish malefactors by means of penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime.” That included “in cases of extreme gravity, the death penalty.” At the same time, it said, “bloodless means” that could protect human life should be used when possible.

But the language was formally changed five years later, in 1997, after Pope John Paul II issued his pro-life encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae*. Since then, the catechism has taught that the use of the death penalty is permissible only when the identity and responsibility of the condemned is certain and when capital punishment “is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor.”

In response to our changing times, Pope Francis said capital punishment “heavily wounds human dignity” and is an “inhuman measure.”

“It is, in itself, contrary to the Gospel, because a decision is voluntarily made to suppress a human life, which is always sacred in the eyes of the Creator and of whom, in the last analysis, only God can be

the true judge and guarantor.” The death penalty, he continued, not only extinguishes a human life, it extinguishes the possibility that the person, recognizing his or her errors, will request forgiveness and begin a new life.

The pope’s position won’t be readily accepted by North Americans. While the death penalty was abolished in Canada in 1976, a 2012 survey conducted by Angus Reid Public Opinion in partnership with the *Toronto Star* found that 61 per cent said capital punishment is warranted for murder. But given the choice of supporting the death penalty or life imprisonment, 50 per cent chose the latter, the survey found.

In the United States, capital punishment is still legal in more than 30 states. It is supported by close to half of all Catholics.

Sister Helen Prejean, whose work on death row was dramatized in the Oscar-nominated film *Dead Man Walking*, supports the pope’s decision: “At last,” she told *America* magazine, “a clear, uncompromising stance of moral opposition to the death penalty by the highest authority of the church.”

The task now will be to help this message filter down to people in the pew. No doubt, bishops and clergy will need to play a key role here. — PWN

Modern society is uncomfortable talking about death, survey shows

By Peter Jon Mitchell, Hamilton

There’s an old story sometimes shared during eulogies about an elderly women planning her funeral.

“Bury me with a fork,” she tells her minister.

“Yes, but may I ask why?” he inquires.

She explains that as a child, when the dishes were cleared from the table, the forks were occasionally left behind. She came to learn that when the forks remained on the table, a sweet dessert was to follow.

“Bury me with a fork because something better is coming.”

Modern western society is uncomfortable talking about death. This discomfort is on display in a recent survey by the Angus Reid

Institute and Cardus aimed at exploring faith in Canada.

About 60 per cent of Canadians surveyed believe in some form of life after death. There’s no consensus on what form that takes. About 55 per cent believe actions in this life have consequences in the life to come, with 57 per cent professing belief in heaven and a minority at 41 per cent stating they believe in hell.

The declining presence of religion in public life is surely a contributing factor in our inability to find common language around death, in what is a community experience.

Author and journalist Jonathan Kay makes this point in a recent column, noting that the once commonly held idea of an afterlife made grieving tolerable. Kay considers the wide range of public reactions to catastrophe in a secular age where God is no longer welcome at the public podium. He confides that after a recent loss in

his own social circle, “I realized that I hadn’t the slightest idea how to talk to my children — or anyone — about death.”

Kay is hardly alone.

This summer marked the 20th anniversary of Princess Diana’s

death. Among the ocean of flowers that pressed against the gates of Kensington Palace, mourners left accompanying notes and cards providing the equivalent of a core sample of the soul of the nation. Biblical scholar and former

Anglican bishop of Durham, N.T. Wright, summarized the sentiments as “a rich confusion of belief, half belief, sentiment and superstition about the fate of the dead.”

— BELIEF, page 15

Death penalty is contrary to Gospel: pope

By Cindy Wooden

The death penalty, no matter how it is carried out, “is, in itself, contrary to the Gospel,” Pope Francis said.

Marking the 25th anniversary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church at the Vatican Oct. 11, Pope Francis said the catechism’s discussion of the death penalty, already formally amended by St. John Paul II, needs to be even more explicitly against capital punishment.

Capital punishment, he said, “heavily wounds human dignity” and is an “inhuman measure.”

“It is, in itself, contrary to the Gospel, because a decision is voluntarily made to suppress a human life, which is always sacred in the eyes of the Creator and of whom, in the last analysis, only God can be the true judge and guarantor,” the pope said.

The death penalty, he said, not only extinguishes a human life, it extinguishes the possibility that the person, recognizing his or her errors, will request forgiveness and begin a new life.

The church’s position on the death penalty, he said, is one example of how church teaching is not static, but grows and deepens along with a growth in faith and in response to modern questions and concerns.

In the past, when people did not see any other way for society to defend itself against serious crime and when “social maturity” was lacking, he said, people accepted the death penalty as “a logical consequence of the application of justice.”

In fact, he said, the church itself believed that, and the death penalty was a possible punishment in the Papal States. It was only in 1969 that Pope Paul VI formally banned the death penalty, even though it had not been imposed since 1870.

“Let us take responsibility for the past and recognize” that use of the death penalty was “dictated by a mentality that was more legalistic than Christian,” Pope Francis said. “Remaining neutral today when there is a new need to reaffirm personal dignity would make us even more guilty.”

The first edition of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, published by St. John Paul II in 1992, recognized “as well-found-

ed the right and duty of legitimate public authority to punish malefactors by means of penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime, not excluding, in cases of extreme gravity, the death penalty.” At the same time, it said, “bloodless means” that could protect human life should be used when possible.

But the language was formally changed in 1997 after St. John Paul II issued his pro-life encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae*. Since then, the catechism has specified that the use of the death penalty is permissible only when the identity and responsibility of the condemned is certain and when capital punishment “is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor.”

The development of church teaching, Pope Francis insisted, is not the same as contradicting or changing church teaching. “Tradition is a living reality and only a partial vision would lead to thinking of ‘the deposit of faith’ as something static.”

“The word of God,” he said, “cannot be saved in mothballs as if it were an old blanket to protect against insects.”

The Christian faith, he said, always has insisted on the dignity of human life from the moment of conception to natural death. So, the church has a continuing obligation to speak out when it realizes something that was accepted in the past actually contradicts church teaching.

“Therefore, it is necessary to reiterate that, no matter how serious the crime committed, the death penalty is inadmissible, because it attacks the inviolability and dignity of the person,” Pope Francis said.



WILDFIRES IN CALIFORNIA — An aerial view of destruction in Santa Rosa, Calif., is seen Oct. 11 after wildfires. More than 40 people have died and some 5,700 homes and businesses have been destroyed by the blazes, which were well on their way to becoming the deadliest and most destructive in California history. Sonoma County Sheriff Robert Giordano said officials were still investigating hundreds of reports of missing people and that recovery teams would soon begin conducting “targeted searches” for specific residents at their last known addresses.

Continued from page 1

A current partnership between local farmers, including women, and the World Food Program of the United Nations to provide “homegrown school meals” in 37 countries is “a hopeful example,” Auza said. The effort “attends to the needs of girls and boys, fosters education and increases market access for women, all at the same time,” he said.

Based in Rome, the World Food Program is the world's largest humanitarian organization addressing hunger and promoting food security. It provides food aid to an average of 80 million people in 76 countries each year.

Addressing the violence women and girls face, Auza again quoted Pope Francis in saying

that eliminating violence is impossible “until exclusion and inequality in society and between peoples are reversed.”

“Through poverty and exclusion, adolescent girls, especially those in rural areas, also experience heightened vulnerability to sexual exploitation, child marriage and other unacceptable forms of violence,” the archbishop said. “The horrifying prevalence of violence against women, thus, remains a salient and sad example of the deep connection between economic exclusion and violence.”

Auza also discussed the current global migration crisis and its effect on migrant women and girls in particular, reminding the global community it has a responsibility “to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate” migrants

and refugees.

“Millions of women and girls are fleeing violent conflicts or extreme poverty only to find themselves exploited by traffickers and manipulators along perilous routes and even in host communities,” the archbishop said.

The Vatican's UN delegation, he said, "strongly supports the international community in its efforts to raise awareness and take concrete steps to prevent the abhorrent phenomenon of violence perpetrated against migrant women and girls."

“Women often heroically defend and protect their families, sacrificing much to achieve a better life for themselves and their children,” Auza said. “They deserve to be assisted and supported in order to realize their legitimate aspirations to a better life for themselves and for their loved ones.”

He said the Vatican "remains strongly committed" to endeavours aimed "at truly protecting women's dignity, while promoting their integral development and advancement within the family and society."



Eva Krawchuk

Farewell

Soaring over fields now barren
Once green then golden
That provided nourishment and camouflage
Soaring over lakes
Honking goodbyes
And gratitude
Promising to be faithful
To return
Come early spring
They rise to meet the moon.

By Eva Krawchuk

Continued from page 14

Faced with death, religious communities embody a narrative of hope displayed through corporate rituals and acts of support that are instinctual in compassionate communities. The presence of religious communities also matter beyond the moments of tragedy and public grief, Wright reminds us. Philosophers from Plato forward understood that what we

believe about death shapes how we live.

Despite the absence of a common narrative around death, we understand grief requires public expression. Yale theologian Miroslav Volf argues that western culture is in a memory boom. Every tragedy is memorialized almost the instant it happens. Volf says the obsession with erecting memorials is in part a response to our short memories amid the fren-

zied pace of consumer culture and 24-hour news cycles.

Volf writes: "We demand immediate memorials as outward symbols because the hold of memory on our inner lives is so tenuous." Another reason we so rapidly memorialize is our social consensus that remembering and, more concisely, our continuous remembering is "our most basic obligation to do justice."

Remembering is a matter of doing justice.

Grief draws us to reflect on meaning. Kay reminds us of the common refrain, in the aftermath of tragedy, to love each other more.

"It's sentimental and unsatisfying," he writes. "But without God by our side, it's the best we can do."

Kay argues we find meaning in social connections, investing time and energy in those around us in order to hold on to love.

Modern western society could use more, rather than fewer, religious communities integrated into public mourning. Religious communities are invested in the care of the isolated, suffering and dying, motivated by love of neighbour and love of God.

They hold on to love, always remembering that the fork remains on the table.

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Congregation for Eastern Churches marks 100 years

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — No matter how much suffering Christians face in the world, God never forgets those who trust in and serve him, Pope Francis told leaders of Eastern Catholic churches.

The courage to “knock at the door” of God’s heart and “the courage of faith (are) needed when you pray — to have faith that the Lord is listening,” the pope told patriarchs, metropolitans, bishops, priests and lay members of the Eastern churches during his homily in Rome’s St. Mary Major.

The special mass of thanksgiving Oct. 12 marked the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Congregation for Eastern Churches, an office that supports the Eastern Catholic churches, and the Pontifical Oriental Institute, which offers advanced degrees in Eastern Christian liturgy. During the morning mass, the Sistine Chapel choir sang with a choir of Eastern seminarians studying in Rome, and an Eastern

priest chanted the day’s Gospel reading in Arabic.

In his homily, the pope recalled the congregation was founded during the tumultuous time of the First World War and that, today, another kind of world war continued to rage with “so many of our Christian brothers and sisters of the Eastern churches experiencing tragic persecutions and an evermore disturbing diaspora.”

The 23 Eastern Catholic churches include the Chaldean, Syriac Catholic, Coptic Catholic, Melkite and Maronite churches as well as the Ukrainian Catholic Church, the largest of all the Eastern churches. Their presence in the East and Middle East has been threatened by decades of crises, oppression and war.

Pope Francis said the difficult situations they face beg many questions, most of all, “Why?”

How many times do they hear from the lay faithful or experience the feeling that “We see the wicked, those with no scruples, look out only for themselves, crushing others, and it seems that

everything goes so well for them, they get whatever they want, and they only think about savouring life,” the pope said.

Like in the day’s first reading from the prophet Malachi, the people wonder why evildoers prosper. But God tells them he listens “attentively” and has noted all those who fear the Lord and trust in him no matter what, the pope said.

“God does not forget his children, his memory is for the righteous, for those who suffer, who are oppressed and ask, ‘Why?’ and yet they do not stop trusting in the Lord,” the pope said.

“How many times the Virgin Mary, on her journey, asked herself, ‘Why?’ But in her heart, which reflected on everything, God’s grace made her faith and hope shine,” he said.

What is needed is the courage to “knock on God’s heart” and pray. “When you pray, you need the courage of faith,” the “courage to knock at the door” and the faith that God is listening, he said.

Like the Gospel says, “Ask and you will receive,” God will



CNS/L'Osservatore Romano

PONTIFICAL ORIENTAL INSTITUTE — Pope Francis is seen during a visit to the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome Oct. 12 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Congregation for Eastern Churches.

always give his greatest gift: his Spirit, he said.

Before the mass, Pope Francis visited the nearby Pontifical Oriental Institute and greeted the members of the Congregation for Eastern Churches as well as the patriarchs and major archbishops the congregation supports.

With students gathered in the garden, the pope blessed a cypress tree, and then he met with guests and the Jesuits who run the educational institute.

The pope gave them a written message asking them to reflect on ways the school can continue to fulfil its mission given that the

dictatorships of the past have often left behind fertile terrain for the spread of global terrorism.

“No one can close their eyes” to the current situation of persecution against Christians and their forced exodus from their homelands, he said. Many now find themselves settled in Western nations where Latin-rite parishes and dioceses are the norm.

He invited the pontifical institute, which helps members of the Eastern churches strengthen their faith before the many challenges they face, to prayerfully listen to “what the Lord wants in this precise moment.”

Canon law must serve Vatican II vision

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Catholic Church’s Code of Canon Law is an instrument that must serve the church’s pastoral mission of bringing God’s mercy to all and leading them to salvation, Pope Francis said.

Just as the first full codification of Catholic Church law was carried out 100 years ago “entirely dominated by pastoral concern,” so today its amendments and application must provide for a well-ordered care of the Christian people, the pope said in a message Oct. 6 to a canon law conference in Rome.

Leading canonists, as well as professors and students from all

the canon law faculties in Rome, were meeting Oct. 4 - 7 to mark the 100th anniversary of the first systematic Code of Canon Law, which was promulgated by Pope Benedict XV in 1917.

Work on the code began under the pontificate of St. Pius X and was a response not only to the need to examine, systematize and reconcile often conflicting church norms, Pope Francis said. After the Vatican lost its temporal power, he said, St. Pius knew it was time to move from “a canon law contaminated by elements of temporality to a canon law more conforming to the spiritual mission of the church.”

The 100th anniversary of the code, which was updated by St.

John Paul II in 1983, should be a time to recognize the importance of canon law as a service to the church, Pope Francis said.

When St. John Paul promulgated the new law, the pope said, he wrote that it was the result of an effort “to translate into canonical language . . . the conciliar ecclesiology,” that is, the Second Vatican Council’s vision of the church, its structure and relation to its members and the world.

“The affirmation expresses the change that, after the Second Vatican Council, marked the passage from an ecclesiology modelled on canon law to a canon law conforming to ecclesiology,” Pope Francis said.

Vatican bank launches legal action over investment losses

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Vatican bank has initiated legal action in Malta against unnamed third parties because of “significant damages” incurred after a 17-million-euro investment.

The bank, formally known as the Institute for the Works of Religion, recently turned to judges in Malta to start civil action “against various third parties deemed liable of having caused significant damages” regarding “certain investment transactions in which it participated,” the Vatican press office said Oct. 10.

Greg Burke, Vatican spokesperson, told journalists the transaction involved “an initial investment of 17 million” euros made at the beginning of 2013. Determining the amount of total damage incurred would be up to the court in Malta, he added.

Launching the legal action demonstrates the bank’s desire “to accept responsibility for abuses in the past,” he said.

According to the written communiqué, such a move also reflects the bank’s “commitment, in the interest of transparency, to report to the competent authorities any potential abuses perpetrated

against it and to take, as in this instance, any appropriate action to protect its financial and reputational interests, including outside of the Vatican City State.”

Pope Benedict XVI began a series of reforms in 2010 to increase oversight, transparency and accountability of the Vatican’s financial activity. Top management at the bank saw a number of major changes over those years, including the July 2013 resignation of its director and the deputy director, Paolo Cipriani and Massimo Tulli, who were later found guilty of money laundering by a Rome court.

Bank management again saw a major restructuring in 2014 as part of the larger reform of all Vatican financial institutions directed by the new Secretariat for the Economy.

In 2016, about 15,000 clients had nearly six billion euros in assets at the institute, which primarily invests in “very low-risk” financial instruments, according to its website. Individuals and entities allowed to have an account at the institute are Catholic institutions, clerics, employees or former employees of Vatican City State with salary and pension accounts, and embassies and diplomats accredited to the Holy See.



CNS/Gonzalo Fuentes, Reuters

CATALONIA DEBATES INDEPENDENCE — Nobel laureate Mario Vargas Llosa of Peru addresses an Oct. 8 demonstration organized by the Catalan Civil Society organization in Barcelona, Spain. Cardinal Antonio Canizares Llovera of Valencia defended his country’s unity as a “moral good” and condemned “sedition and fraud” by secessionists, as Catalonia debated independence at an Oct. 10 regional parliamentary session. The cardinal’s comments appeared in a newsletter circulated Oct. 7 - 8, as hundreds of thousands of Spaniards in Madrid, Barcelona and other cities rallied against Catalan independence. Catalonia, the wealthiest of Spain’s 17 autonomous regions, is home to 7.5 million people with its own language and culture. Regional officials said 90 per cent of voters backed secession Oct. 1 after a 42.3 per cent turnout of Catalonia’s registered voters.

Some people go through life trying to find out what the world holds for them only to find out too late that it’s what they bring to the world that really counts.

— Lucy Maud Montgomery