



No paper next week

The Prairie Messenger will be closed until Jan. 2, resuming weekly with the Jan. 4, 2017, issue.

Returning to Spirit

Since 2001, Returning to Spirit has shone a hopeful light on the darkness that is the legacy of Indian residential schools.

Congress Day

Professional boundaries, ethical dilemmas and self-care were explored during a recent Congress Day for parish and ministry leaders in Saskatoon.

Christmas giving

About 180 students from inner-city Saskatoon schools did something they may not have had the opportunity to do before: shop for Christmas gifts to give to family members.

Holiday film guide

The commercial side of Christmas seems to arrive earlier every year, and so too holiday-themed movies quickly forgotten. Gerald Schmitz gives a list of some compelling fare worthy of year-end attention.

Dread and joy

Among Edna Froese's immediate family, peppernuts are an essential part of the Christmas season. The process of baking them brings about memories, from the warm and fuzzy to the unbearable. "Am I really the only one who anticipates Christmas with dread and joy?" she asks.

Music for liturgy

This week's Prairie Messenger features music selections for liturgy from Jan. 22, 2017, the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, to March 12, the Second Sunday of Lent. The selections include Ash Wednesday.



Pope Francis invited to Saskatchewan

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — The Catholic bishops of Saskatchewan remain hopeful about a recent invitation asking Pope Francis to visit the province to meet with indigenous leaders, elders and residential school survivors.

Canadian bishops were recently informed that Pope Francis will not be visiting Canada in 2017, but may consider a visit in 2018 or 2019.

"Pope Francis receives many invitations, far more than he can accept," said Archbishop Donald Bolen of Regina, "but we remain hopeful. Our indigenous brothers and sisters have asked him to come to Canada, and we support them in this request.

"It is our deepest hope and prayer that this will help to bring healing to some of the deepest wounds in the Canadian church

and society. We want to be a part of the healing and reconciliation process," said Bolen.

The bishops of Saskatchewan affirmed that the principal purpose of a visit by Pope Francis would be to meet with, listen to and address indigenous people.

The decision to support the request for the pope to come to Canada — and the idea that such a visit might be particularly appropriate for Saskatchewan — first arose out of conversations with indigenous leaders in this province as the church grappled with the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and sought ways to join First Nations and Métis people in the work of healing, reconciliation and relationship-building.

The TRC Final Report released in June 2015 presented 94 Calls to Action, including a request for a papal apology on

Canadian soil for Catholic involvement in residential schools and the abuse of indigenous children that happened there. Catholic dioceses and religious orders operated about 60 per cent of the government-mandated schools that operated in Canada for over a century.

"We continue to grow in our awareness of the negative pieces of our colonial history. We recognize more openly the good and the negative parts our church has played in the historical encounter between the colonizers and those being colonized," said Archbishop

op Murray Chatlain of Keewatin-Le Pas.

"We hope that the Holy Father, coming and meeting with Aboriginal, Inuit and Métis representatives from all of Canada, where he may express an apology and communicate the whole church's commitment to be in real dialogue with each other, would be a great blessing" Chatlain said.

"Our fervent prayer is that a visit by Pope Francis could promote a mature, ongoing relationship. This visit may act as a catal-

— ENCOUNTER, page 12

Syrian families struggle with new life in Canada

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — Before Christmas last year, Wartohi Myrdijian had to worry about the bombs falling on either side of her house in Aleppo. She was most afraid of the crude, unpredictable, improvised bombs that came from the ISIS side of the conflict.

"We were not afraid of the government forces. It was ISIS," said the mother of two girls.

"The government was there to defend us."

Whenever it was safe, Warhoti took her daughter Patil to one of the three Armenian schools in Aleppo still operating. The other five had closed. She had watched the Armenian population of Aleppo shrink from 80,000 down to about 10,000.

The decision to leave, and when to leave, was not easy for the Myrdijian family. There would be no do-overs. Leaving meant walking away from their home, the family business, gener-

— CHRISTMAS, page 10



Catholic Register/Michael Swan

LIFE IN CANADA — The Kazanjian family, refugees from Aleppo, Syria, are spending their first Christmas in Toronto this year.



CNS/L'Osservatore Romano

GENERAL AUDIENCE — Pope Francis blows out candles on a birthday cake presented by a woman during his general audience in Paul VI hall at the Vatican Dec. 14. The pope turned 80 Dec. 17.

Christmas is time to open hearts to little things: pope

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Christmas is a time to open your heart to the little and wondrous things found in baby Jesus — born poor and defenceless so he could be near and bring hope to everyone, Pope Francis said.

"The most beautiful joy of Christmas is that inner joy of peace: the Lord wiped away my sins, the Lord has forgiven me, the Lord had mercy on me, he came to save me. That is the joy of Christmas," the pope said Dec. 14 at his weekly general audience.

With a Nativity scene decorating the stage in the Vatican audience hall, the pope's weekly meeting with visitors and pilgrims was festive with a group of "zampognari," Italian bagpipe players, who played traditional songs and carols.

People also sang and wished the pope a happy birthday, in anticipation of him turning 80 on Dec. 17. Before the audience, two women presented him with a small chocolate cake with two candles lit

on top, which he eventually blew out with some prompting.

"I thank all of you for these good wishes for my birthday," he later told those gathered in the hall.

However, he said with a smile and a warning that he was just poking fun, in his native Argentina wishing people happy birthday before the actual day brings bad luck and anyone offering greetings prematurely "is a jinx."

Preparing for Christmas with Advent is a time to be open to "the surprise of a God-child, a poor God, a weak God, a God who abandoned his greatness in order to be close to each one of us," he said in his main audience talk.

God "knelt" and lowered himself before humanity to offer his mercy "and free man from that which disfigures the beautiful image of God in him. Because when we are in (a state of) sin, God's image is disfigured" within us.

God never abandons his people, the pope said. God is always

— GOD'S GRACE, page 15

Youth raise money, make micro-loan to help poor

By Dianne Towalski

BUTLER, Minn. (CNS) — Many years ago, a woman in Nicaragua was poor, but she had a sewing machine. She was lucky because it offered a way to make money that a lot of women in her country didn't — and still don't — have.

A customer gave her \$5 to make a shirt, but she had to travel by bus an entire day to get the material and thread she needed to complete the project. The customer felt bad that she had to spend so much time and money, so he gave her five more dollars so she could make a profit.

Rev. Tony Kroll recalled that story — wearing the shirt the woman had made for him — during an annual potluck and raffle fundraiser organized recently by middle-school faith formation students at Holy Cross Church in Butler, in the St. Cloud Diocese. He attended the event to help the youth raise money to invest in micro-loans that will help people in developing countries start their own businesses.

"If she could get a loan for, say, \$500, she would only have to go once a month to town to buy supplies, and she could work for the whole month and make a living sewing shirts," Kroll told the youth and guests at the potluck event.

A micro-loan is a small, short-term loan with a low interest rate usually granted to start a business. The loans are administered by a non-profit organization, in this case, Working Capital for Community Needs, based in Madison, Wisconsin.

According to the non-profit, 64 per cent of its nearly 28,000 borrowers are women, and the average micro-loan is just over \$1,200.

Earlier in the school year, the students talked about Pope Francis' challenge to help migrants and refugees, and they wondered what they could do in their small town.

"How could we, in Butler, accept that challenge and do something?" said Mary Peeters, their teacher.

When the idea surfaced for financing a micro-loan, the stu-

dents were enthusiastic and confident they would be able to raise the \$1,000 minimum needed to invest in the program, she told The Visitor, newspaper of the Diocese of St. Cloud.

The students realized that helping someone start a business in a developing country would help that person stay in his or her home.

"I think they would rather stay where they are, instead of going to another country because that's just like starting over," said Jack Peeters, a seventh-grader. "And maybe some people don't like them coming here and that makes it hard for them."

"They need help to stay where they are living with their family," said Kalli Steinbach, a ninth-grader. "If they want to stay and do good, they should have the right to do that even if they need help."

They started the fundraising project in early November with a presentation after mass. Eighth-grader Kami Steinbach spoke to parishioners about what the students wanted to accomplish, while other students were there



CNS/Dianne Towalski

STUDENTS HELP MICRO-LOANS PROGRAM — Rev. Tony Kroll, a longtime investor in micro-loans, poses with youth at Holy Cross Parish in Butler, Minn., Nov. 20. Parish youth were enthusiastic to raise the \$1,000 minimum needed to invest in the micro-loans program which helps poor people, mainly women, begin their own business.

dressed as small business owners, including a coffee bean farmer and a baker. They announced that the proceeds from the annual potluck would go to the cause and handed out detailed information about micro-loans. They raised \$350 in donations that day.

"It feels nice to be able to help people and to talk to everyone in the community about what we're doing," Kami said.

Kroll, a retired St. Cloud diocesan priest and a longtime investor in micro-loans, gave Peeters the idea for the project. He knows first-hand how micro-loans can help, having served in the diocese's mission in Venezuela and leading many mission trips to Latin America.

"This system of micro-credit is capitalism in its simplest form, where we put the dignity of the human person first," he said. "I get a lot of joy out of just knowing that I can help people stay at home."

Only when people are forced to find a better place to raise their families do they come to the United States, he noted.

Peeters was overwhelmed with people's generosity to help her students meet their \$1,000 goal, and she's proud the students are investing in the micro-loan organization.

"It gives them a sense that, regardless of how small you are, you can make a difference," she said.

Pope, cardinals discuss reform of curia

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis and members of the international Council of Cardinals advising him on church governance deliberated on defining the role of Secretariat of State and its relationship to other Vatican offices.

Meeting with Pope Francis Dec. 12 - 14, the Council of Cardinals worked on laying out clear objectives in the reform of several offices and congregations.

"Two fundamental themes emerged as the guidelines of the reform of the dicasteries: the mis-

sionary impulse and synodality," said Greg Burke, director of the Vatican press office.

Although St. John Paul II's constitution *Pastor Bonus*, a 1988 reform of the curia, states that the secretariat was to "foster relations" with other curial offices and "co-ordinate their work," Burke told journalists it was somewhat general. The new document on the current reform will be "much more clear and laid out regarding the Secretariat of State and its role in co-ordinating the Curia," he said.

Cardinal Kevin J. Farrell, prefect of the new Vatican office for laity, family and life, also updated the pope and the council on upcoming projects for the dicastery.

The Vatican announced the same day that two new undersecretaries had been named by Pope Francis to the new dicastery, which is set to begin its work in January: Scalabrinian Father Fabio Baggio, 51, and Jesuit Father Michael Czerny, 60.

Baggio is a professor and the director of the Scalabrini International Migration Institute in Rome.

Born in the former Czechoslovakia and raised in Canada, Czerny has served as an official of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace since 2010.

His long career in the field of social justice includes having served as the Canadian director and executive director of the African Jesuit AIDS Network, which he founded, and spending two years in El Salvador to carry out the work of his confreres who were murdered during the civil war there.

The discussion between Farrell and the council, Burke said, "centred on the role of the laity with an invitation to all to reread Pope Francis' letter to Cardinal Marc Ouellet, president of the Pon-

tifical Commission for Latin America."

In his March 19 letter, the pope warned the clergy of falling into the temptation of believing that committed laypeople are those only dedicated to the works of the church or matters of the parish without reflecting "on how to accompany baptized people in their public and daily life."

The Council of Cardinals will meet again Feb. 13 - 15.

Christkind continues charity tradition

By Zita Fletcher

NUREMBERG, Germany (CNS) — At a time when many people are celebrating Christmas with material gain, the people of Nuremberg continue a 68-year-old tradition of sharing Christmas spirit through community service.

Every year since 1948, the "Christkind," or Christ child angel, appears standing on a parapet of the *Frauenkirche*, the Church of Our Lady, in the old medieval citadel of Nuremberg. Dressed in a shimmering cloak and flowing white gown, she is instantly recognizable due to her long blond curls and tall golden crown.

She is Nuremberg's embodiment of a female angel, said to bring Christmas gifts to people in German-speaking countries.

"My duty as the Christkind is to bring Christmas and Christmas joy to people," said 19-year-old Barbara Otto, the current Christkind, elected in 2015.

Every two years the city of Nuremberg elects a young woman to play the role. She must be sociable enough to preside over one of the oldest Christmas markets in Germany, wise enough to explain the intricate details of Germany's former imperial city, and tall enough to stand on the towering ledge of a church de-

signed in 1355 to house the Holy Roman emperor's scepter and crown jewels.

Yet, despite her prestigious position, the Christkind's duties are humble. She spends most of her time walking along busy streets, visiting people at the local Christmas markets or at charitable institutions such as hospitals and homes for the elderly and disabled.

"Last year I was at the street clinic in Nuremberg where homeless people are cared for," Otto recalled in a November interview with the Archdiocese of Bamberg. After reciting a traditional poem and distributing gifts, she was surprised by the sound of music and an invitation to dance with everyone.

"Then we all joined hands and danced the Snow Waltz," said Otto. "That is one of those moments you share with people you don't know, with whom you are complete strangers, and share this (Christmas) happiness with them. That was certainly very moving."

This year, Otto, a native of Nuremberg, estimated she had 180 - 190 appointments scheduled at local organizations within the city and neighbouring communities. The city of Nuremberg prohibits her appearances for

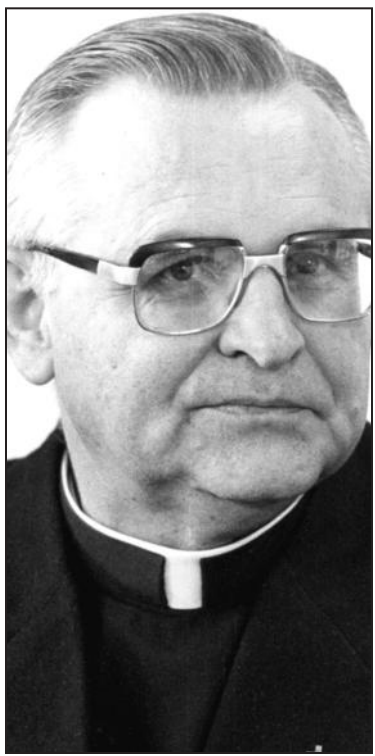
commercial use; she works only to promote charitable causes, including friendly relationships with people of other countries. One of her tasks is to distribute gifts to patients at various children's hospitals.

The Christkind angel, often mistaken for the Child Jesus, was created by Martin Luther to counteract Catholic devotion to St. Nicholas. However, the angel tradition found common ground between Catholics and Protestants and quickly spread through both religious communities across German-speaking territories.

"The Christkind is a unique character, that can bring people joy only through her behaviour," Otto said in an interview with the city of Nuremberg.

A music enthusiast, volunteer, and student of business, Otto is proud to be responsible for the demanding role of representing her home city. "Only 23 other women in Nuremberg before me have accomplished this," said Otto.

Like her predecessors, Otto will continue to remain on active duty after her last term presiding over the Christmas season ends in Germany. She will then act as ambassador to sister Christmas markets in Philadelphia and Baltimore and will visit Glasgow, Scotland, Nuremberg's sister city.



CNS/KNA

CARDINAL ARNS — Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns, known as the "cardinal of the people" and one of the most active voices against Brazil's military dictatorship, died at age 95 in São Paulo Dec. 14. Arns, the retired archbishop of São Paulo, had been hospitalized since Nov. 28 with pneumonia.

Returning to Spirit honours Missionary Oblate

By James Buchok

WINNIPEG — Since 2001, Returning to Spirit has shone a hopeful light on the darkness that is the legacy of Indian residential schools. That’s seven years before a government apologized, and nine years before a national commission investigating the schools began its work.

“Everybody should take Returning to Spirit, to understand ourselves, to live out fully who we are, to get back to the spirit of who we really are,” said Sister Olive Halpin, MO (Missionary Oblate), who has been a workshop trainer in the RTS program since 2006. On Dec. 13 Halpin was recognized for her work with RTS as the organization held an open house at its new Winnipeg head office at Micah House, on North Main Street, in the Archdiocese of Winnipeg’s Catholic Centre for Social Justice.

Returning to Spirit consists of a four-day workshop for non-Aboriginals, and a four-day workshop for Aboriginal people, then the two come together in a final gathering.

“We have to be open to con-



James Buchok

RETURNING TO SPIRIT — Returning to Spirit trainers in Winnipeg include, from left: Sister Olive Halpin, MO; Dennis Chartrand; Jacques Lafrance; Rev. François Paradis, OMI; and Dianne Little.

versation as equals instead of trying to prove who is right and who is wrong,” said Halpin, adding that the simple question, “What happened to you?” can lead to a transformative experi-

ence. She said the workshop evaluations on the RTS website and participants’ statements such as “It changed my life” attest to the power of the experience. “It’s quite amazing,” she said.

Halpin, who has been part of workshops in Saskatoon, Regina, Vancouver, Nanaimo, Calgary, Edmonton, Yellowknife and elsewhere, said her Missionary Oblate superior encouraged the community to become involved, with 40 to 50 of the sisters participating over the years.

The community also has a his-

tory of being part of the residential schools. “It was painful for our sisters,” she said, and she’s often wanted to speak of the good people who tried to do right, but she knew there had to be a place and time for that.

“There were things that should never have happened, for sure, but many people who were there did their best.”

She told of a nun who would sit in a rocking chair with the little boys who needed consoling before bedtime. “Many people who worked there didn’t go there

Chalice’s gifts are changing with the times

By Evan Boudreau
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — From seeds for farmers to seed money for businesses, Chalice Canada has been evolving its charity work to match the fast-changing needs in developing countries.



Rev. Patrick Cosgrove

Through its annual Gift Catalogue, the Catholic charity allows donors to select a specific item which they’d like to donate.

As more people look to entrepreneurship rather than agriculture to elevate themselves out of poverty, Chalice Canada has been rethinking its gift list.

“In the beginning most of the gifts that we had on the catalogue and the donations that we were receiving mostly were broad things or very basic items such as animals and farming seeds,” said Douglas Estanga, Chalice Canada’s international manager for Latin America. “One of the ways that we’ve evolved is by including new items and categories that will help to have a more extensive impact on the communities where we work (by supporting) small business and

entrepreneurship.”

Chalice’s Canadian roots began in 1994 when Rev. Patrick Cosgrove started laying the groundwork for the organization as an extension of the American-based Christian Foundation for Children and Aging. Working with a volunteer out of a church rectory in Springhill, N.S., Cosgrove registered the charity in 1996 under the name Christian Child Care International.

In January 2008 the charity, whose head office is now in Bedford, N.S., became Chalice Canada.

In 2014, it put almost \$20 million into nutrition, education and shelter programs in 15 developing countries, including areas of Africa and South and Central America, according to its annual report.

“You know that it is a coat, that it is seeds of planting, that it is helping somebody go to school,” he said. “That idea or concept of having something very specific that you are providing to somebody is really appealing.”

In addition to basic items, donors are able to invest in a recipient’s future by funding small business setups, continuing education and trades training.

There is also a category called Most Needed Gift.

“It goes toward items or things that might not be in the categories, that are not within animals or livelihood, but are also needed in the communities but are not as common,” said Estanga. “We tell the sites that we have this amount of money for their most needed items and then they put forward a request to us as to what is the most needed item for them and the other families that is not in the categories that we have.”

— GIFTS, page 10

Syrian refugees, agencies face obstacles

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — Will Month 13 unsettle thousands of Syrian refugees who have already settled in Canada?

It’s certainly a possibility, says Catholic Crosscultural Services of Toronto executive director Caroline Davis.

Month 13 is how settlement agencies like CCR refer to what happens one year after a refugee arrives in Canada. At that point, federal supports disappear. For those refugees who haven’t landed a job in their first year, it usually means moving down a notch in income as they move into the provincial welfare system.

Of the 36,300 Syrian refugees welcomed to Canada since Dec. 10 last year, about 15,000 settled in Ontario.

A single adult refugee receives \$822 a month in federal assistance over the first 12 months. Ontario Works (OW), the province’s main welfare program, pays \$706 a month for a single adult.

“One of the obstacles for some people will be the housing that they might be in now might be a bit too expensive,” Davis said. “Not very many have been living large, but it might still be more expensive than they can afford on an ongoing basis.”

Ontario Works provides a “maximum board and lodging” allowance for two parents with three children of \$931. Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation currently lists the average

market rent for a three-bedroom apartment in Toronto at \$1,540.

The decision to look for cheaper rent isn’t simple. Children have had their first year of Canadian schooling. Yanking them out of their school to start again in another might not be worth the \$100 or \$200 per month saved in rent. Parents are also enrolled in English classes where they have grown comfortable.

About half the Syrian refugees sponsored by churches and other volunteer groups have found employment in their first year. But only about 10 per cent of government-sponsored refugees — often more traumatized and many with disabilities — have been able to settle into jobs. Studies have shown the social and business networks of private sponsorship groups give privately sponsored refugees an advantage.

But just finding a job isn’t necessarily the best path forward for refugees. Survival jobs sometimes trap refugees who haven’t really mastered English into a low-wage, part-time cycle.

“There are folks who really want to work and who don’t like the idea of receiving OW or even receiving funds from their sponsor group or from the Canadian government allowance. They would rather work,” Davis said.

For refugees who arrived with little or no English, working may

not even be an option.

“Getting your English language skills from zero to something that would allow you to enter the workforce is going to take maybe longer than a year,” Davis said.

Like many settlement agencies, it’s been a struggle for Catholic Crosscultural Services to keep up with demand for English classes.

“Certainly we could use some more of them,” said Davis.

But it’s more complicated than just renting more classroom space

— CHILD CARE, page 12



Catholic Register/Michael Swan

Caroline Davis, executive director of Catholic Crosscultural Services of Toronto.

Christmas provides a clue to Catholicism in Canada

By Reginald Bibby
and Angus Reid

LETHBRIDGE, Alta. — During the Christmas season large numbers of Canada's Catholics will seemingly come out of the woodwork for their semi-annual visit to churches. Similar to what happens at Easter, national attendance will triple to close to 50 per cent. That will involve a jump from about 10 per cent to 35 per cent in Quebec, and a major increase from around 25 per cent to a whopping 65 per cent in the rest of the country. Ironically, the Christmas crowd will be joining regulars who increasingly have been coming from other countries.

Overall, that translates into a lot of people. Catholics, who number some 13 million people and comprise about 40 per cent of all Canadians, are easily the country's largest religious group. The Catholic Christmas total will be somewhere around six million people. For those who follow sports more closely than religion, that number essentially matches the total number of fans who attend the home games of all seven Canadian NHL teams in an entire season.

The typical response of most observers will be on the cynical side. "Catholics who otherwise don't attend services think they should show up at least at Christmas and Easter, especially if mom and dad and maybe the grandparents are around." Faith

Reginald W. Bibby holds the Board of Governors Research Chair in Sociology at the University of Lethbridge. Angus Reid chairs the Angus Reid Institute. Their latest book is Canada's Catholics: Vitality and Hope in a New Era (Toronto: Novalis, 2016).

seemingly is of marginal importance to them.

But our research suggests that Christmas actually provides an important clue as to the role of religion in the lives of most of Canada's Catholics. Put succinctly, they might not be coming but they certainly aren't leaving. And when it comes to beliefs and practices, they are into religion à la carte. Our data tell a blunt and sobering tale: for many Catholics, faith is valued far more than group involvement.

The cynics are accurate about sporadic attendance. In the 1960s, approximately 80 per cent of Catholics were weekly churchgoers. Today, the figure stands at around 15 per cent nationally, in Quebec, under 10 per cent.

Still, the fact such large numbers of Catholics make a point of showing up at Christmas is a reminder that many continue to value their Catholic faith. Our extensive surveys of Catholics and other Canadians have found, for example, that:

- 83 per cent of Catholics believe in God;
- 72 per cent say they believe that God cares about them personally;
- 54 per cent claim they have experienced God's presence;
- 68 per cent believe they have been protected by a guardian angel;
- 72 per cent acknowledge that they have spiritual needs;
- 41 per cent tell us they pray privately at least once a week;
- 40 per cent maintain they feel strengthened by their faith — 13 per cent daily, 13 per cent weekly, 14 per cent monthly
- 73 per cent believe in life after death
- 53 per cent think we can communicate with the dead
- 57 per cent say that, when they die, they want to have a religious funeral.



Art Babych

CHRISTMAS SERVICES — During the Christmas season large numbers of Canada's Catholics will seemingly come out of the woodwork for their semi-annual visit to churches. Similar to what happens at Easter, national attendance will triple to close to 50 per cent, write Reginald Bibby and Angus Reid. The reaction to this should not be cynicism, but encouragement.

More generally, close to 50 per cent of Canadian Catholics see God as an important factor in determining what happens in their lives. That's true for about 80 per cent of active Catholics and 30 per cent of less active Catholics. In all of these cases of belief, practice, and salience, levels are similar for Catholics in Quebec and in the rest of the country.

And Catholics are not about to leave the church. On the contrary, some 80 per cent raised in Catholic homes continue to say they are "Catholic." Outside Quebec, the figure is 77 per cent, in Quebec, 88 per cent.

Christmas attendance signals the fact that the majority of Catholics today place considerable value on beliefs, prayer, the occasional mass, rites of passage, and being Catholic. But, when it comes to the church, the problem is not that Canadian Catholics want a lot; the problem is that they want so little.

They also are no longer passive and acquiescent, nor particularly obedient. Rather than bowing to the authority of the church in everyday life, they want to make their own moral and ethical decisions. So it is that our surveys have documented what we all know well — that large numbers of Catholics break with the church's positions when it comes to things like sexual behaviour, abortion, sexual orientation, the role of women, and divorce.

Yet they stay Catholic and value being Catholic. The obvious question is, "Why?" Andrew Greeley, the late provocative sociologist, priest, and bestselling novelist, said that he often had been asked why he remained a Catholic when he disagreed with the church on so many matters. His response: "Why should I leave? I like being Catholic and I like being a priest." He added that the moral failings and incompetence of leaders have not driven average people out of the church because they like being Catholic. They like "the stories about angels and saints, Mary the mother of Jesus and stained glass windows and statues, Midnight Mass, first communion, Lent, Advent, the communion of the saints, the sacraments, the Christmas cribs, the lady holding Jesus. You may break with the institution," said Greeley, "but you cannot escape the images."

Will things ever change? Will Catholics ever want more?

As mortal sociologists and pollsters, we hardly have all the answers. But one basic reality could turn things around. All of us give our time and resources to those things which elevate our lives and the lives of the people we care about most, led by our families and friends. If Catholics can find that greater involvement in parishes tangibly contributes to such an enhancement of life, a significant number will want to have more to do with the church. Currently, most do not seem to be making that key connection.

Until they do, the majority can be expected to leave Christmas services, paradoxically, staunchly Catholic with the clear intention of reappearing — "same time next year."

Down syndrome video banned in France

By Agnieszka Krawczynski
The B.C. Catholic

VANCOUVER (CCN) — A video of children with Down syndrome and the message, "Everyone has the right to be happy," has been banned in France.

Dear Future Mom, created in 2014 for World Down Syndrome Day, aired on French TV and has been seen more than seven million times on YouTube.

France State Council, however, upheld a French Broadcasting Council ban on showing the video during TV commercial breaks Nov. 10.

In court documents, the council stated the two-minute short was "likely to disturb the conscience of women who, in accordance with the law, had made different personal life choices."

Its website adds the film is "inappropriate" and not in the "general interest" of the public "since it is presented as addressed to a pregnant woman" and "likely to upset women who have resorted to medical abortion."

As many as 96 per cent of pre-

natal diagnoses of Down syndrome end in abortion, according to the Jerome Lejeune Foundation, an international organization founded by friends of that Catholic French geneticist, who discovered the cause of trisomy 21 in 1959.

The group appealed the broadcasting council's original ban of the video and was shocked to hear the ban upheld.

The decision puts the "preservation and destruction" of human life "on the same level, as if the two acts had the same value," said Jean-Marie Le Mene, the foundation's president.

"The ambition of Dear Future Mom was simply to bring about a positive message about Down syndrome, that nobody has the right to deny the capacity for happiness," Le Mene continued.

"The decision of the State Council therefore considers that the freedom of expression of people with Down syndrome must bow before the right of abortion."

The group will take the issue before the European Court of Human Rights. A CitizenGo peti-

tion launched Nov. 23 to bring the video to French television gained nearly 20,000 signatures in two days.

In Canada, similar videos have received a warmer welcome.

The Canadian Down Syndrome Society released a series of videos, called Down Syndrome Answers, Nov. 1. It shows 10 Canadian children and adults with the developmental disability.

"The majority of prospective parents know very little about Down syndrome," said national executive director Kirk Crowther.

"Doctors do their best, and there are lots of websites offering the medical perspective but they typically use very clinical terms that don't capture the emotional and human side of the Down syndrome story."

The short videos answer questions such as: when do babies with Down syndrome learn to walk? Can a person with Down syndrome live on their own, ride a bike, or get a driver's licence?

"This campaign isn't about pro-choice or pro-life," said the society's Ed Casagrande. "It is really about pro-information."



Art Babych

90th BIRTHDAY — Queen Elizabeth turned 90 April 21. Britain's longest-serving monarch, she has been queen for 64 years.

www.prairiemessenger.ca

Congress Day held for parish and ministry leaders

By Kiply Yaworski

SASKATOON — Professional boundaries, ethical dilemmas and self-care were explored Nov. 30 during a Congress Day for parish and ministry leaders in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

Facilitators for the day included representatives of Emmanuel Care, the Catholic health ministry organization that runs 13 health care facilities in the province on behalf of the bishops, a counsellor with Catholic Family Services, and an associate professor of psychology at St. Thomas More College.

Director of Pastoral Services Blake Sittler introduced the day, noting that the topic of boundaries relates to the diocese’s Covenant of Care and Sexual Abuse and Misconduct Protocol.

“Good ministry is promoted and supported when we have good boundaries,” he said. Sittler noted the benefits of consulting with other professionals about issues that are of concern across many disciplines.

He also cited the CCCB document Responsibility in Ministry. “Desiring to minister as Jesus did and to exercise leadership that is about service, not power, and that calls and enables others to serve, we will strive to develop the communication and management skills that are needed in a particular milieu . . . acknowledge the limits of our qualifications, abilities and availability, and recommend that, where appropriate, people consult other professionals, particularly with respect to marriage and other counselling, legal, financial, and medical matters,” quoted Sittler.

“The issues we are looking at today are not trying to sanitize our ministry,” he said. “Rather, we want to hone our skills, ask



Kiply Yaworski

CONGRESS DAY — Facilitators at a diocesan Congress Day addressing boundaries, ethics and self-care were, from left: Scott Irwin, Leah Perrault, Brian Chartier, Christie Meinema, and Francis Maza.

the right questions, in order to deepen and improve our ministry.”

Diocesan administrator Rev. Kevin McGee positioned the day in spiritual terms, beginning with the Gospel account of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, which involved several boundaries, both cultural and religious.

“Jesus is speaking out of his relationship with the Father,” McGee said. The motivation for ministry and encounters with others should also be rooted in doing the will of God, he added.

“The human condition being what it is, sometimes we might find ourselves operating out of other programs, trying to have our own security needs met, having our own esteem needs made, or our power and control needs met,” he acknowledged, saying self awareness is critical

when it comes to boundaries in ministry.

It is important to recognize this struggle, to intentionally address it and to bring it to prayer and the light of God’s grace, McGee said. “It is a call to pray: ‘Lord, help me to live my life in a way that operates out of a program that seeks your will and your Gospel, and not my gospel.’ ”

Leah Perrault, Scott Irwin and Francis Maza of Emmanuel Care explored the process of ethical decision-making. They also presented a series of health care scenarios, inviting participants to wrestle with the ethical dilemmas in small groups, challenging them to discern the issues and decide on a course of action.

“Ethics is the way we

approach the messiness of life,” said Perrault, offering the challenge: “How do we do that faithfully with an informed Catholic conscience?”

Maza described ethics as a discipline that “examines who we ought to be and what we ought to do in light of who we say we are,” stressing that ethics requires discernment and an effort to understand the context of each situation. The challenge in the face of sometimes complex situations is to stay true to our boundaries, he added.

Christie Meinema of Catholic Social Services provided an overview of professional boundaries to Congress Day participants. “Boundaries exist to protect both the professional and the

client. We hope to do the best with whoever is in front of us, and boundaries help us to be effective in that.”

Challenges to maintaining boundaries might include the very human desire to build trust and rapport, the desire to go beyond professional limits when working with those who may have limited support, confusion about job description or roles, and living/working in a small community, said Meinema, offering examples and anecdotes to illustrate these issues.

Principles at the heart of professional boundaries apply in many other roles in life, she pointed out. These include respecting the dignity and worth of individuals, promoting a client’s self-determination, and respecting an individual’s culture.

Professionals — including those in ministry — must not exploit their position for personal or professional gain, must not engage in romantic or sexual relationships with clients, must abstain from all forms of harassment (verbal, physical or sexual), must maintain confidentiality, and must set appropriate and healthy limits, she added. Professionals are also called to address a client’s disrespectful or abusive behaviour, to limit their own self-disclosure to clients, to avoid physical contact, and to consult colleagues or other experts when necessary.

Meinema also addressed the issue of burnout and the importance of self-care, and the day concluded with the development of a self-care checklist presented by Dr. Brian Chartier, a counsellor and an associate professor of psychology at STM.

Our Lady of Guadalupe feast day celebrated

By Teresa Hiebert

SASKATOON — Bishop Bryan Bayda, CSsR, of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon delivered a thought-provoking homily about Our Lady of Guadalupe during the Divine Liturgy Dec. 11 at St. George’s Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral in Saskatoon. He also spoke of Dec. 12 as the National Day of Prayer in Solidarity with Indigenous People, inviting the congregation to work together with all in a spirit of co-operation and solidarity.

Since 2002, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) and the Canadian Catholic Aboriginal Council have promoted the annual National Day of Prayer celebrated on the Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

In 1946, Pope Pius XII proclaimed Our Lady of Guadalupe the Patroness of the Americas. In 1531, Our Lady appeared to an indigenous peasant, St. Juan Diego, at what is now Mexico City. With her appearance as an Aztec princess and through the symbols on her dress, the Aztecs

understood her message. Human sacrifices were no longer required. This was enculturated evangelization, with nine million conversions to Catholicism in the next few years.

Recently, St. George’s Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral and Our Lady of Guadalupe Roman Catholic Parish have begun exploring a relationship together. Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish serves First Nations, Métis, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parishioners in the heart of Saskatoon, based at Guadalupe House and celebrating mass at St. Mary’s Roman Catholic Church.

The Guadalupe parish community gathered Dec. 11 to celebrate the Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Dec. 12) at St. Mary’s, beginning with smudging by community elders. Rev. Kevin McGee, diocesan administrator, presided at mass, which was concelebrated by Bayda and Rev. Graham Hill, CSsR, assisted by Deacon Paul Labelle.

After mass elders, clergy, parishioners and visitors shared a traditional feast.

Students share joy of Christmas giving

By Derrick Kunz

SASKATOON — About 180 students from Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools did something they may not have had the opportunity to do before: shop for Christmas gifts (free of charge) to give to family members.

Select students from three schools — St. Frances Cree Bilingual School, St. Michael Community School and St. Maria Goretti School — participated. Principals and teachers selected families who would benefit most.

A group of volunteers led by Carla Shynkaruk-Adamko, whose children go to school within the division, spent months preparing a temporary Christmas Store at the building that was formerly St. Patrick School. They gathered donations from colleagues and local businesses, co-ordinated the arrangements with the school division, set up the store, guided students through their shopping experience and wrapped the presents.

“Most of us take the simple act of giving a gift for granted. We can buy a friend a cup of coffee, or pick up ‘just one more little thing’ as a stocking stuffer. But these children and their families don’t have the same opportunities,” Shynkaruk-Adamko said. “They

may not experience the joy of giving without this store.”

Superintendent of Learning Services Gordon Martell stated the division welcomes this unique form of support from the community.

“A tremendous amount of work has gone into this. We are

thankful for all the efforts to give these students a sense of belonging and build their confidence. Students who experience giving have a heightened sense of self-worth and empathy. This is a great opportunity to build these attributes in children and youth during the Christmas season.”



Diocese of Prince Albert

BENEMERENTI MEDAL — The Benemerenti Medal is an honour awarded by the pope to members of the laity for service to the church. The medal has been awarded three times in the Diocese of Prince Albert since its formation in 1933. Margaret Koch is the first woman to receive the award in the diocese. Pictured from left: Rev. Nick Ferreras, parish priest, Our Lady of Consolation; Bishop Albert Thévenot; Margaret Koch; and Rev. Maurice Filleau, vicar-general of the diocese.

How Moana expands Disney’s multicultural gospel

By Mark Pinsky
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For more than 70 years Walt Disney Studios has been one of the most effective purveyors of faith and values to the nation’s — and arguably the world’s — young children.

Disney’s full-length animated features have presented a consistent, optimistic gospel: If you believe in yourself, and appeal to a power greater than yourself for help, then good will always triumph over evil.

Walt Disney, who called himself a Christian but rarely attended church, always downplayed explicit religious symbolism in his animated features, preferring magic as an instrument of supernatural intervention. Think wishing upon a star, or relying on a fairy godmother. That, in essence, reflects what the 20th-century social philosopher Will Herberg called America’s secular, “civic religion” — faith in faith.

“It is not faith in anything (in particular) that is so powerful,” Herberg wrote, “just faith, the ‘magic of believing.’”

With its new full-length animated feature, *Moana*, Disney Studios

Pinsky is author of “The Gospel According to Disney: Faith, Trust, and Pixie Dust”

expands the ethnic and religious diversity in its heroines, in this case with a spirited Polynesian girl played by Auli’i Cravalho, who is a native Hawaiian. The film is the latest in the lucrative princess franchise that began in 1937 with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, and was enhanced over the decades with films like *Sleeping Beauty* and *Cinderella*.

Moana finished No. 1 at the box for three weekends in a row, earning \$145 million since opening over the Nov. 25 weekend.

This suggests that the movie, which has been nominated for a Golden Globe award, will remain in theatres through the Christmas holidays, and become the likely default choice for families with youngsters.

Reviewers and cultural critics have noted that *Moana* represents the continuing evolution of Disney’s template for female heroines. Like her more recent predecessors — Merida in *Brave*, Elsa in *Frozen* — the title character of *Moana* is portrayed as a proto-feminist princess who acts, rather than being acted upon, and who doesn’t need to marry a prince to find redemption or validation.

Significantly, the character Moana — the film’s “chosen one” — is also non-Christian as well as non-Caucasian, thus broadening the religious spectrum presented in Disney’s world.

The narrative is built around traditional Polynesian cosmology, starting with the islanders’ ancient origin story, in which the island goddess Te Fiti created all life.

The demigod Maui, a brawny, extravagantly tattooed shape-shifter and trickster with a magical fishhook, sings and speaks about how he “lassoed the sun,” and gave Polynesian mortals fire, as well as their island homes.

Dwayne Johnson, who is half

Samoan, plays Maui. In the trailer running in theatres, he says that indigenous experts and storytellers consulted by the film’s writers and directors have made it “a cultural showcase.”

Moana and Maui have to travel across the sea as wave-riding navigators, to return Te Fiti’s glowing heart, which Maui stole years before. His theft turned the goddess into a slumbering, sacred island, and the resulting curse has

caused the fish to flee the waters around Moana’s island and its coconuts to spoil. To return the heart and lift the curse, the pair must first do battle with another figure in the Polynesian pantheon, Te Ka, the Lava Witch. An apparition of her dead grandmother inspires Moana’s quest.

Walt Disney’s early, unbroken parade of white, implicitly Chris-

— EMBRACED, page 7



MOANA — Disney’s *Moana* heroine is a spirited Polynesian girl played by Auli’i Cravalho. Dwayne Johnson, who is half Samoan, plays Maui.

‘Moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends toward justice’

By Caitlin Ward

In 1965, on the steps of the State Capitol in Montgomery, Alabama, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. asked how long it would be before African Americans would have full equality and justice in the United States. He answered his own question: “not long,” Dr. King said. “The arc of

You Gotta Be Des’ree

the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.” He was paraphrasing 19th-century abolitionist Theodore Parker, also a minister. I first heard the concept listening to a talk by Bryan Stevenson, an African American lawyer who founded the Equal Justice Initiative, though he phrased it slightly differently: “the moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends towards justice.”

The idea has stuck with me for years. That said, “not long,” as a concept, is rather vague. Time is relative, and what a geologist thinks is “not long” is bound to be far longer than a three-year-old waiting for cake.

I think what the past year has taught us is that at this point, “not

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

long” is at best, “not yet.” I don’t only speak about justice and equality for African Americans in the United States, though that’s certainly a significant issue. I mean justice and equality generally — we remain frustratingly ensconced in the era of “not yet.” I write this as Aleppo falls in Syria. I write this as the Liberals have approved the construction of two pipelines, shackling our country to oil once again. I write this as that wretched orange man creates a more and more terrifying future for the United States and the world as he demonstrates his narcissism, self-interest, and incompetence in running a government as a result of those first two things.

I write this remembering how many of my columns in the last two or three years have attempted to say something reasonable or purposive about humanity or God or both through the lens of the latest terrible thing that has happened. I write this wondering how many times I managed to succeed. I write this wondering if it’s reasonable to believe that the arc of the moral universe is particularly long, or if it bends with any logic at all.

But then, I also write this on the eve of the new year. I write this remembering another line that has stuck with me for many years — one I read years before I would have ever known who Bryan Stevenson was, or knew anything about the death penalty or the mass incarceration in the United States that Stevenson works against. This line is from *Anne of Green Gables*: “tomorrow is always fresh with no

mistakes in it . . . well, with no mistakes in it yet.”

I may not have got that exactly right — my L.M. Montgomery books are buried at the bottom of a box in my parents’ garage — but I think I’ve got the sentiment down. The older I get, the more wisdom I glean from Montgomery. She suffered from severe depression herself, but consistently wrote complex and delightful characters who were often hopeful despite sometimes difficult circumstances. Her books are filled with beautifully touching moments and an incredible insight into the human condition that often goes unnoticed — probably because they were aimed at young women, a group that is rarely taken seriously.

I mean, by all this, that just as tomorrow has no mistakes in it yet, so does next year. That may be naive or wildly optimistic. It probably is. But I don’t see much point in thinking anything else right now. There are times and places where hope is next to impossible, and despair is not only easy, but feels inevitable. In those times and places, people have been systematically broken down by violence or poverty or injustice or all of those things until there is not much left of themselves to cling to. The phrase, “hope springs eternal” must have been uttered by someone who’s never hit the bottom — but I’d hazard a guess that many of us are not there, yet.

Now, I’m not going to lie: things are bad. Things are so very

bad. Pretending otherwise *would* be naive. But there’s this thing that’s been building in me for the last little while. It’s not a plan, or a call to action. It’s an idea. And it might not be a fair one, but I can’t shake it. It’s this: depression is a mental health issue, but despair? For many of us, despair is a luxury. Hopelessness is something you can afford when things look bad but no one’s breaking down your neighbour’s door. It still costs too much.

“Not yet” doesn’t discount “not long.” Perhaps we don’t have much evidence that the arc of the moral universe bends toward justice, but frankly, nor do we have evidence that it doesn’t. And either way, it certainly won’t if we give up fighting for it.

Listen as your day unfolds Challenge what the future holds Try and keep your head up to the sky Lovers, they may ‘cause you tears Go ahead release your fears Stand up and be counted Don’t be ashamed to cry CHORUS You gotta be You gotta be bad, you gotta be bold, you gotta be wiser You gotta be hard, you gotta be tough, you gotta be stronger You gotta be cool, you gotta be calm, you gotta stay together All I know, all I know, love will save the day	My oh my, yea, eh, eh CHORUS Time ask no questions, it goes on without you Leaving you behind if you can’t stand the pace The world keeps on spinning Can’t stop it, if you tried to This best part is danger staring you in the face
Herald what your mother said Read the books your father read Try to solve the puzzles in your own sweet time Some may have more cash than you Others take a different view	Listen as your day unfolds Challenge what the future holds Try and keep your head up to the sky Lovers, they may cause you tears Go ahead release your fears My oh my, eh, eh, eh CHORUS Got to be bold, got to be bad Got to be wise, do what others say Got to be hard, not too too hard All I know is love will save the day

In brief: a holiday guide to some better movies

Screenings & Meanings

Gerald Schmitz



The commercial side of Christmas seems to arrive earlier every year. So too holiday-themed movies quickly forgotten. There was *Almost Christmas* out on Remembrance Day and *Office Christmas Party* a few weeks ago. Fortunately this is also the season when more compelling fare contends for year-end attention. Here are a range of titles to consider.

Rogue One: A Star Wars Story (<http://www.starwars.com/rogue-one/>)

Directed by Gareth Edwards, this new episode in the rebooted Star Wars saga is the biggest blockbuster of all starting Dec. 16. Rebel Alliance heroine and outlaw Jyn Erso (Felicity Jones) is given a challenging mission by Mon Mothma to steal designs for the Death Star. Can she and her fellow

warriors succeed up against the Empire’s military director Orson Krennic (Ben Mendelsohn)? And don’t forget Darth Vader (voiced by James Earl Jones).

La La Land (<http://www.lalaland.movie/>)

Also in wide release on Dec. 16, writer-director Damien Chazelle’s second music-themed feature after his Sundance hit *Whiplash* is charming critics and audiences, making it an early favourite for the best picture Oscar and has already garnered eight Critics’ Choice nominations and seven Golden Globe nominations. The central characters are two struggling souls with bigger aspirations who meet and fall in love. Mia (Emma Stone, awarded best actress at the Venice film festival) works in a coffee bar while auditioning for acting roles.



Summit Entertainment

LA LA LAND — Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling star in *La La Land*. The film is charming critics and audiences, having already garnered many award nominations and is an early favourite for the best-picture Oscar.

Multiculturalism embraced

Continued from page 6

tian princesses began to change in the 1990s, under new leaders like Michael Eisner and Jeffrey Katzenberg, and has continued more recently, under Robert Iger.

The studio’s princess palette embraced multiculturalism, featuring other faith traditions and ethnicities. *Aladdin*, and *Pocahontas* demonstrated that it was no longer necessary to be European to be a Disney princess. (The studio’s first Latina princess, “Elena of Avalor,” is featured in a new Disney Channel series.)

Given that Disney’s target audience for its animated features tends to be children who ultimately watch them repeatedly on home videos and listen to the songs on CDs, the impact of *Moana* in mainstream Christian, Jewish and secular homes is likely to be considerable.

Through the title characters in *Mulan* and (in male form) *Brother Bear*, Disney animators introduced young viewers to the elements of Confucianism and shamanism.

In another breakthrough, *The Princess and the Frog* presented an African-American princess, an adherent of Voodoo/Santeria. Not coincidentally, the co-directors of *Moana*, Ron Clements and John Musker, also worked on *Aladdin* and *The Princess and the Frog*.

To be sure, the new movie’s presentation of Polynesian beliefs as lighthearted entertainment puts in sharp relief how some religions’ origin narratives are taken seriously and considered sacred — regardless of how far-fetched — while others are seen as amusing mythology, or folklore, and thus diminished.

There has also been some Internet grumbling that the Polynesian beliefs in *Moana* are blandly non-specific, blending a number of Oceania’s faith traditions, and in the process diluting them. But if the price of this inclusion is to present this faith tradition in a Disneyfied, homogenized version, it is at least another small step for teaching tolerance and cultural ecumenism.

Sebastian (Canadian Ryan Gosling) takes gigs as a jazz pianist. Although set in modern-day Los Angeles, their deepening connection is choreographed to the tune of sparkling sound-and-dance numbers that conjure up a golden age of Hollywood musical romances. What’s not to love?

Nocturnal Animals (<http://www.focusfeatures.com/nocturnalanimals>)

Adapted from Austin Wright’s 2011 novel *Tony and Susan* by fashion designer turned director and co-writer Tom Ford, this is another second feature, also set in L.A., which opened Dec. 9. Susan, played by Amy Adams (*Arrival*), is a gallery owner involved in a provocative art scene. Tony (Jake Gyllenhaal) is an ex-husband from her Texas hometown she left decades ago. The title is that given to an unsolicited manuscript she suddenly receives from him, a Texas crime thriller that begins to play out on screen to bizarre effect as their troubled past returns with a vengeance.

Collateral Beauty (<http://collateralbeauty-movie.com/>)

A high-profile cast star including Will Smith, Kate Winslet, Keira Knightley, Helen Mirren and Edward Norton star in this drama by director David Frankel, which opened Dec. 16. Smith plays Howard Inlet, a New York advertising executive who becomes withdrawn after suffering the tragic loss of a child. As friends express concern and try to reach out he embarks on a search for meaning by writing letters to universals — love, time, death — that bring surprising personal responses and a new outlook on the world.

The Space Between Us (<https://www.facebook.com/spacebetweenus/>)

Also in theatres Dec. 16, directed by Peter Chelsom, is this extra-terrestrial story of Gardner Elliot (Asa Butterfield), the first human Martian after his pregnant astronaut mother gives birth shortly after a spaceship lands on the red planet. She dies from complications without revealing the father and he has an unusual childhood to say the least. Growing up to be an intelligent teen he searches for clues about his father and forms an online friendship with Colorado girl Tulsa (Britt Robertson). But on his first visit to earth complications arise as his body cannot adapt to earth’s atmosphere. Can he still find what he’s looking for?

Passengers (<http://www.passengersmovie.com/>)

Opening today is another interplanetary adventure directed by Norwegian Morton Tyldum (*The Imitation Game*). Chris Pratt and Jennifer Lawrence star as two passengers on the “Starship Avalon” among over 5,000 humans on a 120-year voyage to a far distant planetary colony called “Homestead II.” Jim (Pratt) is a Denver mechanical engineer who paid his way. Aurora (Lawrence) is a New York journalist reporting on cosmic travel. They get much more than they bargained for when a malfunction causes their hibernation pods to open 90 years short of

their destination.

Gold (<https://www.facebook.com/GoldTheMovie/>)

Opening Christmas Day, this feverish tale is directed by Stephen Gaghan, whose last feature, *Syriana*, was 11 years ago. Oscar winner Matthew McConaughey headlines as Kenny Wells, a down-at-the-heels businessman who teams up with a geologist Michael Acosta (Édgar Ramírez) in search of gold in the Borneo jungles of Indonesia. Striking it rich is only the beginning of a wild ride.

Fences (<http://www.fences-movie.com/>)

Also opening Christmas Day is this drama of 1950s African-American life directed by Denzel Washington who stars in the lead role of Troy Maxson, a former Negro League baseball player who has been reduced to working as a garbage collector and struggles to provide for his family. Viola Davis plays his wife, Rose. The screenplay by August Wilson is adapted from his eponymous play which had a 2010 Broadway revival with Washington in the same role. Strong performances suggest the Oscars will not be “so white” this time around.

Why Him? (<http://www.fox-movies.com/movies/why-him>)

Another Christmas week release, this one walks on the silly side. Directed and co-written by John Hamburg from a story by Jonah Hill, it stars Bryan Cranston as Ned Fleming who, with wife Barb (Megan Mullally) and teenage son Scott, gets a lot more than expected on a holiday visit to daughter Stephanie, a student at Stanford University with an unconventional Silicon Valley billionaire boyfriend, Laird Mayhew (James Franco). Ned gets pushed way out of his comfort zone as he battles Laird’s efforts to prove he is marriage material. Who will get the last laugh?

Sing (<http://www.singmovie.com/>)

A family-friendly choice for Christmas is this animated feature directed by Garth Jennings and Christophe Lourdelet, the latest in a parade starring the animal kingdom (*Zootopia*, *The Jungle Book*, *Finding Dory*, *Ice Age: Collision Course*, *The Secret Life of Pets*, *Storks*). No humans intrude on the proceedings as a koala named Buster Moon (voiced by Matthew McConaughey) seeks to revive a struggling theatre. Moon’s optimistic gambit is to stage the world’s greatest singing competition. Picture an Animal Idol of finalists: a mouse, an elephant, a mother of 25 piglets, a gorilla, and a porcupine. Can a song turn things around?

The Founder (<https://www.facebook.com/thefounderfilm/>)

Following up acclaimed roles in *Birdman* and *Spotlight*, Michael Keaton stars as Ray Kroc in this biopic about the ambitious Illinois salesman who built up the McDonald’s global fast-food empire after manoeuvring to take over a California hamburger restaurant operated by brothers Mac and Dick McDonald in the 1950s. Laura Dern plays his wife, Ethel Fleming. The story behind those

golden arches won’t be in wide release, however, until Jan. 20.

Live By Night (<http://www.livebynight.movie/>)

In limited release Christmas day is this violent offering from director and co-writer Ben Affleck, based on a Dennis Lehane novel. Set in 1920s Boston during a Prohibition era of illegal booze, organized crime and



Universal

SING — This family-friendly choice for Christmas is a sort of “Animal Idol” as a koala named Moon seeks to stage the world’s greatest singing competition.

corruption, Affleck also plays the main character of Joe Coughlin, son of a police captain who has gone over to an underworld high life where nothing and no one can be trusted. Opens wide on Jan. 13.

Jackie (<http://www.foxsearchlight.com/jackie/>)

Directed by Chilean master Pablo Larraín, this December release tells an intimate story of the Kennedy assassination and aftermath as seen through the eyes of First Lady Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy. As Jackie, Natalie Portman gives one of the year’s best performances. Written by Noah Oppenheim (best screenplay at the Venice film festival), it draws on Theodore H. White’s Life magazine interview with JFK’s widow. The winner of the Toronto festival’s Platform prize could be an Oscar favourite.

Also deserving mention is Larraín’s *Neruda*, a biopic of the great Chilean poet starring Gale García Bernal in the role. It premiered at Cannes and went into limited release Dec. 16. Other noteworthy Cannes selections set to arrive in North American theatres include: Ken Loach’s *Palme d’or* winner *I, Daniel Blake* (U.K./France/Belgium), Maren Ade’s *Toni Erdmann* (Germany/Austria), Asghar Farhadi’s *The Salesman* (Iran/France), and Pedro Almodóvar’s *Julieta* (Spain), based on an Alice Munro short story.

Lastly, there is at least one film with deep spiritual content to watch for — Martin Scorsese’s *Silence* (<http://www.silence-movie.com/>) about Jesuits in 17th-century Japan. An epic passion project that had its world premiere at the Vatican on Nov. 29, it expands next month from a very limited end-of-year release.

Hymn choices prepared by Bernadette Gasslein, Karen Koester, Heather Reid and Christina Ronzio. Please note that these selections are not meant to be prescriptive, but to help you in your choice of music that works for your community, with its resources and repertoire. Don’t be afraid to repeat selections from week to week; consider adding just one new piece per season. Note that selections from Celebrate in Song (CIS) are included with CBW III, since Celebrate in Song was designed as a supplement to CBW III.

SUNDAY/ FEAST	Part of the Mass	CBW III	Breaking Bread 2017	Glory and Praise (Green, 1997)	Gather
January 22, 2017 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time	Opening hymn	302 Arise, Your Light Is Come! CIS 6.12 Gather Your People	548 All the Ends of the Earth 315 Let Us Go to the Altar	548 City of God 662 Praise to You, O Christ, Our Saviour	781 Lord, When You Come 596 Praise to You O Christ Our Saviour
	Preparation of Gifts	433 The Voice of God CIS 6.39 The Summons	502 All That Is Hidden 503 Lord You Have Come	485 In the Shadow of Your Wings 621 This Alone	798 Two Fishermen 790 The Summons
	Communion	530 There Is One Lord CIS 6.15 There Is A Longing	334 Taste and See 595 We Are the Light of the World	522 Bread of Life 669 Beautiful Saviour	932 One Bread, One Body
	Closing	476 Come and Journey with a Saviour CIS 6.31 Christ, be Our Light	595 We Are the Light of the World 616 We are Called	568 They'll Know We Are Christians 656 Christ, Be Our Light	766 City of God
January 29, 2017 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time	Opening hymn	601 Gather Us Together CIS 6.12 Gather Your People	628 Lead Me Lord 303 Gather the People	351 Seek the Lord 599 Blest Be the Lord	781 Lord, When You Come 596 Praise to You O Christ Our Saviour
	Preparation of Gifts	445 Earthen Vessels CIS 6.39 The Summons	394 Be Thou My Vision 425 To You, O Lord	546 God Has Chosen Me 687 Sing Alleluia	798 Two Fishermen 790 The Summons
	Communion	522 Blessed Are They CIS 6.5 Life-Giving Bread, Saving Cup	630 O How Blessed 327 Ubi Caritas	203 Psalm 34: The Cry of the Poor 584 Earthen Vessels	932 One Bread, One Body
	Closing	561 O God, Beyond All Praising CIS 6.29 O God of Past and Present	375 The Spirit Sends Us Forth 377 God Has Chosen Me	715 Lead Me, Lord 717 Beatitudes	766 City of God
February 5, 2017 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time	Opening hymn	522 Blest Are They CIS 6.34 Let Us Go to the Altar	306 Come, Worship the Lord 539 Come, Now Is the Time to Worship 6.34 Let Us Go to the Altar	530 Table of Plenty 657 We Are the Light of the World	606 Glory and Praise to Our God 734 Bring Forth the Kingdom
	Preparation of Gifts	582 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness 473 God is Love 6.20 Living Spirit, Holy Fire CIS 6.20 Living Spirit, Holy Fire	596 I Want to Walk As A Child of the Light 677 The Lord Is My Light	477 Holy Darkness 660 What You Hear in the Dark	592 We Are the Light of the World 782 Only This I Want
	Communion	612 Drink in the Richness of God 603 Gift of Finest Wheat CIS 6.5 Life Giving Bread, Saving Cup	630 O How Blessed 627 Blest Are They	304 Jesus, Come to Us 513 Our Blessing Cup	943 Bread of Life From Heaven
	Closing	591 God Is Alive! 345 City of God CIS 6.31 Christ, Be Our Light	595 We Are the Light of the World 383 City of God	401 Lord, You Give the Great Commission 558 Whatsoever You Do	775 Go Make a Difference 807 We Are Called
February 12, 2017 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time	Opening hymn	522 Blest Are They CIS 6.12 Gather Your People	391 Lead Me, Guide Me 439 A Mighty Fortress	617 A Mighty Fortress 622 Lord of All Hopefulness	611 All Creatures of Our God and King

Gasslein holds a licence in sacred theology with specialization in pastoral catechetics from the Institut catholique de Paris. For the past 40 years she has been engaged in various liturgical and catechetical ministries, leading workshops around the country and is editor of Worship, a journal published by Liturgical Press. She and her husband live in Edmonton.

Koester is a member of the National Council for Liturgical Music, a group that advises the CCCB. She earned a bachelor of education with music major at the University of Alberta, and has a graduate diploma in religious education at Newman Theological College. She has been actively involved in parish music ministry for over 30 years as a singer, choir director and occasional trumpeter at her parish, St. Joseph’s Basilica, and in the Archdiocese of Edmonton.

Reid is the director of music for St. Basil’s Parish in Ottawa. She has an undergraduate degree in music (Western) and a masters degree in liturgy from Notre Dame. Reid is a member of the music committee for the Ontario Liturgical Conference.

Ronzio is the director of the Liturgy Office for the Diocese of Hamilton. She holds an MA in liturgical studies from St. John’s University in Collegeville, MN.

SUNDAY/ FEAST	Part of the Mass	CBW III	Breaking Bread 2017	Glory and Praise (Green, 1997)	Gather
February 12, 2017 continued	Preparation of Gifts	482 Eye Has Not Seen CIS 6.26 All For Your Glory	520 Holy Wisdom, Lamp of Learning 591 Your Words Are Spirit and Life	342 Turn to Me 650 Prayer of St. Francis	728 Eye Has Not Seen
	Communion	612 Drink in the Richness of God 603 Gift of Finest Wheat CIS 6.5 Life Giving Bread, Saving Cup	324 Gift of Finest Wheat 336 Eat This Bread	265 Psalm 119: Happy Are They 591 Dwelling Place	924 Song of the Body of Christ 943 Bread of Life From Heaven
	Closing	547 All Praise to God CIS 6.23 Holy Is Your Name	502 All That Is Hidden 617 Alleluia! Raise the Gospel	613 O God, Our Help in Ages Past 707 Lord of Glory	689 Though the Mountains May Fall 685 How Can I Keep From Singing?
February 19, 2017 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time	Opening hymn	361 Great God of Mercy CIS 6.34 Let Us Go to the Altar	560 Sing of the Lord’s Goodness 485 God Is Love	442 Blessed Be the Lord 679 O Bless the Lord	590 Christ Be Our Light (v 1-3) 703 Lord of All Nations
	Preparation of Gifts	416 Spirit Blowing Through Creation CIS 6.38 A Sower’s Seed Fell on a Path	394 Be Thou My Vision 487 Dwelling Place	646 Christians, Let Us Love One Another 691 Praise the Lord, My Soul	806 The Harvest of Justice 832 In Christ There is No East or West
	Communion	612 Drink in the Richness of God 603 Gift of Finest Wheat CIS 6.5 Life Giving Bread, Saving Cup	647 One Lord 600 The Light of Christ	591 Dwelling Place 637 May Love Be Ours	681 We Remember 500 Ubi Caritas
	Closing	547 All Praise to God CIS 6.23 Holy Is Your Name	190 Holy God, We Praise Thy Name 383 City of God	565 In Christ There is No East or West 668 I Sing the Mighty Power of God	590 Christ Be Our Light (v 4,5) 765 The Church of Christ
February 26, 2017 8th Sunday in Ordinary Time	Opening hymn	551 Give Praise to the Lord CIS 6.12 Gather Your People, O Lord	434 Seek Ye First 660 Remember Your Love	608 Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God 671 Glory and Praise to Our God	861 Praise and Thanksgiving
	Preparation of Gifts	483 For You Are My God CIS 6.26 All For Your Glory	453 Like a Child Rests 485 God Is Love	352 In Your Love Remember Me 610 Only in God	721 You Are Mine 581 O God, You Search Me
	Communion	612 Drink in the Richness of God 603 Gift of Finest Wheat CIS 6.5 Life Giving Bread, Saving Cup	339 One Bread, One Body 342 God’s Holy Gifts	251 Psalm 103: Loving and Forgiving 600 Only in God	946 Let Us Be Bread 695 You Are Near
	Closing	547 All Praise to God CIS 6.30 From the Table of Christ Jesus	373 Celtic Alleluia: Sending Forth 617 Alleluia! Raise the Gospel	664 Mighty Lord 444 Lift High the Cross	761 God Has Chosen Me 610 Sing of the Lord’s Goodness
March 1, 2017 Ash Wednesday	Opening hymn	360 Eternal Lord of Love 352 Again We Keep This Solemn Fast 367 O Lord, Throughout These Forty Days CIS 6.18 Led By the Spirit	131 Again We Keep This Solemn Fast 123 Parce Domine	341 Save Your People 557 Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service	484 Hosea 487 Again We Keep This Solemn Fast
	Imposition of Ashes	621 Grant to Us, O Lord 374 With Our God	115 Signed By Ashes 661 With the Lord	340 Ashes 471 Hosea	468 Dust and Ashes 489 Merciful God (Ash Wed. Refrain) 469 Remember You Are Dust
	Preparation of Gifts	363 Healer of Our Every Ill CIS 6.19 This Season Calls Us	129 Save Your People 519 Now Is the Time	342 Turn to Me 620 There is a Longing	478 Return to God 962 Ashes
	Communion	611 Take and Eat CIS 6.8 Take and Eat	314 Give Us, O Lord 330 Unless a Grain of Wheat	349 Change Our Hearts 209 Psalm 51: Create in Me 518 The Supper of the Lord	950 Take and Eat 937 Now in This Banquet (Lent refrain)
	Closing	358 Have Mercy, Lord, On Us CIS 6.30 Table of the World	127 In These Days of Lenten Journey 132 From the Depths We Cry to Thee	343 The Glory of These Forty Days 354 Somebody’s Knockin’ at Your Door	493 Change Our Hearts

SUNDAY/ FEAST	Part of the Mass	CBW III	Breaking Bread 2017	Glory and Praise (Green, 1997)	Gather
March 5, 2017 1st Sunday of Lent	Opening hymn	12A, or 86 Litany of the Saints or 352 Again We Keep This Solemn Fast or 360 Eternal Lord of Love CIS 6.18 Led By the Spirit	32 Litany of Saints 131 Again We Keep This Solemn Fast	345 Forty Days and Forty Nights 546 God Has Chosen Me	479 Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days 483 Forty Days and Forty Nights
	Preparation of Gifts	512 God Created Earth and Heaven 402 We Who Once Were Dead CIS 6.35 O Christ, You Speak the Names of God	435 On Eagle's Wings 117 Gracious God	341 Save Your People 560 God of the Hungry	475 Tree of Life (Lenten verses first) 474 From Ashes to the Living Font 805 Touch the Earth Lightly
	Communion	611 Take and Eat CIS 6.8 Take and Eat	330 Unless a Grain of Wheat 336 Eat This Bread	525 Gift of Finest Wheat 550 Servant Song	937 Now in This Banquet (Lent refrain)
	Closing	357 Be With Me, Lord CIS 6.19 This Season Calls Us	122 Led By The Spirit 120 The Glory Of These Forty Days	343 The Glory of These Forty Days 351 Seek the Lord	492 Jerusalem My Destiny 493 Change Our Hearts
March 12, 2017 2nd Sunday of Lent	Opening hymn	495 We Walk by Faith CIS 6.18 Led by the Spirit	485 God Is Love (vs 3 for today) 660 Remember Your Love	351 Seek the Lord 673 Sing to the Mountains	878 Transform Us 481 The Glory of These Forty Days
	Preparation of Gifts	482 Eye Has Not Seen 402 We Who Once Were Dead CIS 6.35 O Christ, You Speak the Names of God	130 Transfiguration 677 The Lord Is My Light	443 Transfiguration 669 Beautiful Saviour	877 How Good, Lord, to Be Here! 474 From Ashes to the Living Font
	Communion	621A Grant to Us, O Lord 483 For You Are My God CIS 6.8 Take and Eat	323 To Be Your Bread 500 Transfigure Us, O Lord	694 Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence 713 Rain Down	948 At the Table of Jesus 937 Now in This Banquet (Lent refrain)
	Closing	360 Eternal Lord of Love CIS 6.20 Living Spirit, Holy Fire	598 I Am the Light of the World 505 Out of Darkness	639 There's a Wideness in God's Mercy 599 Blest Be the Lord	628 You, Lord, Are Both Lamb and Shepherd 598 O God Beyond All Praising

This Christmas is filled with the unknown for many refugees

Continued from page 1

ations of Armenian heritage and community in Aleppo to become refugees. Beyond that, everything was unknown.

“We always had the hope it will get better,” said Kyork Myrdijian, Warhoti’s husband.

A year later, the Myrdijian family is safe from ISIS attack in Toronto, part of the huge influx of refugees brought to Canada to escape the violence of their homeland. But this Christmas is still filled with the unknown for the Myrdijians and other refugees, as they continue to struggle with feelings of home sickness while trying to make a new home in a new land.

For Kyork Myrdijian, the point of no return came when a home-made rocket fell in their street in Aleppo.

That was it. The family headed for Beirut, following in the footsteps of Kyork’s sister-in-law. The sister-in-law’s family had cleared out of Aleppo when Kyork’s brother died of complications from untreated diabetes — untreated because of the bomb that had exploded next door.

In Beirut in time for Christmas, Kyork found work — a cash, under-the-table job as a mechanic. Refugees have no legal

status in Lebanon and employers take advantage of them. The wages were pitiful and the family relied on the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

This year in Toronto, the only terror that Warhoti and Kyork have to endure is the demands of their teenaged daughter Patil. She wants to try sushi. As far as her Armenian parents are concerned, there’s nothing very Christmas-y about rolled up raw fish.

Chances are Patil will celebrate Christmas with a traditional Armenian plate of *ghavourma* on Christmas Eve. The next day there will be *Kibbeh Labanieh*, a meatball yogurt soup. Sushi will have to wait.

While Christmas presents, lots of food and days off work and out of school sound much better than bombs, snipers and a flight into exile, it would be a mistake to imagine the Myrdijian family has landed in clover.

Through a translator, the family explained that Toronto is still a strange, cold and foreign city.

English is an exhausting, daily struggle. Work has been hard to find and he had limited success.

The city, they said, is so expensive.

The Kazanjian family was in Armenia last year, jammed in with Kyork Kazanjian’s parents. Kyork

Kazanjian had spent 20 years building up an autobody shop in Aleppo. That was gone. There were no prospects and no hope in Yerevan, Armenia’s capital. When the chance came for the Kazanjian family to fly to Toronto, where sponsors were waiting, there was really no choice.

But on the bleak bus ride from Pearson International Airport to the hotel last February, Kyork was sure he had made a mistake.

“What we felt. . . . It would be impossible for anybody to realize, to understand,” he said.

Ten months later, he still wonders.

“Some days I say I wish I was back home,” Kyork said.

Today he works in an auto body shop, which is not the same as owning an auto body shop. But there’s more to it than jobs and money.

“We had family in Armenia and in Syria. Here we have no one,” explains Vana Kazanjian, the eldest daughter.

Vana’s focus is on school. She dreams of becoming a lawyer — a dream she had in Aleppo and in Armenia.

“I want to solve problems, the problems of people,” she said. “I want to see people treated fairly, justly.”

The serious young teen has

every confidence she will be a lawyer.

She thinks her chances of making it to law school in Canada are no better and no worse than they were in Syria before the war.

At the same time, she wants there to be more to life than the drive through a competitive education to a competitive career.

“(Last Christmas) I was with my cousins, my grandma and grandad,” she said.

Vana has tried to make friends in Canada, but it’s a slow process. She finds herself more at home on Saturday mornings in the Armenian language and culture classes St. Gregory the Illuminator

Catholic Church offers with Toronto’s Catholic school board. She’s determined to hang on to her Armenian identity.

“I’m not going to be bad in my own language,” she said.

The Kazanjians are hoping to sponsor Kyork’s parents. They want to bring the family together again.

“Happiness during Christmas is having family and friends,” said Kyork Kazanjian.

“If you have a palace but no loved ones . . .”

Waiting for the Prince of Peace this Advent, he has one piece of wisdom.

“War is a very bad thing.”

Gifts are based on need

Continued from page 3

This approach to supporting development is as important as addressing the immediate needs of those in need, he added.

“One of the ideas of international development is to not only provide people with things that they can consume right away, but also to help them to develop new trades or improve their trades or small businesses,” said Estanga.

“In some cases what they need helps with farming because that is

what is available and that is what they can do where they live. But in some other areas it may be more urban and then they may need help with welding equipment or some other tools for their trade which there is a market for where they live.

“That’s why it goes beyond just basic things such as farming and animals into opportunities for small businesses (and trades people.)”

For more information about Chalice Canada, go to <http://www.chalice.ca>

Peppernuts: welcoming the beauty as well as the mess

By Edna Froese

It was time, definitely. There are those who begin their Christmas planning in July, their shopping in early October, and their baking in early November. Not I. Thanks to many years of teaching — and other reasons, of which more later — my family knew that Christmas didn't begin in our house until exams were graded or urgency demanded it, whichever came first. The habit still lingers. But two weeks ago, as of this writing, it was time to begin baking.

Among my people, and in my immediate family, peppernuts are essential. Peppernuts (a.k.a. *pfefferküsse* [German] or *päpanät* [Low German] or *pebernodden* [Danish], etc.) are tiny, crisp, spicy — and addictive; eating only one is impossible. They're wonderfully dunk-able in tea or coffee and perfect for keeping small children occupied in church.

Making peppernuts is both labour-intensive and child-friendly. The dough itself is simple enough; its special character derives from added spices, which are variously decreed by traditional family recipes. It's once the dough is mixed that children can be invited to roll the soft dough into thin snakes — like playing with playdough! After being solidly frozen, the dough-snakes are thinly sliced and each small round placed on cookie sheets. Then wait for the smell of warm spices throughout the house.

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

No longer having young children around to conscript for help, I began alone, braced for inevitable memories. First, though, the pleasure of the work. Oh, I've heard about efforts (probably by men) to adapt a sausage machine into a dough slicer so the work could be done more quickly. As if work is, by definition, onerous. But if I offer up the tactile pleasures of cookie dough to the god of efficiency, to what shall I give that "redeemed" time? To other work that I might likewise construe as onerous?

On the contrary, I would rather enter the task and make it beautiful, something I had already learned when I happened across Thich Nhat Hanh's mindful distinction between "washing the dishes to get them done" and "washing the dishes to wash the dishes." I'm not a complete Luddite; arthritic wrists make me glad for a hand mixer, although I still miss the satisfaction of creaming butter using a wooden spoon. I'm just grateful that I can still roll out the dough, make even slices, and line them up on the cookie sheet, precisely the right distance apart.

Then there's the bits of raw cookie dough from the ends of snakes (I say fie on those who would rob me of that delight with talk of unsafe food practices), a taste of many Christmases past. And, yes, here come the memories, all of them, like a series of



Edna Froese

WELCOMING THE BEAUTIFUL AS WELL AS THE MESS — “Among my people, and in my immediate family, peppernuts are essential,” writes Edna Froese. As the work begins, the inevitable memories flow — the good, and the painful.

snapshots, from tolerable — even warm and fuzzy — to unbearable.

Am I really the only one who anticipates Christmas with dread and joy? The season is so hyped, so elongated (it begins already with the snuffing out of Halloween jack-o-lanterns and even appears, in places, in July), so stuffed with stories of plentitude and sentimentality that it raises anticipation to ridiculous levels, and provokes in me a curmudgeonly wish that Christmas be outlawed. Then those who dwell purposefully within the sacred narrative could celebrate in secret, pondering what it means that divinity has been embodied in fallible humanity, while the rest of the population could find some other justification for an orgy of buying more stuff and putting up more decorations. The advertising-fuelled expectations of Martha Stewart-style fabulous dinners and parties

could then be held separate from the spiritual longing for redemption from pointlessness and violence and heartache.

Sure, the carols — or rather the Christmas-themed songs — do sometimes acknowledge that someone might not come home for Christmas, or that money might be too scarce for gift-giving. That's but a token gesture for those whose families are too dysfunctional to gather over a turkey (if there is one) without some kind of bad ending. Or for those who mourn losses too painful to celebrate anything. And I don't even want to imagine what this season of jolly commercial goodwill means in the midst of a war zone or in refugee camps or in slums.

It's not popular to speak of such stories at Christmastime. Try changing the conversation to world conflicts or poverty when someone in a store asks yet again,

“Are you ready for Christmas?” Always I want to retort, “What do you mean by ready? Who is ever ready for the drastic upending that it would take to bring about “peace and goodwill to all’?” Indeed, what would we do if glory did reveal itself to our harried minds?


Even as I take the first pan of peppernuts out of the oven, browned to perfection, I know that railing about Christmas demands will not solve either the vexing problems of the world or more immediate family tensions so ever-present in my mind. Nevertheless, I will make peppernuts — every year — and share them, with the family, with friends. I will make other favourite cookies, and, if it's my turn to host, will cook the turkey and all the other dishes that surround it on the carefully set table with its lit candles.

We will also bring such gifts as the family has agreed upon, whether it be an in-house exchange or a charitable donation on behalf of the family. There will be pleasure in the doing and the making and the buying, if I choose to be mindful and to acknowledge the sources of the anxiety. Familiar rituals give birth also to good memories. Neither ritual nor memories of whatever sort should be ignored.

From the very first Christmas I can remember — during which I watched it all from my sick bed — to other Christmases, including one in which funeral flowers became part of the living-room decorations, I can choose to welcome the beautiful even as I learn to accept the reality of messy human experiences. Just as we revel in the diamonds of hoarfrost in the midst of bitter cold, finding warmth where possible, and giving thanks.

It's all of a piece, isn't it? Memories and fresh peppernuts.

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Maranatha prayer: through us, light comes with power

Breaking Open the Ordinary

Sandy Prather



It is among the last words of our Scriptures. It is an Advent mantra. It is a plea pouring from my heart as this year draws to a close. More than usual this Advent and Christmas season, my prayer has been, “*Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus!*” It’s not just a pious thought or mindless repetition; it is a desperate appeal and an anguished request for the Messiah and the promised kingdom to break fully into our world.

Undoubtedly influenced by recent events, it is inspired by and nurtured through the Advent readings. It expresses an awareness of our world’s deep need for healing and grace and a steadfast hope in the saving action of our God.

For me and for many, watching and reading the daily news, we sense a world careening toward darkness. Pope Francis highlighted such signs of the times in his recent letter *Misericordia et Misera* (Mercy and Misery): we are living in a world marked by polarization, violence, exclusion and a pathology of indifference. Globally, whole peoples suffer hunger and thirst, refugees and immigrants find no welcome and children live in hunger and poverty, searching for food, shelter and peace. There are inhuman condi-

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.

Child care is an issue

Continued from page 3

and hiring more qualified teachers. There’s also the issue of child care.

“That can also be an obstacle in being able to take the class, if you have nowhere to put the children while you take the class,” Davis said.

Starting in January, Catholic Crosscultural Services will open English classes in a Mississauga apartment building with a high concentration of Syrian new Canadians. The hope is that Syrians in the building and surrounding buildings will be able to make child-minding arrangements among themselves — where one parent takes the morning class and watches the neighbour’s children in the afternoon, allowing the neighbour to also take classes.

“We’re trying a few things. I don’t know whether we’ve come up with the golden solution yet, but we’re still trying,” said Davis.

tions in too many prisons, high levels of illiteracy, and the travesty of human trafficking. The signs Pope Francis describe paint a sombre picture, indeed.

Politically, listening with attentive ears, we hear a strident increase in rhetoric that marginalizes the already marginalized. We have let go of facts and allowed “post-truth” to rule the media and shape our thinking. If something feeds our bias, we affirm it as true. Hate and divisiveness are not only permitted, but encouraged, and people are threatened because of their religion, sexual orientation, colour of skin or ethnic origins.

My dismay and fear have grown as I consider how broken things seem, how incapable we have become of reasoned, respectful conversation and how intolerant of balanced views. I think of the next four years and my heart quails. The darkness seems pervasive right now. I’m like the cartoon character Ziggy, standing on the edge of the earth, looking up into the night sky and addressing God, “*Can you please do something soon? The meek are getting creamed down here.*”

And then, there, right when I need it most, *Maranatha*, breaks in. “Come, Lord Jesus!” The Advent plea and corresponding Christmas response are a reason for hope and a basis for courage. The astonishing, never-to-be-forgotten Good News to be celebrated is that Christmas is so much more than a soft nativity scene, gift exchanges and jolly parties, lovely as all those are. Instead, John’s prologue reveals its profound meaning: the light has come into the world and the darkness does not overcome it.

Isaiah’s stirring vision of the

age of the Messiah where peace and harmony reign, truth and justice go hand in hand and the poor are judged with righteousness is, with the coming of this child, a reality. The promised Saviour is born unto us, and in his life, death and resurrection, the reign of God is established on earth. The battle, as they say, is over, and we know who wins.

But this is where *Maranatha* reverberates as a refrain in our hearts and a mantra as we go forward. We live in the interim, in both the “now” and the “not yet” of this reigning of God. Even as we encounter the light and know the good, we daily experience encroaching darkness and intrusive evil. Even as we know the darkness will not win, we feel helpless as it ascends to power and is given a culture in which to act.

Praying *Maranatha*, however, recalls for us our deepest conviction and places us within its power: the light has conquered the darkness and continues to do so. We have reason for steadfast hope and cause for courage. Jesus, the Light of the world, is present with power. Our task is to align ourselves with that power.

Come Lord Jesus, we pray and then turn to face the darkness with our small, individual lights. Every action on behalf of justice and equality pushes back the darkness. Every movement that promotes peace and tolerance

brings an increase of light. Every time we protest against violence, we further the kingdom. With every response of goodness in the face of evil, *Maranatha* becomes more evident.

Pope Francis, in closing the church’s Year of Mercy, warned that mercy was not to be a parenthesis in the life of the church. Now, more than ever, he stated, we need a revolution of mercy. Now more than ever, as we go forward into this night, we need people willing to stand for the light and to be the light. Hope arises and courage rests in the belief that the light came into the world and the dark-



M. Weber

A BROKEN WORLD — The world seems a dark place, writes Sandy Prather, and she says her fear and dismay have grown as she considers how broken things seem. But then the *Maranatha* prayer breaks in: “Come, Lord Jesus.” “The Advent plea and corresponding Christmas response are a reason for hope and a basis for courage.”

ness did not overcome it. *Maranatha*, we pray, that, through us, the light continues to come with power.

Encounter important to healing

Continued from page 1

y to valuing the spiritual traditions and culture of our indigenous people along with all the other cultural backgrounds that make up our Canadian Catholic population. We have things to learn from each other,” Chatlain added.

An encounter between Pope Francis and the Aboriginal and Métis people of Canada is of great importance to healing relationships that were damaged, said Bishop Albert Thévenot, M. Afr., of the Diocese of Prince Albert.

“With good intentions, the church joined the colonial power while serving the poor. Was this a contradiction? Many have suffered and were hurt. Traditions and belief were destroyed. The consequences are still visible today. Together we must put before us a plan of action and in dialogue with one another,” Thévenot said.

Bishop Bryan Bayda, CSsR, of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon, expressed support for any efforts that will heal families.

“Disrupted cultural normalcy of any family may result in a lack of meaningfulness, poverty, addictions and crime,” said Bayda. “The families in Canada and particularly in Saskatchewan would benefit greatly from any attention the Holy Father could bring into focus on this issue.”

The idea of a visit from Pope Francis is generating interest and excitement in the province.

“If it comes about, this would represent the first occasion that the province of Saskatchewan would

enjoy a papal visit, and particularly from a pope who speaks in such profound ways to the needs of the marginalized of our society,” said Rev. Kevin McGee, diocesan administrator for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

“The bishops would welcome such a visit as an opportunity for Pope Francis to speak words of healing and reconciliation on behalf of the Catholic Church to our indigenous brothers and sisters who have experienced deep wounds as a result of church-sponsored colonization as well as abuses that took place in residential schools that were under the direction of Catholic leadership,” he said.

“A papal visit would also be a celebration of our faith, affirming the various ways we are called to witness to a Gospel of love and mercy in our families, society, environment and world,” McGee added.

The invitation must be kept in perspective, cautioned Bolen. “The Holy Father is only able to make a small number of international trips in any given year, and the world’s needs are many. Nonetheless, even the possibility of a papal visit necessitates a great deal of planning,” he said.

Research into what is involved, and preliminary conversations with indigenous leaders and with various levels of government and civic authorities have been initiated, said Don Gorsalitz of the Diocese of Saskatoon Catholic Foundation. Experts are being consulted and engaged in the areas of logistics, event planning, communications, transportation and in crowd, health

and safety control. “Building the financial capacity to host the visit is also underway,” he said.

Wanuskewin Heritage Park near Saskatoon — a place that for the past 6,000 years has been rich in indigenous culture, spirituality and history — has been identified and supported by the indigenous community as a desirable location for a papal apology, Gorsalitz added.

If a papal pastoral visit becomes likely, it would need to be co-ordinated with the Vatican and with other Canadian dioceses that have extended an invitation to Pope Francis, the Saskatchewan bishops noted.

And while this invitation has been supported by the bishops of Saskatchewan, Chatlain expressed the hope that their effort “would be an expression of all our (Canadian) dioceses’ desire for a renewed relationship with our Aboriginal brothers and sisters.”

Beyond a possible papal visit, the Catholic dioceses and eparchy in Saskatchewan are continuing to build relationships and to seek ways to stand in solidarity with indigenous people, added the Archbishop of Regina.

“It is now an appropriate and critical time for renewed commitment for our church to work alongside indigenous peoples in the pursuit of justice and well-being. For generations there have been those who have built bridges and strengthened relations, but the Truth and Reconciliation report rightly summons all of us to take responsibility for the past and to work toward a different and healthier future,” Bolen said.

Incarnation empowers us to give up bitterness

In Exile

Ron Rolheiser, OMI



For many of us, I suspect, it gets harder each year to capture the mood of Christmas. About the only thing that still warms our hearts are memories, memories of younger, more naïve days when the lights and carols, Christmas trees and gifts, still excited us. But we’re adult now and so too, it seems, is our world.

Much of our joy in anticipating Christmas is blunted by many things, not least by the commercialism that today is characterized by excess. By late October we already see Christmas decorations, Santa is around in November, and

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

December greets us with series of Christmas parties which exhaust us long before Dec. 25th. So how can we rally some spirit for Christmas day?

It’s not easy, and commercialism and excess are not our only obstacles. More serious are the times. Can we, amid the many cruelties of this year, warm up to a season of tinsel and festivity? Can we continue to romanticize the pilgrimage of one poor couple searching for shelter 2,000 years ago amidst the plight of the millions of refugees today who are journeying without even a stable as a refuge? Does it mean anything to speak of peace after various elections this year polarized our nations and left millions unable to speak civilly to their neighbours? Where exactly is the peace and goodwill in our world today?

Closer to home, there are our own personal tragedies: the death of loved ones, lost marriages, lost

families, lost health, lost jobs, lost time, tiredness, frustration. How do we celebrate the birth of a redeemer in a world which looks shockingly unredeemed and with hearts that mostly feel heavy and fatigued?

The Christmas story is not easily made credible. How do we maintain the belief that God came down from heaven, took on human flesh, conquered all suffering, and altered the course of human history?

This isn’t easy to believe amidst all the evidence that seems to contradict it, but its credibility is contingent upon it being properly understood. Christmas is not a magical event, a Cinderella story without midnight. Rather, its very centre speaks of humiliation, pain, and forced fleeing which is not unlike that being experienced by millions of refugees and victims of injustice on our planet today. The Christmas story mirrors the struggle that’s being experienced within our own world and within our own tired hearts.

Incarnation is not yet the resurrection. Flesh in Jesus, as in us, is human, vulnerable, weak, incomplete, needy, painfully full of limit, suffering. Christmas celebrates Christ’s birth into these things, not his removal of them. Christ redeems limit, evil, sin and

pain. But they are not abolished. Given that truth, we can celebrate at Christ’s birth without in any way denying or trivializing the real evil in our world and the real pain in our lives. Christmas is a challenge to celebrate while still in pain.

The incarnate God is called Emmanuel, a name which means God-is-with-us. That fact does not mean immediate festive joy. Our world remains wounded, and wars, strikes, selfishness, and bitterness linger. Our hearts too remain wounded. Pain lingers. For a Christian, just as for everyone else, there will be incompleteness, illness, death, senseless hurt, broken dreams, cold, hungry, lonely days of bitterness and a lifetime of inconsummation. Reality can be harsh and Christmas does not ask us to make make-believe. The Incarnation does not promise heaven on earth. It promises heaven in heaven. Here, on earth, it promises us something else — God’s presence in our lives. This presence redeems because knowing that God is with us is what ultimately empowers us to give up bitterness, to forgive, and to move beyond cynicism. When God is with us, then pain and happiness are not mutually exclusive and the agonies and riddles of life do

not exclude deep meaning and deep joy.

In the words of Avery Dulles: “The Incarnation does not provide us with a ladder by which to escape from the ambiguities of life and scale the heights of heaven. Rather, it enables us to burrow deep into the heart of planet earth and find it shimmering with divinity.”

George Orwell prophesied that our world would eventually be taken over by tyranny, torture, double-think, and a broken human spirit. To some extent this is true. We’re a long way from being whole and happy, still deeply in exile.

However, we need to celebrate Christmas 2016 heartily. Maybe we won’t feel the same excitement we once felt as children when we were excited about tinsel, lights, Christmas carols, and special gifts and special food. Some of that excitement isn’t available to us anymore. But something more important is still available, namely, the sense that God is with us in our lives, in our joys as well as in our shortcomings.

The word was made flesh. That’s an incredible thing, something that should be celebrated with tinsel, lights, and songs of joy. If we understand Christmas, the carols will still flow naturally from our lips.

In this New Year, take stock of the most important things in life



Liturgy and Life

Deacon Bob Williston

The Christmas mysteries need more than one liturgical event to express the fullness of the story of the Incarnation. It begins with Christmas Eve, continues through Christmas Day, the feasts of the Holy Family and Mary, the Mother of God, right through to the great Feast of the Epiphany. Each of these liturgies has a part to play in telling the story of how God became one of us in the person of Jesus.

While the Feast of Mary, the Mother of God, has much to say to us about Mary and her role in salvation history, it really was meant by the church to proclaim the dual nature of Jesus. “Born of a woman, born under the law,” as Paul says in the second reading, but also having this connection to the Divine family: “so that we might receive adoption as sons and daughters.”

So the title of Mary as “Mother of God” has been one way the church underlines the Divine nature of Jesus. Still, as if to hold these dualities in tension, we hear again the story of the shepherds coming to Bethlehem and how Mary “treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.” The place of Mary in the unfolding of this mystery is the place of all disciples. I love one line in the song *Mary, Did You Know?* when it says, “Mary did you know that the son you just delivered will soon deliver you?”

Jan. 1 and the beginning of a New Year can always be a time for fruitful reflection on where our life’s been and where it is going. Moments of grace and mystery have touched us over this past year and we can ask ourselves some important questions. Where has God been revealed in my life over the past year? What are those marking moments that have shifted my awareness, my compassion, my understanding and my direction in life?

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

What has stretched me? What relationships have become important to attend to? Of great importance is to ask the question: “What am I truly grateful for in my life?”

Taking time for some prayerful reflection can lead us to more fully give ourselves to God’s loving plan for us. It can lead to a new opportunity for surrender and dedication. It can also help us to refocus and take stock of the really important things in life.

Doing this kind of self-examination might help us to see a thread that runs through our life — something consistently weaving its way through our experience. There’s a lovely poem written by William Stafford that expresses this, called “The Way It Is”

There’s a thread you follow. It goes among things that change. But it doesn’t change. People wonder about what you are pursuing. You have to explain about the thread. But it is hard for others to see. While you hold it, you can’t get lost. Tragedies happen; people get hurt or die, and you suffer and get old. Nothing you can do can stop time’s unfolding. You don’t ever let go of the thread.

At the bedrock of my spiritual life lies a deep-seated “thread” of a childhood memory of going to church

Mary Mother of God	Numbers 6:22-27
	Psalms 67
January 1, 2017	Galatians 4:4-7
	Luke 2:16-21

with my mom. We attended the Redemptorist Parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Vancouver and each week, when I was a grasshopper, we would trudge off to Perpetual Help Devotions to pray. On the way there, my mom would direct me to think of something or someone to pray for at that time. I remember studying the icon of Our Lady. It was large and was above the left side altar.

I remember being more impressed with Mary’s hands than with her crown. Royalty meant little to my five-year-old mind, but her large hands meant something more, something deeper.

As I walked to church holding the warm and protective hand of my own mother, Mary’s large hands enveloping Jesus’ tiny hands had a deep meaning of

strength and protection.

The Redemptorist priests I grew up with were very much a reflection of that strength and protection. They went out of their way to make people, even little children, feel like part of the family. That has been a strong thread winding its way throughout my life. Through my childhood years these priests were fatherly and caring. Through my teenage years they were “kind of cool” to be around. Through my adult life and ministry, they have been brothers to my wife and I, older and younger, uncles to my children, men full of faith and loving kindness. The grace of that “thread” has blessed me and my family throughout the years.

So here we are at the beginning of another year and how appropriate to start with a liturgical prayer that is mindful of Mary’s love and protection. The year fittingly begins with a blessing, the blessing of Aaron from the first reading: “The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.”

You have been named as a child of God. Carry that title with you as a strong thread throughout the whole year! Blessings on 2017!



CNS/Bridgeman Images

Mary and the Christ Child are depicted in this 17th-century painting by Giovanni Battista Salvi.

Churchperson of the Year

For more than three decades the Prairie Messenger has named a Churchperson of the Year in its final issue of the civic year. We now highlight Canadians who have made a significant contribution to our understanding of the faith.

This year we highlight a theologian who has provided spiritual fodder for Prairie Messenger readers for many years. He came from a small town in Saskatchewan and now heads a theological school in Texas. Just as there was a saying in Jesus' time, "What good can come from Nazareth?" many people might ask: "What good can come from Cactus Lake?"

Rev. Ron Rolheiser has been writing weekly newspaper columns for more than 30 years. In 1982, while living and studying in Belgium, he began to write a regular feature column in the now-defunct Western Catholic Reporter. The column offered reflections on various theological, church and secular issues. Choosing to call his column "In Exile,"

Rolheiser commented:

"All of us live our lives in exile. We live in our separate riddles, partially separated from God, each other, and even from ourselves. We experience some love, some community, some peace, but never these in their fullness. Our senses, egocentricity, and human nature place a veil between us and full love, full community, and full peace. We live, truly, as in a riddle: The God who is omnipresent cannot be sensed; others, who are as real as ourselves, are always partially distanced and unreal; and we are, in the end, fundamentally a mystery even to ourselves."

His weekly column is now carried by almost a hundred newspapers worldwide.

It is amazing how Rolheiser continues to explore new topics each week, integrating spirituality with psychology, literature and daily life. He speaks a language that nourishes the soul of contemporary women and men.

The diversity of topics he has written on just this past year is illustrated by some of his titles: "The end

of the world," "The Dangers in being a Warrior Prophet," "Our resistance to love," "Suicide and mental health," "Our deepest insecurity," "The Ten Commandments of mercy," "On reading difficult passages in Scripture."

Currently president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas, Rolheiser is much in demand as a speaker and retreat master. A specialist in the fields of spirituality and systematic theology, he has authored more than a dozen books. A blurb on his book *Seeking Spirituality* comments: "In this book Ronald Rolheiser makes sense of what is frequently a misunderstood word: spirituality. Spirituality is not, as often thought, something 'out there,' but means the restlessness that is deep in all of us. How we channel that restlessness, that deep desire, is what separates a healthy spirituality from an unhealthy one."

Rolheiser has helped many Christians better understand their faith and integrate it into contemporary culture. The Prairie Messenger salutes him as our Canadian Churchperson of the Year. — PWN

Canada's way of expressing division is different than America's

Building a Culture of Life

Mary Deutscher



I don't typically follow American politics, but like most Canadians this year I just couldn't look away. I was completely drawn in by the spectacle of a deeply

divided America, and then a sobering thought hit me: Canada really isn't that different from our southern neighbours. We have just chosen a different way of

expressing (or rather not expressing) our division.

This thought struck me when late on election night, Stephen Colbert, a comedian and political satirist, sincerely begged Americans not to repeat the same fiasco during the next election. He wasn't talking about the outcome of the election, but rather the "exhausting, bruising" process that pitted neighbour against neighbour. He read from a poll stating that close to fifty per cent of Republicans and Democrats say that the other party makes

them afraid. That's half of Americans who have so demonized those who disagree with them that they cannot find common ground.

Despite our outward friendliness, I believe Canadians are experiencing similar trust issues. Like our American neighbours, Canadians are deeply divided. However, instead of forming two distinct camps to overemphasize our differences, we have chosen to pretend our differences of opinion do not exist. We cheerfully go about our days without talk-

ing about sensitive issues and are easily rattled by political conversations, awkwardly changing the topic to make sure no one is offended. But our divisions are still there, and where Americans seem to be preparing for a war, Canadians have started to heavily handedly crush any dissent that would make us feel uncomfortable.

Take for example the case of Jordan Petersen, a University of Toronto professor who objected to being forced to use gender-neutral pronouns. Rather than being given a fair opportunity to voice his opinions, he was publicly denounced at an event that was supposed to be a debate on freedom of speech. Whether one agrees with Petersen or not, the use of gender-neutral pronouns is far from a well-discussed topic. Unfortunately we cannot even begin to have a conversation about this and many other issues because we cannot handle the thought that we might disagree.

In an effort to avoid America's polarity, we are whitewashing our once proudly pluralistic country. However, just because we pretend that there is only one set of values doesn't actually make it so, and

— CANADIANS, page 15

We cannot afford the cost of ignoring poverty: doctor

By Gary Bloch, Toronto

As a family doctor who works largely with people living on low incomes, poverty is at the root of many of the illnesses I treat. And, a dozen or so years into my career, my workload shows no sign of easing up. A shortsighted perspective would say, "Good for me."

The Cost of Poverty in Toronto report released recently turns this thinking on its head. The report calculates that poverty costs Toronto alone \$5 billion a year. I am not an economist, but the share of this cost that falls on me and my family is huge.

In my life, the report's findings play out daily: Last week, I saw a patient who had spent more than 10 years living in a ravine. He had been to hospital multiple times during that decade, with heart attacks, skin infections and serious depression. If he had been housed, with enough income to support himself at even the most basic standard of living, allowing him to eat properly, live with less stress, engage with community supports and primary health care, the tens of thousands of health dollars spent on him may well have been avoided.

A colleague of mine was with a group of medical students recently when they asked a patient why he was in hospital with an injured leg. He answered,

Bloch is a family physician in Toronto, an assistant professor with the University of Toronto, and an expert adviser with EvidenceNetwork.ca. www.troy-media.com

"Because I have no money." He said he came to hospital with issues that could have been addressed in the community because there is no one to help him and he can't afford to care for himself at home. The students and their teacher spent the next two hours trying to understand how this was possible.

We also see the effects of poverty at home: the discomfort of living next to people who are struggling to survive, with the resulting anger this causes on both sides. Our children come home from school talking about their friends who have to ask for help to go on a field trip and who hide their inadequate lunches out of shame.

To avoid dealing with this situation is not only immoral, it also makes no sense. This report highlights the negative side of continued poverty: poor health and lost productivity. The report also tells me that a society with no poverty would be healthier, happier, and easier to live in. We would also likely save money in the long run.

There has been an endless stream of reports and commissions looking at how to address poverty. We have Toronto and Ontario poverty reduction strategies and are waiting for a federal version. We know we must address a lack of affordable housing or child care, inadequate social assistance rates and the rise of precarious work. We are pretty sure climate change is making the situation worse.

But the biggest barrier to ending poverty is the political orthodoxy we have lived by for the past 40 or more years, grounded in austerity: that good government is small government, that

social programs must shrink and that taxes are evil. Over this period, we have seen the most dramatic rise in poverty rates and income inequality, with a concentration of wealth in the top one per cent. It's time for a rethink.

I'd be more than happy to pay more taxes if I knew that money would help my community to be healthier and happier. I feel good and hopeful when provincial and federal leaders talk about initiatives that will make life easier for those who are most vulnerable. I am more than happy to put my money where my mouth is.



CNS/Omar Sanadiki, Reuters

ALEPPO FIGHTERS ON SYRIAN TANK — Forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar Assad stand atop a damaged tank Dec. 13 in the destroyed government-controlled area of Aleppo.

People can be manipulated by political ideology, xenophobia

The Editor: The recent events in the United States reveal how political masters have used fear to manipulate people and engineer an election victory. The same techniques are being put to use in Canada, as some candidates in the Conservative leadership race use fear to try to become the leader of a national party and, perhaps, the prime minister of Canada. All people of faith and goodwill have a responsibility to fight xenophobia and exclusivity.

Church leaders need to be in the forefront of this issue to encourage and support people who see the dangers which are ahead and who are trying to push against tribalism and exclusivity. Living in a post-fact age, we need to be able to cut through all information disseminated and find the truth. We need to find good sources to rely on for facts and we need to learn how to present these facts, especially using social media which the masters of disinformation use very effectively.

We are all connected in this universe and what affects the least, affects all. Holding on to what we believe to be our rights and refusing to share of our wealth lest we lose it, will ensure that we do lose rights and wealth. There is enough for all. There is room for all.

There are many people of goodwill in this world. Together we can make a difference and bring peace and justice into a very troubled world. — **Anthony Chezzi, Sudbury, Ont.**

Canadians have stark value differences

Continued from page 14

there is a real danger that our political correctness is about to catch up with us. There are stark value differences among Canadians, and we can either hide them and hope they don't escalate into conflicts, or acknowledge them and find ways not just to tolerate each other but to actually collaborate in finding workable solutions.

Consider the way that we respond to the many different approaches to childhood education. On the one hand, we could insist that everyone participate in one, uniform public school system to ensure that every Canadian child is treated in an identical manner. Or, we could accept that there are different educational philosophies and build a system that allows parents and teachers to engage in these different philosophies in the manner of their choosing. These systems could be faith-based or secular, focused on fine arts or math and science, co-ed or single sex. What is important is that we are able to respect differences of opinion without taking legal action that demands uniformity from all parents, students and teachers. We can do better than chastising people who disagree with us, or running to human rights tribunals every time we are offended.

To conclude his election night coverage, Colbert encouraged his

audience to "kiss a Democrat, (or) go hug a Republican" as part of their resolve to engage in a more respectful election process in the future. Maybe there's a good New Year's resolution in that for us. What would happen if each of us made an effort to make friends with someone who does not share our political perspective? I'd gladly join the parish community that organizes a liberal/conservative prayer partner program, if only to find out which side of the political spectrum wants to take on my particular concoction of political views.

Acknowledging our differences of opinion is not "un-Canadian," but trying to bury these differences under the rug sure is. Our biggest national failures have been times that we have tried to subsume different cultures into one way of thinking, and our biggest successes have been times that we have brought many cultures together under one banner.

As Saskatchewan's motto reminds us, *multis e gentibus vires* (from many people strength). Our true strength is in the diversity of our thoughts, beliefs, opinions and values. Let's make sure we continue to have the space to express this diversity.



Madonna and Child/Giovanni Bellini

Mother

After the shepherds,
the Magi,
Simeon and Anna,

Mary sighs,
rocks her baby
and wishes for someone,
anyone,
to see the baby
in the Saviour
and comment on
his dimples.

By Marion Young

God's grace greater than sin

Continued from page 1

faithful and "his grace is greater than sin."

"We need to learn this because we're a bit pig-headed and we don't get this," he said.

Looking at his audience, the pope asked people to answer the question, "Who is greater: God or sin?"

"Hmm, you don't sound convinced," he said in reaction to the hushed and scattered replies.

"Who is victorious in the end, God or sin?" and "Is God able to conquer the biggest," most shameful, most terrible sin in the world? he asked, followed by people shouting aloud their answers.

"This question isn't easy," he said, suggesting any theologians in the audience might want to speak up and answer it.

"With what weapon does God conquer sin?" he asked as people responded: "Love!"

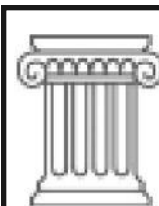
"Oh! Very good. Lots of theologians here, Good!" he smiled.

Knowing God is victorious over all evil, that he can break down all obstacles with his grace and forgiveness and that he has come to save everyone is the reason for Christian hope, he said. In fact, "it's awful when we find a Christian who has lost hope," thinking "it's over," and there is nothing on the horizon.

"Evil will not triumph forever, there is always an end to suffering. Desperation is conquered because God is among us" born in a manger in Bethlehem, he said.

"Christmas is a day for opening the heart, it's necessary to open the heart to the many small things in that baby and the many splendors that are there," he said.

"In the defenceless strength of that baby," people can see "the final victory over the arrogant and noisy powers of the earth," he said in one of his summarized greetings to various language groups.



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CNS/CBC News via Reuters

The Fort McMurray wildfire, initially identified May 1, soon grew, destroying one-10th of the city, and prompting one of the largest fire evacuations (involving more than 80,000 people) in Canadian history.



CNS

Ron Rolheiser, OMI, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is the Prairie Messenger's churchperson of the year.



Art Babych

Young Inuit throat singers Samantha and Cailyn perform a song on Parliament Hill. Aboriginal youth are in crisis across the country, with overall suicide rates five to seven times the rate for Canadian youth overall.



Frank Flegel

Regina Archbishop Daniel Bohan died Jan. 15, 2016.



Design Pics

Amoris laetitia (The Joy of Love), a post-synodal apostolic exhortation by Pope Francis, was released April 8. Pope Francis calls Catholics to enter more deeply into the beauty of marriage and Christ's teaching. Controversy erupted at the end of 2016 when four cardinals asked Pope Francis for clarifications, particularly on the issue of giving communion to divorced and civilly remarried Catholics.



Catholic Register/Swan

Syrian refugees mark one year since Canada welcomed the first group of refugees. Since November 2015 Canada has welcomed 36,393 Syrian refugees. However, a frustrating backlog of refugee applications will get longer as federal targets drop.



Tim Yaworski

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate celebrated their 200th anniversary Oct. 21, 2016, at a celebration in Saskatoon. Rev. Ron Rolheiser is an Oblate of Mary Immaculate.



CNS/Javier Galeano, Reuters

People protest against U.S. president-elect Donald Trump following the Nov. 8, 2016, election.



RNS

The Zika virus story broke in 2016 when it became clear that Brazil was facing the biggest epidemic ever of the virus. The virus causes severe birth defects in unborn babies.



CNS/Patrick B. Kraemer, EPA

Canada's Penny Oleksiak was one of the country's medal-winners at the Rio Olympics in August 2016. She was also chosen Canada's athlete of the year.



CNS/Carlo Allegri, Reuters

A massacre at a club in Orlando targeted gay people. Among terrorist massacres with the most casualties were those in Nice, France, Belgium, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Pakistan, Philippines, Afghanistan, Somalia, Nigeria, Congo, Turkey, Yemen, Libya, Ivory Coast.

2016

CNS/Paul Haring

Pope Francis had a busy year in which he concluded a Year of Mercy, urged pastoral care for divorced and remarried, defended migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border, criticized Donald Trump's wall-building idea and held historic meetings with Lutheran and Russian Orthodox leaders.

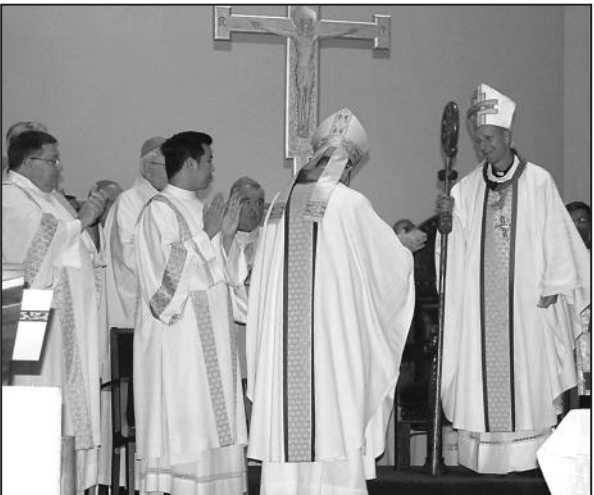


Art Babych

Senator Murray Sinclair is pleased the federal government is collaborating with indigenous leaders and families of Missing and Murdered Women and Girls in Canada to establish a national inquiry. Sinclair noted that the inquiry was one of the "Calls to Action" of the TRC.



On Jan. 22, 2016, four people were killed and seven others injured in a shooting spree in La Loche, Sask.



Frank Flegel

Rev. Donald Bolen, former Bishop of Saskatoon, was named Archbishop of Regina and officially installed Oct. 14, 2016.



Art Babych

About 200 Canadians have had physician-assisted death since June. Meanwhile, independent panel reports are recommending more access to palliative care across the country.



CNS/SANA news agency via EPA

Syrian soldiers patrol a neighbourhood in Aleppo Dec. 12 after recapturing it from rebels. Media reports state the Syrian army claimed it had recaptured 98 per cent of the former rebel territory in eastern Aleppo. "Aleppo will join the ranks of events in world history that define modern evil, that stain our conscience decades later . . ." — U.S. Ambassador Samantha Power