



Week of Prayer

The faithful of Winnipeg will begin celebrating the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on Jan. 17, with a city-wide ecumenical worship service at St. John XXIII Roman Catholic Church. — page 3

A rabbi and a bishop

It was standing-room-only as Rabbi Claudio Jodorkovsky of Congregation Agudas Israel and Bishop Donald Bolen of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon shared insights and reflections on the music, poetry and prayers of Canadian icon Leonard Cohen. — page 6

Anne Frank's diary

"Will we come to see Anne Frank differently now that her iconic diary is in the public domain?" writes Cathy Lynn Grossman. New translations will be created, and translation has power. — page 8



Desert of silence

Uncovering the secrets that silence has to teach us is not easy, writes Ron Rolheiser, OMI. "Silence, until properly befriended, is scary and the process of befriending it is the soul's equivalent of crossing a hot desert. . . . But there's a peace and a meaning that can only be found inside the desert of our own chaotic and raging insides." — page 10

Welcoming refugees

As Syrian refugees arrive in Canada, Michael Dougherty reflects on his experience with Winnipeg's response to Chilean refugees in the mid-1970s. — page 12

A new year

We walk into the unknown every time the calendar year changes, and sometimes we walk with a sense of trepidation or fear, writes Tom Saretsky. "But we need things to look forward to because they provide anticipatory joy and give us confidence to face what is yet to come." — page 13

French Muslim fights 'jihad' extremists

By James Martone

PARIS (CNS) — Mohammed Chirani was pursuing a midlife career change in the United Kingdom when news erupted out of his native France that Muslim extremists had attacked the Paris headquarters of a satirical magazine, Charlie Hebdo, killing 12 people, including eight of the magazine's staff.

The news gradually worsened over the next two days, as the extremists killed a policewoman, and then another four people inside a Paris kosher food market.

For Chirani, the events were devastating; he felt he and other Muslims were being "held hostage" by a minority of fanatics, and that it was his duty to do something about it.

He prayed for guidance and headed back to France where, since then, he has been engaged in a campaign to eradicate ex-



CNS/James Martone

Mohammed Chirani

tremism. He calls his mission a *jihad*, playing on the same word

that some Muslim extremist groups use to describe their violent actions.

"Mine is a *jihad* of testimony, of citizenship and spirituality," explained Chirani, who lived from ages nine - 19 in his parent's native Algeria, where he learned Arabic, studied the Quran, and was a member of the Algerian Muslim Scouts.

"The real meaning (of *jihad*) is effort, a spiritual and ethical effort. For (extremists), *jihad* means only to kill and harm," Chirani told Catholic News Service recently.

He spoke to CNS at a Catholic institute of learning in Paris, where he was studying world religions to strengthen his skills at interfaith dialogue. In the meantime, he said, he has been focused on beating Muslim extremists at their own game via French press, radio and television, where Chirani was busy "desanctifying" the false pretenses he claimed the

extremists groups used to justify their violence.

He looked tired yet steadfast. In November, extremists had struck France again, killing 130 people and wounding hundreds of others in co-ordinated attacks across the capital.

"We are at the mercy of fanatic delinquents, fanatic scum, who have taken religion from 1.6 billion people," he said, referring to an estimated number for the world's Muslims, whom he described as "peace-loving."

"When you have people who kill holding a flag on which is written 'there is no God but God and Muhammad is his prophet,' when you have people cutting the throats of innocents crying 'God is great,' when you have people killing journalists and then saying 'we have avenged the prophet' . . . this is being held hostage," said Chirani, 38.

— VERSES, page 15

Aid agencies welcome relief fund deadline extension

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Catholic overseas aid agencies welcomed news the federal government is extending the deadline for the Syria Emergency Relief Fund to Feb. 29.

The previous Conservative government had created the Syria Emergency Relief Fund last September, promising to match dollar for dollar contributions up to a cap of \$100 million to registered aid agencies providing assistance to Syrians affected by the five-

year civil war. However, by the year-end deadline, the fund had raised only \$12 million.

"Your support over the coming months will be crucial," said International Development Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau at a news conference Jan. 7, flanked by representatives of many of Canada's top charitable agencies, among them Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (CCODP) executive director David Leduc.

"It's a big mistake to assume the level of generosity of Canadians was disappointing over the last several months," Leduc told CCN after the news conference. "As the minister said, there was a huge focus on receiving, welcoming the refugee community coming to Canada and I think many Canadians took that to heart, and have contributed very generously to those efforts and continue to do so."

"The message the minister and all of our organizations were hopefully sending today is to remember the refugees will keep coming and the situation will continue to get worse if we don't also contribute significant resources and efforts on resolving the conflict and bringing aid to those who need it most on the ground at the moment."

The news of the deadline extension came as images of emaciated and starving children were released from Madaya, a city that has been under siege by the Syrian government.

Carl Hétu, national director of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA) Canada, has been warning of the danger of starvation for some time. "Famine



CCN/D. Gyapong

International Development Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau

has now become a tool of war for the last two or three years," he said. The television pictures have exposed how "food is used as a weapon, in this case starving an entire city."

"It's been happening in other cities over the last few years," he said. He pointed out the government is not the only guilty party in using famine; rebel groups have also used it.

"A lot of people are being threatened every day if they don't follow this rebel group or that rebel group or adhere to the government side," he said.

Leduc said Bibeau had responded to a request from the civil society/NGO community to extend the deadline.

"It was listened to and well-received and that's a trend this

— CHRISTIANS, page 7

Vespers close centennial year in Winnipeg archdiocese

By James Buchok

WINNIPEG — The Jubilee Centennial Year of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg came to a close Dec. 4, in the first week of Advent as the new Catholic church year began.

"Both years speak of new beginnings," Archbishop Richard Gagnon said. "During Advent we

await the arrival of the Messiah. We acknowledge Jesus as the Christ and we open our hearts to him to draw closer to him in our daily lives."

Gagnon made reference to the evening's reading from 2 Peter 3:8-14, which speaks of Jesus' second coming, " 'But the day of

— THIEF, page 7



Buchok

CENTENARY ICON — The Centenary Icon of the Holy Family, created to commemorate the Jubilee Centennial of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, is carried through St. Mary's Cathedral where it was placed on permanent display Dec. 4, 2015, during the evening prayer service ending the centennial year.

‘Thirst for God’ is present in everyone, pope says

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Go out and seek the signs God is offering everyone today that will lead to Christ, Pope Francis said.

The thirst for God is present in everyone, and it's the church's task to help those with "a restless heart" by pointing them to the true light of Christ, the pope said Jan. 6, the feast of the Epiphany, which marks the manifestation of Jesus as saviour to the world.

In his homily during mass in St. Peter's Basilica, the pope said the church's mission is to help people "know the face of the father" by first receiving "God's light and then to reflect it. This is her duty."

The church must always remember, however, that the light it shares is the glory of the Lord. "The church cannot deceive herself into thinking that she shines with her own light. She cannot," he said.

"Christ is the true light shining in the darkness. To the extent that the church remains anchored in him, to the extent she lets herself be illuminated by him, she is able to bring light into the lives of individuals and peoples," he said.

It is only by receiving this divine light that Christians can be true to their vocation of proclaiming the Gospel, which is not proselytism, not a mere profession and "not simply one option among many," but an obligation, he said.

The Three Wise Men who come from afar seeking the promised king show that "the seeds of truth are present everywhere, for they are the gift of the creator, who calls all people to recognize him as the good and faithful father," the pope said.

"The church has the task of recognizing and bringing forth more clearly the desire for God, which is present in the heart of every man and woman," he said.

"Like the Wise Men, countless people, even in our own day, have a restless heart, which continues to seek without finding sure answers," he said. "They, too, are looking for a star to show them the path to Bethlehem."

But Christians must also keep asking and looking for the Christ Child as well, especially in today's age, and "to seek the signs which God offers us, realizing that they require our diligence in order to interpret them and, therefore, understand his will."

"And once we have found him, let us worship him with all our heart, and present him with our gifts: our freedom, our intelligence, and our love," the pope said.

As people follow the light that "streams from the face of Christ full of mercy and fidelity," he said, do not forget that this light is also "very small," coming from a tiny, humble child in a manger.

"True wisdom lies concealed in the face of this child. It is here, in the simplicity of Bethlehem, that the life of the church is summed up."

While Pope Francis and thousands of people were at mass in St. Peter's Basilica, thousands more lined the main boulevard leading to St. Peter's Square for the traditional, folkloric Epiphany celebration. Marching bands, Roman gladiators and hundreds of people in Renaissance costumes paraded up the street along with the Three Kings and real camels.

At the Angelus at midday, the pope said the revelation of Jesus to the shepherds and the Three

Wise Men "teaches us that in order to encounter Jesus it is necessary to know to look up to heaven, to not be withdrawn into oneself, but to have a heart and mind open to the horizon of God, who always surprises us, to know to welcome his message and respond quickly and generously."

The Three Wise Men also compel "us to not be satisfied with mediocrity, to not just stum-

ble along in life, but to seek out the meaning of things and to look deeply at the great mystery of life with passion. And they teach us to not be scandalized by smallness and poverty but to recognize the majesty in humility and know how to kneel before it."

Finding that star, such as the Gospel, is a source of great joy and consolation, he said, because one feels "guided and not aban-

doned to our fate."

"Without listening to the Gospel, it is not possible to encounter" Jesus, he said.

The pope asked people to pray that the Virgin Mary "help us turn our gaze away from ourselves, to let ourselves be guided by the star of the Gospel in order to encounter Jesus, and to know how to lower ourselves in order to adore him."



CNS/Stoyan Nenov, Reuters

EPIPHANY CUSTOM IN BULGARIA — Men jump for a wooden cross floating in freezing water on the feast of the Epiphany in Sofia, Bulgaria Jan. 6.

Vatican supports two states for Holy Land

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — A historic agreement signed between the Holy See and Palestine that supports a two-state solution in the Holy Land has gone into effect, the Vatican announced.

"The agreement, consisting of a preamble and 32 articles, regards essential aspects of the life and activity of the church in Palestine, while at the same time reaffirming the support for a negotiated and peaceful solution to the conflict in the region," the Vatican said in a statement Jan. 2.

The two parties signed the Comprehensive Agreement between the Holy See and the State of Palestine at the Vatican June 26. The accord focuses mostly on

the status and activity of the Catholic Church in the Palestinian territories. It assures the church "juridical recognition" and "guarantees" for its work and institutions in there.

The Comprehensive Agreement follows up on the Basic Agreement, signed in 2000, between the Holy See and the Palestine Liberation Organiza-

tion, and was the result of years-long bilateral negotiations.

Although the Comprehensive Agreement is considered as the first official recognition of the state of Palestine by the Holy See, the Vatican has referred to the State of Palestine since January 2013. The Vatican also praised the United Nations' recognition of Palestinian sovereignty in 2012.

Pope's first video prayer message asks for dialogue

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — In his first video prayer message of the year, Pope Francis asked people to join him in praying that inter-religious dialogue lead to "peace and justice."

The video message was part of a prayer initiative co-ordinated by the international Apostleship of Prayer, a Jesuit-run outreach that has given Catholics the pope's monthly prayer intentions since 1890.

In the video, the pope called for dialogue among religions and asked that people "not stop praying for it and collaborating with those who think differently."

"Many think differently, feel differently, they seek God or meet God in different ways. In this crowd, in this range of religions, there is only one certainty we have for all: We are all children of God," the pope said.

Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim and Catholic religious leaders were also featured in the video, first declaring their personal beliefs followed by each one declaring: "I believe in love."

"I hope you will spread my prayer request this month," the pope said. "That sincere dialogue among men and women of differ-

ent faiths may produce the fruits of peace and justice. I trust in your prayers."

Pope Francis will deliver his monthly prayer intentions on video over social media in Spanish with subtitles in 10 languages throughout the Holy Year of Mercy.



CNS/Reuters

NEW MEXICAN MAYOR GUNNED DOWN — Gisela Mota takes the oath of office as new mayor of Temixco, Mexico, Jan. 1. She was killed the next day at her home by four gunmen.

South Sudan bishop condemns attack on teaching sisters

By Bronwen Dachs

YAMBIO, South Sudan (CNS) — An attack on religious sisters at a teacher training college in South Sudan has shaken and saddened the church, a church leader said, while urging people of faith to demand the implementation of the latest peace accord to end the civil war.

Violence and fear-mongering seem "rampant in both church and society" in the northeast African country, said Bishop Edward Hiiboro Kussala of Tombura-Yambio.

Five armed men, believed to be allied to South Sudan's main rebel group, assaulted and threatened religious sisters at the Solidarity Teacher Training College in Yambio, the capital of the country's Western Equatoria state, Dec. 28.

After climbing the fence surrounding the college, the men confronted the nuns, who were locking up the building for the night, and demanded guns, cash, phones and computers, De La Salle Brother Bill Firman, direc-

tor of Solidarity with South Sudan, said in a statement.

"Of course the sisters had no guns, but handed over the other items" and the men drove away in two cars, Firman said.

"It was clearly a planned attack, but the assailants were not familiar with the compound," he said, noting that it was "a very traumatic incident, but there were no casualties."

More than 100 people have been killed since May in Western Equatoria, which until then had been relatively peaceful in war-torn South Sudan. In early December, violent battles erupted between armed groups in Yambio.

Solidarity with South Sudan is a Catholic missionary group implementing teacher and health training, agriculture, trauma healing and pastoral programs in many parts of South Sudan, under the auspices of the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference.

Fifty students graduated from the college mid-November and were to teach in primary schools around South Sudan.

Court decision on assisted suicide law reserved

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Euthanasia and doctor-assisted suicide continue to raise thorny jurisdictional questions as the federal government seeks another six months to craft legislation on these contentious issues.

The Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) reserved judgment Jan. 11 after hearing arguments for and against granting Parliament an extension on the Carter decision, which struck down some of the Criminal Code provisions against assisted suicide last Feb. 6. The SCC’s year-long suspension of the decision is almost up. The federal government wants the suspension extended until Aug. 6. Meanwhile, Quebec went ahead with its so-called “medical aid in dying” euthanasia law Dec. 10.

Robert Frater, representing the Attorney General of Canada, pointed out the court has granted extensions on other Charter matters, but none “go to life and death issues” like this one, and require two levels of government to legislate.

The fact that the federal government is not objecting to the province of Quebec’s seeking an exemption from any extension of Carter led several justices to ask if that spoke to an inconsistency regarding the position Ottawa is taking on its jurisdiction over the Criminal Code.

Quebec went ahead with its euthanasia law in December, arguing so-called “medical aid in dying” is health care and therefore under provincial jurisdiction.

“You’ve got the criminal law power,” said one justice. “But you’ve just said to us, if in fact they go ahead in Quebec, there are no criminal law consequences . . .”

Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin asked if each territory and province “adopted their own scheme would there be any need for any federal legislation?”

She questioned whether the federal government was making the call as “a matter of political



CCN /D. Gyapong

EXTENSION ON DECISION NEEDED — Canadian Association for Independent Living executive vice-president Michael Bach said the extension is needed because there is not enough protection for people with disabilities.

acceptance,” or whether it was accepting it “from a legal point of view.”

Frater explained that in light of the Quebec Court of Appeal decision in December that the province could go ahead with its medical aid in dying bill, that ruling was for now “the rule of law” so it was being accepted for practical reasons. “We are not in any way ceding jurisdiction,” he said.

Lawyer for the appellants in the Carter case Joseph J. Arvay said he “adamantly opposes an extension,” but if it is granted, the second option is to “grant a mechanism” for those seeking exemptions.

He said Canada’s “acceding to Quebec’s” desire for an exemption “is just politics.”

“It’s not principled,” he said. “It would be principled to give the exemption to everyone. If you give the exemption to everyone, maybe you need a judge to determine” who would qualify for a doctor-assisted death.

Arvay also said the Supreme Court had “already read down the legislation” by saying physician-assisted death should apply only to adults, to those who are competent and suffering intolerably.

Justice Michael Moldaver said

maybe Parliament will want to require judicial oversight and other measures to ensure that “as far as possible we will not be killing people who shouldn’t be killed.” Parliament may also want to define competence “for Criminal Code purposes, for allowing someone to

deliberately take someone’s life with impunity.”

Arvay argued “real suffering people” will face “the very cruel choice” while waiting for Carter to come into effect: they are either “going to suffer horribly or die prematurely” because they choose to commit suicide earlier than they might if the legal option to have a physician-assisted death is available to them.

He told the justices the only Criminal Code issues under debate were those that arose from the Provincial/Territorial panel’s recommendations: whether or not physician-assisted dying should be allowed to mature minors; whether laws should protect not just the doctor but also the health care team; whether nurses would be allowed to carry out assisted deaths; and whether assisted deaths should be given to those who were competent at time of an advanced directive, but not competent later. The other Criminal Code matters were decided in Carter, according to Arvay.

Malliha Wilson, speaking on behalf of the Attorney General of Ontario, said Ontario supported the federal government’s seeking an extension, because without a Criminal Code amendment, uncertainty is created regarded what the provinces and territories can and cannot do. She also spoke of the need to prevent “medical tourism” resulting from different rules across the country.

Jean-Yves Bernard for the Quebec Attorney General defended its medical aid in dying bill as provincial jurisdiction and part of a continuum of care including palliative care.

Toward the end of the hearing, Moldaver pointed out if the Supreme Court did not grant an extension, Parliament could still use the notwithstanding clause or override the provision of the Charter to obtain a delay.

After the hearing, Canadian Association for Community Living executive vice-president

— SAFEGUARDS, page 11

Groups miss TRC target by \$21 million

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — A \$21-million shortfall in Catholic fundraising has added another challenge to the task of reconciliation between Canadian churches and Native communities.

As the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission landed in Ottawa last month, accountants have been dealing with the failure of the Moving Forward Together campaign.

Catholic agencies, which ran more than 60 per cent of the federal government-mandated residential schools, were expected to raise \$25 million as one part of the final settlement between Aboriginal communities, churches and the government to cover the damage done by the schools

to generations of young indigenous Canadians. But the “best-efforts” campaign raised just \$3.7 million.

The four national churches which were party to the agreement have been sorting out final payments into the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. As a result of the Catholic fundraising campaign falling more than 80 per cent short of its goal, a reimbursement has been made to the Anglican Church of Canada in addition to some other adjustments.

As the largest operator of residential schools, the Catholics made the largest funding commitment to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation — \$79 million.

The Catholic payments were divided into three parts:

- \$29 million in cash, an amount that was later brought down to account for payments already made in separate lawsuits;
- \$25 million in in-kind services spread over 10 years;
- \$25 million to be raised in a “best-efforts,” Canada-wide fundraising campaign.

Despite hiring top-flight fundraising consultants to run the Moving Forward Together fundraising campaign, the Catholic campaign never really got off the ground. While the consultants on the campaign had a track record of successfully raising money for hospitals and universities, the complex issues of residential schools and national reconciliation with Canada’s Aboriginal people didn’t lend themselves to conventional fundraising.

“It’s not a reflection on that (consulting) company. It was the nature of that campaign,” Grouard-McLennan Archbishop Gerard Pettipas — the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops point man on the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement — told The Catholic Register.

“To be honest, at the time the fundraising campaign was perhaps

causing more animosity than it was going to raise any funds. It was not the right time for a fundraising campaign,” said Aboriginal issues consultant Gerry Kelly.

In the latter stages of the fundraising campaign the Catholic bishops tried to make up some of the shortfall with a nationwide pew collection that raised nearly \$1 million.

With the campaign over and the Aboriginal Healing Foundation wrapped up, the Catholic fundraising shortfall meant a reduction in the proportion owed by the other three churches.

In November, a \$2.8-million cheque was cut for the Anglicans. The Anglican Church of Canada has decided to apply that money to its ongoing Anglican Fund for Healing and Reconciliation, which runs reconciliation projects in remote Aboriginal communities across Canada.

Though the Catholic shortfall means that the Presbyterian Church of Canada’s \$1.3 million cash payment is slightly higher than the proportion of residential schools it operated, the Presbyterians are not taking back any of their money.

“Ultimately, the agreement is for survivors,” said Presbyterian Church of Canada principal clerk to the General Assembly Stephen Kendall.

Of \$6.9 million the United Church of Canada was committed to contributing, \$2.2 million was in proportion to the Moving Forward Together campaign. At press time, there was no word whether the United Church had received any reimbursement or what the church might do with a reimbursement.

Money from all four churches to fund healing and reconciliation programs is now administered by the Legacy of Hope Foundation — successor to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. The Catholic parties are due to make another \$1.2-million contribution to Legacy of Hope this year.

Week of Prayer begins in Winnipeg

By James Buchok

WINNIPEG — The faithful of Winnipeg will begin celebrating the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on Sun., Jan. 17, with a city-wide ecumenical worship service at St. John XXIII Roman Catholic Church, 3390 Portage Ave. at 7:30 p.m.

A weekday evening service will take place Thurs, Jan. 21 at Sherwood Park Lutheran Church, 7 Tudor Cres., and the week of prayer concludes with a Hearts Burning for Unity gathering, Sun., Jan. 24 at St. Paul’s Anglican Church, 830 North Drive. Both begin at 7:30 p.m. Members of all churches have been invited to participate in an ecumenical choir at each of the services.

During the week, all are welcome to join in daily ecumenical gatherings for reflection, prayer and fellowship at St. John XXIII, beginning at 10 a.m. each morning. Clergy and laity from various churches and traditions have been invited as guest speakers to facili-

tate the reflective portion of these daily gatherings. Coffee and fellowship will follow each daily gathering.

Topics from Monday to Saturday are: Called to be Messengers of Joy; The Witness of Fellowship; A Priestly People Called to Proclaim the Gospel; The Fellowship of the Apostles; Listen to this Dream; and Hospitality for Prayer.

This year’s resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity have been prepared by an ecumenical team in Latvia, as chosen by the International Committee appointed by the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The various Latvian churches and religious organizations involved have chosen as this year’s theme, “Called to proclaim the mighty acts of God,” inspired by 1 Peter 2:9; “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called

you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” They invite Christians around the world to reflect on what it means to be the people of God, and how we are called both to proclaim and to respond to the acts of God in the world.

According to the Canadian Council of Churches website, Latvia has been a religious and political battleground throughout its history. Today, Latvia is a crossroads where Roman Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox meet and no single group is dominant.

For staff members of Winnipeg’s religious organizations the Week of Prayer was preceded by the 15th annual luncheon of church leaders and their chancery, diocesan and conference staffs, the Wednesday before the Week of Prayer. This year Bishop Susan Johnson and the staff of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada National Office, and Bishop Elaine Sauer and the staff of the Manitoba Northwestern Ontario Synod office hosted at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church in River Heights.

Disaster looms without education for refugee kids

By Jean Ko Din
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — Syria’s civil war has seen families pulling their children out of school as they escape the growing violence and persecution in the area. Many have not been back to school since the war started in 2012.

Jenny Cafiso, executive director of Canadian Jesuits International (CJI), said this as a recipe for disaster.

“Right now, kids are just hanging around with nothing to do in camps or inside Syria in urban

areas. There’s potential for them even now to be frustrated, to be angry and to be attracted to join rebel groups or other things,” said Cafiso.

“Even if the war ends, you’ll have a generation of people who have not been to school and that will have huge implications in terms of rebuilding the country.”

In December, CJI and the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) hosted an evening at Loretto College in Toronto where three humanitarian aid workers shared their experiences of what it’s like to work on the ground in Syria. All agreed that educating youth

has to be a priority.

Jesuit Father Fouad Nakhla works with a JRS centre in the Syrian capital city of Damascus. Established in 2012 with a staff of 12, the centre was initially built to service refugees fleeing conflict in Iraq. With the conflict growing in its own backyard, the centre quickly expanded. Nakhla said there are about 600 new people coming to the centre every month.

The centre originally focused on social work and education. Now, Nakhla said the centre has shifted its focus to education and opening classroom spaces for

children.

“Last year, we received more than 300 children per day in a small space,” he said. “In September, we have a bigger house in another area, and there we have more space and we can work with about 600 more children.”

Nakhla said that in working with the Syrian children he sees a new way that the centre’s workers could give hope to its community. By giving the children a safe place to meet and learn together, it creates friendly bonds among families across the city.

“I think if we want to work with Syrians and to give some hope, it’s our way,” said Nakhla. “We give them a secure place . . . and we give an opportunity to talk and meet each other. I think in this way, we can reach a kind of reconciliation in the future.”

For now, however, increased social tensions and no political resolution in sight has constrained international humanitarian organizations in the aid they are able to provide.

“Families are not fleeing violence in Syria only,” said Miriam Lopez-Villegas, international programs co-ordinator at CJI. “They are also fleeing the region due to the lack of humanitarian assistance in the country and at their first place of displacement.”

Lopez-Villegas said in order for humanitarian agencies to intervene, agencies need to respond to the crisis beyond what the local government can handle. But in reality, humanitarian agencies are constrained by a lack of resources and limited support from the local governments.

Loae Almously is a Syrian refugee who resettled in Canada last June. Before arriving, Almously worked in the JRS centre in Jordan for about two and a half years. He said he witnessed first-hand how the reduction of humanitarian services in the past two years has made life even

worse.

“At the end of 2014, after the reduction of assistance for the (refugees in) Jordan, many people decided to go back to Syria, which was unsafe for many of them,” said Almously. “They said that the life became the same in Syria and Jordan because we don’t have the assistance we need to live. So, we had to go back to Syria to live there which was the wrong solution for many people.”

Almously said that although he and his family now live safely in Canada, he cannot forget there are still many others suffering back home. He continues his work here in Canada as an advocate for Syrians.

More than 120 people attended the panel discussion. Members of religious orders, local parishioners, private refugee sponsorship groups and other concerned community members came to learn about the plight of refugees.

“The goal (for the event) was to open a window into the reality in the region,” said Cafiso. “As we get ready to welcome refugees here . . . the vast majority of people are and will continue to be in the region. The people that are coming to Canada is a small minority and we need to continue to remember the needs of people there.”

The Canadian government pledged in September to match donations to Canadian charities up to \$100 million from its Syrian Emergency Relief Fund. Last month, the government also pledged \$100 million to support the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to help fleeing Syrians.

“I think it’s positive that they are also supporting UNHCR, but I would also say that it would be important for the Canadian government to support established Canadian non-governmental organizations that have a track record in the region,” said Cafiso.

Youth urged to be ‘salt of the earth’

By Deborah Gyapong

MONTREAL (CCN) — Canada’s apostolic nuncio urged more than 700 young people gathered at St. Joseph’s Oratory in Montreal Dec. 30 to be “pregnant with God” so others might be awakened to love in Christ.

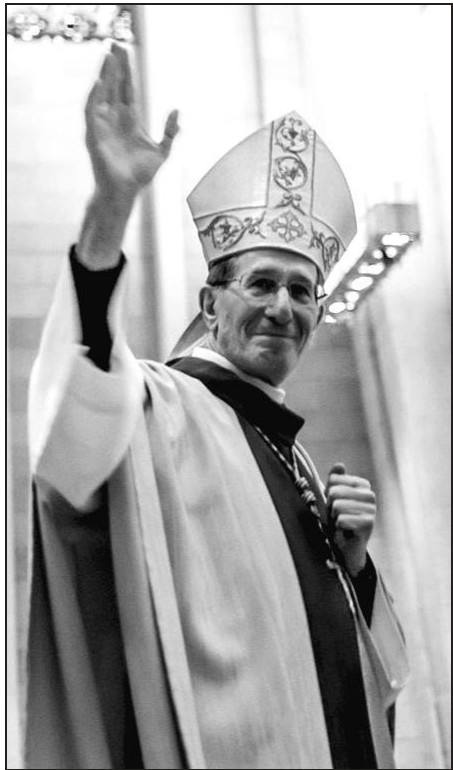


Photo courtesy CCO

RISE UP CONFERENCE — Canada’s Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Luigi Bonazzi celebrated mass at St. Joseph’s Oratory in Montreal Dec. 30 as part of Catholic Christian Outreach (CCO) Rise Up 2015.

“In the horizon of many of our contemporaries, today, God has somehow disappeared, is absent,” Archbishop Luigi Bonazzi told university students from across Canada gathered for Catholic Christian Outreach’s (CCO) annual Rise Up conference.

More than that, the absence of God is no longer “perceived as a problem,” and “brings forth the night with its accompanying darkness,” the nuncio said.

“And precisely because the meaning of pain is no longer understood, we escape from it and have arrived at the point of presenting as an act of dignity and compassion to administer death to someone, in order to spare them from suffering,” Bonazzi said. “The way to learn how to love has been lost and, consequently, the true meaning of love.”

“This is the context in which, as disciples of Jesus, you are called to live and witness your

faith,” the nuncio said.

He urged the young people present to purify themselves and draw close to God so they can bring God to others.

“In other words, the kingdom of God is God himself who builds it and only those who receive God can give God,” he said.

“This is precisely the gift given to us in the mystery of Christmas and which is renewed in every eucharist: we receive God and so can give him. We become capable of living the highest human experience, the highest human activity: by God’s grace, to bring forth God!”

Quoting third-century church father Origin of Alexandria, who compared a Christian to a pregnant woman who carries new life within her, Bonazzi said the “Christian is one who walks in the world ‘pregnant with God.’”

The Christian carries “another life in his life, learning to breathe with the breath of God, to feel with the mind of Christ, as if he had two hearts, his own and another with a stronger beat that will never be extinguished,” he said. “In this very moment, again, God is looking for mothers in order to take flesh.”

“Dear young people, you are called to be mothers and fathers who carry God,” he said.

The nuncio said it is Christ himself, the Word of God, who abides in us, makes us strong and calls us to be “salt of the earth.”

“Yes, in this world full of great lights and frightening shadows, rich in extraordinary potentialities and threatened by serious dangers, you are called to be evangelical salt,” he said.

He noted the call to be salt of the earth is conjugated in the plural, emphasizing the importance of living and acting “in unity,” he said. “Alone we can do nothing; we are inevitably destined to lose taste and to be thrown outside.”

It is “within the church that the Spirit divinizes us,” he said. “Having become church, you will act always in the ‘plural,’ that is to say as a ‘we-communion,’ even when you act ‘singly’: in this way, with the grace of unity given

by the Lord among you, you will be able to fulfil the plan of God, to overcome the great challenges of the world and to meet the deepest yearnings of people.”

“It is of little importance if, as ‘salt-church,’ you are few in number compared to the multitude waiting to be seasoned: it is enough that you are authentic, rich in Divine strength: indeed, in the kingdom of God, what matters is not the quantity of what we do but the spiritual density of what we are,” Bonazzi said. “In addition, to perform in the world your mission to be ‘salt-church,’ you must know how to dilute yourselves within the circles you frequent: if you remain within compact but isolated cliques, your action will serve little to foster and promote the work of the new evangelization.”

“It is necessary, first of all, to draw close to our contemporaries, and then share with them,” he said. “To draw close does not mean losing one’s own identity or downplaying it, but having the courage to embrace — with love and without complicity with evil — the situations we encounter, changing them from within, following the example of Jesus.”

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New Ukrainian priest brings his family to ordination

By Thandiwe Konguavi
Western Catholic Reporter

EDMONTON (CCN) — Bishop David Motiuk remembers clearly when he first met Michael Bombak.

It was a summer day at the beach with the children at Camp Oselia when Bombak approached then-Father Motiuk, and said, “I’m thinking of being a priest.”

Motiuk was impressed. He had known many young men in relation to the priesthood and young women considering religious life, but few acted upon that call.

“He just felt so comfortable talking about God and things of faith. It was a rather natural fit for him,” said Motiuk. “He was very open, ‘Here I am Lord.’”

Bombak, 32, born and raised in Edmonton, said “Yes” to the Lord in the sacred ordination of priesthood on Jan. 1.

The Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton celebrated his ordination on New Year’s Day at St. Josaphat’s Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral.

Married with four young children, Bombak is preceded by two priests in his family. His great uncle, a priest, brought the family to Canada when he was transferred from Ukraine.

Bombak’s journey to the priest-



WCR/T. Konguavi

NEW YEAR’S DAY ORDINATION — Rev. Michael Bombak was ordained a Ukrainian Catholic priest on New Year’s Day. Here, he is pictured with his wife Kim Bombak, daughters Georgia, four, Miriam, six, Philomena (three months), and son Tobias, seven.

hood began even earlier than his encounter with the future bishop at summer camp.

He recalls a moment while serving as an altar boy at St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Parish, when he looked down at his hands and said, “ ‘Maybe these are the hands that the Lord

wants to use in his priesthood.’ ”

“I had this joyful feeling that I just can’t describe,” said Bombak.

He likened that feeling to what it might have been like for the disciples on the road to Emmaus. “Their hearts were burning within them. It was joyful but peaceful at the same time.”

Despite his zeal, Bombak was encouraged by his father to go to university and get a degree before pursuing his vocation.

In university, his faith was completely challenged. Foundations that he thought were strong were washed away. He stopped attending church and lived a sec-

ular lifestyle. He questioned his faith.

“Why should I believe in the resurrection? Why should I believe that we’ve been visited by the Lord as a man and as God? Why should I believe that?” he thought.

“I didn’t know it at the time, but the Lord was really working, even though he felt so far away,” said Bombak.

He started looking in the right places, reading the right books by authors such as C.S. Lewis and Peter Kreeft, and his faith started to grow.

He became an Edmonton Catholic Schools teacher and soon after he met Kim, who would become his wife. Baptized Anglican but not raised in a strong faith environment, Kim was discovering the Christian faith for the first time and Michael was coming back into his faith in a much more fervent way when they began discerning marriage.

Michael and Kim married in 2007.

Bombak was loving his seven-year career as a teacher, and the couple had just bought a condo when a visit to the Ukrainian Church seminary in Ottawa abruptly changed the course of their lives.

While praying in the chapel, Bombak heard the still voice of the Lord, and he knew it was time to go.

In keeping with the tradition of the Eastern Catholic churches, being married was not an impediment to Bombak’s call to the priesthood.

The couple sold their condo, packed their belongings and, with three small children in tow, moved to Ottawa.

From 2012 to 2015, Bombak studied and received formation at Holy Spirit Ukrainian Catholic Seminary in Ottawa.

His journey to priesthood has been a family affair.

“It’s a complete sacrifice of one’s life in order to glorify the Lord and to bring people to the Lord and within a married cleric’s life, that’s a family affair,” he said.

“It’s the witness of a family. It’s the witness of a wife and children, and it’s a beautiful thing. It’s a difficult thing, but it’s a beautiful thing.”

At seminary, the Bombaks learned the difference between being called to be true Christians and being called to serve.

Kim said the seminary experience was like “spiritual bootcamp.”

“You learn how to be a clergy family. It definitely stretches you,” she said. “Our family got strengthened.”

With Michael’s long days and only one day off per month, the family learned how to be strong when apart. “We learned this new dynamic and how to stay connected,” Kim said.

Motiuk said Bombak is a people person and his skills with people and pastoral approach will serve him well in his priesthood.

“Already, as a relatively young man he’s able to integrate what he’s learned in the seminary, his own faith journey, and to meet the people where they are. Not to have preconceived ideas or to be judgmental,” said Motiuk.

Canadian video takes *Laudato Si’* to the people

By Thandiwe Konguavi
Western Catholic Reporter

EDMONTON (CCN) — Pope Francis’ encyclical On Care for Our Common Home (*Laudato Si’*) had an immediate effect on film producer Kevin Moynihan.

The pope’s comprehensive letter on the environment tackling issues such as pollution, climate change, access to water, loss of biodiversity and their interconnectedness with global inequality, hit home for Moynihan.

“I read the whole thing and right away I said, ‘We gotta get this into the hands of kids in high school, university, people in parishes and offices.’ ”

So Moynihan did what he does best. His latest work, *Laudato Si’: A Canadian Response*, was released Nov. 20. Within a few weeks, the 35-minute video had been seen in some 20 countries and garnered more than 2,000 views on YouTube

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bti86O_Tw5A).

Moynihan, along with his wife and co-producer Anne Moynihan, interviews Canadian leaders in the ecological movement including David Suzuki, Tony Clarke, Maude Barlow and Vancouver mayor Gregor Robertson.

Bob McKeon, former co-ordinator of the Edmonton archdiocese’s office for social justice, called the video’s summary of the encyclical, along with its references and application to Canada, “quite extraordinary.”

“We have this papal document which is international in scope and then we have a clear, intentional, professionally produced Canadian resource,” he said.

Moynihan has been using his talents to turn important church documents into audiovisual packages for more than 30 years and is a strong believer in the potency of the medium.

“Audiovisual is a warm medium,” he said. “It goes by the editor in your brain and goes right to your heart.”

He also figured that the majority of people probably would not have the opportunity to read the 192-page letter, so he included important excerpts from *Laudato Si’* in the video.

“Because they would have seen it on the screen and had it read to them, they will be able to quote it — that these are the words of Francis and he said this. He said this about oil, he said this about the cries of the poor and the cries of the earth,” said Moynihan.

The production, which had a budget of about \$22,000, was funded by a number of Canadian religious congregations.

McKeon praised the commitment and support of the sisters who made the video possible.

“They’ve been working on these issues for so long and they’re

thinking practically and strategically,” said McKeon.

Sister Joan O’Keefe, congregational leader of the Sisters of Charity-Halifax, said at the time Moynihan approached them about the video, the order had received a lot of writing about the encyclical, but none of it coming from Canada.

“The encyclical really incorporates a lot of what our sisters have been working on and trying to live,” said O’Keefe. “So I just thought (the video) was a nice way to participate in something that someone else wanted to do that can go across Canada.”

Canadian dimensions highlighted in the video include lack of access to safe drinking water for some First Nations communities; local initiatives to reduce carbon footprint; and the then federal government’s reluctance to discuss climate change.

Anupama Ranawana, regional animator for Development and Peace, said the video’s emphasis on the need to educate and be educated about climate issues is also a key focus of Development and Peace efforts.

As a critique, Ranawana said it would have been ideal if the video had opened up the encyclical’s “menu of actions” to show ways of supporting those most impacted by climate change through awareness, compassion, advocacy and financially.

“Many of our members and supporters at Development and Peace are reflecting and grappling with the meaning of the encyclical and what it calls us to,” she said. “There are already great (grassroots) and lay-led responses to *Laudato Si’* out there and it would have been fantastic for the video to showcase some.”



WCR

CANADIAN VIDEO — This is a screen capture from film producer Kevin Moynihan’s video *Laudato Si’: A Canadian Response*, released Nov. 20. Within a few weeks, the 35-minute video had been seen in some 20 countries and garnered more than 2,000 views on YouTube.

A rabbi and a bishop walk into a concert. . . .

By Killy Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — It was standing-room-only as Rabbi Claudio Jodorkovsky of Congregation Agudas Israel and Bishop Donald Bolen of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon shared insights and reflections on the music, poetry and prayers of Canadian icon Leonard Cohen.

“For the Jewish community this is a very important event and a special evening,” said Jodorkovsky, citing the opportunity to study and learn together, the cherished friendship between the Jewish and Catholic communities in Saskatoon, and his own friendship with Bolen.

Bolen described the origins of the evening as part of a lifelong fascination with the Christian and Jewish imagery in Cohen’s work. “I was six years old when my sister came home with Leonard Cohen’s first record in 1967.

“I had also heard over the years about the Jewish worship foundations of some of Cohen’s songs, such as Who By Fire, and other songs with a strong connection to Judaism,” Bolen added, describing a longing to discuss Cohen’s lyrics with someone who knew the Jewish tradition. “When Claudio and I became friends, the idea for the evening took root.”

During the Dec. 14 program, the two friends shared insights into six of Cohen’s songs — Who By Fire (1974), If It Be Your Will (1984), Anthem (1992), Come Healing (2012), Born in Chains (2014), and Hallelujah (1984) — as well as excerpts from the 1984 poetry collection Book of Mercy.



Tim Yaworski

CONVERSATION — Rabbi Claudio Jodorkovsky (left) of Congregation Agudas Israel and Bishop Donald Bolen of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon discuss The Hymns of Leonard Cohen at an evening conversation Dec. 14.

Jodorkovsky began by describing Cohen’s song Who By Fire as a modern reworking of a traditional Jewish prayer — *Unstanch Toke* — which is prayed during the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the day of forgiveness.

“We have a special prayer, one of the most important prayers that speaks about this . . . who is going to die by fire, by water, by different causes,” he said. Cohen updates the traditional prayer, but leaves the theology intact.

The rabbi also noted that in October 1973 — a few months before the release of the song — Cohen was in Israel during the Yom Kippur war. “It was the worst war in the history of the state of Israel . . . and Leonard Cohen was there, singing for the troops,” he said.

“I can imagine this was a difficult experience of confronting death, which is exactly what we do during this day of Yom Kippur. We have lots of traditions on this day that remind us that Yom Kippur is some kind of rehearsal for our own death. Because when you confront death, you can better your life.”

Bolen responded to the rabbi’s reflection, saying, “I find it a joy and a relief that this song comes from Jewish liturgical tradition. It is not a morbid preoccupation with death, but a grappling with death and judgment.”

In the song’s repeated refrain “And who shall I say is calling?” Cohen is possibly questioning death, Bolen mused. “It’s a way of asking what life is about.” He added: “I find some consolation that the song and the prayer is about our accountability before God, and that God’s judgment indicates that we are in God’s hands in death as in life. God’s judgment is also balanced with God’s mercy.”

Bolen led the reflection on the song If It Be Your Will, which Cohen himself has described as a prayer. The lyrics speak to the poet’s desire to surrender to God: “If it be your will / That I speak no more / And my voice be still / As it was before / I will speak no more / I shall abide until / I am spoken for / If it be your will.”

“I find in this prayer and in Leonard Cohen, the humbleness of a prophet, that he can speak what God wants him to speak,” observed Jodorkovsky.

Like the poet or songwriter, a homilist or preacher is also “dependent on receiving a word,” said Bolen. “From personal experience I can say it is a bit of a precarious life depending on a word to be given to you, and at the same time feeling like such a sinner that you never really feel that you deserve to be a vessel to a word that wants to be said,” Bolen described. “And when a word comes, it is nothing short of mercy. And so the first verse of the song is one that resonates with me deeply, and I have prayed many such prayers as this.”

The song also speaks about human brokenness and mercy, Bolen added. It continues with “If it be your will / If there is a choice / Let the rivers fill / Let the hills rejoice / Let your mercy spill / On all these burning hearts in hell / If it be your will / To make us well,” before concluding: “And draw us near / And bind us tight / All your children here / In their rags of light / In our rags of light / All dressed to kill / And end this night / If it be your will.”

Bolen reflected on the phrase “rags of light,” citing a talk by British Rabbi Jonathan Sacks



Tim Yaworski

HYMNS OF LEONARD COHEN — Hundreds attended an evening conversation Dec. 14 between Rabbi Claudio Jodorkovsky of Congregation Agudas Israel and Bishop Donald Bolen of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, entitled The Hymns of Leonard Cohen.

delivered at the Vatican, which included a reflection on Adam and Eve and the garments of light they are given by God.

Sacks described how the Hebrew words for “garments of skin” are almost indistinguishable from the Hebrew words for “garments of light.” Second-century sage Rabbi Meir read the text as saying that God made for Adam and Eve “garments of light” before expelling them from the Garden.

“So Leonard Cohen’s words ‘rags of light’ takes on meaning . . . we are at once beautiful in our God-given clothes, thus ‘dressed to kill,’ but also mindful of the long history of human violence, from Cain and Abel to the present, where we seem to do so much killing,” said Bolen.

Jodorkovsky added: “Rabbi Meir, as a mystic of those times, was trying to teach that before sending them out of the garden of Eden, God wanted to protect Adam and Eve from the imperfection of the world — and light is a symbol of God. So according to this interpretation, God protected them, and then he sent them out.”

Cohen is reminding us that we have a little bit of God with us — the light is there, added the rabbi. “We all have the capacity to kill and we all have the capacity to find the light, to find God, and it is our decision. We are all ‘dressed to kill,’ but we are all dressed with light, too . . . and it’s our decision to be able to ‘end the night,’” Jodorkovsky said.

Jodorkovsky then reflected on Cohen’s song Anthem — with its refrain “Ring the bells that still can ring / Forget your perfect offering / There is a crack in everything / That’s how the light gets in.”

“Anthem is a psalm, it is a cry about an imperfect world — with injustice, with war, with blood, with corruption. But it is also the recognition that imperfection is necessary as a condition for redemption,” he said.

“The broken is also holy,” said the rabbi, pointing to the biblical account of Moses coming down from Mount Sinai with the tablets to find the people worshipping the golden calf. Those first tablets were broken in a moment of crisis, but God required that the broken pieces also be kept treasured in the Ark of the Covenant.

“We sometimes are so concentrated on the problems of the world. But what I hear from Leonard Cohen is this is part of the

human condition. We have to try and repair that for sure, but we have to think on all the good possibilities we have. We live in a great world, with so, so many people doing good things — and we have to remember that... that’s the key for redemption and for salvation.”

Bolen then explored the song Come Healing, from Cohen’s 2012 CD, Old Ideas. The song is a litany of where we and the world need healing, Bolen said, listing: “Come healing of the body, come healing of the mind, come healing of the spirit, come healing of the limb, come healing of the heart, come healing of the altar, come healing of the name.”

“The song not only calls forth healing, it also suggests that this healing, this mercy is also offered to us, and offered lavishly,” said the bishop, reflecting on the verse, “Behold the gates of mercy in arbitrary space, and none of us deserving the cruelty or grace.”

“Cohen certainly understands and names that life is harsh and cruel and broken in many ways — many ways chosen and not chosen — and it is also graced: mercy pours down upon us.”

In particular, Bolen reflected on the phrase “come healing of the altar / come healing of the name,” saying: “I hear that quite strongly as an invitation to heal our places of worship, our communities of faith, our way of speaking about God, our way of speaking the name.”

The bishop added, “As a Catholic I hear this song as an invitation to healing within our religious tradition — our history of anti-Semitism, the history of our relations with indigenous people, the sexual abuse crisis. All these come to mind in terms of where we need healing.”

Jodorkovsky added: “I interpret this ‘healing of the altar,’ this ‘healing of the name’ as another commandment, and this is a commandment of trying to teach and show the world how wonderful and how important religion is. We need to work hard on that, and show the world that it is true there are people that are using religion for bad things, but religion is also responsible for most of the good things in the world. This for me is ‘healing of the altar and healing of the name.’”

The rabbi then explored Born in Chains, recorded in 2012, when Cohen was 80 years old, after reportedly working 40 years on the

song, in which he tells his own history of growth and transformation, using the image of the Exodus, and the move from slavery in Egypt, through the Red Sea to freedom.

“He uses religion to tell his own story, his personal story. I identified in the first three paragraphs, different stages of the history of the Jewish people. The first one is slavery. And he may be talking about his personal slavery . . . and with the miracle comes the realization and the revelation, he is able to recognize the ‘word of words’ and the ‘measure of all measures’ and he says ‘blessed is the name, the name be blessed / written on my heart in burning letters’ — like the tablets were written with burning letters. This is a revelation. This is a moment when he encounters God.”

Bolen then led a reflection on Cohen’s well-known Hallelujah. “It’s a celebration, and it’s a lament. Its plaintive refrain is etched in the minds and hearts of millions of people,” said Bolen.

“It has to be my favourite opening verse of a song: ‘Now I’ve heard there was a secret chord that David played, and it pleased the Lord, but you don’t really care for music, do you? It goes like this: the fourth, the fifth, the minor fall, the major lift, the baffled king composing Hallelujah,’” he described.

“Here he draws on the tangled life and character of King David. David becomes a way into the complexity of the human condition and human love. The song takes us to places that penetrate into the heart of the human condition, and it does it with a disarming honesty.”

The song reveals that God is in the midst of all our brokenness and all our joys, added Bolen. “In this song I hear Cohen offering his response to the human condition. It’s beautiful and breathtaking, its cruel and harsh, its marked by human sin and it’s touched by grace. It’s a gift, but not an easy gift. Sometimes it’s a tormenting gift, but the final response is Hallelujah — it’s a response out of a deep engagement with human life.”

Jodorkovsky noted that in Judaism, the translation of Hallelujah is not simply to praise God, but to invite others to praise God with us.

When Cohen sings the song, the Hallelujah he offers is passionate and filled with meaning, the bishop added.

Parkland Restorative Justice hires co-ordinator

By **Franceline Doderai**

PRINCE ALBERT — Parkland Restorative Justice (PRJ) last year hired Heather Driedger to co-ordinate its two programs: Person to

Person (P2P), a prison visitation program, and Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA), a re-integration program for sex offenders.

Based in Prince Albert and

serving both the city and the outlying communities, PRJ is supported by different faith communities who share the belief that restorative justice provides healing, helps reintegrate inmates and keeps our communities safe.

Driedger brings valuable work experience to her assignment as well as a steadfast commitment to restorative justice.

“The work of PRJ is important, community building work,” she says. “Crime is a break in relationships and communities. Understanding that crime and the justice system are complex, I have found approaching these complexities best unfolds through a restorative lens rather than a punitive one.”

Driedger believes restorative justice “allows more creativity for approaching repair, instead of blanketing offenders with pre-determined punishments and leaving victims’ voices silenced and their needs unaddressed. Of course, there is a place for the traditional

way of sentencing offenders, especially high-risk offenders, but even in these cases, restorative justice can be utilized afterward as part of the offender’s rehabilitation and the victim’s road to healing. P2P and CoSA are both strong examples of restorative justice being used with high-risk offenders.”

Parkland Restorative Justice has a proud history of work in the restorative justice field dating back to the 1970s when the local Mennonite community started P2P at the Saskatchewan Penitentiary to provide visits for inmates who were not receiving regular visitation. P2P has experienced steady growth throughout the years and, by the 1990s, there were consistently 50-60 inmates being visited on a monthly basis by volunteers.

It became evident to the co-ordinator and volunteers of the

P2P program that there needed to be more reintegration programs for offenders in the community. The CoSA model was adopted in 1997 by staff and volunteers of P2P to help reintegrate offenders back into the community. In 2014, increased support across denominational lines led to the transition of P2P and CoSA programming no longer being under the umbrella of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan but under the formation of a new, non-profit, Parkland Restorative Justice. This formation was intended to better reflect the variety of partners involved in the programming and to grow restorative justice programming in Prince Albert.

Today, there are more than 60 volunteers in the P2P program. Volunteers visit monthly for two

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Fournier

PARKLAND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE — From left: Iris Kiryk, from the Ukrainian Catholic community; Heather Driedger, PRJ co-ordinator; Jacquelyn Janzen, chairperson and member of the Mennonite community; Franceline Doderai, secretary and member of Sacred Heart Parish; Velma Harder, from the Mennonite community; Rev. Michael Averyt, Roman Catholic chaplain at SaskPen; Rev. Ryan Siemens, pastor of Grace Mennonite Church; and Rev. Dave Whalley, pastor of Shellbrook’s United Church community.

Day of the Lord will come like a thief

Continued from page 1

the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise.’ Those who started this archdiocese 100 years ago were faced with the same mystery. The advent of 100 years ago held the same proclamation. Those here 100 years ago would not feel very much out of place. The only difference is the date and the circumstances in which we live today. Peter asked, ‘since all will be dissolved what kind of persons should we be?’”

“The celebration of the centennial is a continual celebration,” Gagnon said. “As it comes to an end we are challenged to launch

this new ship of faith on new currents. This is our task and this is why I have called for an archdiocesan synod.”

In November the archbishop announced that the Archdiocese of Winnipeg would undertake the first synod in its history. The synod process will be undertaken over a two-year time frame beginning in the spring, and will determine future directions for the archdiocese.

“The past year has been successful as a centennial observance,” Gagnon said, as he provided a few recollections beginning with the Jubilee Year Indulgence in which the archbishop had invited the faithful to partake by

visiting one of four designated churches in the archdiocese, including Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Church in Camperville, Man., 420 km north of Winnipeg. The others were St. Augustine of Canterbury in Brandon, St.-Francois Xavier Church in St.-Francois Xavier and St. Mary’s Cathedral in Winnipeg. On Oct. 10 two busloads of pilgrims visited all four locations in one day. “And many others did so on their own,” Gagnon said, including what he described as “an amazing number” in rural Manitoba.

The archbishop said the Centennial Mass May 3 at the MTS Centre in Winnipeg, with 12,000 in attendance, “was a remarkable event of diversity and unity. The sacrament of confirmation (conferred on 800 candidates during the mass) brought emphasis to the importance of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christians.”

The archbishop also recalled the evening of prayers in October honouring the communities of religious women and men who have served the archdiocese for the past 100 years, and the three-day academic symposium at St. Paul’s College examining the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, also held in October.

“And tonight we install our Centennial Icon,” Gagnon announced. The Centenary Icon of the Holy Family, created to commemorate the Jubilee Centennial of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, had toured throughout the archdiocese during the centennial year and was placed on permanent display at the cathedral that evening. “I am deeply grateful to the Knights of Columbus and the many local councils who transported the icon and cared for it as it travelled,” the archbishop said.

“It is my hope this centennial year will always remind us of Christian family life in our church. We go to meet Christ as he is waiting for us at the very doorstep of our second 100 years.”

Christians most in need

Continued from page 1

government has shown since the first day it came into office, one of great transparency and a desire to listen to Canadians,” Leduc said.

Though Canadian governments have set up matching relief funds previously, they have usually been in response to a catastrophe such as earthquakes in Haiti or Nepal or typhoons in the Philippines. This is the first such fund created for an ongoing humanitarian crisis. Bibeau said the crisis represents the largest in terms of refugees since the Second World War.

Hétu said Christians in Syria face additional hardship in the region. “In the first two years, Christians were simply victims of war like everybody else,” he said. “As the conflict has degenerated, Christians have become a target because of their faith.”

Government aid, whether from Europe or North America, treats “everyone as equals,” and makes need the “most important approach,” said Hétu.

CCODP has raised \$2.7 million for Syria relief, of which \$2 million is eligible for the match-

ing funds program, Leduc said.

CNEWA Canada has raised \$800,000 in eligible funds, according to Hétu. “If you put Christians as a particular target group, that doesn’t fit the government agenda.”

However, for CCODP, Christians are often among those most in need.

“Our approach and policy is as it relates to the conflict has always been to focus our efforts on areas and individuals and communities that are the most vulnerable, and are suffering the most as a result of this. In that case the Christian communities are very high on the agenda,” said Leduc. “I think it’s important to remember this is a conflict that will continue to leave long-lasting damages on the ground and it will be an area that will require our concentration, our help, our assistance and our efforts for not only the months to come, but for most likely several years going forward.”

Though CNEWA and Aid to the Church in Need are both eligible for matching funds, Hétu said both agencies focus on Christians, though the programs churches in the region sponsor help everyone regardless of religious faith.

Winnipeg man remanded into custody

By **Richard Fréchette**

WINNIPEG — As a result of a routine audit by the Archdiocese of St. Boniface, it was discovered that over \$400,000 of parish funds have been misappropriated since 2009. The audit results were reported to the Winnipeg Police Service. After investigating, the police have charged Leo McCaughan, 39, with fraud over \$5,000, theft over \$5,000, and falsification of books and documents. He was remanded into custody.

The Archdiocese of St. Boniface has been working closely with St. Bernadette Parish and the Winnipeg Police Service. Between March of 2009 and December of 2015, McCaughan was employed as the administrator at the Parish of St. Bernadette on Cottonwood Road in the City of Winnipeg. During this time frame, he was entrusted with numerous duties which included managing the finances of the church. It’s alleged that he exploited his position for his own financial gain by embezzling and withdrawing over \$400,000. He then covered up his actions by entering false information into the general ledger.

Following the discovery of the missing funds, the archdiocese

has issued an audit report outlining recommendations to establish internal controls. The archdiocese is working closely with the new pastor and the parish finance committee to implement safeguards to ensure that parish assets are protected. In the past two years, the archdiocese has been conducting routine audits of all parishes in the archdiocese. The archdiocese had established, 10 years ago, a series of Best Practices for Parish Administration (revised in 2015) that are available upon request.

The Archdiocese of St. Boniface is deeply saddened for the parishioners of St. Bernadette. People have donated funds to the parish in good faith for the good of the parish. These funds would have been directed toward the parish’s normal operations and for its mission of helping the poor and other works of charity. Additionally, a significant portion of the funds raised for the renovation of the church building are missing. This is a major setback for the people of St. Bernadette. However, the archdiocese, the new pastor, the deacon and the staff are committed to working together to heal the parish’s wounds.



Tim Yaworski

BISHOPS’ LEVEE — Bishop Bryan Bayda of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon and Bishop Donald Bolen of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon joined members of Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus assemblies to host the annual Bishops’ Levee on New Year’s Day at the Cathedral of the Holy Family in Saskatoon. Open to all, the afternoon social gathering was an opportunity to exchange greetings and best wishes for 2016.

Anne Frank’s diary now belongs to the world

By Cathy Lynn Grossman
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Will we come to see Anne Frank differently now that her iconic diary is in the public domain?

Already scholars in Europe are posting it for academics — and maybe new translations, according to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz. It’s the result of a court battle by the copyright-holding foundation, which ostensibly wanted to extend copyright to give royalties to charity. The foundation lost. And it lost more than control over money.

It can lose control of a carefully honed image of the young girl, universally mourned after dying in the Holocaust.

Haaretz quotes one of the first to publish the diary, Isabelle Attard, a French Parliament member whose grandparents died in the Holocaust. Attard said in a statement on her website: “Seventy years after the author’s death, the whole world can use, translate and interpret these works, and use them to create new ones.”

New ones. Think about that. Translation has power.

Consider the knockdown,

Cathy Lynn Grossman is a senior national correspondent for RNS.



Courtesy of the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation

ANNE FRANK’S DIARY — Anne Frank, photographed at school before her family went into hiding from the Nazis in 1942.

drag-out battles over biblical translation. Centuries ago, a translation out of sync with the view in power could get you burned at the stake. There are messages packed with theological meaning in every word choice in a Bible translation. A few years ago, there was a word-by-word showdown over a contemporary language version of the New International Version of the Bible.

“Today’s NIV” was an epic bust.

The diary of Anne Frank isn’t religious holy writ but it is cultural scripture in a way.

And the translations have long been subject to debate.

The Anne Frank House official site details three major texts that have been the basis of translations worldwide. The first, Anne began at age 13 when the family moved into a cramped annex over

a warehouse in Amsterdam. At 15 she began revising to reflect her more literary and mature voice in the months before the Nazis drove the family members out of hiding and dispersed them to concentration camps. The final, and best-known, text was a selectively edited melding of the two by her father, Otto Frank, the sole survivor of the family.

In her 2009 book *Anne Frank: The Book, The Life, The Afterlife*, Francine Prose observed that Otto Frank had originally excised Anne’s barbed remarks about her mother and another family hiding with the Franks. Those entries, which Prose said also reveal “the extent of Anne’s curiosity about sexuality and about her body — don’t substantially change our perception of her.” However, Prose said, the battle over the diary obscured Anne’s “considerable skill as a writer.”

And there also have been lengthy battles over perceptions of Anne’s Jewishness arising from the Otto Frank text, which served as the basis for Broadway and Hollywood versions.

The version that became the Tony Award-winning Broadway play in 1956 was excoriated by Jewish novelist Cynthia Ozick. According to *Jewish Week*, Ozick said the script “infantilized, Americanized, falsified, (and) kitschified” the diary to the point

that “it would have been better for the diary to have been burned.”

Frank Rich, writing for *The New York Times*, said it “did remove much of the diary’s modest Jewish content in the interest of ‘universalizing’ its story — and this was in line with Otto Frank’s wishes that his daughter be memorialized as an affirmative figure of hope rather than a grim Nazi casualty.”

Should we fear for our idea of Anne — seven decades after her death in Bergen-Belsen in 1945?

What happens when new translators — with a viewpoint of 2015, and with no fatherly or financial investment of the image of Anne Frank — delve into the Dutch?

Would her death matter less if she were not the universal saint of the Broadway and film version? Would we forget our internalized ideas of the big-eyed girl, writing that she still believed in human goodness, even as we, the readers, knew the horror closing in on her?

No.

New translations can only make her more real. We will come to know her as a complex, acerbic, defiant teen with literary dreams. And we may know her more as a Jew at heart who understood that to be driven to look with questioning eyes is one of God’s holy gifts.

So, translate away, find depth and richness and maybe foibles and the crankiness of a 15-year-old no matter how intellectually precocious. Give the world new perspectives on Anne Frank.

She’ll triumph still.

Her text is foundational to our way of grasping the import of the Holocaust — six million faces, seen in one.

Volunteers establish friendships

Continued from page 7

hours each time and establish friendships that help the inmates recognize their value as human beings and help them reintegrate successfully when released from prison. Both visitors and inmates are enriched by the experience P2P offers them. Highlights of their visits include a Christmas banquet in December and a barbecue in June, paid for by the inmates themselves in a show of appreciation to their visitors.

The CoSA program matches one released inmate with three or more volunteer support members who meet regularly, formally and informally, to establish a support system for this ex-inmate who would otherwise have little or no social support on the outside and would be prone to reoffend and return to prison. Research (Wilson, Cortoni and McWhinnie, 2009) demonstrates that sexual reoffending rates for men who participate in CoSA are 80 per cent lower than for men who do not participate.

Driedger can be contacted at 306-763-6224 or parklandrestorativejustice@gmail.com

Donkeys aside, some feast days are worth revisiting

By Caitlin Ward

My sister has been researching medieval saints’ days with an eye to start celebrating them in the traditional manner. Recently she alerted me to a long-forgotten and fantastic ecclesiastical feast. Well, we’re not sure just how ecclesiastical it was: fantastic, definitely, and celebrated, certainly, but there’s some historical disagreement about how seriously it was taken. Its significance changed multiple times between its inception sometime

became attached to the Feast of Fools, a medieval bit of tomfoolery taking place early in January and tied to a lot of apparently very scandalous pre-Christian rituals. Now, what these scandalous rituals are, those pesky French theologians were not particularly interested in detailing, if my cursory research is anything to go by. But my sister’s newly discovered feast was a casualty of this crackdown.

The feast I speak of, if you’re curious, is known as *Festum Asinorum*. Or, in the vernacular: the Feast of Asses.

I know. Even without the modern double entendre, it’s probably a bit hilarious. A feast for donkeys — a mass said for donkeys, too, and in some places, a donkey was brought to stand at the right of the altar. Historical sources say that it was “possibly a wooden donkey,” which seems to imply that possibly, it was not. And it was standing to the right of the altar.

Yes, ha ha. Live donkeys in church. Before we get carried away in our disdain for our religious forebears, though, let’s remember that we belong to a church that until relatively recently celebrated the Feast of the Circumcision. Because that’s a perfectly normal name for a day, and a perfectly not weird thing to celebrate. Or, at least, we thought so until 1960.

These days, it’s “the commemoration of the conferral of the Most Holy Name of Jesus,” because now we’re thinking that the naming is more important

than the circumcision. Perhaps the other was simply a hangover from a stranger time in history, and we’re all far too modern for that nonsense.

But let’s face it, “the Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord, is the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God, and also the commemoration of the conferral of the Most Holy Name of Jesus,” is kind of a mouthful for one day. And you know what? It’s also not as interesting. You start “the Octave Day . . .” to someone, you’ve lost them four words in. You say “the Feast of the Circumcision,” though, and you’ve got an attentive (if incredulous) audience. Of course, we oughtn’t choose the name based solely on how easily we can startle and/or scandalize non-Catholics, but it *is* an entertaining side-effect.

The thing is, in the effort to be far too modern for all this nonsense, I feel as if it’s become all too easy to misplace a fundamental aspect of how we experience and live our faith. Obviously, the less tangible aspects of Catholicism — the prayer, the philosophy, the theology — are fundamental to its expression. But just as much, we are a faith of ritual and sacrament. We are a faith of feast and fasting. We are a faith of corporal acts of mercy. Catholicism, ultimately, is a profoundly physical thing. The expression of our faith is a reflection of our faith: the divine and the human fused in the body of Jesus, and the ethereal and physical fused in the Body of Christ.

It’s about the naming of our saviour *and* the circumcision of a baby.

OK. I realize that using Jan. 1 as my example to belabour this point borders on absurd, if we haven’t crossed over into madness already, but perhaps that’s the point. Once upon a time we were a church that brought live donkeys into the sanctuary. That’s a fantastic thing and I love it. We may never get a full-blown revival of *Festum Asinorum*, and perhaps we shouldn’t try, but I’ve got half a mind to resurrect some of those old feast days. Neither my sister nor I will try to bring a donkey into the sanctuary this Jan. 14, but rest assured we’ll find a way to mark that day. We will have our feasts.

*Orientis partibus
Adventavit Asinus
Pulcher et fortissimus
Sarcinis aptissimus.*

*Hez, Sire Asnes, car chantez,
Belle bouche rechignez,
Vous aurez du foin assez
Et de l’avoine a plantez.*

**Translated
(by Timothy Crowley)**

From the Eastern lands
The Ass is come,
Beautiful and very brave,
Well fitted to bear burdens.

Up! Sir Ass, and sing.
Open your pretty mouth.
Hay will be yours in plenty,
And oats in abundance.

A Hymn for the Feast of Asses (11th Century)

in the 6th century and its ultimate condemnation by 15th-century French theologians. How reverently the feast was treated varied greatly from era to era as well, it seems. In the early days, it seems to have been part of a larger morality play involving Jewish prophets and gentile philosophers. Later, it became its own feast, marked on Jan. 14, and it commemorated the Holy Family’s flight into Egypt.

In the end, and likely why it was eventually suppressed, it

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

Short takes on some mighty fine documentaries

Screenings & Meanings

Gerald Schmitz



Amid the holiday season's flashier titles documentaries get little if any theatre time. So to start off the new year here are five that should not be overlooked. While these may not be easy to find, they are worth keeping in mind and searching out.

Becoming Bulletproof (U.S. 2014)

Who says people with disabilities can't make a rip-roaring western? Premiering at the October 2014 Vancouver film festival, director Michael Barnett's award-winning account of how they did it is a sheer delight. The non-profit organization behind this collaborative filmmaking project is called Zeno Mountain Farm, which operates programs nationwide. Each year it runs an "actors camp" in Los Angeles where over the course of several weeks disabled participants come together to produce an original short film.

Becoming Bulletproof chronicles the spirited efforts of the group that assembled to make a western "bulletproof" with the help of the Zeno Mountain team

who has cerebral palsy, and Jeremy, 28, who suffers from Williams syndrome and is the hero of the piece. Another main cast member is Judi, 53, a camp veteran who has acted in previous films. Sure there are challenges (what film set is problem free?), but these actors are not only inspiring, they are really engaging and fun to watch. For more details including the potential for community-based screenings, check out: <http://www.becoming-bulletproofmovie.com/>

Unbranded (U.S. 2015)

Winner of the audience award at last spring's Toronto HotDocs festival, director Phillip Baribeau recounts another kind of real-life western saga. It follows a 4,800-kilometre journey on horseback across the United States from the Mexican to the Canadian borders — the brainchild of Ben Masters, a recent graduate of Texas A&M University who recruited three other college buddies to saddle up alongside. We're not talking ordinary horses but 16 wild mustangs more or less broken in for the purpose. The foursome want to

make a point about the situation facing wild horses protected under federal law since 1971. Their numbers have become an increasing cause of concern. (Some 50,000 horses and burros are currently in holding facilities.)

The young cowboys get valuable advice from an old hand, Val, but mostly they are on their own encountering a host of obstacles and challenges (i.e., crossing the Grand Canyon and mountain ranges) that

test their endurance and bonds of friendship. Every day is an adventure that includes the unex-

pected such as when a favourite horse is injured and has to be replaced. They also acquire a burro named Donquito that becomes a character in its own right. Over 500 hours of footage has been whittled down to 106 minutes that is both a candid story of four young guys on a mission and a visual tribute to the importance of nature's remaining wide-open spaces and the unbranded wild creatures that inhabit them. The film is available for purchase. See: <http://watch.unbrandedthefilm.com/>

The Russian Woodpecker (Ukraine/UK/U.S. 2015)

Chad Gracia's engrossing film has garnered a slew of awards since receiving the grand jury prize for world cinema documentary at Sundance and is currently available on some video-on-demand platforms (see: <http://www.russianwoodpecker.com/>). Chernobyl in northern Ukraine is infamous as the site of the world's worst nuclear plant meltdown in 1986 — the surrounding area a highly toxic no-go zone — but was it an accident? That is the question posed by a most unusual interlocutor, Fedor Alexandrovich, a dishevelled Ukrainian artist cum investigator who was born and raised in Chernobyl and carries the effects of its radioactive cloud in his own body.

What provoked Alexandrovich's suspicions was the proximity to Chernobyl of a more expensive if lesser-known ill-fated Cold War Soviet-era installation called the "Duga." This was a giant radio-transmitter tower supposedly designed to interfere with the communications of western governments and which emitted a stream of rapid-fire noises (hence the "woodpecker" allusion in the title). Alexandrovich believes that the Duga was about to be exposed as a colossal failure, jeopardizing the careers of its high-ranking promoters in the Soviet hierarchy, and that the Chernobyl disaster conveniently led to its abandonment.

The thought that something so dangerously extreme might have happened on orders from higher ups in Moscow seems diabolically far-fetched. But Alexandrovich and cinematographer associate Artem Ryzhykov doggedly pursue the possibility, although they don't get much satisfaction from some of the former Soviet officials they manage to interview. There's no smoking gun of a monstrous coverup. What does seem plausible though is that a Kremlin elite cared more about its position than the health and safety of Ukrainians. Given the tensions between Ukraine and Russia these days there may be some justification for Alexandrovich's worries about his politically charged accusations putting his family at risk.



Ben Masters

UNBRANDED — Unbranded is the winner of the audience award at last spring's Toronto HotDocs festival. It follows a 4,800-kilometre journey on horseback across the United States from the Mexican to the Canadian borders — the brainchild of Ben Masters, a recent graduate of Texas A&M University who recruited three other college buddies to saddle up alongside.

Something Better to Come (Denmark/Poland 2014)

Also out of Russia, here is a story that is even more unbelievably true. A co-production of the Danish and Polish film institutes, intrepid Polish writer-director Hanna Polak spent 14 years following the fate of Yula, beginning in 2000 as a 10-year-old eking out a precarious raw subsistence inside Moscow's *svalka*, an enormous waste landfill — the largest in Europe — situated just 21 kilometres from the Kremlin. After Yula's father died, she and her alcoholic mother became homeless so like others on society's margins they moved to this harsh twilight zone, especially brutal in winter, where the only source of income is scavenging through trash for potential items of value. The dump has an informal sort of mafia running illegal recycling operations with cheap vodka as the currency of choice. It's a Hobbesian world where life is nasty, brutish and usually short.

Given that the site is heavily guarded against trespassers Ms. Polak had to take repeated risks to try to chronicle Yula's story, often filming secretly and illegally, coping with some very rough threatening circumstances. From childhood on, addictions and violence including rapes are prevalent. The security police sometimes set fire to the makeshift shelters of the dump's unofficial residents. The years depicted coincide with those of Vladimir Putin (referred to as "Mr. KGB") in power and show a bleak societal underside in striking contrast to his bellicose grand ambitions.

Yula is pregnant at 16, giving up the baby at birth, but she is not doomed. Indeed she and her mother finally succeed in getting a small apartment in a housing estate. At 18 she gets a job, telling Polak, "It wasn't my fate to die in the dump." By age 23 things are looking up. She has a partner and has given birth to a daughter as if to prove the words

of Maxim Gorky that "everyone . . . lives for something better to come." Still she knows that most of the people Polak filmed in the landfill never left and are probably dead.

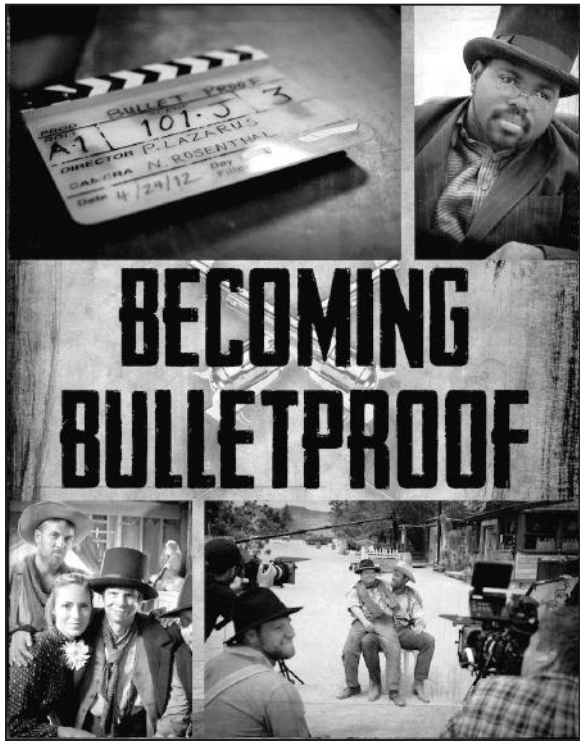
If Linklater's Boyhood was a unique fictional journey 12 years in the making, this 14-year documentary project starting in girlhood is an equally remarkable achievement. For more information and availability visit: <http://hannapolakfilms.com/>

The Tainted Veil (United Arab Emirates/Denmark/Egypt/France/Morocco/Syria/Turkey/UK 2015)

This film doesn't deal with the niqab, the most restrictive form of headdress for Muslim women, controversy over the wearing of which marred the recent Canadian election campaign. But it is a thought-provoking exploration of the much more common female head covering, the hijab, its religious and cultural roots, and the range of perspectives held by Muslim women and girls regarding the reasons for their choices whether to wear it or not. Is this piece of cloth "tainted" because it has been associated with the oppressive pressures of male-dominated societies and patriarchal traditions? Or can it be a freely chosen expression of personal faith, a woman's right to adopt?

Co-directors Nahla Al Fahad, Mazen al Khayrat and Ovidio Salazar include interviews with male religious authorities and scholars on the meaning of the veil past and present. However, it is the women who are being judged for their personal choices, and their divergent views on what the veil means to them, that are the most compelling. Viewers will come away with an appreciation of how Muslim women feel as well as a better understanding of the diversity of Muslim practice around the world.

The Tainted Veil was released in the U.S. in December. More information at: <http://www.thetaintedveil.com/>



AWARD-WINNING FILM — This is the poster for *Becoming Bulletproof*, a film that documents the making of an original western film called *Bulletproof*. *Bulletproof* features actors with and without disabilities who meet every year at Zeno Mountain Farm (ZMF) to write, produce, and star in original short films.

and using as sets a nearby Pioneer town theme park. Two of the gunslinging stars are A.J., 32,

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God is intimately interested in human connection

Liturgy and Life

Gertrude Rompré



There's a line in Richard Linklater's film *Before Sunrise* where the character, Céline, proclaims her belief that, "if there's any kind of God it wouldn't be in any of us, not you or me, but just in this little space in-between." Now, hers isn't a fully Christian view — we believe in the Divine spark within each one of us — but it does point to something deeply important: the fact that God is intimately interested in connection. God cares about humans connecting with each other and God cares about connecting with us. This week's readings abound with examples of God wanting to connect with humanity in a profound way. They also show us what happens if we choose to say "yes" to the call to enter into relationship with God, each other and the world in which we live.

The first reading brings us back to Jerusalem at a time when the people are rebuilding the city and returning from exile. They've had a hard time of it and are just beginning to see hope. Central to that hope is the Law that the priest Ezra brings forward to the assembly. It's interesting to see how much attention is paid to this proclamation of the

Rompré is the director of Mission and Ministry at St. Thomas More College in Saskatoon.

Law. We hear that a special platform was built for Ezra to stand on. We read that the people received the Law with great rejoicing and even wept when they heard the words of the Law. Once they heard the Law they celebrated with a great feast.

Why all the fuss? Because the Law in Hebrew Scripture isn't just a list of rules to be followed, it's a symbol of relationship, of a people's deep bond with their God. The Law is an articulation of how God's people are to live in response to their covenant relationship with God. The Law is like a wedding band, showing the people that they are wedded to a God who promises to be with them through thick and thin. That's why the psalmist can sing that the "law of the Lord . . . revives the soul!" The Law reveals connection.

If the first reading speaks of the connection between God and God's people, then the reading from Corinthians is the classic passage about human interconnectivity and

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time January 24, 2016	Nehemiah 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10 Psalm 19 1 Corinthians 12:12-30 Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21
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how God makes that connection possible. In all of our diversity, we are one body. We are made into one body by our common union, or communion, with Christ. God is in the "space in-between" each of us, as Céline reminds us. The Spirit within each of us connects us and becomes the Spirit between us. And because this is the case, we are able to celebrate our differences, the variety of gifts we bring to the whole Body of Christ.

During this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we do well to reflect on the one Spirit that weaves us into one body. While we know that the divisions within the Body

of Christ are still very real, we also know that the Spirit is alive and at work in each of our respective communions. What would it be like if we were to see each Christian family as members of the one body, just like St. Paul did in his letter to the Corinthians? Perhaps it would go something like this: "Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the United Church would say, 'Because I am not Mennonite, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the Catholic Church would say, 'Because I am not a Baptist, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body!" May our shared prayer for unity deepen our commitment to each other as sisters and brothers in the one Body of Christ.

This week's gospel, too, is about connection. The evangelist, Luke, plays with words by addressing his gospel to the most excellent Theophilus, the lover of God. From the very beginning, this gospel presumes relationship and that the reader is in love with God. This context of connection, then, colours the rest of the reading.

In some ways, the gospel is about loving relationship that cannot be contained. Entering into this covenant with God, allowing ourselves to be connected to the Body of Christ, triggers an overflow of God's life into the world. That's the good news that Jesus is talking about, that's the reason Jesus can say he has been called to bring release to the captives and sight to the blind. Jesus knows that God's love cannot be contained but that it spills over into all of creation and changes things!

May this week of prayer deepen our sense of connection with God and each other. May we celebrate the Spirit of God in-between us that links the Spirit of God within each one of us, and then refuses to be contained. May all of our relationships proclaim the Good News of God's abundant and overflowing love for us!

Make an inner pilgrimage into the desert of your own silence

In Exile

Ron Rolheiser, OMI



The Belgian spiritual writer Bieke Vandekerckhove comes by her wisdom honestly. She didn't learn what she shares from a book or even primarily from the good example of others. She learned what she shares through the crucible of a unique suffering, being hit at the tender age of 19 with a terminal disease that promised not just an early death but also a complete breakdown and humiliation of her body enroute to that death.

Her attempt to cope with her situation drove her in many directions, initially to anger and hopelessness but eventually to monasteries, to the wisdom of monasticism and, under its direction, into the deep well of silence, that desert that lurks so threateningly inside each of us. Away from all the noises of the world, in the silence of her own soul, inside the chaos of her raging, restless insides she found the wisdom and strength not just to cope with her illness but to also find a deeper meaning and joy in her life.

There are, as John Updike poetically puts it, secrets that are

hidden from health, though, as Vandekerckhove makes evident, they can be uncovered in silence. However uncovering the secrets that silence has to teach us is not easy. Silence, until properly befriended, is scary and the process of befriending it is the soul's equivalent of crossing a hot desert. Our insides don't easily become calm, restlessness doesn't easily turn into solitude, and the temptation to turn to the outside world for consolation doesn't easily give way to the idea of quiet. But there's a peace and a meaning that can only be found inside the desert of our own chaotic and raging insides. The deep wells of consolation lie at the end of an inner journey through heat, thirst, and dead ends that must be pushed through with dogged fidelity. And, as for any epic journey, the task is not for the faint of heart.

Here's how Vandekerckhove describes one aspect of the journey: "Inner noise can be quite exhausting. That's probably why so many flee to the seduction of exterior background noises. They prefer to have the noise just wash over them. But if you want to grow spiritually, you have to stay inside of the room of your spiritual raging and persevere. You have to continue to sit silently and honestly in God's presence until the raging quiets down and your heart gradually becomes cleansed

and quieted. Silence forces us to take stock of our actual manner of being human. And then we hit a wall, a dead point. No matter what we do, no matter what we try, something in us continues to feel lost and estranged, despite the myriad ways of society to meet our human needs. Silence confronts us with an unbearable bottomlessness, and there appears no way out. We have no choice but to align ourselves with the religious depth in us."

There's a profound truth: Silence confronts us with an unbearable bottomlessness and we have no choice but to align ourselves with the religious depth inside us. Sadly, for most of us, we will learn this only by bitter conscription when we have to actually face our own death. In the abandonment of dying, stripped of all options and outlets we will, despite struggle and bitterness, have to, in the words of Karl Rahner, allow ourselves to sink into the incomprehensibility of God. Moreover, before this surrender is made, our lives will always remain somewhat unstable and confusing and there will always be dark, inner corners of the soul that scare us.

But a journey into silence can

take us beyond our dark fears and shine healing light into our darkest corners. But, as Vandekerckhove and other spiritual writers point out, that peace is usually found only after we have reached an impasse, a "dead point" where the only thing we can do is "to pierce the negative."

In her book *The Taste of Silence*, Vandekerckhove recounts how an idealistic friend shared with her his dream of going off by himself into some desert to explore spirituality. Her prompt reaction was not much to his liking: "A person is ready to go to any kind of desert. He's willing to sit anywhere, as long as it's not his own desert." How true. We forever hanker after ide-

alized deserts and avoid our own.

The spiritual journey, the pilgrimage, the Camino we most need to make doesn't require an airline ticket, though an experienced guide is recommended. The most spiritually rewarding trip we can make is an inner pilgrimage into the desert of our own silence.

As human beings we are constitutively social. This means, as the Bible so bluntly puts it, that it is not good for the human person to be alone. We are meant to be in community with others. Heaven will be a communal experience, but, on the road there, there's a certain deep inner work that can only be done alone, in silence, away from the noise of the world.

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. Follow Father Ron on Facebook: www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser

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As Syrian refugees arrive, a reflection on past experience

By Michael Dougherty

A collective shudder went through the small group as a Winnipeg police car approached along Broadway near the Legislative Building. The wary newly arrived Chilean refugees had been living under a brutal military dictatorship since the U.S. assisted military coup d’etat that overthrew the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende two years earlier on Sept. 11, 1973. Summer of 1975 had seen the first trickle begin arriving in Manitoba as part of a wave of federal government sponsored victims of state violence.

I stepped into the street and waved the police car to a stop, explaining the fear the new arrivees held of police because of their lived experience under the Chilean dictatorship. The officers got out of their patrol car and warmly greeted the newest Manitobans to help allay their concern.

Michael Dougherty is a member of the co-ordinating committee of Yukon Cares, a community group sponsoring a Syrian family of 11 soon to arrive in Whitehorse, Yukon.

By October 1975 close to 500 Chilean refugees had come to call Manitoba their home. By the summer of 1976 this number would almost double. Responding to the pressing needs of the arriving refugees the Canadian Chilean Working Group of Manitoba formed in 1975 with the generous assistance of mainly local Roman Catholic and United churches. Then Sister Marjorie Beaucage and I co-chaired it and Rev. Hugo Unruh served as the secretary-treasurer. Practically, my task through this ecumenical effort was to assist in the early phase of the Chileans’ adjustment to Canadian life. I accompanied them to immigration interviews, served a translator, and among other jobs took them on orientation walks like the one described just to get them out of the old hotel near the CNR station on Main Street where they had been billeted while dealing with settlement issues and awaiting apartments.

The Bosco Centre at 87 Isabel became our hub and storage point for clothing, furniture and household supplies. It also provided initial office space for the bilingual program co-ordinator whom we hired directly out of the arriving Chilean community of refugees.

Right away problems surfaced with ill-prepared immigration officials seemingly concerned more with departmental bottom lines that addressing the basic needs of these refugees. They placed newly arriving families in an aging near skid-row hotel just north of the CNR train station. I recall sitting with families in the dowdy restaurant as strippers walked through on the way to their performances. The restaurant staff possibly because of language problems just put plates of food in front of the families without any reference to menus or personal choice. When our working group tried to establish how much the refugees were entitled to spend on food daily and other basic rights questions, we were stonewalled.

Fortunately we could avail ourselves of the generous office of the then Attorney General Howard Pawley. A call from the attorney general to come to a luncheon meeting in his office would be answered immediately by federal bureaucrats. The immigration officials would arrive to see us sitting there. Minister Pawley would eat his brown bag lunch with us while we asked the questions we couldn’t get answers from on our own on settlement issues. (I sadly noted the death of this genuine social advocate and former premier of Manitoba in Windsor, Ont., on Dec. 30.)

Ruben Tucas would spend much of his time in liaison efforts with the local federal Manpower office trying to get jobs for arrivees. The normal immigrant stories of a psychologist making beds at a downtown hotel or the deputy police chief of Chile’s largest city, Santiago, stocking shelves at a Liquor Commission warehouse were typical of their early days. As well, many of the refugees had been imprisoned and some tortured. Their families experienced fear, uncertainty and repression, only to be reunited with their missing relative at the Chilean airport just as they boarded their direct flights to Canada.

Some of them must have thought initially that coming from summer in Chile to a bitter Winnipeg winter was just an extension of their punishment. Our response and understanding

of the psychological trauma they had gone through was certainly inadequate by today’s still evolving standards, but we did the best we knew how. This included finding the resources to assist in again relocating individuals to other cities, even countries where they would be reunited with family, friends or find the help they needed in some other way.

Early on it became apparent that the Chilean refugees would be tagged as “communists” by some with all the Cold War baggage this implied. We even became aware of believed RCMP scrutiny on the growing Chilean community at events such as when the Chilean Association organized a Chile National Day silent march on Sept. 18, 1976. The march followed a line from Memorial Park up Colony to Portage over to Donald then on to the U.S. Consulate across the Assiniboine River for a wrap-up protest rally there.

Just as we approached the parkade behind the Hudson Bay building at Colony and Portage, I noticed two men in civilian garb snapping photos of everyone from between cars on the third level as we walked by. Holding

— NEW FAMILIES, page 13

Faith focus for school division a happy coincidence in Year of Mercy



Catholic Connections

Deanna Pellatt

“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” (Luke 6:36)

Christ the Teacher Catholic Schools in Melville, Theodore, and Yorkton continue their journey on making stewardship a way of life. The faith focus for this school year is the stewardship virtue of mercy which follows the previous years’ focus on gratitude, generosity, trust and responsibility based on Rev. Darrin Gurr’s pillars and Dan Potvin’s 10 virtues of stewardship. What an incredible “Godcidence” that our year of focus on the virtue of mercy coincides with the Jubilee Year of Mercy!

Early in 2015, on Jan. 28, the feast day of St. Thomas Aquinas who is the patron saint of Catholic schools, a prominent Dominican preacher — Rev. Ken Letoile — said, “Catholics must be “merciful teachers” in eliciting the best from everyone around them.” Letoile went on to say, “Our call, reli-

gious, ordained, and laity alike, is to be ‘merciful teachers who wake up the world,’” and added that St. Thomas saw teaching as a profound work of mercy.

Pope Francis also quotes St. Thomas in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* — The Joy of the Gospel — stating that, “mercy is the greatest of all the virtues.” He also writes that “the church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven, and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel.”

Catholic schools, as instruments of the church, must also strive to meet this criteria. Pope Francis has declared 2016 a Holy Year of Mercy as a way for the Catholic Church, and therefore Catholic schools, to “make more evident its mission to be a witness of mercy.”

The Parable of the Good Samaritan from the Gospel of Luke served as the starting point for both staff and students to focus on mercy as a virtue of stewardship. The parable concludes with Jesus asking the lawyer, “Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the

man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” The lawyer answered, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.” Jesus says the same thing to all of us and he is calling each and every one of us to be merciful teachers. We all teach those around us through our words and actions and by the way we live our lives.

Students and staff were made aware that this parable is more than just a moral lesson. Beyond that, it definitively defines “neighbour love” as the practice of mercy.

Rev. James F. Keenan, SJ, in *The Works of Mercy: The Heart of Catholicism*, quotes Venerable Bede’s interpretation and explanation of the Good Samaritan parable: “The wounded man who lies outside the gates is Adam, wounded by sin, lying outside the gates of Eden. The priest and the Levite, representing the tradition and the law, are unable to do anything for Adam. Along comes the Samaritan (Christ) who tends to Adam’s wounds, taking him to the inn (the church), gives a down payment (his life) for Adam’s healing (our salvation), and promises to return for him (to pay in full the cost of redemption) and take him to where he dwells (the kingdom).”

Keenan explains that we are called to follow the actions of the Good Samaritan, not because the parable is attractive, but because it is a retelling of the entire Gospel. In it, we are called to go and do likewise . . . to be merciful. The parable is not simply one among many that Jesus told, but rather serves as a foundational explanation of Jesus’ commandment to love.

Keenan goes on to write about the importance of imitating this merciful love of Christ through participation in the works of mercy. Our schools are always involved in a number of projects where the staff and students do exactly that. In the fall, many of our schools participated in the Farm Credit Canada Drive Away Hunger Campaign. Eight schools collected just over 5,500 lbs. of food, which stays in our communities to feed the hungry of our area.

Recently our schools were involved in a variety of Advent projects which included weekly prayer celebrations, singing and visiting with senior citizens in our communities, purchasing gifts from Free The Children and Chalice for families and communities in need around the world, and collecting necessary goods and funds to assist various charities and service organizations with their Christmas campaigns for those in need.

Engaging in the works of

STEWARDSHIP

A way of life

THE WORKS OF MERCY

Being the Hands and Heart of Christ

Living life Christ-centred rather than self-centred

Christ the Teacher CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

mercy to help those in need has been and always will be an important practice in our Catholic schools. We are simply working to increase awareness that not only is it the moral thing to do, but that it is our responsibility as disciples of Christ to extend God’s mercy to all of our neighbours. If you look closely at the background images of our poster, you will see love in action through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. People are being the hands and heart of Christ both in offering and accepting the gift of mercy. Let us go and do the same!

In the breath between the old and new year is eternity

Soul Searching

Tom Saretsky



At the stroke of midnight on Jan. 1, the promise to change, the resolve to do things differently, and the desire to succeed might have been declared from many a reveller that night. And why not? The New Year always begins with potential and promise. However, if you're anything like me, the resolutions I make for New Year's can quickly become *revolutions*. I revolve to my former way of doing things and the days, that turn into months, derail my noblest intentions.

How is it with you? The New Year has only begun, and maybe it is too early to determine whether your mapped-out plan for the year needs redrawing. Many things can happen over which we have no control. Unpredictability has a definite

effect on us. What will you do with the difficult experiences ahead? Will they define you or will they defeat you? Will they bless you or will they curse you? Perhaps these questions are the ones to think about instead of trying to eat less or exercise more.

There's a Swedish proverb that goes, "The afternoon knows what the morning never would have expected." If that same saying was applied to the end of a calendar year it would read, "The year-end knows what the New Year never would have expected."

What is your tendency at the end of each year? Do you look ahead in anticipation or do you ponder on what has been? It's a good idea to do both, but to reflect on what we've experienced is a valuable exercise because it adds perspective to our lives and provides some wisdom regarding our journeys of the past year. Were the experiences good ones? Were they affirming? Enriching? Enlightening? Were they diffi-

cult? Ponderous? Destructive? What did I learn from these experiences?

We walk into the unknown every time the calendar year changes, and sometimes we walk with a sense of trepidation or fear. We don't know what the coming weeks and months will bring, because we can only see for today. But we need things to look forward to because they provide anticipatory joy and give us confidence to face what is yet to come. As well, our resolutions, made with the noblest of intentions, are necessary. If they are reasonable, they will give us a sense of control and a sense of direction for our future. However, if they're made with no provision for failure or revision, then they're apt to crush us.

Lloyd Ratzlaff in his book *The Crow Who Tampered with Time* writes, "*I no longer make New Year's resolutions. I know how feeble willpower is. I make only these daily resolutions: to breathe consciously, to smile as often as*

possible, to give up worrying, and to accept the present moment with re-born attention. Year-end and year-beginning are fictional times separated by no more than a breath or the blink of an eye; in that breath, in that blink, eternity resides."

Perhaps this is the best way to live. There's gentleness in Lloyd's tone that invites rather than coerces or forces. When you submit or force yourself to live a certain way, a lot can go wrong, but smiling as often as possible proves that flowers are blooming even during the coldest months. Giving up worrying allows us to trust that all will be well, and living in the present moment gives birth to joy, peace and contentment. Eternity resides in our breath, and frees us from the ultimate prison warden of time.

May we be blessed during this year with a spirit of peace and calm that allows us the joy of living and appreciating the present moment God gives to us.



FROSTY COMMUTE — "It was one of those chilly and empty afternoons in early winter, when the daylight is silver rather than gold and pewter rather than silver." — G. K. Chesterton

New families enrich lives of volunteers

Continued from page 12

the bullhorn I had been given in order to provide bilingual marshalling directions as needed, I used it to inform the marchers in Spanish what was happening and asked them to turn and wave at them. The two men quickly disappeared. An earlier overnight break-in at a Point Douglas meeting of Chilean support groups from across the country didn't do anything to diminish our suspicions.

The fear provoked by the assassination of Orlando Letelier, a high-ranking minister in Allende's government, in Washington, D.C., in September 1976, reached into Manitoba. Chilean community members reported seeing suspicious individuals that they believed were members of DINA, the notorious Chilean secret police, operating in Winnipeg. Other refugee communities across Canada reported similar surveillance and intimidation tactics. I sat in on meetings acting as a translator between RCMP and threatened Chilean community members recounting their experiences.

The "communist" concern persisted with some negative consequences. While living in Morris, Man., in early 1977, I tried to organize a cultural evening for the community with a performance of a Chilean music and dance group. The gym at Morris Collegiate had been booked, tickets printed and ads placed when use of the gym was suddenly revoked. I later found out that statements like, "We shouldn't make it easy for commies to come to Morris," allegedly made by town elders, resulted in the cancellation of the group's local performance.

The Canadian Chilean Working Group of Manitoba evolved. Settlement issues gave way to community education and solidarity efforts. The Chilean Association emerged on its own to become the voice of the Chilean community as it took root in Manitoba. Reconstructing lives, adjusting to a new country and culture and overcoming prejudices and fear took time but the positive results are obvious today. The Chilean refugee community has enriched Manitoba in many ways. Some of the original refu-

gees returned to Chile with the restoration of democracy in the early 1990s, some even with Canadian spouses. Many other families stayed on and are now beginning their second and third Canadian-Chilean generations.

The arriving Syrian families will face similar challenges. Some backlash is already apparent as we bizarrely hear of all Muslims being labelled as "terrorists." We can all hope that the warmth and support of our communities again will overcome fear and prejudice. Government transparency and positive engagement will be essential. Community education will be critical and likely the faith community of Manitoba will again be taking a lead position in welcoming our newest Canadians.

In the end these new families will immensely enrich the lives of the volunteers about to assist them and strengthen our communities as all refugees and immigrants to our rich cultural mosaic have in the past. All they want is peace and a chance to earn their bread. We can surely give them that and together we will all gain much more.

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Christians in Holy Land

It has become a tradition that every year after the Christmas season bishops from three continents visit Catholics in the Holy Land, to show their solidarity and support. The reason for their visit can be found in the complex history of that region of the world.

Christians in the Middle East, despite two millennia of citizenship in various countries, are fleeing in increasing numbers. The number of Christians in the Holy Land has been in steady decline. Bethlehem serves as an example.

In 1948, just after the Second World War and when Israel was recognized as a country, Christians made up 85 per cent of Bethlehem’s population. It declined to 54 per cent after the 1967 war between Israel and the Arab countries that resulted in Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, where Bethlehem is located.

As more Christians left and Muslims moved in, the Christian population in Bethlehem declined to 40 per cent in 1998, 15 per cent in 2009 and only 10 per cent in 2015. With the Basilica of the Nativity, Shepherds’ Field and other Christian shrines in Bethlehem, the Catholic Church is doing what it can to maintain a Christian presence in the town, although sometimes it seems to be a losing battle.

A major Catholic presence is provided by Franciscan friars who have dedicated themselves to preserving the church in the Holy Land since 1333. Today, more than 300 friars work with 100 sisters from

various congregations in Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Cyprus and Rhodes. They are in charge of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, as well as the churches of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem and the Annunciation in Nazareth.

Additional aid is provided by supporters of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land. There is also the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, composed mainly of lay men and women throughout the world. The order traces itself back to the First Crusade, but its modern purpose is to try to maintain a Christian presence in the Holy Land. It does this mainly by supporting the Latin Patriarchate in the Holy Land headed by Patriarch Fouad Twal.

This order financed the construction of 40 schools for the patriarchate. Today, about 19,000 students attend these schools, from preschool classes through high school and in some technical schools that train craft workers, tradespeople and those working in the tourist industry.

The schools educate both Christians and Muslims, with a present breakdown of 60 per cent Christian and 40 per cent Muslim. The patriarchate and the order hope that people of different religions will learn to live in peace and mutual respect.

The Latin Patriarchate has 68 parishes as well as orphanages, clinics and a seminary. The costs for continuing them, including paying more than 1,500 teachers, put a heavy burden on the patriarchate, and these are relieved by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

Other institutions supporting a Christian presence include Bethlehem University and The Ecumenical Institute of Tantur. The university, operated by the Christian Brothers and established in 1964, has 3,223 students, 78.3 per cent of whom are women. Its student body is now 75 per cent Muslim.

Tantur was founded by the Vatican and is operated by the University of Notre Dame. It invites Christians, Jews and Muslims to meet there to try to find solutions to the Middle East’s problems.

The annual post-Christmas visit by bishops from Canada, the United States and South Africa is another means of support. One of the visiting bishops this year was Bishop Lionel Gendron of St. Jean-Longueuil, Que.

Gendron said he was impressed by the work the church is doing through its educational institutions and noted that, of the 900 students studying in the Catholic schools in Gaza, only 83 were Christians. The schools have remained coeducational despite requests by Hamas and some parents for gender-separate classes, he said.

The bishops’ visit to Gaza last year came after the war that left 100,000 Gazans homeless. This year saw more economic and building activity. “There is still a lot of suffering, but I’ve seen more signs of hope,” said Gendron. “Last year, I thought it was truly awful; this year, hope is there.”

Christians worldwide are being asked to support that hope, especially any efforts that lead to peace. — PWN

A climate mobilization march brings a conversion of heart and mind

Building a Culture of Life

Mary Deutscher



While the world was focused on the Paris UN Climate Change Conference this fall, a number of community groups in Saskatoon came together to host a climate mobilization march. The event attracted hundreds of people who were energized to fight for our common home . . . and me.

To be honest my initial motivation to attend the march had nothing to do with personal conviction. I had always tried my best to reduce, reuse and recycle, but I had never felt any passion

about keeping the earth green. Although I had read a lot of articles about *Laudato Si’*, I hadn’t actually found time to read this encyclical on the environment.

On this particular occasion, however, a non-Catholic friend invited me to come, and I thought, “If my secular friend and my pope agree, who am I to sit at home binge watching Netflix?”

Attending the rally gave me the opportunity to think about what has been holding me back from joining the excitement

around climate change. I’m not a climate change denier, but I’m not a climate change activist either. I’ve glanced at the science around global warming, but my growing mistrust in scientific experts stops me from jumping on any bandwagon. I’m ready to agree that our climate is changing, but I’m just not in a position to make firm statements about what is causing this change.

Around this point in my pondering about the environment, I generally loose interest. But while I was at the climate change rally, I

was able to take my thinking a few steps further. In that small school gymnasium on a Sunday afternoon, surrounded by strollers, dogs, information booths and catchy slogans (“there is no planet B” was my personal favourite), I had an epiphany. I realized that I don’t need to have a firm position on climate change to be able to work toward the goals of the environmentalist movement.

People arrive at a desire to protect the environment from a variety of avenues. For some, it is because they are worried that global warm-

ing will destroy the earth. For others, it is quite simply because they love our natural environment, fescue and all. As a Catholic, my interest in the environment is rooted in my belief that humankind has been entrusted with the stewardship of the earth.

This realization triggered in me a deeper reflection on stewardship. My mind immediately sifted through a few examples of bad stewardship (cf, Denethor from the Lord of the Rings who taught

— HUMANS, page 15

Celebrate ‘outrageous hope’ all year long

Soul Mending

Yvonne A. Zarowny



“If you love only those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors/pagans doing that?” Matthew 5:46-47

Each year my *need* for Christmas deepens.

I give thanks for how savvy were the politicians who placed it at the time of the Winter Solstice, the Great Turning of Earth; and the return of the sun to our Northern Hemisphere.

It is as if the whole of Divine’s Creation joins us in the birthing anew of the outrageous hope we can reap the rewards of peace — if only we listen to, deeply internalize, and then put into practice the teachings of love and compassion brought to us by the Christ Child.

As the days lengthen and the bubble of Christmas magic fades for another year, we return to the reality of our world.

That includes dominant *social* structures threatening our and many of our earth co-habitants

lives. One “fruit” of this is their generation of millions of refugees worldwide.

During the Christmas season, many of us watched or participated in pageants of a young Palestinian family from the Galilee seeking refuge — and inns not having room for them.

Two thousand years later — with “Christianity” nominally the religion of the most powerful nations on earth for a good portion of that time — we have record deaths, destruction and refugees.

Many of these so-called “Christian nations” care little for their own poor much less refugees and the environment.

Many have the biggest economies with the biggest militaries — and have had for decades.

After 14+ years of bombing missions and invasions — rather

than peace and security — there is a trail of failed states, increased “terrorism,” and an exponential growth in the number of refugees.

Yet we persist with this failed approach. Why?

Like most Canadians, I am pleased with the change in Canada’s policies toward refugees.

In September, when the Harper Conservatives were using fear as part of their election campaign, I was encouraged when Toronto’s Cardinal Collins announced that archdiocese’s commitment to raise *additional* funds to privately sponsor refugees chosen according to need *regardless* of religion or country of origin.

We, the tax-payer, paid for a number of our former cabinet to go to Rome to witness the “raising” of Collins to the College of Cardinals.

As we know about our former ruling party, they would only do that for a friend and supporter of their policies. This includes the one which distinguished between giving to the poor and those of poverty prevention/reduction — with only the former being granted “charity” status.

Jason Kenney, a Roman Catholic and part of the Conservative *only* delegation, was minister for

— PERVERSE, page 15



CNS/L'Osservatore Romano/EPA

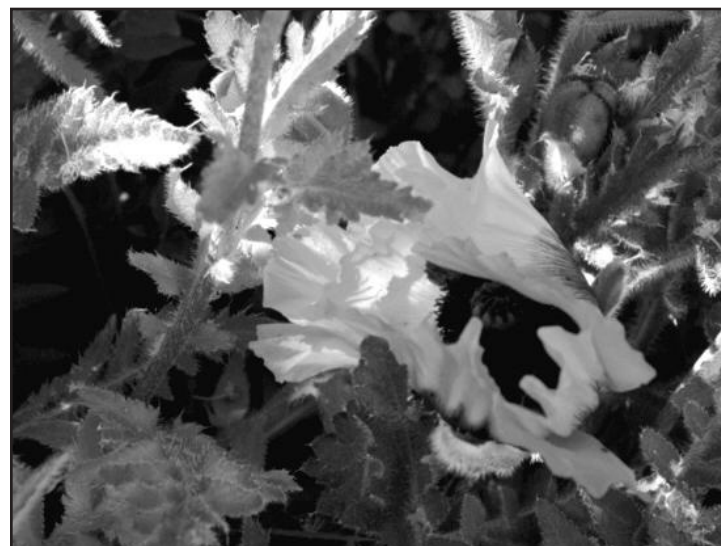
POPE VISITS GRECCIO SHRINE — Pope Francis kisses the altar as he arrives to pray in front of a Nativity scene during a Jan. 4 visit to the Franciscan shrine in Greccio, Italy. The pope made a surprise visit to the place where his namesake, St. Francis of Assisi, created the world’s first Nativity scene. “He wanted to visit the sanctuary and places where St. Francis, on Christmas Eve in 1223, represented the first living Nativity in history,” Bishop Domenico Pompili of Rieti told ANSA, the Italian news agency. Greccio is a town 100 kilometres northeast of Rome and 90 kilometres south of Assisi.

Continued from page 1

“These verses are not universal, and not for all times and places,” Chirani said, adding that the world’s major religions called for “wisdom” and “reason” in

He had begun speaking Arabic in the middle of the live interview and directly addressed those behind the attacks.

"I defy those who have threatened me," he said, explaining how he had declined offers from French security to provide him with police protection. "I put myself under God's protection."



Wicks

nestled amidst the bristled leaves of life
 divine love finds me
 transforming me . . .
 with light
 energy
 gentleness
 faith
 to be unfolded as who I am . . .
 joyful
 grateful
 beloved
 nestled amidst the bristled leaves of life

By Anne Wicks

Continued from page 14

I think one of the reasons many people shy away from the environmentalist movement is because we have a picture in our mind of a group of people who don't want us to engage the earth in any way. In this extreme viewpoint, human beings are seen as an infestation that needs to be managed or exterminated.

Our role as stewards calls us beyond this binary to a much more complicated mission. As good servants we have a responsibility to multiply what has been given to us by cherishing the earth, fostering all life, and finding new ways to develop and sustain the environment. The Catholic message heralds the intrinsic value of all cre-

If our lack of concern about the environment is another symptom of our culture's rebellion from God, perhaps a renewal of responsible care for the environment can be a first step back toward embracing our role in creation. We are stewards not only of our environment, but also of each other. When the Master returns, may he find good and faithful servants and a world teaming with life.

Continued from page 14

In July 2015 we received a

How do we reap the rewards of the promise of Christmas *if* don't follow the teachings of Jesus?



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Editor: Abbot Peter Novocosky, OSB 306-682-1772
 <pm.editor@stpeterspress.ca>
 Associate editors: Maureen Weber <pm.canadian@stpeterspress.ca>,
 Don Ward <pm.local@stpeterspress.ca>
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New book on God’s mercy based on papal interview

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Being ministers of God’s mercy, church members overcome “prejudice and rigidity,” taking risks like Jesus did in order to heal and to save, Pope Francis said.

In Jesus’ day, lepers were cast out of the community “to avoid contamination: the healthy needed to be protected,” but Jesus, at his own risk, “goes up to the leper and he restores him, he heals him,” Pope Francis said in a new book-length interview on mercy.

“By welcoming a marginalized person whose body is wounded and by welcoming the sinner whose soul is wounded, we put our credibility as Christians on the line,” the pope told the Italian journalist Andrea Tornielli in *The Name of God Is Mercy*.

The book was scheduled for a worldwide release Jan. 12.

In the interview, the pope spoke about experiencing an overwhelm-

ing sense of mercy during confession when he was 17 years old, provided more details about stories he has recounted in homilies, explained his comment, “Who am I to judge” about a homosexual person seeking God and discussed the need he saw to invoke a jubilee Year of Mercy.

He also talked about the relationship of mercy and justice and addressed criticism that his focus on mercy amounts to watering down church doctrine and tolerating sin.

Tornielli asked Pope Francis why he so frequently and negatively mentions the “scholars of the law” in his morning homilies. The pope responded that in the Gospels “they represent the principal opposition to Jesus: they challenge him in the name of doctrine” and such an attitude “is repeated throughout the long history of the church.”

Using the example of Jesus’ close contact with lepers despite the

Old Testament law that lepers be excluded from the community, Pope Francis said it is obvious that the exclusion of lepers was meant to contain disease, but it led to social and emotional suffering and, what is worse, to a sense that lepers had committed some sin which caused their dis-

ease. They were excluded from the community, but also from a relationship with God.

In literally reaching out to lepers, the pope said, Jesus “shows us a new horizon, the logic of a God who is love, a God who desires the salvation of all men.”

Jesus touched and healed the lepers, he continued. “He didn’t sit down at a desk and study the situation, he didn’t consult the experts for pros and cons. What really mattered to him was reaching stranded people and saving them.”

Pope Francis said a similar attitude by the church today “provokes angry mutterings from those who are only ever used to having things fit into their preconceived notions and ritual purity.”

“Caring for outcasts and sinners does not mean letting the wolves attack the flock” or jumping into the darkness with sinners, he said; it means being aware of the reality of sin and sharing the reality that God always is ready to forgive the sinner.



CNS/Paul Haring

PAPAL INTERVIEW TURNS INTO A BOOK — Pope Francis speaks with Italian journalist Andrea Tornielli aboard his flight from Rome to Havana in this Sept. 19, 2015, file photo. Tornielli conducted an interview with the pope on the topic of mercy. The interview is contained in a new book titled, *The Name of God Is Mercy*.

today urgently need to hear.

“The church does not exist to condemn people but to bring about an encounter with the visceral love of God’s mercy,” he said.

Priests, especially in the confessional, must do all they can to communicate God’s love and mercy. If they cannot offer absolution to someone, the pope said, they should at least offer a blessing. The fact that the person entered the con-

fessional is a clear sign of God’s grace already at work.

As for his “Who am I to judge” remark to reporters in July 2013 when asked about the church’s attitude toward homosexual persons, Pope Francis said, “I was paraphrasing by heart the Catechism of the Catholic Church where it says that these people should be treated with delicacy and not be marginalized.”



CNS/L’Osservatore Romano

POPE BAPTIZES IN SISTINE CHAPEL — Pope Francis baptizes one of 23 babies in the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican Jan. 10. The baptisms were held on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. The best thing parents can pass on to their children is their religious faith, Pope Francis said. Ensure this faith “not be lost, help make it grow and pass it on as a legacy,” he told the infants’ parents and godparents.

testament law that lepers be excluded from the community, Pope Francis said it is obvious that the exclusion of lepers was meant to contain disease, but it led to social and emotional suffering and, what is worse, to a sense that lepers had committed some sin which caused their dis-

When the grace of God begins to help a person recognize his or her sin and need for forgiveness, the pope said, that person “needs to find an open door, not a closed one. He needs to find acceptance, not judgment, prejudice or condemnation. He needs to be helped, not pushed away or cast out.”

“Jesus sends forth his disciples not as holders of power or masters of a law,” the pope said. “The Christian message is transmitted by embracing those in difficulty, by embracing the outcast, the marginalized and the sinner.”

Obviously, he said, the church cannot and does not pretend sin is unimportant.

But “God forgives everyone, he offers new possibilities to everyone, he showers his mercy on everyone who asks for it,” Pope Francis said. “We are the ones who do not know how to forgive.”

The pope told Tornielli he is convinced that God’s mercy is Jesus’ most important message and that it is a message people

Combat ‘culture of waste,’ diplomats told

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Cold indifference to migrants, the poor, the hungry and the persecuted must be overcome through the warmth of mercy, which can transform people into artisans of peace, Pope Francis said.

In a lengthy speech Jan. 11 to diplomats accredited to the Holy See, the pope called on the world’s governments to work together to combat the effects of a “culture of waste” that sacrifices “men and women before the idols of profit and consumption.”

Dialogue, he said, is the antidote that can heal the world of the “individualistic spirit” growing in today’s culture, causing indifference toward those who suffer, particularly migrants who only seek to “live in peace and dignity.”

Biblical and human history is marked by countless migrations of those seeking a better life or fleeing circumstances such as war, persecution, poverty or the effects of climate change, Pope

Francis said. Unfortunately, their suffering has begun to “appear normal” to too many people.

Making a special appeal on behalf of those fleeing war and religious persecution, the pope said they often find themselves at the mercy of the “powerful who exploit the weak” or turn to human traffickers where they “may well lose their possessions, their dignity and even their lives.” The pope called for an end to human trafficking, adding that “it turns human beings, especially the weakest and most defenceless, into commodities.”

Countries who are taking in migrants, he said, also face hardships and fears, especially due to the growing threat of international terrorism. Despite the difficulties, the pope affirmed his conviction that Europe has the means to “balance between its twofold moral responsibility to protect the rights of its citizens and to ensure assistance and acceptance to migrants.”

Expressing gratitude for initiatives in welcoming migrants, the

pope recognized the efforts of countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Greece, who have continued to help and not close their borders. He also commended the Italian government’s commitment to saving lives in the Mediterranean and its taking responsibility for “a massive number of refugees.”

“It is my hope that the traditional sense of hospitality and solidarity which distinguishes the Italian people will not be weakened by the inevitable difficulties of the moment but that, in light of its age-old tradition, the nation may prove capable of accepting and integrating the social, economic and cultural contribution which migrants can offer,” he said.

The cultural implications of migration, particularly in regards to different religious affiliations, also must be addressed, he said. Without “sincere and respectful dialogue,” growing diversity can lead to fears and to viewing others as enemies due to “closed-mindedness and intransigence.”

Lebanon strains under massive weight of refugees

By Doreen Abi Raad

BEIRUT (CNS) — While the flow of migrants into Europe and the West has sparked controversy, Lebanon continues to bear the brunt of absorbing massive numbers of refugees. A commonly cited figure is that one in four people in Lebanon is displaced from Syria.

“They are everywhere . . . in all of Lebanon,” Rev. Paul Karam, president of Caritas Lebanon, told Catholic News Service of the presence of Syrian refugees in the country, which is roughly two-thirds the size of the state of Connecticut.

There are no formal refugee camps in Lebanon. Rather, some Syrians establish — with the permission of the local municipality — informal tent settlements. Others find ways to rent space in apartments or squat in abandoned buildings.

As of November, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees calculated there were nearly 1.1 million registered refugees living in Lebanon — but not all refugees are registered with the UN agency.

The true scale of the influx is that there are more than 1.5 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon, equal to almost one-third of the country’s existing Lebanese population of nearly four million, Karam said. In addition, there are 20,000 Iraqi refugees.

Although Jordan and Turkey are

also hosting Syrian refugees, Karam noted Jordan is almost eight times the size of Lebanon, and Turkey about 24 times larger. According to a UNHCR report released Dec. 18, Lebanon hosts more refugees compared to its population size than any other country.

“The Lebanese have shown a real spirit of welcoming the refugees. They help them, they are assisting them, but of course this cannot continue for too many years,” he told CNS.

Most of the Iraqi refugees are Christian, and about 97 per cent of the Syrian refugees are Muslim, Karam said. Consequently, the overwhelming presence of Syrian refugees upsets the demographic balance of Lebanon, which is about 40 per cent Christian.

“It will destabilize the system,” Karam warned.

At least 65,000 Syrian babies born in Lebanon since the outbreak of the Syrian conflict are stateless, with no identification documents. Their births are not registered in Lebanon or in Syria.

“So, shall Lebanon have another story with the new, let me say, scenario, with Syria?” Karam asked. He cited the presence of Palestinians in Lebanon for more than 60 years “and nobody has resolved their problem.” Currently, there are about 500,000 Palestinians in Lebanon, most in areas agreed upon between Palestinians and the Lebanese state; these areas are commonly referred to as camps.

Just because you made a mistake doesn’t mean you are a mistake.

— Georgette Mosbacher