



Bishop appointed

Rev. Jon Hansen, CSsR, has been appointed bishop of the Diocese of MacKenzie-Fort Smith. The bishop-elect, who served as pastor at St. Mary's Parish in Saskatoon's core neighbourhood for six years, replaces Bishop Mark Hagemoen, who was recently installed as bishop of Saskatoon.

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Indigenous rights

NDP MP Romeo Saganash's dream to see Canada bring its laws in line with the United Nations Declaration on the



Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) has moved closer to reality.

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Chaldean clergy

Patriarch Louis Raphaël I Sako of Babylon, head of the Chaldean Catholic Church, was accompanied by Bishops Bawai Soro and Emmanuel Shaleta and Rev. Niaz Toma as he visited the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon.

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Marian Centre

After a long period of waiting, the members of the Madonna House Apostolate who staff Regina's Marian Centre soup kitchen finally came back to work Dec. 11, following major structural repairs to the building, which had been closed since August.

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Apocalyptic fervour

Evangelicals in the U.S. think Trump's Jerusalem decision "was part of God's plan for the world, a step on the way to the reunification of the holy city (still considered occupied under international law) and the restoration of the ancient Israelite Temple. In other words, a step on the way toward the apocalypse," writes Matthew Gabriele.

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New church a symbol of reconciliation

By Andrew Ehrkamp
Grandin Media

FORT SIMPSON, N.W.T. (CCN) — Forgiveness. It's a difficult road for most, even longer and tougher for the Dene of Fort Simpson and the surrounding Deh Cho area who survived residential school.

But here they are — men, women, elders and their families — filling seats that spill over into the back kitchen, celebrating the new \$1.3-million Sacred Heart Church in Fort Simpson, a village of 1,200 some 600 kilometres west of Yellowknife.

The old church building, built in the 1920s, was torn down. The new church opened on Sept. 17 thanks in part to the Archdiocese of Edmonton, which contributed through its Together We Serve annual appeal, as well as donations from the local community, private donors, Catholic Missions in Canada, and the Diocese of Hamilton.

There are high hopes for the

future of the new building among the people of the Deh Cho region, including healing the relationship with the church — in part, by incorporating the Dene language, spirituality and traditions into the mass and other ceremonies.

"We're very hopeful that this new church will make it possible for there to be a real, future Dene church," said Nick Sibbeston, a former federal senator, who is a longtime parishioner at Sacred Heart. "The Catholic Church has to recognize and, just out of respect, incorporate some of the Dene spirituality and practice."

Sen. Nick Sibbeston and his wife, Karen, are longtime parishioners at Sacred Heart.

Sibbeston resigned his seat in November, in part to spend more time bringing Dene traditions into the Catholic Church.

Sacred Heart is located directly opposite an empty lot where the Lapointe Hall residential school was demolished in 2010. The former school, built in the 1950s, had been run by the Oblate Brothers of

Mary Immaculate, the missionaries in Fort Simpson and the Northwest Territories.

The new church was packed for the consecration ceremony, but the parish often struggles to have more than 50 people on Sundays. Many Dene people in the community are residential school survivors still struggling with their

relationship to the church and to Catholic missionaries in the North.

Crossing that road to begin healing the relationship with the Catholic Church has been difficult, survivors say, but the new church building is a crucial signpost.

— DENE, page 5

Ethics of fundraising questioned in Saskatoon

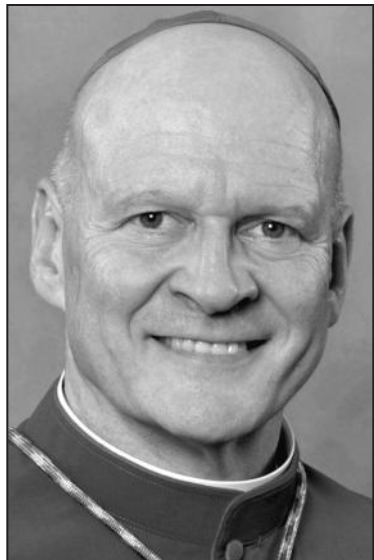
By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — Questions about the ethics of fundraising were raised recently in Saskatoon when it was revealed that two Catholic organizations — St. Paul's Hospital and a Catholic elementary school — were among the community groups receiving funding from a men's organization that held a fundraiser Dec. 1 featuring women in G-strings dancing on raised walkways.

A number of community groups and local leaders expressed surprise and concern about the nature of the "Boys Lunch Out" annual charity fundraising event hosted by the Progress Club, while others said the event was misrepresented by the media.

In response to comments in the media suggesting that Catholic organizations need not scrutinize fundraising methods, Bishop Mark Hagemoen of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon addressed the issue with leaders of Catholic health and Catholic education in the community, and released a clarifying statement.

The statement released Dec. 5 reiterates the diocese's "long-stand-



PM file

Bishop Mark Hagemoen

ing position that all fundraising activities to benefit Catholic organizations must respect the dignity of the human person and must not exploit human beings in any way."

The bishop noted that, for Catholic organizations, fundraising involves both an opportunity and a responsibility to demonstrate Catholic faith and values.

"Respect for the human person is a foundational guiding principal for Catholic institutions that provides insight and direction for all our ministry activities, including the efforts to financially support such activities," said Hagemoen.

St. Paul's Hospital Foundation ultimately decided not to accept a \$25,000 donation from the Progress Club event. According to a statement from Chris Boychuck, SPH Foundation chair, "We will also be looking to ensure that our gift acceptance process completely aligns with our policy, which states that 'gifts must not compromise the Foundation's integrity, nor be derived from any activity that runs counter to the mission and core values of the Foundation or Hospital.'"

A spokesperson from Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools said school division leaders are in agreement with the bishop's position and are evaluating their relationship with the Progress Club. School officials are arranging a meeting with the club to express concerns directly before taking any action.

Build peace by welcoming migrants, refugees: pope

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Exploiting a fear of migrants and refugees for political gain increases the possibility of violence and discrimination and does nothing to build a culture of peace, Pope Francis said in his message for World Peace Day 2018.

"Those who, for what may be political reasons, foment fear of migrants instead of building peace are sowing violence, racial discrimination and xenophobia, which are

matters of great concern for all those concerned for the safety of every human being," the pope said in the message, which was released by the Vatican Nov. 24.

The pope chose "Migrants and refugees: Men and women in search of peace" as the theme for the celebration Jan. 1, 2018. The message is delivered by Vatican nuncios to heads of state and government around the world.

Presenting the message to the

— PEACE BEGINS, page 15



CNS/Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN NATIVITY SCENE DEPICTS WORKS OF MERCY — Life-size statues depict the corporal work of mercy of visiting the sick in the Nativity scene in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican.

Australia makes 20 recommendations for church

MELBOURNE, Australia (CNS) — After five years of hearings, nearly 26,000 emails, and more than 42,000 phone calls from concerned Australians, the Royal Commission Into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse released its 17-volume final report Dec. 15.

Among its 400 recommendations, 20 were aimed specifically at the Catholic Church, whose leaders spent three weeks in February testifying at a “Catholic wrapup.”

Several of the recommendations related to the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference working with the Holy See to change the Code of Canon Law “to create a new canon or series of canons specifically relating to child sexual abuse.”

One recommendation was for the Australian bishops to work with the Holy See to determine if the absolute secrecy concerning matters discussed during confession also applies to a child confessing he or she has been abused sexually. The report also said the church should consider if “absolution can and should be withheld” if a person confesses to perpetrating child sexual abuse.

Sydney Archbishop Anthony Fisher and Melbourne Archbishop Denis Hart, conference president, said they did not see the church changing its rules on confession.

Fisher, like most of the Australian bishops who testified to the commission, said in a Dec. 15 statement he was “appalled by the sinful and criminal activity of some clergy, religious and lay church workers (and) I’m ashamed of the failure to respond

by some church leaders, and . . . I stand ready to address any systemic issues behind this.”

The Vatican, noting the commission’s “thorough efforts,” said the report “deserves to be studied seriously.”

A Dec. 15 statement reiterated the Vatican’s commitment to “the Catholic Church in Australia — lay faithful, religious and clergy alike — as they listen to and accompany victims and survivors in an effort to bring about healing and justice.”

Several of the commission’s recommendations aimed at improved screening and formation for religious.

The commission also recommended the Vatican retain for at least 45 years documents “relating

to canonical criminal cases in matters of morals, where the accused cleric has died or 10 years have elapsed from the condemnatory sentence. In order to allow for delayed disclosure of abuse by victims and to take account of the limitation periods for civil actions for child sexual abuse.”

It said the bishops’ conference “should conduct a national review of the governance and management structures of dioceses and parishes, including in relation to issues of transparency, accountability, consultation and the participation of lay men and women.”

“What now needs to be made clear by the (Australian) church leadership is that they take these recommendations and findings

seriously and that they are willing to act swiftly in implementing the findings,” said Francis Sullivan, CEO of the church’s Truth, Justice and Healing Council.

“This process will start with the TJHC doing a comprehensive analysis of the report and, in particular, the recommendations that relate either generally or specifically to the Catholic Church. We expect to have this report finalized and provided to the church leadership early in 2018,” he said in a statement.

In February, the Royal Commission said that, since 1980, seven per cent of the nation’s Catholic priests had been accused

of child sexual abuse and 4,444 people reported allegations of child abuse to church authorities.

In a 2010 address to a seminar sponsored by the Canon Law Society of America and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Mercy Sister Sharon Euart, a canon lawyer, noted that a bishops’ conference “is not a governing body with the power to enact regulations binding its members, except in those matters where universal law (i.e., the Code of Canon Law) requires it.”

She noted that some provisions worked out for the United States eventually were applied worldwide.

Sunday has lost its sense as day of rest, renewal in Christ

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Just like a plant needs sun and nourishment to survive, every Christian needs the light of Sunday and the sustenance of the eucharist to truly live, Pope Francis said.

“How can we carry out the Gospel without drawing the energy needed to do it, one Sunday after another, from the limitless source of the eucharist,” he said Dec. 13 during his weekly general audience.

“We don’t go to mass to give something to God, but to receive from him that which we truly need,” the pope said. Sunday mass is the time and place Christians receive the grace and strength to remain faithful to his word, follow his commandment to love others and be credible witnesses in the world.

The pope continued his series of audience talks on the mass in the Vatican’s Paul VI hall, which was decorated with a large Christmas tree and a life-sized Nativity scene. A number of people in the audience hall handed the pope — who turned 81 Dec. 17 — Christmas cards, notes and a chocolate cake.

In his catechesis, the pope responded to the question of why it is so important to go to mass on Sundays and why it is not enough just to live a moral life, loving others.

Sunday mass is not simply an obligation, he said. “We Christians need to take part in Sunday mass because only with the grace of Jesus, with his presence alive in us and among us, can we put into practice his commandment and, in this way, be his credible witnesses.”

“Just like a plant needs the sun and nourishment to live, every Christian needs the Sunday

eucharist to truly live,” he said in summarized remarks to Arabic speakers.

“What kind of Sunday is it for a Christian if an encounter with the Lord is missing?” he asked in his main talk.

Unfortunately, in many secularized countries, the Christian meaning of the day has been lost and is no longer “illuminated by the eucharist” or lived as a joyous feast in communion with other



CNS/Kim Ludbrook, EPA

PROTEST SLAVE TRADE IN LIBYA — A protester in Pretoria, South Africa, chains himself as part of a protest highlighting the slave trade in Libya Dec. 12.

Vatican needs to combat financial crime

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Vatican earned praise from Council of Europe experts for its updated legislation against money laundering and for its vigilance in flagging suspected cases, but the committee said the effectiveness of the Vatican efforts could not be proven until Vatican courts actually prosecuted someone for a crime.

Moneyval — the Council of Europe’s Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism — released a progress report on the Vatican’s efforts Dec. 8.

The experts said the Vatican Financial Information Authority “seemed to be working efficiently,” but although the Vatican court had frozen the assets of several accounts at the Vatican bank, “the Holy See had still not brought a money-laundering case to court. While considerable amounts of money continued to be frozen, no criminal case had yet produced a confiscation order,” a Moneyval press statement said.

Moneyval said the Financial Information Authority’s 2016 report indicated that the main offices suspected in Vatican bank

accounts it flagged for investigation involved suspected “fraud, serious tax evasion, misappropriation and corruption.”

In a statement Dec. 8, the Vatican said it is “committed to taking the necessary actions in the relevant areas to further strengthen its efforts to combat and prevent financial crimes.”

The Vatican also highlighted the report’s appreciation of “the creation of a specialized Economic Financial Crimes Investigation Unit within the Corps of the Gendarmerie and the appointment of a specialized assistant promoter of justice.”

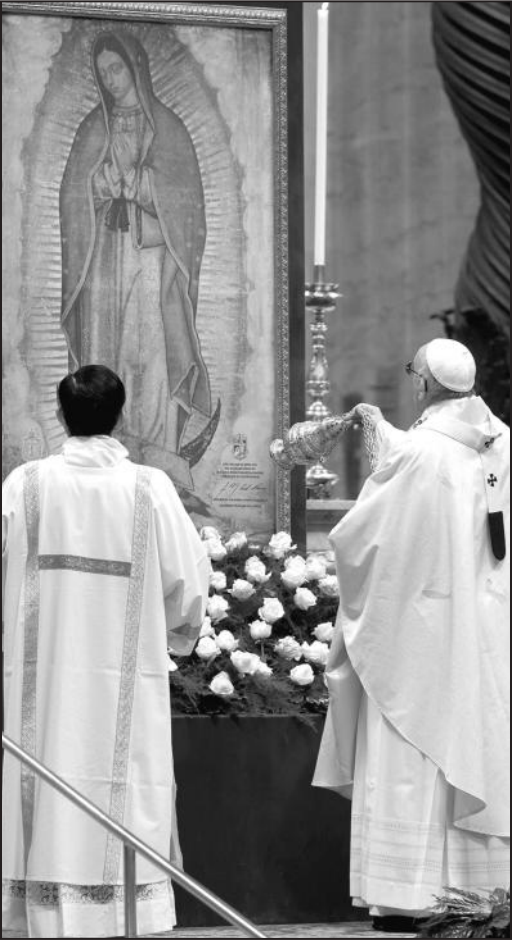
The Moneyval report said the Vatican had hired two full-time officers for the new unit, both of whom are on leave from “the Italian police forces and both fully trained in modern financial investigation techniques,” but Moneyval also recommended all of the Vatican gendarmes receive training in fighting financial crimes and suggested that the Vatican City court “needs further professional reinforcement in this regard.”

“While this review cannot form a view on the quality of the evidence adduced in financial crime cases that have so far come before the (Vatican City) tribunal,” Moneyval said, “the success rate of the promoter (of justice) before the tribunal so far is not encouraging.”



CNS/Debbie Hill

BETHLEHEM — Palestinians walk by a store selling Christmas decorations Dec. 12 in Bethlehem, West Bank.



CNS/Max Rossi, Reuters

GUADALUPE FEAST DAY — Pope Francis swings a censer in front of an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe as he celebrated mass Dec. 12 marking her feast day in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican.

parishioners and in solidarity with others, he said.

Also often missing is the importance of Sunday as a day of rest, which is a sign of the dignity of living as children of God, not slaves, he said.

“Without Christ, we are condemned to be dominated by the fatigue of daily life with all its worries and the fear of tomorrow. The Sunday encounter with the Lord gives us the strength to live today with confidence and courage and to move forward with hope,” he said.

Bishop-elect Jon Hansen has ‘a pastor’s heart’

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — Pope Francis has named Rev. Jon Hansen, CSsR, as the new bishop of the Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith.

Presently serving as pastor of Our Lady of Victory Parish in Inuvik, N.W.T., and in the missions at Tsiigehtchic, Tuktoyaktuk, and Paulatuk — all in the Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith — the Redemptorist priest is also well-known in Saskatoon, where he served for six years as pastor of St. Mary’s Parish in the core neighbourhood.

“I am very grateful to Pope Francis for this unique opportunity to continue serving the church of northern Canada. It is a place that I feel at home and is filled with people that I love,” said Hansen.

“Though the call of the north was strong, the hardest part of going was saying goodbye to St. Mary’s Parish and the wonderful Diocese of Saskatoon. It was there that I first became a pastor and it was there that I met so many faith-filled people that I still call friends. In the end I decided not to leave them behind but, instead, carry them with me in my heart,” Hansen added.

The installation and ordination of the new bishop will be held March 16, 2018, in Yellowknife, N.W.T. Hansen succeeds Bishop Mark Hagemoen.

Hagemoen — who was installed Nov. 23 as the eighth bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon while continuing to serve as the apostolic administrator of Mackenzie-Fort Smith — greeted the Dec. 15 announcement of Hansen’s appointment with joy.

“With gratitude and excitement,



Kiply Yaworski

Bishop-elect Jon Hansen, CSsR

ment, we welcome the news of the appointment of Bishop-elect Jon Hansen as the seventh bishop of the Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith,” he said.

Hansen first came to serve in the northern diocese while Hagemoen was bishop.

“In the short time that Bishop-elect Hansen has been in the north, he has demonstrated a pastor’s heart that guides everything he does,” said Hagemoen. “Hansen is also a capable administrator, which he has demonstrated in the parish and Arctic region, and as he has facilitated ministry and restoration projects in the resource-challenged region.”

He added: “We are all grateful to the Holy Father for providing a new shepherd for the diocese — a man with such a shepherd’s way and the right gifts to pastor the Mackenzie-Fort Smith Diocese.”

Archbishop Donald Bolen of Regina said Hansen’s appointment will be a blessing for the

people of Mackenzie-Fort Smith.

“It was a privilege to work closely with Father Jon when he was serving as pastor of St. Mary’s Parish in Saskatoon,” said Bolen, former Saskatoon bishop. “During part of that time, Father Jon also served as vice-chair of the Council of Priests. He was a great pastor, ready to accompany people, like a good shepherd.”

Bolen noted that during his time in Saskatoon, Hansen was also involved in the diocese’s reconciliation work with indigenous peoples, and with justice outreach in the neighbourhood of St. Mary’s Parish.

Rev. Mark Miller, CSsR, expressed the support and prayers of the Redemptorist community: “With the help and support of his Redemptorist confrères, Father Jon Hansen discerned several years ago a call to serve God’s people in the far north. He prepared well for the new assignment — in Inuvik, where he has been stationed for over two years. It is obvious that he has found his home.”

Rev. Ciro Alfonso Perez, CSsR, present pastor at St. Mary’s, reflected on the appointment of Hansen, with whom he served in Saskatoon. “Father Jon was pastor at St. Mary’s for six years and left a strong imprint in the parish and the Diocese of Saskatoon. Anyone who heard him as a homilist, or who read his journal in the *Prairie Messenger* since he became pastor of Inuvik; anyone who followed his reflections on the north and his photo gallery will immediately see some of the gifts he shared with us,” said Perez.

“More importantly, anyone who sought his counsel when feeling overwhelmed or without hope; anyone who experienced

his pastoral presence, his care and compassion when in need, will know Father Jon will bring a real gift to the new role to which he is called. We also recognize in Father Jon someone who was very purposeful, diligent and faithful in seeking to know and follow God’s call in his life.”

Hansen was born in 1967 in Edmonton and raised in Grande Prairie, Alta. After high school he attended the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology and completed a diploma in construction engineering. Returning for further studies, he completed a BA at the University of Alberta.

He joined the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (the Redemptorists), professing religious vows in 1998. He then studied at the University of St. Michael’s College, Toronto, where he graduated with a Master’s of Divinity in 2003. After a diaconal appointment in Sudbury, he was ordained to the priesthood in Grande Prairie on April 24, 2004, by Archbishop Arthé Guimond of the Diocese of Grouard-McLennan.

Subsequently, Hansen served as associate pastor in Redemptorist parishes in St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador, and in Toronto, where he was the director of “Out of the Cold,” a program that provides food and shelter to the homeless in the inner city. In 2007 he became the director of formation for Redemptorist students.

In 2009 he was appointed pastor of St. Mary’s Parish in Saskatoon. During his six years there, Hansen served on the Diocesan Council for Truth and Reconciliation and the Council of Priests, as well as working with the diocesan Office of Migration and the Office of Justice and Peace. In 2015 he was appointed pastor of Our Lady of Victory Parish in Inuvik.

The Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith has 32 parishes and missions, with a Catholic population of 20,110 served by three diocesan priests, four priests who are members of institutes of consecrated life, five religious sisters who are members of religious institutes, as well as 18 lay pastoral workers.

Sisters join global push to create a blue planet

By Meggie Hoegler
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — Blue is the new green. At least that is the case for the Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada.

On Dec. 10 the sisters became the first religious community in Canada to become a designated Blue Community. A global movement started by The Council of Canadians and the Canadian Union for Public Employees, the Blue Community’s purpose is twofold: to recognize water as a human right for all and to be conscientious of sustainable water usage.

For their first order of business, the sisters plan to phase out bottled water at all their events.

“We want to educate others about water so it does not become an exclusive commodity,” said Sister Thérèse Meunier, congregational leader for the Sisters of St. Joseph in Toronto.

“By being a part of the global Blue Community, we are upholding the human right to safe, clean water,” said Leah Watkiss, program director of the Ministry of Social Justice, Peace and Care of the Earth for the Sisters of St. Joseph. “We are ensuring water justice, which means everyone has equal access.”

The sisters were inspired to join the movement after Pope Francis addressed the issue of access to clean drinking water in his encyclical *Laudato Si’*. Pope Francis calls it a “central issue in today’s world and a problem that affects everyone.”

There are 844 million people on the planet who lack a basic drinking water service, according

to the World Health Organization. In Canada, there are currently close to 75 indigenous communities under drinking water advisories.

The sisters plan to implement



Courtesy of the Sisters of St. Joseph

BLUE COMMUNITIES — Members of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto participate in a water ritual as part of the Blue Communities initiative.

changes in their own local communities, from Toronto to Sault Ste. Marie.

“We plan to incorporate easy but practical ways to conserve water into our houses and programs across Ontario,” said Meunier.

Every little bit counts, from little reminders to turn off the tap while brushing your teeth to being conscious of the length of your showers, she said.

The sisters are also working on a video outlining what it means to be a Blue Community.

“We want everyone to get involved,” said Meunier. “Water is a human right for all.”

MP seeks to defend indigenous rights

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — NDP MP Romeo Saganash’s dream to see Canada bring its laws in line with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) has moved closer to reality.



CCN/D. Gyapong

Romeo Saganash

The Liberal government has indicated it will support his private member’s Bill C-262 that would do just that.

Implementing the UNDRIP is also a position endorsed by the Canadian Conference of Catholic

Bishops and the Holy See’s representative at the United Nations. In 2010, the then president of the CCCB signed a joint letter with other religious leaders calling on the Canadian government “to work in partnership with indigenous peoples on a respectful process for the full endorsement and implementation” of the UN Declaration.

In a news conference Dec. 5, Saganash, following the bill’s first of two hours of debate in the House of Commons, described Bill C-262 as “probably the most important legislation that the Parliament of Canada will have to consider in a long time.”

“What I’m proposing here is a legal framework for the future,” he said. If a bill comes forward on something such as a First Nations control of First Nations Education Act, “these are the minimum standards the government has to respect.”

Without this legislation, the meaning of treaty rights and Canada’s constitution remains “vague,” he said.

“The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has the merit of clarifying what those rights are,” he said. “That will hopefully avoid us going to court every single month.”

“There’s hundreds of millions

of dollars that are spent fighting Aboriginal rights in this country. If we are serious about reconciliation, then that needs to stop as well.”

Saganash pointed out the justice minister is obligated to ensure any legislation is “consistent with the Charter before it’s tabled.”

“We don’t have the equivalent for Aboriginal and treaty rights. This is what this bill is going to do as well, said Saganash, who represents the Abitibi-Baie-James-Nunavik-Eeyou riding in Quebec.

Saganash, a Cree from northern Quebec, told the House Dec. 5 he is “a survivor of the residential school system where I spent 10 years incarcerated culturally, politically, linguistically, spiritually even, in the residential school system.”

“I set out to do exactly two things coming out of residential school: first, to go back to the land where I come from and live off the land, hunting, fishing, and trapping. That is exactly what I did the first year I came out of residential school,” he said. “The other thing I said to myself was that when I came out the objective for me that I set out was to reconcile with the people who had put me away for 10 years.”

— SAGANASH, page 4

Christmas story lived in Catechesis of Good Shepherd

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Children participating in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd in parishes across Canada have been prepared to enter deeply into the Christmas story.

ed in five infancy narratives the children are exposed to at various stages in the catechesis, McClure said. These include the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Birth of Jesus Christ and the Adoration of the Shepherds, the Adoration of the Magi, and the Presentation

into the atrium in the beginning of the year, we give them practical life lessons so the child can learn to care for the church, for the materials there, themselves and the other kids,” she said.

“The atrium was the place where the Jewish people would prepare to enter the Temple,” said Meghann Baker, a catechist at Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal in Russell, Ont. For the children, the atrium is “a microcosm of the macrocosm of the church.”

“We proclaim the Word to them, then together we ponder, we listen together,” she said, noting the approach is not didactic. “We really have to learn to step out of the way and ask questions and see what the Holy Spirit stirs in these little souls.”

“There’s a movement of the Spirit within them,” Baker said. “It happens and it’s real.”

The preparation for Christmas involves entering deeply into the Advent season.

“In the atrium, we look at the Messianic prophecies — ‘The

people who walked in darkness have seen a great light,’ and ‘Behold a Virgin shall conceive,’” she said. “We talk about how long before Jesus came the Jewish people had been waiting and heard prophets who listened to God with the ears of their heart.”

“During Advent and Christmas, we’re not only remembering when Christ came, we’re not only preparing to receive him now, we’re also waiting for the moment of *parousia*, when Christ will come again,” Baker said.

“It’s so natural for them,” Baker said. “Some of them have these moments, like ‘Oh, wow, I get it!’ Other times it’s a lot more peaceful than that,” she said. “Sometimes it’s peace, contentment, a quiet sigh. They’ll say things, like ‘My whole body is happy.’ They feel it in their entire being. They feel the profundity of it.”

Baker said every time she is in the atrium with the children she understands what Jesus meant when he said ‘Unless you become like little children you will not enter into the kingdom of God.’

“I watch these little children and the ease with which they receive God’s love, God’s promises and God’s gift and the joy with which they respond to these things,” Baker said. “This is what it means to receive your love and to be happy.”

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd began in Italy in the

1950s when a Scripture scholar was asked to give religious instruction to a boy of seven. Sofia Cavaletti found the experience life-changing so she began developing the program with Gianna Gobbi, an expert in Maria Montessori’s teaching methods. Since then, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd has spread to 37 countries. In Canada, its biggest concentration of atriums is in Ontario, but the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Association of Canada lists atriums in the western and Prairie provinces as well.

“It’s really growing,” said Dorothy Burns, chair of the Board of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Association of Canada. “Membership has more than doubled since 2014.”

“More and more people are becoming engaged in the work and the number of requests for courses (to train catechists) has doubled as well.”

The catechesis is now offered in French in one location, Burns said, and there is interest now in Montreal. Level one covers ages three to six; level two covers ages seven to 12.

Burns, who is from the Calgary area, said there are catechists in Vancouver, Whitehorse, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, St. Boniface, Saskatoon, Toronto, Ottawa, North Bay, Peterborough, Sault Ste. Marie, Hamilton, and London.

— CHILDREN, page 11



Photo by Ruth Ann McClure

CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD — Children participating in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd in parishes across Canada have been prepared to enter deeply into the Christmas story. After a presentation children can handle the Nativity set as they ponder the lesson (St. George’s Parish, Ottawa).

In child-sized “atriums,” the children are taught “auditorially, kinesthetically, and visually, in a total sensorial environment,” said Ruth Ann McClure, co-ordinator and director of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd at St. George’s Parish in Ottawa, one of six parishes using the Montessori-inspired catechesis in the Ottawa archdiocese. “The child will tell you it smells like God.”

The Christmas story is includ-

of Jesus in the Temple.

“We make a set of infancy narratives using little characters made of clay or wood,” she said

Anchored in the church’s liturgical year, the catechesis for three to six-year-olds begins with the Bible and a geography lesson, McClure said. They have a “beautiful globe of the world,” and a puzzle map of Israel showing the various regions.

“When the children first come

Saganash was first Cree to receive law degree in Quebec

Continued from page 3

He was good to his word.

Saganash was the first Cree to receive a law degree in Quebec in 1989. Among other leadership roles, he became one of the negotiators and drafters of the UNDRIP.

The work was “not easy,” he told the news conference.

“There were moments at the UN when I thought I just should go back home and leave it there, because it was difficult,” he said. “The challenges were great. We started with trying to get member states to recognize we were peoples like all other peoples, not just minorities in our countries, we were peoples indeed with the same right of self-determination.”

It took 23 years to negotiate the document and Saganash was there from the beginning in 1984.

In September 2007 the UN General Assembly accepted the document, but Canada was one of four countries that voted against it, with the United States, New Zealand, Australia. Canada came aboard in 2010, he said.

However, Saganash expressed disappointment that the Conservatives are not backing his bill.

The Tories’ Crown-Indigenous Relations & Northern Affairs critic MP Cathy McLeod told the House Dec. 5 she found the Liberal government’s decision to support a pri-

vate member’s bill, and not to put such important legislation forward as a government bill, “unfathomable.”

“In the past, the Liberals have argued vehemently that any small changes to the Indian Act and the Labour Code must only be introduced as government legislation, where there is an opportunity for comprehensive reflection and not just a couple of hours of debate,” she said. “I would suggest that the bill before us today has more far-reaching implications than the right to a secret ballot for union certification.”

Article 19 of the UNDRIP requires the government to “ensure free, prior, and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative measures that may affect them,” she told the House.

She asked if this would apply broadly to such legislation as the recent marijuana bill that will affect indigenous Canadians as well as non. She also asked about how the government would obtain this consent, since the national bodies representing indigenous peoples are advocacy organizations, not rights holders.

Bill C-262 has another hour of debate before a vote that would send it to committee. Saganash told the House he believed any questions MPs have could be answered at the committee stage.

VANCOUVER (CCN) — Pilgrims spend hours standing in line in the hot Roman sun to see one of the world’s most famous pieces of history: the Sistine Chapel.

Yet, when they finally get inside, they are literally herded out within five minutes. It’s a problem former video game and animated film director Wilson Tang hopes to change.

“Five minutes is not enough to learn anything,” said Tang, now the CEO of Yumebau, a new augmented and virtual reality company.

“Mixed reality has an incredible power to transport people to these places and in fact probably give them a more intimate experience than they would in real life.”

Tang, speaking to 50 creatives and professionals at the John Paul II Pastoral Centre recently, said new technology can allow a person to learn about and experience the Sistine Chapel as if he or she was the only pilgrim in line.

“Maybe you get to see Michelangelo on the scaffolding, at that first moment when he touches the brush to the ceiling. What is he thinking? Does he know what he’s about to do is about to go down in history? Let’s see the painting as it progresses over eight years. What does it mean? What is the religious significance? What is the political significance? What is the artistic significance?”

Others might be interested in holy sites in Israel, but may never get to see them due to religious or

Virtual reality fills in for cathedrals

By Agnieszka Krawczynski
The B.C. Catholic



B.C. Catholic Agnieszka Krawczynski

VIRTUAL REALITY — A woman uses virtual reality glasses to look around the inside of a church only she can see.

political conflict, physical disability, or just not being able to afford the trip.

With virtual reality technology, “we can allow people to really learn in these places in a way they are not able to physically anymore.”

Tang spent some 20 years working in architecture, computer graphics design, animation, and app design before creating Yumebau this summer.

“It entertained people, but in the end there was an emptiness,” he said. “There is a lot of need for positive messages in the world today.”

Tang is most interested in the educational and cultural possibilities of transporting people to another world, virtually.

He told his audience to imagine life six centuries ago. “There’s

no lights, there’s no movies, virtual reality, or television. For the most part, you probably lived in hovels and it was pretty dark at night. But you went to these cathedrals, you looked through the rose windows, you looked at sculptures hidden in the shadows, and you were transported to another world,” he said.

“Architecture, and art, were the medium of their time, even though they were made of concrete and steel. They were made for the church, to transport people’s lives away from the world they lived in.” This is what Tang, with new technology, hopes to do.

The event was hosted by the Archdiocese of Vancouver and Catholic Creators, a network of professional writers, designers, and other creatives.

South Sudanese women peace-builders tour Canada

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Two women leaders from South Sudan toured Canada Nov. 24 - Dec. 11 to raise awareness of women’s peace-building and efforts to end gender-based violence.

The tour, sponsored by KAIROS Ecumenical Justice Initiatives in collaboration with Development and Peace and Amnesty International, marked the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence, an international effort not widely known in Canada. The seven-city tour included meetings with indigenous women to share their experience of reconciliation.

In Ottawa, the women addressed a parliamentary breakfast sponsored by the All-Party Women’s Parliamentary Caucus and the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association Dec. 7.

“It is especially hard for women in South Sudan,” said Agnes Wasuk Petia, who co-ordinates the National Women’s Program of the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC), in an interview. “Where there is war, women are most affected.”

South Sudan came into independent existence in 2011 after decades of civil war in Sudan between its Muslim-dominated north and its largely Christian and animist south. But since the formation of the new country, ethnic violence has broken out among various tribes.

Women and children are especially vulnerable, Petia said. “They have a lot of responsibili-



CCN/D. Gyapong

WOMEN PEACE-BUILDERS — Rachel Warden of KAIROS, Awak Hussein Deng, youth co-ordinator for the South Sudan Council of Churches, Agnes Wasuk Petia, co-ordinator of the Council’s National Women’s Program, and Kelly Di Domenico of Development and Peace (from left), were on Parliament Hill Dec. 7. The tour, sponsored by KAIROS Ecumenical Justice Initiatives in collaboration with Development and Peace and Amnesty International, marked the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence.

ties to hide their families from the conflict.”

In the process of running to hide, they can be exposed to gender-based violence and hunger, she said.

“They are seeing their sons and daughters dying,” she said. “There is no freedom of movement, so they can’t go to areas where they can cultivate big farms.”

Petia explained people in South Sudan live in towns and villages, then walk several kilometres to plots of land to farm, but it is no longer safe to leave the towns.

In addition, South Sudan has experienced two years of drought, she said. In the areas where there

is rain, the people are not able to bring their crops to the big towns, where people are most affected by hunger.

The purpose of the tour was to “share with Canada and learn from the Canadian experience on violence and violations of human rights,” Petia said. They also hoped to engage the Canadian government, NGOs and people of goodwill “to support the grassroots women’s peace process.”

“When you feel like you are helpless and being violated,” it is difficult to see what can be done, Petia said. “We will go and tell the people some of the issues are global.”

“What we have learned in Canada, we have to learn to forgive, so we can get healed and become ourselves,” Petia said. “The youth need to be strong, to understand who they are and what they live for.”

Awak Hussein Deng, youth co-ordinator for the SSCC, and a representative of the Evangelical church, said the council offers youth 35 and under a range of seminars on leadership development, combating gender-based violence, and help for women and girls to develop economic self-sufficiency.

The SSCC also collects money and clothes to distribute to the

most vulnerable, as well as food such as lentils, oil, sugar and flour, Deng said.

Petia said representatives from the SSCC also visit displaced persons camps to ensure the most vulnerable who can’t help themselves get access to food and help.

The SSCC also offers workshops for trauma healing, where people who have been violated and women who have been raped can “come out to speak,” Petia said. Often a person who has been violated in war loses the ability to know how they can contribute. The workshops give “the person the knowledge of her potential when healed.”

The council holds workshops to “build capacity in peace-building and nation-building,” and in giving women skills in various areas: good governance, peace-building and economic empowerment,” Petia said.

This was the second tour of Canada by women from a conflict-torn country. The first No Mas Tour (No Mas means No More in Spanish) took place last year, bringing women from Colombia to talk about peace-building efforts there, said Rachel Warden, a spokesperson for KAIROS.

KAIROS works with partners on the ground in South Sudan such as the SSCC and others in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Colombia where rape has become a weapon of war, Warden said.

Studies have shown peace-building efforts that included women “are more effective and durable,” Warden said.

Hope for church in the North is to incorporate Dene traditions

Continued from page 1

“Thank God. All I can say is thank God. My dad taught me all about my native spirituality, what God really means to him, and this is now brought into the church,” said Rose Betthale-Reid, a former student at Lapointe Hall, tearing up after the consecration mass.

“We have to learn from our history, our battlegrounds, what we went through — now we’re going through the healing.”

Sibbeston, who attended residential schools in Fort Simpson, Inuvik and Yellowknife, is among the leaders of that healing, by pushing to have the Dene take a greater leadership role in their parishes.

“There’s a kind of a backlash and anger at the church for putting them through residential school and they have rejected the modern church,” said Sibbeston. “If we could Dene-cize the church, we could use our language and we could have songs in our own language, people will come back.”

A small group of parishioners at Sacred Heart Parish, Sibbeston among them, translates the mass into Dene on Sundays. A birch-bark basket and moose-hide blanket are used to collect the offering and drumming is often part of the celebration.

“This is something I’ve always dreamed about, something that has our culture in it. It’s not just sitting down, kneeling down, praying,”

Betthale-Reid said. “It’s hearing our drums and everything, that bring us so much peace with God.”

“We are with the land, the animals and the people around our church. That’s where we spiritually grew up and are getting stronger. We’re starting to use our language, our native tongue, and our drums, which is so awesome.”

On Saturdays, Sibbeston attends a mass for Dene elders at local long-term care facility, translating the Gospel, homily and key prayers into South Slavey, the local Dene dialect.

“Enculturation is a way — most of the Catholics here are Aboriginal — of honouring and living the life of the people,” said Bishop Mark Hagemoen, Bishop of Saskatoon and the former head of the Mackenzie-Fort Smith diocese.

Church leaders say it has been a key message since Pope John Paul II, who visited Fort Simpson in 1987, and locally through Bishop Emeritus Denis Croteau, who recognized the need for local Dene leadership.

“In many communities the rosary is recited before mass begins and each decade is led by an elder who may have a small exhortation or a prayer intention to make, and that’s expressed in Dene,” Hagemoen noted. “It’s very moving and very beautiful.”

Nevertheless, Sibbeston said the Dene want more.

Many would like to see the Feeding the Fire ceremony — a traditional Dene practice in which

a large fire is built to honour the air, land, water and all of God’s creation. It’s been a part of other services, but parishioners want to see it incorporated into mass.

“How that’s done is the task of liturgists, bishops, the people to discern what is appropriate,” Hagemoen said. “That’s exciting and important. It’s not open season, and the Dene elders will be the first to tell you what shouldn’t be part of the Catholic mass, and it’s good wisdom to guide a young bishop.”

Hagemoen said he supports more enculturation, but in the Mackenzie-Fort Smith diocese it will be for his successor to decide. (Jon Hansen, CSsR, has been appointed Bishop of Mackenzie-Fort Smith — see story, page 3.)

What the Dene want most, Sibbeston said, is the blessing that the Dene traditions can be an integral part of the Catholic Church.

“We almost need for someone to tell us it’s OK,” Sibbeston said. “There are no more priests, no more sisters. It’s either us do something, or there’s nothing. There’s been a slow growth of the Dene people being involved in the church, participating and leading, and that’s where we are now.”

Sibbeston is hopeful after his own long journey toward healing his relationship with the church.

He was five-and-one-half years old when he was sent to residential school, coming home during the summer to visit his

grandmother who was a member of Sacred Heart Parish.

Sibbeston went on to become a lawyer, member of the Legislative Assembly, and premier of the Northwest Territories. But like many residential school survivors, outward success masked inner sadness, depression and loneliness.

“I feel that I wasn’t a very good father. I drank. And I wasn’t able to cope with what a normal family would have been. Because I didn’t know how,” Sibbeston said.

His wife, Karen, said she and their six children also suffered indirectly from Nick’s years in residential school, combined with his political work that took him away from Fort Simpson.

“I didn’t feel like I could be present with them sometimes. There were a lot of times where I was kind of preoccupied with where he might be or what was going on with him . . . I was caught up in that as well, emotionally and mentally.”

Nick Sibbeston went through a period where he hated the Catholic Church, where he could have “burned the church down” because he was so angry, but he credits faith, Marriage Encounter workshops and — most of all — prayer, for positioning him on the road toward healing.

“I turn to God and in my spiritual life, there’s been my grandmother and a number of Dene elders who I really respect. I turn to them

and ask them for their help and I talk to them because I know they’re in heaven close to God and Jesus, and invariably I get help from them,” Sibbeston said.



Grandin Media

Rose Betthale-Reid

In spite of his years in residential school and his own past, Sibbeston said the future of the Catholic Church in the Northwest Territories depends on making it much more relevant by continuing to incorporate Dene traditions and getting local people involved.

“Believe it or not, I used to say ‘Let the church finish. Let the church burn down, and from the ashes of that, then there will be a local Dene church’ . . . and in my view, this is what’s happening. That’s the true hope for Catholic Church in the North.”

Chaldean patriarch visits Ukrainian eparchy

By Kyla Predy

SASKATOON — A little after 5:30 p.m., Patriarch Louis Raphaël I Sako, patriarch of Babylon and the head of the Chaldean Catholic Church, entered the Saskatoon eparchial communications office with Bishops Bawai Soro and Emmanuel Shaleta and Rev. Niaz Toma.

Soro had been installed as Bishop of the Chaldean Catholic Eparchy of Mar Addai of Toronto two days previously, occasioning the visit from the patriarch. Mar Addai is the eparchy of the Chaldean Catholic Church for all of Canada.

Bishop Bryan Bayda, CSsR, of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon, was ready to greet them, and led them into the

Ukrainian Catholic Religious Education Centre (UCREC) bookstore of the Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate to exchange greetings and gifts.

Bayda and the Chaldean bishops discussed how the Ukrainian and Chaldean Catholic communities in Saskatoon work together, and how the Chaldeans here have their own Knights of Columbus Council. Vicar General Rev. Janko Kolosnjaji and Bayda presented each Chaldean cleric with a copy of *Christ Our Pascha: The Catechism of the Ukrainian Catholic Church*. Sako, in turn, handed a blue velvet case to Bayda.

The bishop opened the case to reveal a gold scroll, rich with imagery. The crest featured the three wise men, which tradition holds came from Babylon, where

Sako is seated as patriarch.

After the exchange of gifts, Bayda led the Chaldean clergy around the chancery office. Opening the door to the chapel, he told the Chaldeans that, on long working days, “I open my office door and the chapel door, and with the direct line of sight to the tabernacle, I remember whose church this is.”

Before leaving the chancery office, Bayda and the Chaldeans held a discussion about the difficulties faced by their respective eparchies. The issue of language was brought up by the Chaldeans, with the inquiry of what the Ukrainian Catholics were doing about it. Bayda replied that less and less Ukrainian was being used, as younger generations were no longer as fluent in the language, though Ukrainian is

still present in many of the divine liturgies across the eparchy. While the Ukrainian Eparchy uses two languages, one of the Chaldean bishops remarked, “We have three that we must handle: Arabic, Chaldean, and Aramaic, not to mention English.”

Leaving the chancery office, the group headed outside to the sound of the Sisters of St. Joseph ringing the bell to the Shrine of the Nun Martyrs Olympia and Laurentia. Holding candles, the sisters sang *Mnohaya Lita* for the patriarch.

The sisters took the Chaldean hierarchy on a tour of the shrine, explaining the significance of the nun martyrs. A booklet about the shrine, as well as a Christmas ornament with greetings in Ukrainian on the back, were presented to each of the Chaldean clergy, who were impressed by the diverse col-

lection of nativity scenes on display, and how the scenes displayed the culture of the country in which each nativity set originated.

On the way to St. George’s Cathedral, Bayda showed Sako the *Panagia* (Greek for “all holy”) of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which he wears around his neck, explaining the significance of Our Lady of Guadalupe for him. One of the questions that Eastern churches must consider is, “How do you evangelize with culture?”

“Our Lady of Guadalupe,” explained Bayda, “is a perfect example of enculturation.”

The tour concluded at St. George’s Cathedral, where the Chaldeans sang a hymn to its patron. Bayda then accompanied them to Sacred Heart Chaldean Catholic Church to celebrate mass, which was followed by a reception at Holy Family Cathedral.

Garden aims at healthy students

By Ramona Stillar

NORTH BATTLEFORD, Sask. — Twenty per cent of families in Canada live below the poverty line — a statistic that rises to a staggering 33 per cent in North Battleford, according to 2016 census data.

The 2012 Canadian Community Health Survey indicated that, among off-reserve indigenous people 12 years and older, 22 per cent live in households that experience food insecurity — three times that of the non-indigenous population. First Nations people are also more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes.

Health complications associated with food insecurity range from malnutrition to obesity. It may appear contradictory, but it is precisely those who experience food insecurity who are more likely to suffer from obesity. One reason for this apparent anomaly is that people with lower incomes generally have reduced access to food that is affordable and healthy, and so they turn to low-cost, high-calorie foods instead.

Low-income families face many obstacles in following a nutritious diet, including limited access to fresh produce. The St. Mary Community School garden is an ongoing project dedicated to changing this situation.

In a school where 93 per cent

of the student population is First Nation or Métis, the community emphasizes the need to foster healthy physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual development among students and staff alike.

The school believes that healthy connectedness through strong relationships with parents and the school community leads to greater engagement, knowledge, and opportunity to gain new perspectives for the benefit of everyone. Healthy students learn better, and educated students are healthier.

St. Mary students are involved in the construction and maintenance of the garden, product selection and cultivation, and meal preparation. Their enthusiasm for growing their own food has become increasingly evident. It is seen not only as a noble endeavour, but as a means to achieve improved overall health, better problem-solving skills, and an interest in food sustainability, which leads, in turn, to environmental sustainability.

Since 2006, the Aboriginal population has grown by 42.5 per cent — more than four times the growth rate of the non-Aboriginal population over the same period. According to projections, the Aboriginal population will continue to grow quickly, and in the next two decades is likely to exceed 2.5 million persons, with proportionally more children and

youth and fewer seniors.

Traditional teachings and knowledge are at risk, but growing food demonstrates that they are not lost: they are relevant now and will remain so as we and future generations learn to cherish our role as stewards of the earth. The St. Mary’s School community garden demonstrates that students who think critically, ask questions, plan, sort, test, and investigate, develop higher literacy skills, better decision-making skills, and make more informed choices.

Like the mustard seed, the garden will grow and thrive, creating healthy youth who are committed to investing in themselves and their community.



Kyla Predy

SCROLL — While visiting the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon, Patriarch Louis Raphaël I Sako of the Chaldean Catholic Church presented Bishop Bryan Bayda with a gold scroll featuring the three wise men, which tradition holds came from Babylon, where Sako is seated as patriarch.

Nuncio encounters Eastern churches

By Kyla Predy

SASKATOON — On the morning of Nov. 25, Archbishop Luigi Bonazzi, Apostolic Nuncio to Canada, entered the chancery office of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon to be greeted by the Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate. Thus began the nuncio’s encounter with the workings of the Saskatoon eparchy.

Bonazzi made each moment of his visit deeply personal. He didn’t just say hello to people and learn their names, but endeavor-

oured to truly meet each person individually, giving him or her his full attention. This was in imitation of Pope Francis’ encouragement to develop a “culture of encounter”: instead of throwing money at the poor, the Christian takes the time to see them and to touch their hands.

Bishop Bryan Bayda led a tour of the offices, beginning with a greeting of the staff in the Guadalupe Room. The tour continued in the Family Life Office, where Deborah Larmour discussed her work with the eparchy, including creating a marriage preparation course that ties in with Eastern theology and traditions. Bonazzi accepted a booklet that Larmour put together, and expressed interest in the number of new marriages occurring in the eparchy. He commented that only 20 of the 500 official document blessings he gives for couples each year are for new marriages; the rest are for significant anniversaries.

Bonazzi voiced surprise at being shown the number of churches for which the eparchy is responsible in Saskatchewan. He noted how eparchies go through seasons in life, and how it is important to appreciate past seasons, the present season, and also the future.

“We just had a meeting of the Eparchial Stewardship Forum to discuss how, in the next 15 years, we can secure our places of worship and catechesis,” Bayda

explained. “A factor in this is how to practise good stewardship over the churches that are no longer in use owing to the decline in the population of Ukrainian Catholics in Saskatchewan.”

Leaving communications coordinator Chris Pidwerbeski’s office, Bayda showed the nuncio photographs of the church leaders Ukrainian Catholics pray for during the divine liturgy. “We pray for our emeritus bishop,” Bayda said, “so why not this pope also?” and he pointed to a photograph of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. Bonazzi responded that he would have to send a note to the emeritus pope, telling him that there is a whole eparchy praying for him in Saskatoon.

Before touring Bayda’s office, Bonazzi and the bishop stopped to pray in the chapel across the hall.

Another highlight of the nuncio’s tour of the chancery occurred in the front office of the Bishop Budka Eparchial Stewardship Society, Inc. (BBESSI), where the work of the Annual Eparchial Appeal interested him. After meeting the staff and accepting a brochure about the appeal, Bonazzi expressed his thoughts on the importance of giving as a means of participating in the joy that Pope Francis often speaks of.

The tour of the chancery con-

— EFFORTS, page 7



Kiply Yaworski

FILL THE PLATE — Sharon Powell, Vyenda McLean, Colette Chantler, and Jackie Saretsky were among the Catholic Pastoral Centre volunteers serving lunch with Bishop Mark Hagemoen at Saskatoon Friendship Inn Dec. 8. Sponsorship of a “Fill the Plate” day at the inn was a gift from the diocese to the new bishop as a way to mark his recent installation. Open for breakfast and lunch 365 days a year in Saskatoon’s core neighbourhood, Friendship Inn serves between 500 and 1,000 people a day. Those seeking meals and other services at the Inn include people without homes, street workers, couch surfers, individuals and families struggling to survive on a fixed income, people experiencing addictions and mental health issues, single mothers and fathers, children, senior citizens, and new immigrants.

Actions identified

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — The Dec. 2 Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (APC) meeting spent a major portion of its time identifying specific actions to move toward achieving the four archdiocesan priorities Archbishop Donald Bolen announced last August. The meeting identified focused work areas — categories of work that will accomplish the priorities — according to Leah Perreault, who is playing a leading role in the process.



PM file

Leah Perrault

Bolen said he had arrived at the priorities after a period of discernment that included prayer and consultation with stakeholders throughout the archdiocese. Each of the four priorities is presented with an explanatory paragraph.

1) Building vital and viable parish faith communities:

Each parish is called to be a genuine community of faith with sustainable spiritual, financial, human, and capital resources.

2) Living evangelization and discipleship:

The world needs to meet Jesus,

and each of us needs to meet him, over and over again — e.g., we need to go where the people are, with a strengthened ability to speak about Jesus: by equipping disciples to live as authentic witnesses; by forming and supporting strong leaders and clergy.

3) Listening and engaging in dialogue, and seeking justice and reconciliation:

We are called to be a church in dialogue, which seeks to heal wounds in our society and in our church, working with ecumenical partners and other faith communities where we are able to.

4) Growing a faithful and responsible stewardship:

To be able to share the gifts we have been given, we need to work together, drawing on everyone's gifts.

Perreault said the exercise was to get advice in terms of how we move from these priorities to focused work areas, thus planning transparently for our future in the archdiocese and in our parishes.

She went on to say that the focused work areas identified by the APC group are the big picture themes, such as transmitting the faith, being a church that heals wounds, or the work we do with communications, which will, in turn, lead to specific tasks.

She used communications as an example: "We may look at the distribution list of the archdiocesan newsletter and ask if people are reading it; is it the most effective way to communicate with people; and if a task came out of that to make changes it would be assigned to an individual."

A complete work plan is expected by spring 2018. Perreault felt that the general population would not be interested in looking at a work plan, "but at the archdiocesan level we need to see the big picture so that we can see how we are taking concrete steps toward realizing growth in these priority areas."

Marian Centre reopens

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — It was a long summer for the members of the Madonna House Apostolate who staffed Regina's Marian Centre soup kitchen. The building was closed in August for major structural repairs, and staff were dispersed across Canada, including to the mother house in Combermere, Ont.

Director Hugo Istaz remained behind until the middle of August, and then returned to his home country of Colombia. He came back to Regina toward the end of November to begin preparations to reopen the Marian Centre for mid-December.

Churches were contacted, donations of food and clothing came in, and on Dec. 11 at 10 a.m., staff member Charlie Cavanaugh unlocked the front door. Several of the regulars who come for the noon meal were waiting for the door to open, including

three who come in the morning to socialize and play cribbage.

Bob Roy and Lino Palmarin, two of the regular Monday morning volunteers, were there to help get things back to normal. Roy usually mans the dishwasher and Palmarin helps wherever he is needed; on opening day, he was in the kitchen, up to his elbows in grease, dissecting a cooked turkey for the noon-day stew. Staff member Katie O'Donnell was already stirring the stew, which was steaming and bubbling in a vat on the stove.

Sixty men, most of them previous regulars, showed up for the noon hot meal. There was a lot of chatter among the men, volunteers, and staff as they caught up on their activities over the summer.

The Marian Centre serves men only. Women are invited to Visitation House, which is not really a soup kitchen but provides lunches and other services for women in the city's downtown core. Visitation House was established and continues to be operated by the Regina archdiocese.

Istaz said the entire renovation project was estimated to be \$400,000, but he expects it will reach about \$450,000 when the project is finally completed. Some of the extra costs resulted from the necessary removal of asbestos, and some parging remains to be done on the foundation; this will be done when warm weather returns in the spring. The Archdiocese of Regina owns the building and signed the original contracts with PCL Construction and the structural engineering firm of J.C. Kenyon, Inc. The archdiocese put up the \$450,000 it cost, but it will be repaid.

"\$200,000 has already been raised and donations are still coming in," according to Istaz.

The repairs were extensive. The foundations extended 20 feet below grade, and new footings were poured. A waterproof membrane was attached to the exterior of the foundation and two new sump pumps were installed to deal with water that may accumulate beneath the building. The new foundation allowed for the



Frank Flegel

MARIAN CENTRE — Charlie Cavanaugh opens the door to the newly renovated Marian Centre in inner-city Regina Dec. 11. The centre, which provides a hot noon meal during the week and sandwiches on weekends, had been closed since August for structural repairs.

removal of some supporting steel beams from the interior basement, which in turn allowed two new rooms to be constructed.

"New windows and lighting made the basement much brighter," said Istaz. The new walls built on the new foundation were painted, and that also helped to increase brightness.

Prior to closing, arrangements were made with Souls Harbour Mission, Carmichael Outreach and Westminster United Church to make sure sandwiches continued to be available for weekends. The other soup kitchen service organizations expanded their regular programs to accommodate the increased numbers that would flow to them from the Marian Centre's closing. The centre regularly provides a hot noon meal during the week and sandwiches on weekends.



OSU

URSULINE DIES — Sister Leona Leibel, OSU, Prelate, passed away at St. Angela Merici Residence in Saskatoon on Nov. 22, after 99 years of life, ministry, and service in the community. She is remembered for her many years in classroom teaching, her love of things beautiful, and her love of God and family.



Tim Yaworski

SIMBANG GABI —The third Sunday of Advent was also the third night of Simbang Gabi, a pre-Christmas novena of eucharistic celebrations by the Filipino Catholic community of Saskatoon. Rev. Deyre Azcuna, associate pastor at the Cathedral of the Holy Family, and Rev. Nestor Silva, OMI, pastor of St. Paul's Co-Cathedral, presided at the celebration Dec. 17 at St. Paul's, which featured traditional language and music of the Philippines, and was followed by a potluck meal. Simbang Gabi reflects the dual character of Advent for Filipino Catholics: a time of solemn purification in preparation for the coming of the Lord that also builds joyful anticipation in the last days of waiting. The novena of masses is also seen as a way of accompanying the Blessed Mother as she waits for her child. Simbang Gabi continued each day between Dec. 15 and Dec. 23, with mass celebrated at different churches across Saskatoon.

Efforts will bear fruit

Continued from page 6

cluded in the Guadalupe Room, where Sister Bonnie Komarnicki, SSMI, gave a presentation on the catechetical efforts of the eparchy. Bayda presented the nuncio with a signed copy of *Christ Our Pascha*, after which Bonazzi expressed his gratitude to the staff and shared his experience of catechism when he was preparing for first communion. There was laughter as he began speed-reciting some Latin text.

"My body works well when I have a good heart," Bonazzi said, encouraging the staff and volunteers to continue their work, knowing that their efforts would bear fruit in the community.

"Be patient with your bishop," he added, and he left the chancery amid laughter.

Bayda and the nuncio then headed to Sacred Heart, a Chaldean Catholic church on the east side of Saskatoon. Three

eastern-rite communities awaited his arrival: Ukrainian Catholics, Syro-Malabar Catholics, and the Chaldean Catholics to whom the church belongs. Children from the Chaldean school attached to the church sang as the nuncio entered with Bayda and other Eastern Catholic priests. After a few introductory words, the grade six students from Bishop Filevich Ukrainian Bilingual Catholic School sang four songs for the archbishop, followed by a small group of Syro-Malabar Catholics.

Bonazzi concluded the encounter at Sacred Heart by speaking to those gathered, focusing on the challenges that immigrants to Canada face in the church community.

"Moving from country to country, always far from my home, I always feel at home because the first home in which I try to live is the home of God," the archbishop said. "I see also that each of you, my brothers and sisters, are my home."

A gentle spirit: walking toward the Infinite

Soul Searching

Tom Saretsky



My nephew Dylan died a little over a month ago from suicide. It has been a difficult time. Nothing prepares a person for sudden and tragic death. It's surgery without anesthesia; it cauterizes one's soul in order for a person to absorb the enormity of the event. As well, it renders one helpless to even say or do anything that might lessen the pain of those most affected. What does one do, beyond "thoughts and prayers," or what does one say beyond dusty words?

Dylan was my wife's godson. He was the oldest grandchild on Norma's side of the family. I was blessed in being able to watch this gentle, enthusiastic and spirited little boy grow up. I delighted in watching him at play, especially with his younger brothers. They would put puzzles together or maybe Dylan would try to place little toy shapes into the right place. Dylan, however, wasn't always able to put the right piece into the right place. Sometimes the brothers' frustration at Dylan would compel them to correct Dylan's mistake; yet,

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

Dylan was never fazed by this. He wouldn't get mad at them or pout. He simply allowed his "mistake" to be corrected. In Dylan's mind, I don't think there was a mistake made. Dylan just let it go. He simply "went with the flow," as the expression goes.

In his early teen years Dylan found his true love in music. His spirit ascended beyond the narrow limits of what our society would deem as normal. Society demands that people conform to its expectations, and to follow a linear track. Society expects all the pieces to fit uniformly, but like those times with the puzzles when he was a young boy, Dylan did not operate that way. He wanted a society in which *his* shapes and puzzles, which do not fit others' expectations, could still be part of a larger whole — a society in which diversity, and not conformity, is welcomed.

Dylan ventured out to wherever

music might take him, even if that meant going to extreme lengths and distances to attend festivals in Costa Rica, Eastern Canada, Europe or the U.S. Dylan was accomplished in the sound producing, stage designing, and music mixing industry, and he was a wonderful guitar player. He was at home when he played. He was comfortable and secure in music, because music has no linear structure.

"Music is a more potent instrument than any other for education," wrote Plato, "because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul." Dylan's soul wasn't confined to structure, but was expanded by rhythm and

harmony and melody. The last time I saw Dylan was in September on the Labour Day long weekend. That weekend was a transfiguring moment for me, because in my conversations and observances of him, I kept seeing glimpses of that little boy. However, that long-ago little boy, who was indifferent to whether a shape was placed into the correct place or not, was now a grown young man. Instead of plugging square shapes into square holes, he was fashioning his own many-shaped pieces into his vision of a more kind, more colourful, more accepting and diverse society — one in which he would be more at home.

Dylan's home wasn't here. His was a spirit that eventually couldn't be contained by physical or temporal structures. He yearned for something more . . . something more infinite. He wasn't afraid to kiss the infinite or to lose everything, because it was in "losing everything" that he truly gained everything. However, this thought does not make the pain any less intense or our longing for his presence any less real.

The Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore writes, "If you weep because the sun has gone out, your tears may blind you to the stars." The view through our faith would tell us that Dylan is resplendent among the stars, lighting the night sky so we can navigate through our darkness; yet we leave room for tears. It is only through tears that our hurt stands a chance of healing, our souls have a chance of mending, and our hearts have a chance of recovering. The power of tears is that, through tears, we are brought closer to heaven, and there is no coming to heaven with dry eyes.



Design Pics

BELLS OF CHRISTMAS — A new year waits in the wings and the bells signifying the advent of the Christ Child are silent, writes Sandy Prather. But we can keep the bells of kindness and compassion, peace, justice and love ringing throughout the year.

The bells of Christmas should ring for us, now and beyond

Breaking Open the Ordinary

Sandy Prather



Catherine Doherty, founder of Madonna House, tells a lovely story about an Advent custom from her childhood. When Catherine was a little girl, her mother would tell her that if she was good during the Advent season, then sometime, at first faintly and then more clearly, she would hear bells. Her mother called them the first church bells: they were the bells around the neck of the little donkey who carried Mary, pregnant with Jesus, as she and Joseph made their way to Bethlehem. Our Lady, said Catherine's mother, was

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.

carrying the Lord, so really she was the first church carrying Jesus, and the donkey's bells were the first church bells.

Starting around the second week of Advent, her mother would begin wearing a little bracelet that had tinkling bells. As her mother moved her hands, Dorothy could hear them tinkle and, excited, associate them with the donkey's bells. During the third week of Advent, her mother's bracelet miraculously got more bells on it and the sound grew louder and louder the closer it got closer to Christmas. As Catherine and her brother found out later, her mother was wearing bells first around her wrist, then her knees, and then her waist, adding more and more as Christmas approached. By the time Christmas Day arrived, their little house was filled with the sounds of bells.

Catherine carried the custom over to Madonna House. During

Advent, she would begin wearing a few bells that could be heard wherever she walked. Like her mother, she added more and more as the days progressed. The community, familiar with the story, used to tell her that the sounds helped them meditate more profoundly on the mystery of Advent and the coming of the Christ Child.

This Advent, I too was blessed to hear the donkey's bells. One evening mid-December, my husband and I went with three of our grandchildren to an inner-city parish. Walking into the large church basement, we saw tables laden with wrapped presents, towers of them in some cases, and volunteers at each table wrapping more. We joined the work crew, wrapping and labelling the donated toys as "Boy 7-9," "Girl 12-14," etc.

The gifts were being readied for the parish's annual children's Christmas party where approximately 800 children from the community would receive a Christmas meal, meet Santa and be given a gift. Everything, gifts and food, was donated; all the workers were volunteers. Chatting with a woman at the table beside me that night, I learned she worked for a social service agency and had brought a work crew of about 10 people to help with the wrapping. The co-

ordinator remarked that he had more offers of help than he needed and that both money and gifts were still pouring in. I listened to them, watched my grandchildren earnestly cutting and taping, and I swore I could hear the donkey's bells in the background.

The bells were ringing again when we gathered with our family and dear friends for our annual tree-decorating party. A tradition for over 30 years now, we gather the Sunday before Christmas, exchange simple gifts, partake of a good meal and help the children decorate our tree. The gifts we exchange are our tokens of the deep affection we enjoy, one that has grown over the years as we have shared life and love; the rich food celebrates the abundance of life and our joy in being together. As the laughter rang out in our house that day, I was sure I was hearing donkey's bells.

I heard them many times this Advent season. Once was when I was walking outside on a dark starry night. The silence took over and my heart's deepest longings surfaced. As I acknowledged my thirst for healing, peace and justice to be born into the world, my ears were filled with the sweet sound of the bells. I heard them again while sitting in a darkened concert hall listening to the sounds of carols being lifted to the rafters. The

carols were accompanied by Scripture readings that told the Christmas story and as I listened to the familiar, beautiful story unfold, my heart calmed, anxieties eased, and busy-ness was set aside. Peace entered my soul and donkey's bells joined the choir.

But it is Christmas now and a season too soon over. Decorations are hastily packed away; festooned trees are stripped bare and discarded; diets and discipline replace our feasting and excess. A new year waits in the wings and the bells signifying the advent of the Christ Child are silent. It's over, it seems.

But wait. Does it have to be over? Would that we keep the bells ringing! After all, the Spirit of compassion and kindness that moved so many to give so generously, the Love that was expressed as families and friends gathered in joy, the Grace that moved us to hunger for and work toward peace and justice: these have taken on flesh and drawn near in a humble stable centuries ago and today in our hearts. Men and women still give, still love and still work on behalf of others. Christmas is not the end of the story; it is the beginning. Christ continues to draw near and continues to be birthed every day and everywhere — and the bells never cease for those who have ears to hear.

Welcoming the stranger with light in the darkness

Screenings & Meanings

Gerald Schmitz



Who doesn't like Christmas lights? In the darkest season they shine brightly and lift spirits. If we take the Christian message seriously it is also a time to put a light out for the stranger, for anyone seeking refuge from the darkness.

In the gospel story, Mary and Joseph were strangers seeking a safe place, however humble, when they arrived in Bethlehem. Later we are told that they had to flee with the child Jesus to Egypt to escape Herod's deadly persecution. The Holy Family became refugees.

Pope Francis has repeatedly called attention to the moral imperative of welcoming, protecting and supporting refugees and migrants, emphasizing duties of justice, civility, solidarity, and hospitality that are rooted in the gospels. ("I was a stranger and you welcomed me" Mt 25:35.)

Some 65 million people, many of them children, are refugees in today's world, more than at any time since the Second World War. At the same time, we see a right-wing "populist" backlash against growing numbers of asylum seekers in many western countries. Canada has remained relatively open but, is not immune. The refugee crisis is testing our values.

A month ago I attended an international discussion at the University of Ottawa on the theme "Welcoming Refugees — Changing the Public Conversation." In troubled times, when fears of and

hostility toward the other are easily stoked, how to mobilize a compassionate response, to bring light instead of heat to bear?

The plight of refugees and migrants was a theme of several films in this year's European Union Film Festival put on by the Canadian Film Institute of which I am an ambassador member. Two of the countries most impacted by the human tide have been Greece and Germany. In Greek director Yannis Sakardis' *Amerika Square* (Greece's official entry for the foreign-language film Oscar), a resentful unemployed Greek man lashes out at the newcomers he blames for making his Athens public square a place of migration and misery, while several refugees — a Syrian man who becomes separated from his young daughter; an African woman being held by a human trafficker — are desperate to leave to find sanctuary elsewhere, preferably Germany.

In Simon Verhoeven's *Welcome to Germany* a young Nigerian man

Human Flow (Germany)
The Other Side of Hope (Finland/Germany)

whose family was killed by the Boko Haram Islamist terror group is seeking asylum when he is taken in by the Hartmanns, a divided upper-class Munich household, setting off all manner of consequences as touchy subjects touch a nerve. Fantastically enter-



Courtesy of Participant Media and AC Films

HUMAN FLOW — The latest work from Ai Weiwei, China's most famous artist-activist, is the documentary film *Human Flow*. "He acts as our personal witness as he goes to the front lines: of desperate people on the move seeking a place of safety; of the dangerous conditions they must often endure; of the harsh security barriers erected to stop them; of the huge encampments in which some may be trapped for many years," writes Gerald Schmitz.

taining, and incisive as timely satire, it's easy to see why it was Germany's biggest box-office hit of 2016.

It says something about the movie business that neither of the above appears to have had any theatrical distribution in North America. However, here are two German productions that have reached Canadian theatres this month.

Ai Weiwei is China's most famous artist-activist, with an expansive humanist vision that has often clashed with the Communist party-controlled regime. He spends much of his time abroad and has a studio in Berlin. His latest ambitious project took him to 23 countries most affected by the global refugee crisis, resulting in the 140-minute film *Human Flow* (<http://www.human-flow.com/>), which premiered at the Venice film festival. He acts as our personal witness as he goes to the front lines: of desperate people on the move seeking a place of safety; of the dangerous conditions they must often endure; of the harsh security barriers erected to stop them; of the huge encampments in which some may be trapped for many years.

Ai puts a distinctive human face on this massive flow of humanity, allowing us to see that these are individuals and families with their own stories and situations, histories of loss and hopes for a better future. As the film opens he is among those helping anxious arrivals on the Greek island of Lesbos and speaks with a young Iraqi man escaping the violence in that country, which has seen four million displaced since the 2003 invasion.

In addition to the European crossroads, Turkey and the Middle East (notably Jordan, Lebanon, Gaza), Ai travels to Pakistan, the Mexico-U.S. border, and Kenya, which hosts the Dadaab refugee camp, the world's largest. Everywhere in images and words (including those of poets and prophets) he strives to present in

human terms the experience of what it is like to be a refugee or migrant. There are stunning shots, from overhead birds-eye panoramas to intimate close-ups, which convey both the scale of what is happening and its deeply personal impacts.

No one wants to be displaced from their home to become a refugee. As one tells Ai: "Being a refugee is much more than a political status. It's the most pervasive kind of cruelty that can be exercised against a human being. You are forcibly robbing this human being of all aspects that would make this human life not just tolerable, but meaningful in many ways."

Among the eye-opening facts presented are that an average of 34,000 people flee their homes every day. At the height of the Syrian exodus 56,000 refugees entered Greece in a single week. Germany's extraordinary acceptance of one million in 2015 contrasts with the "Great Wall of Europe" in places like Hungary and Macedonia. In 1989, when the Berlin Wall fell, there were 11 militarized border walls or fences globally; today there are 70 (with plans to build more). Jordan's refugee population of 1.4 million would be the equivalent to 60 million in the United States or the European Union. (According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, developing countries host 86 per cent of all refugees and less than one per cent of those are ever resettled.)

Behind these statistics and news headlines Ai keeps reminding us of the human story represented by the numbers and of the challenge it presents to our common humanity.

Finnish master Aki Kaurismäki was awarded the Berlin film festival's "silver bear" as best director for his absorbing drama *The Other Side of Hope*, which also shines a spotlight on refugee struggles to escape violence and find a new home. Beautifully filmed in 35mm and featuring strong performances, the movie proceeds along two very different tracks that eventually converge. As it opens Khaled (Sherwan Haji) emerges from under a boat-

load of coal in the Helsinki harbour. A mechanic from the besieged Syrian city of Aleppo, it is the end of a harrowing journey involving human traffickers and multiple border crossings (Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary). We later learn that, after being attacked by neo-Nazis in a Polish port, he stowed away on a cargo ship that happened to be bound for Finland.

In the other narrative an older Finnish man, Wikström (Sakari Kuosmanen), walks out on his sullen wife, sells off his clothing business, wins a fortune at a poker table, and invests in a restaurant called "The Golden Pint," inheriting three employees who haven't been paid in three months. Never mind. The taciturn Wikström seems content to manage and turn things around.

Khaled, able to communicate in English, reports to a police station, requests asylum, and is sent to a reception centre. He befriends another young man, a refugee from Iraq, who will prove helpful in locating Khaled's sister Miriam (Niroz Haji) from whom he has been separated since losing contact while he was jailed in Hungary. At the centre there's nothing to do but wait and smoke until called for an official hearing. (In this picture all the men seem to smoke.)

Khaled scrupulously follows the procedures. He tells the interview board that his house in Syria was destroyed and that he has lost his fiancée and entire family except for Miriam, whereabouts unknown, and a cousin trapped on the Syrian side of the closed border with Turkey. Yet Khaled's case is rejected on spurious grounds even while scenes of Aleppo's destruction are flashing across television screens. Unable to accept being deported, Khaled flees the centre and goes on the run. After being beaten by white nationalist thugs, Wikström finds him one day slumped beside the restaurant's dumpster.

This is where the friendless Wikström discovers he has a heart after all. He takes Khaled in and gives him a job, hides him

— DARK SIDE, page 13

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We wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and peaceful New Year.

What are our ‘epiphanies’ of the past year?

Liturgy and Life

Margaret Bick



“A sudden and important realization or manifestation.” That’s how the 1998 edition of *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* presents the meaning of the word “epiphany.” I can give a couple of examples of epiphanies from my own life. My earliest epiphany, that I can recall, was the moment I realized, while doing some Grade 9 or 10 math homework, that mathematics is actually beautiful. (Epiphanies do not necessarily have religious content. Nor do they necessarily make sense to others!)

Another epiphany came much later in my life when, during a private retreat, I realized that God does, in fact, love me. I’m not an etymologist by any means, but I would add the word “life-changing” to the Oxford definition. Important realizations should be life-changing, otherwise they would not be important. Certainly these epiphanies of mine, each in their own way, made a difference in my life. But enough of me.

I invite you now to stop for a moment and scan your own life for moments of epiphany — moments when you suddenly realized a truth that has, since then, coloured

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

your life. Now don’t continue reading until you have thought of at least one. Ready for the next step? Here goes: Matthew says that a star led wise men from the East to their epiphany moment. Homework and an insightful Cenacle Sister led me to mine. What “star” led you to your epiphanies? Hold on to that thought.

Long ago, wise men in far-off lands looked to the heavens and had an epiphany, a “sudden realization” that something important was about to happen. This realization was enough to send them on a journey to Judea. The church celebrates this epiphany story as key to our realization and understanding that Jesus came for all nations, all people: his offer of grace and salvation is for everyone regardless of race, nationality or culture, or any other category we humans might use to divide ourselves. And this is the cause of great comfort and joy, because most of us in the pews today, like the wise men of the Gospel, are quite unlike the shepherds who were the first to acknowledge the child in that Bethlehem stable as Saviour and Lord.

We all need a star-like sign to remind us that we are

Feast of Epiphany	Isaiah 60:1-6
	Psalms 72
January 7, 2018	Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6
	Matthew 2:1-12

loved and embraced by God. A good look around most parish churches in Canada would show that indeed the nations are gathering in the name of our loving God.

If we return to our various individual daily epiphanies, I’m betting that if we shared them with others, we would find a wide variety of epiphanies and a variety of “stars” that led us to them. On this Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord, we do well to put energy into considering the many and varied epiphanies of others, especially their religious epiphanies. This is a day for celebrating the fact that God reveals God’s self to each one in ways that each one can appreciate.

As a former primary grades teacher, I know what a burden mathematics can be for some people. But for me, my realization of the beauty of mathematics gradually evolved into an understanding that mathematics is, for me, and probably some others, a revelation of the beauty and glory of God. On the other hand, the beginning of any discussion of astronomy or cosmology — the speciality of the ancient wise men — causes my eyes to glaze over. God speaks to each person in language they can understand. To each their own.

In celebrating the universality of God’s love today, we are challenged to open ourselves to the ways in which God is speaking to those outside the walls of our church. If we cannot speak the God-language of the world of our daily lives, we cannot hope to get Christ’s message to take root out there.

Now for our final step. I said earlier that I believe an epiphany should be life-changing in some way. Luke’s shepherds were, at least temporarily, sent to mission. In the two verses following those read at Christmas Midnight Mass, Luke reports that “When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.”

It’s difficult to tell how the experience of the wise men in today’s Gospel story might have coloured the rest of their lives. They had set out to find “the child who has been born king of the Jews.” Whether they came away with a deeper understanding that he is Christ, the Lord” (as the shepherds did) is never revealed. They simply paid homage.

This is a good time of year to reflect on what religious epiphanies, what realizations, we have experienced since last year’s proclamation of this story. How has our understanding of God changed? How has our understanding of who we are as baptized people changed? How has God invited us to mission? How has our response to our lifetime of epiphanies evolved and grown this year?

‘Christ Child of the Year’ should be the world’s refugee children

In Exile

Ron Rolheiser, OMI



Every year *Time* magazine recognizes someone as “Person of the Year.” The recognition isn’t necessarily an honour; it’s given to the person whom *Time* judges to have been the newsmaker of the year — for good or for bad. This year, instead of choosing an individual to recognize as newsmaker of the year, it recognized instead a category of persons, the *Silence Breakers*, namely, women who have spoken out about having experienced sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Part of the challenge of Christ-

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mas is to recognize where Christ is being born in our world today, where 2,000 years after the birth of Jesus we can again visit the stable in Bethlehem, see the newborn child, and have our hearts moved by the power of divine innocence and powerlessness.

For Christmas this year, I suggest we honour refugee children as the “Christ Child of the Year.” They bring as close to the original crib in Bethlehem as we can get within our world today because for them, as for Jesus 2,000 years ago, there is no room at the inn.

Jesus’ birth, like his death, comes wrapped in paradox: he came as God’s answer to our deepest desire, badly wanted, and yet, both in birth and in death, the outsider. Notice that Jesus is born outside the city and he dies outside the city. That’s no accident. He wasn’t born a “wanted” child and he wasn’t an accepted child. Granted,

his mother, Mary, and those with genuine religious hearts, wanted him, but the world didn’t, at least not on the terms on which he came, as a powerless child. Had he come as a superstar, powerful, a figure so dominant that knees would automatically bend in his presence, a messiah tailored to our imagination, every inn door would have opened to him, not just at birth but throughout his whole life.

But Christ wasn’t the messiah of our expectations. He came as an infant, powerless, hidden in anonymity, without status, uninvited, unwanted. And so Thomas Merton describes his birth this way: “Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for him at all, Christ has come uninvited. But because he cannot be at home in it, because he is out of place in it, and yet he must be in it, his place is with those others for whom there is no room.”

There was no room for him at the inn! Biblical scholars tell us that our homilies and imaginings about the heartlessness of the innkeepers who turned Mary and Joseph away on Christmas Eve miss the point of that narrative. The point the Gospels want to make here is not that the innkeepers in Bethlehem were cruel and calloused and this singular, poor, peasant couple, Joseph and Mary, were treated unfairly. The motif of “no room at the inn” wants rather to make a much larger point, the one Thomas Merton just highlighted, namely, that there’s never room in our world for the real Christ, the one who doesn’t fit comfortably into our expectations and imaginings.

The real Christ generally shocks our imagination, is a disappoint-

ment to our expectations, comes uninvited, is perennially here, but is forever on the outside, on the periphery, excluded by our imaginations and sent packing from our doors. The real Christ is forever seeking a home in a world within which there’s no room for him.

So who best fits that description best today? I suggest the following: *Millions of refugee children*. The Christ Child can be seen most clearly today in the countless refugee children who, with their families, are being driven from their homes by violence, war, starvation, ethnic cleansing, poverty, tribalism, racism, and religious persecution. They, and their families, best fit the picture of Joseph and Mary, searching for a room, outsiders, powerless, uninvited, no home, no one to take them in, on the periphery, strangers, labelled as “aliens.” But they are the present-day Holy Family and their children are the Christ Child for us and our world.

Where is the crib of Bethlehem today? Where might we find the infant Christ to worship? In many places, admittedly in every delivery room and nursery in the world, but “preferentially” in refugee camps; in boats making perilous journeys across the Mediterranean; in migrants trekking endless miles in hunger, thirst, and dangerous conditions; in people waiting in endless lines to be processed in hope of being accepted somewhere; in persons arriving at various borders after a long journey only to be sent back; in mothers in detention centres, holding their young and hoping; and most especially, preferentially, in the faces of countless refugee children.

The face of God at Christmas is seen more in the helplessness of children than in all the earthly and charismatic power in our world. And so today, if we want, like the shepherds and wise men, to find our way to the crib in Bethlehem, we need to look at where, in this demented inn, the most helpless of the children dwell.

Children show appreciation

Continued from page 4

Burns estimates about 2,500 children across Canada are in atriums, with about 150 to 200 catechists, who undergo extensive training to be certified.

“I think one of the things that struck me about the work is how one of the immediate responses of children is gratitude,” Burns said. “Usually when you do a presentation, especially on Scripture, you say: ‘Is there anything you would like to say to Jesus?’”

“The first time I did this, the first little boy piped up and said, ‘Thank you, Jesus,’ ” Burns said. “They told me this would happen. (The children) have such an appreciation of the gifts of God at this age.”

The Catechesis begins with the assumption the child already has a relationship with God, McClure said.

“We believe a child, when in a prepared environment made especially for them, with materials that fit their hands, will begin to internalize the mysteries of our faith and understand the symbolism and meaning in our liturgies.”

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Canada backpedals on nuclear weapons ban



It is fitting near year's end, although worrisome, to learn that the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has set its Doomsday Clock to two-and-a-half minutes before midnight, closer to potential nuclear calamity than at any time since the 1980s. They point, for example, to North Korea's continuing efforts to develop nuclear weapons, as well as bellicose counter threats being made by the U.S. government. They point as well to the escalation of tensions between the U.S. and Russia. "Wise public officials should act immediately, guiding humanity away from the brink," the atomic scientists say. "If they do not, wise citizens must step forward and lead the way."

One group of citizens has stepped forward and for their efforts they were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2017, which was presented in Stockholm, Sweden on Dec. 10. The

Gruending is an Ottawa-based writer and a former member of Parliament. His blog can be found at <http://www.dennisgruending.ca> A somewhat briefer version of this piece was published on the website of the United Church Observer on Dec. 8, 2017 (ucobserver.org)

International Committee to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) is a coalition of civil society organizations from more than 100 countries. ICAN's 15 Canadian partners include the Anglican Church of Canada, Physicians for Global Survival, the Rideau Institute and the Canadian Quakers. Since its founding in 2007, the group has worked to convince United Nations member states to create a legally binding treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons.

ICAN says the effort was urgent because there had been two decades of "paralysis" in multilateral efforts toward nuclear disarmament. There are an estimated 15,000 nuclear weapons in the arsenals of states that possess them. All of those countries continue to modernize their weapons and intend to keep, rather than eliminate, them.

Despite this opposition, the civil society campaign was successful at the UN and in July 2017 the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted by 122 member nations. The treaty would prohibit nations from developing, testing, producing, manufacturing, transferring, possessing, stockpiling, using or threatening to use nuclear weapons, or allowing nuclear weapons to be stationed on their territory. A nation that

possesses nuclear weapons may join the treaty, so long as it agrees to destroy them in accordance with a legally binding, time-bound plan. Similarly, a nation that hosts another nation's nuclear weapons on its territory may join, so long as it agrees to remove them by a specified deadline. Once the treaty has been ratified by 50 states, the ban on nuclear weapons would enter into force and become binding under international law for all the countries that are party to the treaty.

However, the so-called "big five" states on the UN Security Council — the U.S., Russia, China, France and Great Britain — have shown no interest in co-operating or in adopting such a treaty. They all possess nuclear weapons and want to keep them and they want to control the agenda. The U.S., for example, placed pressure on its NATO allies to boycott the UN's entire treaty-making enterprise. Unfortunately, the Canadian government allowed itself to be bullied. In 2016, then-Foreign Affairs Minister Stéphane Dion claimed that a ban on nuclear weapons



Courtesy of National Nuclear Security Administration/Wikipedia
Nuclear test in Nevada in 1953

without the support of nuclear weapons states was a foolish and utopian dream.

But ICAN and other campaigners, including the Canadian civil society partners, point to earlier initiatives whose success appeared unlikely but which were ultimately accepted even by the big powers. These include treaties to ban biological weapons (1972), chemical weapons (1993), landmines (1997), and cluster bombs (2008).

The Canadian government continues to claim that it supports the abolition of nuclear weapons,

but that is belied by its opposing the UN's historic treaty in July. Canada continues to insist, along with its nuclear-armed allies, on an incrementalist approach to abolition that has failed for nearly 50 years. Our government also ignores a House of Commons resolution, passed unanimously in 2010, calling for Canadian leadership on nuclear disarmament.

The Trudeau administration claims to "be back" at the UN but is backpedalling on the pressing nuclear question as the clock threatens to tick down to midnight.



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Churchpersons of the year

For more than three decades the *Prairie Messenger* has honoured someone as churchperson of the year.

In this, our last year of publication, we have decided to honour a group: our readers.

The *Prairie Messenger* has been published for 95 years, but this English newspaper had a German twin, of sorts.

When the Benedictine monks first came to Muenster in the then-Northwest Territories in 1903, they identified as a priority the publication of a weekly newspaper. Within nine months of their arrival they were publishing a weekly paper in German, because most of the settlers in the St. Peter's Colony area were German-speaking. It was called the *St. Peter's Bote*.

The German language was frowned upon after the First World War and the settlers in the now-province of Saskatchewan were fluent in English. Because the children of the area were losing the German language, the monks decided to begin an English Catholic weekly newspaper. They called it the *St. Peter's Messenger*. It saw its birth on May 24, 1923. In a few years the *Messenger* was gaining readers beyond the St. Peter's Colony area and in 1928 the name was changed to the *Prairie Messenger*.

Both papers continued to be published weekly until the *Bote* was discontinued in 1947. The last issue was dated July 31.

According to Colleen Fitzgerald in her history of St. Peter's Abbey, *Begin A Good Work*, the first copy of the *St. Peter's Messenger* in 1923 was flown to Regina and presented to the premier and members of the cabinet. "The intent," she wrote, "was not simply to promote a newspaper; the political mood of the province was changing and the need to present the Catholic community in a positive light was essential. Anti-Catholicism was a present and powerful force in Canadian politics in the 1920s and 1930s. . . . The presence of the Ku Klux Klan in Saskatchewan further prompted the monks to publish not just a Catholic paper but an intellectually and journalistically respectable Catholic paper."

"The content of the paper was varied," Fitzgerald wrote. "Local news was still a part of the *PM*, as well as parish events and provincial news. But there were also syndicated columns, book reviews and film ratings, and articles on events in Europe. Subscribers read about complex events such as the founding of the League of Nations and the Spanish Civil War. The analysis of international events was grounded in the Catholic intellectual tradition, and the writing was of

a standard as high as any publication in Canada."

Readership of the *Prairie Messenger* reached its zenith in the 1960s — the decade of the Second Vatican Council and the renewal of the church by Pope John XXIII. Pastors were eager to keep up with developments from Rome and many parishes subscribed to "parish plans" and "parish bundles" to encourage their parishioners to keep abreast of the news. The *Prairie Messenger* reached a high of more than 16,000 subscribers in the mid-1960s.

In the age before the Internet and social media, newspapers were the main source of information and education.

The *Prairie Messenger* staff has been heartened by the overwhelming number of responses received from readers after they learned that the paper will be closed in May 2018. Many comments were made privately. But they all reveal the sadness our readers feel about the closing of the *PM*.

We thank you, our readers, for your support throughout the years. Your financial response to our annual appeal has helped us add a few years to our lifespan. And we rejoice that you have been nourished and inspired by the content of our paper.

We salute you as churchpersons of the year. — PWN

Dark days of winter can be some of most precious times of the year



Life In Canadian Arctic

Jon Hansen, CSsR

As I write this, Inuvik is saying goodbye to the sun for the last time this year. Once it slips below the horizon it will not be seen again for 30 days and the long cold dark nights will now be followed by long cold dark days. That might seem like a depressing thought, and certainly an extra dose of vitamin D is recommended for winter living in the North, but I have come to find the dark days of winter one of the most precious times of the year.

It is not that they are not difficult or that they don't offer a challenge to our ordinary daily routines but, instead, it is precisely in those difficulties and challenges that we receive a wonderful gift that perhaps helps us appreciate life in a way others might take for granted. Here is my thinking:

First, these days come as no surprise. We know they are coming, as they do every year, and we know we need to brace for the darkness. Knowing that something difficult is coming our way is a great advantage, as it gives us time to prepare. There is time to stock up on good books and old movies, time to fill the pantry before the grocery shelves empty while ice bridges are being built, time to put away extra firewood for those particularly cold, dark days.

These days remind us that life is full of difficulties, but knowing that, we can prepare so we are not caught off guard when they come.

Next, when the darkness

arrives it is time to have faith. We cannot cower indoors during the dark days. Work must continue as trap lines are tended and fish are caught under the thickening ice. As the snowmobiles patrol the length of the frozen river, their headlights pierce the darkness just far enough to continue a little way and then a little more. When we have faith in God and faith in our own abilities to cope with difficult situations, we persevere, moving forward a little bit at a time.

Then, we need to laugh in the face of hardship even when we feel like crying. This week we lost a beloved town member who succumbed to the cold in a poorly heated house. It was a tragedy and the town is grieving. It is important to acknowledge that grief but, like the cold, we must not lose ourselves to it. So, every year we use these darkest of days to have the greatest of celebrations.

At the Igloo Church we open the doors to the whole community for a grand celebration in preparation for Christmas. As the townspeople arrive they are greeted by beautiful decorations made of ice and snow as we use the harshness of nature to our best advantage. When life gets tough, it's time to laugh and sing and to show the world and ourselves that we will not be overcome.

Finally, there is solace in knowing that the sun will rise again. Though the sun is out of our view, we see signs of its presence still as beautiful displays of fiery red and orange clouds skirt the horizon during the midday. These days without sunshine might seem long but, like all life's difficult moments, these too will pass. When they do we have the pride of saying we made it through another season of darkness and that is a



Jon Hansen

Sunrise over Tuktoyaktuk

pride that binds us together in a way that just does not happen when life is too comfortable.

When the sun finally returns in early January there is a collective cheer as the communities pull out the stops to welcome the fresh beginning. There are fireworks

and a bonfire made from all the old wooden pallets gathered from the year past. It is a symbolic torching of the old to make way for the new.

As people's faces are set aglow in the warmth and light of the 40-foot flames, one senses that a

transformation has taken place. The darkness has not just been a gap or a pause between one part of the year and the next but, rather, it has been a crucible into which we have been forged into something new. And who does not welcome an opportunity to begin again?

Shalom greeting has wealth of meaning

By Bishop Lionel Gendron, Saint-Jean-Longueuil

At Christmas and New Year's, we enjoy sharing our very best wishes with those we love. Along with "Merry Christmas!" and "Happy New Year!" one of the greetings we so often hear and repeat is "I wish you good health!" It's so important. Without denying the importance of good health, I would like to journey with you to discover the source of the Word of God, that which is truly most essential for the human heart.

We have all heard the Hebrew word *shalom* and know it is most often translated as "peace." What we may not always realize, how-

ever, is that *shalom* does not merely mean peace in the sense of the absence of war. There is in this word a richness with greater implications. Let me illustrate what I mean with an example.

In 2 Samuel 11:7 we read: "When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared, and how the war was going." If one sticks to the literal translation of this passage, David is asking Uriah about the *shalom* of General Joab, his army, and thus of the war; in short, about the "*shalom* (peace) of the war." Now that provides food for thought!

So let's dig deeper and explore the word *shalom* in order to appreciate its wealth of meaning better. In the passage just cited, if *shalom* means the "state," "situation," or even "evolution" of the battle, this term, throughout the rest of the Bible, can also indicate what is

right and complete, and even evoke the fullness of existence replete with life, repose, and blessing.

Moreover, *shalom* denotes the well-being of day-to-day life marked by the harmony and serenity of human persons with themselves, with nature, with one another and with God. Thus, it is a notion with a plurality of meanings which refer as much to each person's peace of heart as it does to peace-harmony-communion in families and societies, as well as among nations. One could say that *shalom*-peace is the only reality capable of truly fulfilling the human heart.

At the same time, the Word of God leads us even further. It teaches us that *shalom* is a gift from God, the Father of mercies, revealed in the person of Christ.

— GOOD HEALTH, page 15

Hansen is a Redemptorist priest and pastor of Our Lady of Victory Parish, Inuvik. See his website: www.jonhansencsrs.com. He was named bishop of the Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith on Dec. 15.

Gendron is president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.



Design Pics

In April Justice Donald Layh ruled that the Saskatchewan government doesn't have the legal right to give Catholic schools funding for students who aren't Catholic. He said provincial government funding of non-minority faith students attending separate schools infringes on religious neutrality and equality rights. The ruling is being appealed.



CNS/L'Osservatore Romano via Reuters

Pope Francis greets a young Rohingya refugee from Myanmar. From his trips to Egypt, Colombia, Myanmar and Bangladesh, Pope Francis tried to convince people that peaceful coexistence and even unity do not require the erasing of all differences. "The unity we share and celebrate is born of diversity," he told the bishops of Myanmar Nov. 29. "Never forget this — it is born of diversity! It values people's differences as a source of mutual enrichment and growth. It invites people to come together in a culture of encounter and solidarity." The violence in Myanmar against Rohingya Muslims has been called genocide.



CNS/Dario Ayala, Reuters

People gather for a vigil in support of the Muslim community in Montreal. Faith and political leaders condemned a shooting at Quebec's main mosque at the end of January that left at least six people dead.



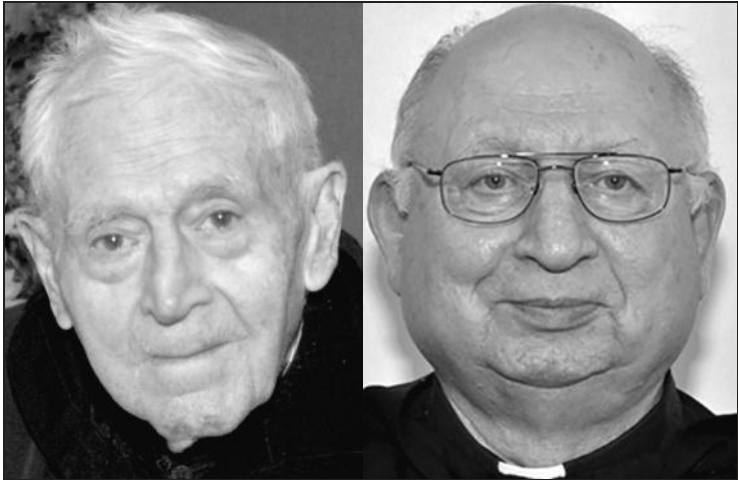
CNS/Ettore Ferrari, Reuters

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau asked Pope Francis to help Canadians "move forward on a real reconciliation" with the country's indigenous people "by issuing an apology" on behalf of the Catholic Church for its role in harming their communities. At their annual plenary, the Canadian bishops said they are in a process of "accompaniment and discernment" on the matter.



Kiply Yaworski

An ecumenical service was held Oct. 29 at the Cathedral of the Holy Family in Saskatoon to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Commemorations were held worldwide.



The oldest monk at St. Peter's Abbey, Brother Wolfgang Thiem, OSB, died Oct. 17 at the age of 93. Rev. Rudolph Novecosky, OSB, died Oct. 9 at the age of 81.



The most recent issues of the *Prairie Messenger* are displayed in the PM office. The monks of St. Peter's Abbey have been publishing a paper at St. Peter's Press since 1904. On May 17, 2017, they announced that the *Prairie Messenger* and St. Peter's Press would close in May 2018.

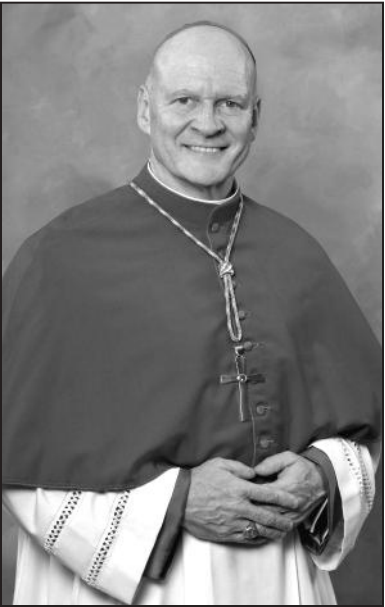


Grandin Media

Community hearings, like this one in Edmonton, have been taking place across the country for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. A final report is scheduled for 2018.



This year the *Prairie Messenger* honours our devoted readers — our Churchpersons of the Year for 2017.



Bishop Mark Hagemoen was installed at the Cathedral of the Holy Family Nov. 23 as the eighth bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.



CNS/Christinne Muschi, Reuters

A two-year-old boy, whose family stated they are from Haiti, watches as an RCMP officer pats down his mother before the two cross the U.S.-Canada into Quebec Aug. 29.

2017



CNS/Bob Roller

The Women's March in January was a worldwide protest to advocate legislation and policies regarding human rights and other issues, including women's rights. In October the #MeToo movement spread virally to denounce sexual assault and harassment in the wake of numerous and ongoing sexual misconduct allegations in the entertainment industry, and increasingly all areas of life.



CNS/Carlos Barria, Reuters

Devastation in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. The 2017 hurricane season saw 10 hurricanes in a row, which included Harvey and Irma, the greatest number of consecutive hurricanes in the satellite era.