

Lutherans

In 2017 Lutherans around the world will mark the 500 years since Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to a church door in Wittenberg. Bishop Elaine Sauer says it will be a year of great and joyful events but will be a commemoration, not a celebration.

— page 3

200 years for Oblates

Two hundred years ago the



French aristocrat Eugene de Mazenod gathered a few priests together in southeastern

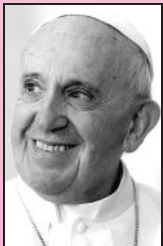
France, writes Michael Swan. The poor, forgotten people would be their life's work. The unexpected twist in their history was that de Mazenod's priests would become the instrument for opening up and evangelizing Canada's western and northern frontiers.

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Explaining indulgences

Pope Francis has fascinated the public because of how

willingly he upends long-standing traditions and promotes a "revolution of



tenderness" to set the Catholic Church on a more pastoral course for a more merciful era, writes David Gibson. "To help fulfil this vision, Francis is also relying on an old-fashioned ritual — indulgences."

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Hospitality and faith

As Syrian refugees were fleeing terror, Lorraine Ratzlaff writes that she was distressed to see so-called "Christians" respond by defending "our" Canadian way of life. A faith centred on hospitality does not build walls, it welcomes.

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Archbishop Bohan's funeral held Jan. 22

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — "He was Paul and I was Timothy," said Saskatoon Bishop Donald Bolen referring to the late Daniel Bohan, Archbishop of Regina who died Jan. 15. Bolen was the homilist in the Jan. 22 funeral mass for Bohan. He recalled how there was often confusion between his name and that of Archbishop Bohan's name because they were so similar, so the two decided to take up different saint's names when in conversation with each other.

Bolen's homily focused on Bohan's faith and how it sustained him in good times and in bad. "Archbishop Dan has given us a cue as to how we are to celebrate this morning's funeral by the way in which he lived and the way in which he prepared to die," said Bolen. (see complete homily on page 18) Bolen and Prince Albert

Bishop Albert Thévenot concelebrated the mass with the clergy of the Archdiocese of Regina.

Bolen served as vicar-general for the Regina archdiocese for a brief period prior to his ordination to the episcopate and his appointment as Bishop of Saskatoon.

The funeral mass was held at Holy Rosary Cathedral with about 1,000 in the cathedral and more in an overflow area in the church's auditorium. Eight bishops/archbishops and more than 60 priests attended from across Canada. Bohan's ecumenical activities were obvious in the attendance of Buddhist monks and representatives of the Hindu, Sikh, Anglican and Coptic Christian representatives in the congregation. Provincial, federal and military representatives were also obvious as well as representatives from the Regina Multi Faith forum, Lutheran and Evangelical churches.

A sister, brother, sister-in-law

and nephew of the archbishop represented the family. Bohan has five siblings; three brothers and two sisters. His mother and the remaining members of the family will attend another celebration of Bohan's life which was scheduled for Jan. 26 in his home city of Moncton, New Brunswick.

The Office for the Dead, celebrated by Rev. Lorne Crozon and held the evening of Jan. 21, was also well attended. Dr. Margie Clow Bohan, the archbishop's sister-in-law, gave a brief eulogy and words of remembrance at the end of the service. "Danny (as he was called by the family) was a good son, brother, uncle, brother-in-law," she said. She referred to his devotion to the family despite the geographic distance between them. He visited as often as he could and interspersed visits with phone calls home. "He loved the Maritimes."

Crozon, the previous archdioce-



PM file

Archbishop Daniel Bohan

san vicar-general, was elected administrator by the Archdiocesan Consultors to serve the archdiocese until such time as a new archbishop is appointed by Pope Francis.

Federal report calls for palliative care framework

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — The long-awaited report of an independent panel's consultations on physician-assisted dying (PAD) released Jan. 18 urges Canada to strengthen access to palliative care and ensure safeguards.

"There are divergent views on many aspects of physician-assisted dying, but there are also areas of growing consensus, including a recognition of the need for carefully considered safeguards, oversight and a strengthened palliative care framework to be developed in parallel with one that provides access to physician-assisted dying in accordance with the Carter decision," concluded the External Panel on Options for a Legislative Response to Carter vs. Canada in its report that runs 461 pages.

Appointed last summer by the Harper government, the panel chaired by palliative care expert Dr. Harvey Chochinov included disability studies expert Catherine Frazee, and legal expert Professor Benoit Pelletier. Originally mandated to provide legislative advice, the Trudeau government changed the mandate to providing a summary of its consultations. It extended the deadline from Nov. 15 to Dec. 15. A spokesperson from the Attorney General's office said the delay in its release was due to the need to translate it into French.

Over five months, the panel met with 73 experts in Canada and abroad in jurisdictions where PAD exists — including the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland and parts of the United States. They conducted an extensive online consultation completed by 14,949 individuals. They also met with 92 representatives of interveners, various med-



CCN/D. Gyapong

PANEL CONSULTATIONS — Parliamentary joint-committee on physician assisted dying (PADM) co-chairs Senator Kelvin Ogilvie and Liberal MP Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Ont.)

ical bodies and stakeholders from 46 Canadian organizations. They examined 321 written submissions.

The report covers the forms of PAD such as assisted suicide and voluntary euthanasia; the definition of key terms; outlines the risks to individuals and society; examines safeguards in assessing PAD requests; and the protection of physicians' conscience rights.

Among the findings, the panel reported 70 per cent support for a national oversight body to track PAD; 76 per cent support for a national palliative care and end-of-life strategy; 78 per cent support for a "comprehensive national home-care strategy"; and 80 per cent support for a national strategy on supports for those with disabilities.

The panel reported respondents "were more likely to agree that physician-assisted death should be allowed when a person faces significant, life-threatening and/or progressive conditions" but were

concerned about the impact on the mentally ill, "especially those with episodic conditions" and for those "who are isolated and lonely."

The release of the report coincided with the first day of meetings of the parliamentary joint committee on physician assisted dying

(PDAM) as members of Parliament and senators heard witnesses from the Justice Department explain the legal parameters for crafting legislation that would exempt doctors or other medical professionals from Criminal Code provisions of homicide and assisting suicide in line with the Supreme Court of Canada's (SCC) Carter decision which struck down some provisions as unconstitutional.

Co-chaired by Senator Kelvin Ogilvie and Liberal MP Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Ont.) the committee must advise the government on crafting legislation that must pass the House of Commons, through the committee process and through the Senate within the four-month deadline extension on the Carter decision granted by the SCC Jan. 15.

Two Justice Canada lawyers appeared as witnesses Jan. 18. They advised the committee they could determine whether the PAD law should only include assisted suicide, where doctors prescribe a

— CANADA, page 5

Expose extremism, Vatican official asks Arab leaders

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Religious leaders must identify and publicly distance themselves from extremists preaching animosity toward others, a Vatican official told religious and government leaders from across the Arab world.

"Extremism, with its violent tendencies, is incompatible with true religious ethics," said Comboni

Father Miguel Angel Ayuso Guixot, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue.

Ayuso spoke Jan. 17 at the first Arab Thinkers' Forum, a gathering sponsored by the Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research. Religious leaders, academics and government officials from across the Arab world gathered in Abu Dhabi Jan. 17 - 18 to discuss

— EXTREMISTS, page 4

Soulless machines can't replace humans: pope

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Don't be afraid of acting fairly and compassionately toward the poor, Pope Francis said in a written message to global business leaders attending the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

And do not let the sweeping innovations in robotics, science and technology "lead to the destruction of the human person — to be replaced by a soulless machine — or to the transformation of our planet into an empty garden for the enjoyment of a chosen few," he said.

The pope's message was read at the meeting Jan. 20 by Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

The annual meeting, held Jan. 20 - 23, brought together more than 2,500 people representing business, government, academia, media and the arts to discuss current challenges such as global economics and security, climate change, gender parity and the so-called "fourth industrial revolution," which refers to new technologies blending the physical, digital and biological worlds, resulting in greater interconnectivity of tools and objects that can collect and exchange real-time data.

In his written address, the pope said world leaders must "guide and govern" these new processes and "build inclusive societies based on respect for human dignity, tolerance, compassion and mercy."

Today, he wrote, fewer opportunities "for useful and dignified employment, combined with a reduction in social security, are causing a disturbing rise in inequality and poverty in different countries."

"Clearly there is a need to create new models of doing business which, while promoting the development of advanced technologies, are also capable of using them to create dignified work for all, to uphold and consolidate social rights, and to protect the environment. We must guide technological development without letting ourselves be dominated by it," the pope said.

He urged leaders, "Do not forget the poor," and told them they have a duty to help those who are less fortunate to live a dignified life and develop their full potential.

"We must never allow the culture of prosperity to deaden us, to make us incapable of feeling compassion" for those who are poor and suffering, and to believe problems are someone else's responsibility, he said.

Once people realize that "our own actions are a cause of injustice and inequality" and that "we are compelled to heed their cry for help," the pope said, then "we become more fully human, since responsibility for our brothers and sisters is an essential part of our common humanity."

"Do not be afraid to open your minds and hearts to the poor. In this way, you will give free rein to your economic and technical talents, and discover the happiness of a full life, which consumerism of itself cannot provide."

Business is "a noble vocation, directed to producing wealth and improving our world," especially "if it sees the creation of jobs as an essential part of its service to the common good," he said.

In the run-up to the Davos meeting, Oxfam Great Britain released its "pre-Davos report" on global economic disparity saying one per cent of the world's people own more than the remaining 99 per cent of the earth's inhabitants.

Today, 62 individuals "own as much as the poorest half of the world's population," which numbers 3.6 billion people, according to the report published Jan. 18.

"Although the number of people living in extreme poverty halved between 1990 and 2010, the average annual income of the

poorest 10 per cent has risen by less than \$3 a year in the past quarter of a century. That equates

to an increase in individuals' daily income of less than a single cent a year," the report said.



CNS/Gregory A. Shemitz

PEACE WALK NEW YORK — Michelle Owens and her daughter Melanie, eight, participate in the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Interfaith Peace Walk Jan. 18 in the Upper West Side neighbourhood of New York City. The theme of this year's event was "Hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor," from Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*. Organizers aimed to draw attention to peace and justice issues, particularly climate change, poverty and income inequality.

KCs aim to work closely with parishes

By Liz O'Connor

LEVITTOWN, Pa. (CNS) — The Knights of Columbus has announced an initiative designed to bring the Knights into closer co-operation with parishes.

Changes were noted in an address delivered by Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson in November to a San Antonio meeting of state deputies and reprinted in the December issue of *Columbia*, the Knights' magazine. "We will use our resources of time, talent and money to strengthen parish-based and parish-sponsored programs," he wrote.

According to Anderson, the 1.9-million-member Catholic fraternal group, organized into over 15,000 councils operating in the United States, Canada and a number of other countries, will continue its focus on spirituality, charity, unity, brotherhood and patriotism. But it will strive to bring its activities into greater identification with parishes under the supervision of parish pastors, avoiding duplication or any perception of competition.

Among the changes involved, the Knights will not build or acquire any new council halls. This change, where parish rather

than separate facilities are used for meetings and activities, has already allowed the formation of councils that would not have been able to afford a building, and will avoid members having to devote too much time and effort to support the building by renting it for unrelated activities.

In another significant change, by the end of this year, the Knights of Columbus will no longer sponsor Scout groups. Instead, the group will work to support parish youth ministry programs, including parish-based Catholic Scouting.

The Knights, Anderson wrote, should strive to integrate the activities of their Squires Circles — affiliated groups of boys and young men ages 10 to 18 — with those of the parish youth ministry. He said councils and assemblies in the U.S. and Canada that do not currently have Squires groups should not begin new ones but instead should support existing parish-based youth ministry programs.

The Knights, Anderson wrote, are devoted to building up the family as the domestic church and to evangelizing family life, a work that can be done most effectively by working in and with the parish.

Andrew T. Walther, vice-president for communications and strategic planning of the Supreme Council, noted in an interview with Catholic News Service that it is important to remember that the Knights of Columbus was founded in 1882 in a parish by a parish priest — Rev. Michael McGivney, recently declared venerable, whose sainthood cause has taken its first steps. In re-emphasizing its focus on the parish, Walther said, the organization is going back to its roots.



CNS/Michael Reynolds, EPA

IMMIGRATION RALLY IN WASHINGTON — A man displays a sign as immigration advocates rally outside the U.S. Supreme Court Jan. 15 in Washington. The Supreme Court Jan. 19 agreed to review President Barack Obama's executive actions to protect from deportation both those who came to the U.S. as children and the immigrant parents of children who are U.S. citizens or legal residents of this country.

No one is excluded from the mercy of God, pope says

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Christians are called to work together in order to be a visible sign that God's mercy excludes no one, Pope Francis said during his general audience Jan. 20.

The pope reflected on the theme of the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity which was taken from the first letter of St. Peter and was selected by an ecumenical group from Latvia. The Lutheran cathedral of Riga, Latvia, he noted, contains a 12th-century baptismal font that serves as a sign of the common baptism that unites Catholics, Protestant and Orthodox Christians.

"St. Peter's first letter is addressed to the first generation of Christians to make them aware of the gift received through baptism and the requirements it entails," the pope said. "We too, in this week of prayer, are invited to rediscover this and do this together, going beyond our divisions."

The pope said that although divisions are often caused by selfishness, the common baptism shared by Christians is an experience of being "called from the merciless and alienating darkness"

to an encounter with God who is "full of mercy."

"To start once again from baptism means to rediscover the source of mercy, the source of hope for all, so that no one is excluded from God's mercy," he said. "No one is excluded from the mercy of God."

The grace of God's mercy, he added, is stronger than what divides Christians and in the measure one receives that grace, one becomes "capable of preaching to all his merciful deeds," especially through a witness of Christian unity.

"We Christians can announce to all the power of the Gospel by committing ourselves to share the corporal and spiritual works of mercy," he said. "This is a concrete witness of unity among us Christians: Protestants, Orthodox and Catholics."

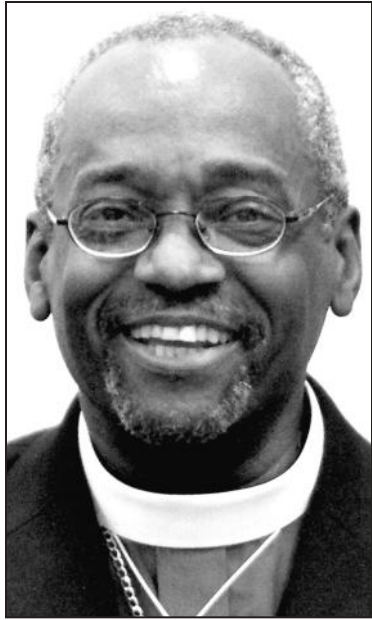
Pope Francis emphasized that the week of prayer serves as a reminder that Christians share a common mission in passing on to others the mercy they have received, especially with "the poor and the abandoned."

"During this week of prayer, let us pray so that all of us, disciples of Christ, may find a way to work together to bring the mercy of the father to every part of the earth," the pope said.

Anglican Church considers implications of suspension

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — The suspension Jan. 15 of the Episcopal Church (TEC) by the primates of the Anglican communion for devising a same-sex marriage canon has implications for Canadian Anglicans.



Art Babych

NO CHANGE — The presiding bishop of the U.S. Episcopal Church, Michael Curry, says his church’s acceptance of gay marriage won’t be rolled back despite sanctions imposed by Anglican leaders. In a Jan. 14 interview with the Associated Press, Curry said he told his fellow top Anglican archbishops meeting in England they should expect no change. “They basically understand we made our decision, and this is who we are, and we’re committed to being a house of prayer for all,” he said. Archbishops overwhelmingly agreed at the meeting to impose sanctions against the U.S. Episcopal Church and issue a statement in support of the “traditional doctrine” that marriage should be between a man and a woman.

The Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) is examining a change in its marriage canon to be debated in its synod this July. Anglican primates from the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) wanted the ACC to be sanctioned along with the American TEC for “unilaterally permitting the blessing of same-sex unions and the ordination of those in active homosexual relationships.”

While the primate of TEC is suspended from decision-making and from participation in some bodies, he has not been expelled from the Anglican communion which, according to the primates’ statement, is determined “to walk together, however painful this is, and despite our differences, as a deep expression of our unity in the Body of Christ.” For now, the move forestalls schism in the Anglican communion centred in Canterbury, England, where the primates’ meetings took place.

However, the conservative Anglican primates of the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) wanted the sanction to include a sharper rebuke and a call for repentance. Many bishops from the Global South had threatened to walk out of the primates’ meetings.

Saskatoon Bishop Donald Bolen, the Catholic co-chair of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada, said in an email interview he was “grateful the final statement of the primates’ meeting reiterated a desire of the Anglican provinces to continue to walk together.”

However, as a Catholic involved in ecumenical relations, Bolen said: “I see it as a good sign that the communion takes it seriously when ‘unilateral decisions on matters of doctrine and polity are taken that threaten our unity.’”

Bolen noted the sanctions on the TEC “are a way of saying that the action of a particular province

is impairing the communion.”

“No sanction was placed on the Anglican Church of Canada, presumably because its discernment is still ongoing,” he said. “In that regard, I found it hopeful that the Anglican Church of Canada invited a contribution to their internal discernment on their marriage canon from the Canadian Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue.”

The Canadian dialogue’s contribution to the ACC’s Commission on the marriage canon submitted in May 2015 asked: “If same-sex marriage becomes possible in the Anglican Church of Canada, what then becomes of the enduring meaning or value of the distinction between male and female, and of procreation as one of the ends of marriage? How would the distinctiveness be maintained?”

It also described the “relatively rapid pace of the synodal process” as worrisome given the “gravity of this potential doctrinal change and its implications for the daily living of Christian faith, for Christian anthropology, and for ecumenical relations.”

The document warned such a change would “signify a new obstacle on the road to full visible unity between us” and “put at risk the fuller reception of the consensus and convergence that has been achieved through the years, raising questions about the level of awareness and authority that past agreements carry, and abrading the ecclesial trust between us.”

ACC Primate Archbishop Fred Hiltz, who participated at the Canterbury meetings, issued a statement noting the fact its upcoming July 2016 synod will deal with a proposed change similar to that of TEC.

“There is no doubt in my mind that the action of the primates’ meeting will weigh into our deliberations,” Hiltz said.



Art Babych

DECISIONS — Archbishop Fred Hiltz, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, said the decision of top Anglican leaders meeting in England to impose sanctions against the U.S. Episcopal Church “will weigh into” the Canadian church’s own deliberations about same-sex marriage in July, the Anglican Journal reported Jan. 15.

Archbishop Foley Beach, the primate of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), a group of breakaway Anglicans in the United States and Canada, participated in the Canterbury meetings.

Bishop Charlie Masters, who heads the Anglican Network in Canada (ANiC), the Canadian diocese of ACNA, said in an interview, “the sanctions offered a good first step.”

The move has “served notice on the whole of the Anglican communion that no province can just decide doctrine and practice and step outside biblical teaching and

practice,” Masters said.

While the sanctions are small and the focus narrow, Masters said it was “very significant.”

“I am sure the Anglican Church of Canada will have noticed very carefully what has happened.”

He noted the Archbishop of Canterbury “did solemnly pledge to hold TEC to this.”

While ANiC and ANCA are not formally recognized by Canterbury, the Episcopal Church or the Anglican Church of Canada, they are in communion with the Global Anglican Future Conference primates.

Canadian Lutherans to mark 500 years in 2017

By James Buchok

WINNIPEG — In 2017 Lutherans in Canada and around the world will mark 500 years since Roman Catholic priest Martin Luther nailed his 95 grievances to a church door in the German city of Wittenberg, setting in motion the events that would lead to an earth-shattering Protestant Reformation.

Bishop Elaine Sauer, head of the Winnipeg-based Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod, says it will be a year of great and joyful events but will be a “commemoration, not a celebration,” of what became one of the most divisive eras in the world’s history.

“We want to proclaim what the reformation gave us,” said Rev. Paul Gehrs, of the ELCIC National Office, “but there were painful things that happened on both (Catholic and reformation) sides.”

Sauer and Gehrs, and Winnipeg’s Lutheran church, hosted the 15th annual luncheon of church

leaders and their chancery, diocesan and conference staffs Jan. 14 at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church in River Heights, ahead of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

In the same way the Week of



Buchok

LUTHERANS IN CANADA — Rev. Paul Gehrs of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada National Office, and Bishop Elaine Sauer of the ELCIC Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod. The denomination continues to flourish with the highly anticipated 2017 National Convention of the ELCIC to be held in Winnipeg.

Prayer brings faiths together, Sauer says Winnipeg is unique being home to seven ecumenical bishops that meet annually. The ELCIC’s national office is also located in Winnipeg and is led by Bishop Susan Johnson.

School board, bishop at odds in Edmonton

By Ramon Gonzalez
Western Catholic Reporter

EDMONTON (CCN) — While the chair of the board of Edmonton Catholic Schools is pleased with new provincial guidelines to develop policies on LGBTQ students, the bishop of Calgary is calling on Catholic school boards to reject them.

In a pastoral letter released Jan. 13, Calgary Bishop Fred Henry said the guidelines “breathe pure secularism.” They would impose a nar-

row-minded, anti-Catholic agenda, he said.

The guidelines, which are expected to help Alberta’s 61 school boards to come up with regulations to protect the rights of LGBTQ students and teachers, were released earlier that day by Education Minister David Eggen.

The 21-page document states, among other things, that school policies should allow gender-diverse students and teachers to participate on gender-segregated sports teams that reflect their gender iden-

tity and choose bathrooms that also reflect their gender expressions.

Boards have until March 31 to submit their policies to the education department for review. The policies must explicitly protect diversity in schools and provide safe places for all students.

At a news conference following the document’s release, Edmonton Catholic board chair Marilyn Bergstra said she was “very impressed” by the guidelines. “I think they are very thorough. I think a lot of thought went into them.”

Bergstra said the guidelines will help the board develop a policy that is clear and unambiguous. “My wish would be that every single word in that document is adopted, but that’s not how democracy works,” she added.

In his letter, Henry said Catholic schools are committed to supporting inclusive communities that teach care and compassion for every person, regardless of age, race, sex, gender or sexual orientation, and require that every person be treated with dignity and respect.

The government guidelines, however, “show no evidence of



WCR/R. Gonzalez

EDMONTON CATHOLIC SCHOOLS — Marilyn Bergstra, chair of the Edmonton Catholic School Board, meets local media Jan. 13 to praise provincial guidelines for school boards to develop policies on LGBTQ students.

Euthanasia opponents disappointed by court decision

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Euthanasia opponents expressed disappointment at the Supreme Court of Canada's (SCC) Jan. 15 decision giving Ottawa only four additional months to craft a physician-assisted death law.

Groups expressed concern over

the SCC's granting Quebec an exemption from the Criminal Code provisions against euthanasia. Those provisions remain in effect elsewhere in the country until the deadline. Quebec has proceeded with its euthanasia law and announced its first patient-requested death by lethal injection the day of the SCC decision.

The SCC also granted exemptions for individuals who could seek a physician-assisted death by applying to a superior court judge. While the nine SCC justices were unanimous in granting the four-month extension, they were sharply divided 5/4 on the majority's decision to grant the Quebec and individual exemptions.

Catholic Civil Rights League president Phil Horgan pointed out the Quebec and individual exemptions amount to "legislative pronouncements" on the part of the SCC and "may be signalling a form of law that Parliament should enact going forward."

The majority justices "are creating a new regime of their own making," in devising the "judicial application procedure," Horgan said. "Where was that in the Criminal Code? Where was that in the original Carter decision?"

"Many judges will have to give serious thought about what conscience rights they have in dealing with such potential applications," he said. "It's a trenchant example of how laws in our country are increasingly being made by five lawyers on the Supreme Court of Canada."

The Quebec-based grassroots group Living with Dignity (LWD) and the Physicians' Alliance Against Euthanasia issued a joint statement Jan. 18 saying they hoped "our parliamentarians will take advantage of this short extension to implement a law that will protect all Canadians from the harms that occur in other jurisdictions where euthanasia or assisted suicide is permitted."

"We remain very concerned by the possibility of a wide-open law that could even target vulnerable children and people lacking basic health care — as was recommended by the Provincial-Territorial Group in its blatantly pro-euthanasia report," said LWD and the Alliance.

The groups said they regretted the Quebec exemption "to allow its doctors to commit acts that are still considered criminal offences everywhere else in Canada."

They called for legislators to ensure conscience rights are respected and protected in any new law, "without any obligation to refer or to collaborate in any way in euthanasia or assisted suicide requests."

Catholic Organization for Life and Family executive director Michele Boulva said she was not surprised by the decision.

"We have known for a while that the ideology of death has made very deep inroads into Canadian culture," she said. "We now need to support physicians and all health care workers fighting for the respect of their Charter right to conscientious objection."

"Less than a year ago, a 'complex regulatory regime' was considered necessary to minimize error and abuse and the suspension was given to afford Parliament time to create one," said Christian Legal Fellowship associate counsel John Sikkema. He noted with the Jan. 15 decision a "narrow majority" is "prepared to permit assisted suicide in the absence of such a regime, and without clear guidance to assist lower courts in deciding individual exemption applications."

"Parliament needs the additional time to develop protections in the Criminal Code that will ensure vulnerable persons will not be at significant risk of abuse and error in the coming system for physician-assisted suicide," said a joint release from The Council of Canadians with Disabilities

(CCD) and the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL). "Due to the exemption granted to Quebec, vulnerable people at end-of-life in that province, unlike other Canadians, will not have the benefit of the safeguard of having their request reviewed by the superior court of their jurisdiction, which will evaluate the request based upon the criteria the SCC set out in Carter."

"Instead, decisions to end lives will be made behind closed doors, without external independent scrutiny," the groups said.

The federal government had sought a six-month extension on the Carter decision that struck down Canada's Criminal Code provisions against assisted suicide last February. The SCC had suspended the decision for a year to give Parliament time to respond but the Feb. 6 deadline was rapidly approaching with no legislation yet in the works.

For COLF's Boulva, the legislative process is not going to solve the problem. "For Catholics and for all people of goodwill, it is now obvious that the building of a new culture of life will take generations," she said. "And it all begins now with a twofold decision: firstly, the decision to give formation, to educate our families, friends and parishioners regarding the truth about human life and dignity inscribed in our souls by our Creator. And secondly, the decision to render these lethal practices irrelevant by being truly compassionate and caring for our brothers and sisters confronted with the challenges of illness until their natural death."

Extremists threaten peace

Continued from page 1

ways to combat terrorism and extremism.

"Extremist tendencies, irrespective of their origin, are actually among the most dangerous threats to world peace and security," said Ayuso, whose speech was released by the Vatican Jan. 19.

"Uncompromising and violent policies," hostility toward those who are different and a refusal to enter into dialogue with others are characteristics of extremism, he said.

"In all religions, there is a treasury of values that can contribute toward building a world of justice, peace, fraternity and prosperity," he said, which is one reason why a solid religious education is so important.

At the same time, religious education is the best defence against a member falling prey to false teachers who jump into the void with extreme ideas, Ayuso said.

Combating extremism "needs genuine effort by religious leaders and opinion makers to identify those persons who portray false beliefs and behaviours as part of their religious ideology," he said. And political leaders must support religious leaders in that effort.

Because peace is "a personal and social duty" as well as a gift from God, he said, believers must refute all teaching and preaching of hatred as "unworthy of God or humanity."



Art Babych

RESTORATION TO MEMORIAL — Work is to start in the spring on the restoration of the National War Memorial in Ottawa at a cost of more than \$5 million. Public Works and Government Services wants the work done before sesquicentennial celebrations in 2017. Firms interested in bidding on the contract must submit their qualifications by Feb. 2.

Board trying to develop 'thoughtful policy'

Continued from page 3

consultation with or sensitivity to the Catholic community," he said. Nor do they reflect Catholic teaching.

"This approach and directive smack of the madness of relativism and the forceful imposition of a particular narrow-minded anti-Catholic ideology," the bishop wrote.

"Such a totalitarian approach is not in accordance with the Supreme Court of Canada opinion (Loyola) delivered on March 19, 2015, and must be rejected."

At that time the Supreme Court ruled that Quebec infringed on the religious freedom of a Jesuit-run school in Montreal by requiring it to teach a program on religious culture and ethics. The school wanted to teach the course from a Catholic perspective.

"Our teaching is rather simple and direct," he wrote. "God created beings as male and female. In doing so, he gave equal dignity to both man and woman. In his plan, men and women should respect and accept their sexual identity."

The Calgary bishop also condemned gay-straight alliances and queer-straight alliances, labelling them as "highly politicized ideological clubs which seek to cure society of 'homophobia' and 'heterosexism,' and which accept the idea that all forms of consensual sexual expression are legitimate."

He said the view that these clubs espouse "is not Catholic."

Bergstra said in a Jan. 15 email to the WCR that the board will review Henry's statement.

The board is trying to develop "a thoughtful policy," she said. "Until

this process is complete, I cannot comment as to specifics of how the final draft policy will look."

However, on the same day, Jan. 15, trustees met at the board office without Bergstra and decided to send out a copy of the provincial guidelines and of Henry's pastoral letter to parents for information.

Bergstra, who could not attend the trustees' meeting as she was at a meeting of the Alberta School Boards' Association board of directors, said if she had been at the board's meeting, she would have advised against the move to send out the documents to the parents "for a variety of reasons."

"Having said this, I want to personally apologize to anyone that the move might have caused harm or hurt to," Bergstra said, refusing to say what reasons she has to oppose sending the documents to parents.

"In moving forward, I want to assure everyone that the board is beginning the process of sifting through the 21 pages of (provincial) guidelines. There is a lot to go through. We want to honour a process that is respectful, thorough and thoughtful."

"And once this process is completed, we will be bringing our final draft forward to public board for its third and final reading."

The Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association entered the debate Jan. 19 with a written statement criticizing the government and defending the Alberta bishops.

The ACSTA said it "regrets Alberta Education's lack of consultation" during the development of the guidelines.

The association, representing 24 school boards, also reaffirmed

the role of the Alberta bishops "to provide moral and theological leadership to the Catholic community, including Catholic education communities."

All Catholic schools in the province "have been and will continue to be inclusive, welcoming, safe and caring environments," the ACSTA said.

It also pointed to a document produced by the Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta which has "long ensured that all students, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, etc., are treated with equal respect and dignity."

The debate over the rights of transgender students came to the forefront earlier last year when a seven-year-old transgender girl wanted to use the girls' washroom in her Edmonton Catholic school.

She was no longer identifying as a boy and didn't want to stand out by having to use a new, gender-neutral washroom. In May, her school agreed she could use the female facilities.

Last December trustees passed second reading of their stand-alone policy on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. However, critics described it as too vague.

According to Bergstra, the board has been waiting for the provincial guidelines to move forward with its policy.

"That was the missing element to final development of our policy," she said Jan. 13.

"I also respect that government did their homework and their due diligence to ensure that it had a very comprehensive set of guidelines submitted to boards."

Priests talk about importance of homily preparation

By Thandiwe Konguavi
Western Catholic Reporter

EDMONTON (CCN) — As a homilist, Rev. Michael McCaffery is probably best known for his brevity. “I always say people don’t remember what I said, but they know it didn’t take me very long to say it.”

He credits this to the best advice he ever received, shortly after he was ordained about 55 years ago.

Msgr. Foran, considered one of the premier preachers in the Edmonton archdiocese at the time, told him: “McCaffery, I want you to preach six minutes and no notes.”

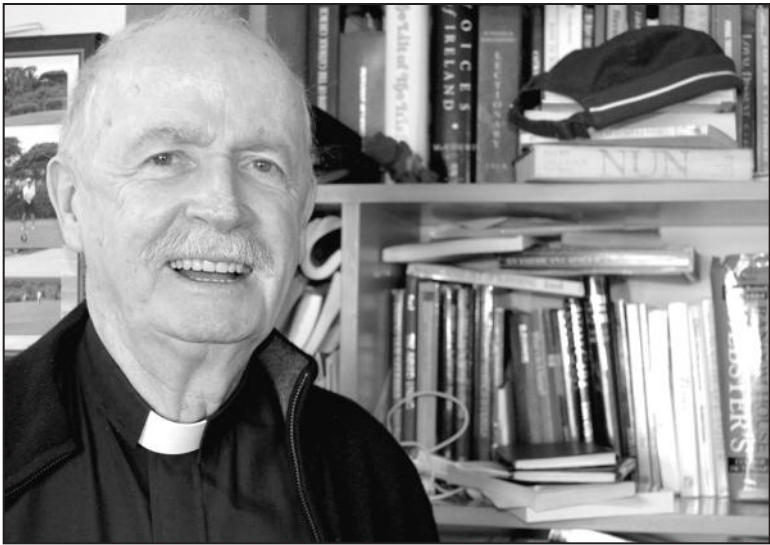
McCaffery, now 80, has tried to follow that advice throughout his priesthood.

Despite the brevity of his sermons, and that of many priests around the archdiocese, much preparation is undertaken before the Sunday homily is delivered.

An integral part of the church’s worship, the homily is only to be delivered by bishops, priests or deacons.

According to the Vatican’s Homiletic Directory, it is not only an instruction, but also an act of worship.

Another seasoned homilist, Rev. Stefano Penna, a teacher of preaching and vice-president for college development and advancement at Newman Theological



WCR/T. Konguavi

SHORT HOMILIES — Rev. Mike McCaffery says people don’t always remember what he said, only that it didn’t take him long to say it.

our history, consecrating our life stories by his Holy Spirit and that is what the preacher has to allow those who hear the word to experience.”

Penna does three things to prepare his Sunday homily, usually starting the Monday before, when he reads the Lectionary readings for the following Sunday. The priest rests with the word and listens prayerfully throughout the week.

Rev. Nilo Macapinlac, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Wetaskiwin and Our Lady of Seven Sorrows in Maskwacis, said Monday, his day off, is the time he empties himself and allows the Word of God to penetrate his mind. He ponders it in his heart in the style of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

“That is a very, very important thing that when the mind is being enlightened by the Holy Spirit it sinks into the heart and the heart becomes the vessel and the treasury of the Word of God. That is the pattern of the homilies, and it has to be delivered to the people so that the Holy

Spirit operates by enlightening the mind and hearts of the people.”

Friar Pierre Ducharme, associate pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Sherwood Park, said the Gospel is a source of meditation for him.

After he reads, if it is not too cold outside, he goes for a walk.

“Once I get moving, particularly if it’s outside, the inspiration comes to me,” he said. “It’s amazing how it happens. I start to see things that I didn’t see before.”

Rev. Peter Ebidero, associate pastor of Holy Family Parish in St. Albert, is beloved by parishioners for his knowledge of Scripture. In preparing his homilies, he reads from the Lectionary

then reads the whole chapter and background of the passages.

Penna said the preacher must have his ear to the community, knowing and listening to what is happening. Citing the Protestant theologian Karl Barth, he added: the preacher is to have the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other.

In addition to monitoring the news, McCaffery turns to writings by renowned theologians such as Jesuit Walter Burghardt and previous homilies he has delivered himself.

He makes an effort to keep apace of what is happening with the people in the community, he said, with an emphasis on listening to the poor, hurting and weak.

“Pope Francis said one of the reasons people leave the church is our homilies don’t reach the hearts. We’re speaking to the goats and not reaching the sheep.”

Ebidero also researches scien-

tific studies from Christian psychologists on the Internet and often incorporates questions and answers from parishioners during the homily.

The next step in preparing a homily is the composition.

When he was young, Penna wrote out and memorized his homilies. Today, he has the points in line beforehand, then delivers the homilies relying on his 30 years of priesthood experience, all of his studies and prayer, and then lets the Holy Spirit go.

He knows, based on his worst experiences delivering a homily which also turned out to be his best experiences delivering a homily, that it is the Holy Spirit who moves the hearts and minds of the hearers.

There have been days when he walked away from the pulpit saying, “I am sorry Lord for having failed you, for having preached such a terrible homily,” but then someone will come up later and say that his homily touched and changed their life, said Penna.

“So I know who it is that’s preaching and it’s awesome. There are days when I say, ‘Lord, help me to be converted by that homily you just preached through me.’

“You become a conduit of Christ, of the Holy Spirit. It’s an amazing moment.”

Saturday is the day when the priest has an opportunity to practise his delivery, said Penna.

“I always said, the people at

Saturday evening mass are going to heaven first because they got the priest’s trial run.”

Following the mass, some people will say, “Father, thank you for your message,” and those who are not really churchgoers might say, “Thank you for your speech.”

Ducharme said he has not got a lot of negative feedback from parishioners in his five years of preaching, which he presumes has

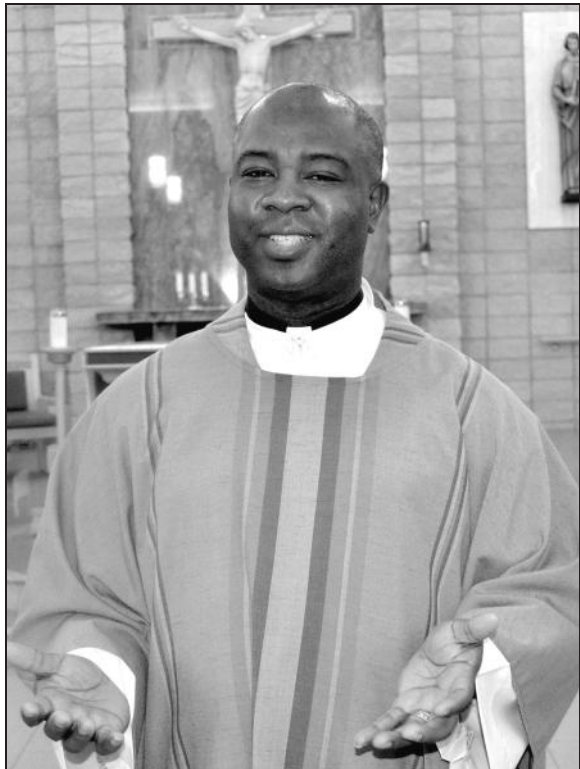


WCR/T. Konguavi

MINDS AND HEARTS — Rev. Stefano Penna says it is the Holy Spirit who moves the minds and hearts of hearers.

a lot to do with the fact that “people are kind.”

“I do think Catholics are generally kind and merciful so they tend to want to tell you when they think it was good.”



WCR/T. Konguavi

HOMILY PREPARATION — Rev. Peter Ebidero, pastor of St. Albert’s Holy Family Parish, learns from Christian psychologists before preparing his Sunday homilies.

College in Edmonton said, just as Jesus stood up to read in the synagogue, the homilist is called to proclaim how God’s word is being fulfilled here and now.

“There are two times of consecration that I act in the person of Christ,” said Penna: “At the altar during the eucharist when I take up his words, ‘This is my body, this is my blood’; and when I proclaim his Gospel. The homily is the amplification of that word.”

Scripture was written to be proclaimed primarily in church, said Penna, and there is an anointing that comes upon the preacher and the hearer.

“We are actually hearing the voice of Jesus retelling the truth of

Canada is unique among jurisdictions

Continued from page 1

lethal dose, or whether it would allow euthanasia, where a physician or other medical professional causes the death usually through a lethal injection. She noted some jurisdictions, such as some American states, allow only assisted suicide. Some jurisdictions allow only voluntary euthanasia. Some allow both.

Lawyer Joanne Klineberg told the committee Canada was unique among all the jurisdictions that offer some form of PAD in that it is the only one that has two different levels of government involved in the jurisdiction of criminal law and of health care. For Parliament, the essential elements of the law have to do with what exemptions for PAD will be allowed in the Criminal Code, she said.

Matters concerning conscience rights for physicians are provincial matters, she said.

Several committee members had questions concerning jurisdiction, such as what would happen if the federal law differed from the Quebec law. The witnesses advised Parliament to focus on crafting a law rather than on jurisdictional questions.

The committee will also need to determine who will be eligible for PAD and define what the legal term “grievous” means from a

medical standpoint, she said.

Conservative MP Mark Warawa (Langley, B.C.) asked whether under the Carter decision a person requesting PAD had to be terminally ill. Klineberg said the SCC decision is “not entirely clear” though the cases in question in Carter concerned people with illnesses such as ALS, Huntington’s disease and terminal cancer.

Klineberg said it is important for the legislation to be clear on what activities will or will not result in a criminal offence so medical professionals will know what they can and cannot do.

In an interview, Warawa, a pro-life MP, said the opinions on the committee are as diverse as those of Canadians at large.

“I am sensing the vast majority of people realize how serious this issue is” and how important it is to have adequate safeguards in the legislation, he said.

“The purpose of the Criminal Code, which applied equally across Canada, is to protect the vulnerable,” he said.

Warawa said Parliament is “required to introduce legislation” because of the Carter decision, but he said at this point it is premature to determine what the committee will advise. When the report is done, he will then decide “whether or not I can support this report.”

Palliative care is one of his prior-

ities. He said he hopes to remind the government of NDP MP Charlie Angus’ motion to adopt a national palliative care strategy that was passed by the previous Parliament.

The makeup of the PADM joint committee:

Senators:

- Senator James Cowan (Liberal)
- Senator Serge Joyal (Liberal)
- Senator Nancy Ruth (Conservative)
- Senator Kelvin Ogilvie (Conservative)
- Senator Judith Seidman (Conservative)

MPs:

- John Aldag, (Liberal Cloverdale-Langley City)
- Rene Arseneault (Liberal Mada-waska-Restigouche)
- Steven Blaney (Conservative Bellechasse-Les Etchemins-Levis)
- Michael Cooper (Conservative St. Albert-Edmonton)
- Julie Dabrusin (Liberal Toronto-Danforth)
- Denis Lemieux (Liberal Chicoutimi-Le Fjord)
- Robert Oliphant (Liberal Don Valley West)
- Murray Rankin (NDP Victoria)
- Brigitte Sansoucy (NDP Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot)
- Brenda Shanahan (Liberal Chateaugay-Lacolle)
- Mark Warawa (Conservative Langley-Aldergrove)

Stories of refugee sponsorship ‘miraculous’

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — In September, St. Philip Neri Parish in Saskatoon welcomed the first Syrian refugee family sponsored through the diocese, and Holy Spirit has also enthusiastically embraced sponsorship of another Syrian family (consisting of a mother, father and two daughters) who arrived Dec. 10.

These are only two of many cases of private sponsorship of refugees from Syria and other countries in crisis that has involved the Office of Migration in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, which is a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) through an arrangement with the federal government (see related article, this page).

Catholic parishes and other churches currently undertaking refugee sponsorship in Saskatoon include St. Philip Neri, Holy Spirit, Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Mary, St. Anne, Sts-Martyrs-Canadiens, St. Augustine, St. Francis, St. Joseph, St. Patrick, Holy Resurrection Orthodox, Holy Trinity Ukrainian Orthodox, Sts. Peter and Paul and Dormition Ukrainian Catholic parishes, Resurrection Lutheran Church, St. Andrew's Presbyterian, Third Avenue United and Knox United churches.

“Right now, two other Syrian families (that are designated for private sponsorship in the diocese) are hunkered down in Northern



REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP — Christine Zyla of the diocesan Office of Migration brought greetings to Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Jan. 17 during a fundraising event for refugee sponsorship. Zyla also provided an update about refugee sponsorship in the diocese and beyond at a Diocesan Pastoral Council meeting Jan. 16 at the Cathedral of the Holy Family in Saskatoon.

Iraq,” said Christine Zyla, co-ordinator of the diocesan Office of Migration. The situation there is dire, and now includes a ‘no-fly zone.’

“We don’t expect that the Visa officers will be able to go in there to do interviews. We are worried

about them, f a m i l y members are worried about them. We are just trying to keep in touch.” She expressed appreciation for the support and communication coming from government officials at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada in recent weeks.

One of the two families trapped in Northern Iraq is a family-linked

sponsorship shared by Our Lady of Lourdes and a family member in Saskatoon, and the other is being co-sponsored by Holy Spirit and a childhood friend of the family who now lives here.

“That friend who is working with Holy Spirit in co-sponsoring

this young couple in northern Iraq has in the meantime been very active in helping the parish with translation, and with helping another new family get settled in,” noted Zyla. “This is the beauty of private sponsorship: the relationships that develop.”

St. Philip Neri Parish also recently welcomed a long-awaited family of seven from Eritrea, coming by way of Sudan, co-sponsored with a family member, she reported, noting the application was first initiated in 2011.

At times, such long delays mean that a sponsorship falls through. For instance, one Syrian family that was identified for sponsorship in Saskatoon resorted to smugglers in the face of delays and hardships, with the father and his three year-old-daughter fleeing to Greece by boat. Thankfully, they arrived safely and are now proceeding through the European system, Zyla said.

However, there are also other “miracle stories” of sponsorships working out in the face of seemingly impossible circumstances. In two cases, sponsorship unfolded over many months after an initial, exploratory email sent by desperate refugees to the diocese.

Zyla described how refugees will comb the Internet looking for help, with some seeking out Catholic sponsorship groups such as the Office of Migration in the Diocese of Saskatoon. She cannot

respond to every such email — sometimes because of language barriers, sometimes because of misunderstanding about what the office can do. “However, the odd time I do get an email from overseas that I actually can respond to.”

A refugee in Lebanon found the office online, and with a good command of English, was able to describe his situation in an exploratory email. “He explained that he and his family were from Maa'loula, which is the southwest corner of Syria, and they had fled because ISIS had come in and destroyed their farm,” Zyla related. “They had fled to Lebanon. He didn’t know if we would be able to help, he was just taking a leap of faith.”

Zyla sent a message expressing regret for all the family had suffered, and relief that they were safe. She explained that she did not know if her office could help them, but would see what she could do. “He was so happy that I even replied,” she said. “He sent me some pictures of what Maa'loula looked like, and pictures of their daily life before it was all destroyed. I come from a farming background: when he said it was a farm, and he said that the farm had been destroyed, it really tugged at me and who I am.”

In the months that followed, they continued to stay in touch via email. “I tried to encourage them,” she said, citing the high interest in sponsorship, and new people and groups coming forward. After hearing an interview on CBC radio with an Anglican priest who had been born in Syria and served in Maa'loula, and learning more about the disappearing Aramaic dialect in the area — a dialect that Jesus spoke — their email conversations deepened, and she learned more about the family and about their faith.

“He told me they are Melkite Christians (a Byzantine rite of the Catholic church). Just as I was beginning to clue into this connection, one of the parishioners of Dormition Ukrainian Catholic Parish (Byzantine rite) in Saskatoon came in to my office and said, ‘I really feel our parish should be doing something about refugees: I really feel that we

— LEAP, page 7

Welcoming the stranger a moral imperative

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — After the world’s attention was captured by the image of a drowned toddler in September 2015, an ever-increasing awareness about the plight of Syrian refugees has prompted a generous response from parishes, organizations and individuals in our community, says Christine Zyla, who co-ordinates the Office of Migration in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

“I have the great good fortune of seeing the goodness in people’s hearts. The phone calls and e-mails and visits asking how we can help just keep on coming,” Zyla said in a report to the Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) Jan. 16 in Saskatoon.

“When I remind people that there are many other populations at risk besides Syrians, the same desire to help is there, and all options are explored,” she added.

In addition to some 4.5 million refugees escaping violence and persecution in Syria, millions of other refugees are also fleeing for their lives from other places around the world — such as Eritrea, Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan, and Burundi — with some finding safety and a new life in Canada.

The 1951 Refugee Convention is a multi-lateral United Nations treaty that officially defines a refugee as someone who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the

country of his nationality.” That UN treaty also spells out the rights of those who are seeking asylum, and the responsibilities of nations in granting asylum.

For refugees, leaving their home is not a matter of choice, explains the United Nations Refugee Agency at www.unhcr.org. “Refugees have to move if they are to save their lives or preserve their freedom. They have no protection from their own state — indeed, it is often their own government that is threatening to persecute them. If other countries do not let them in, and do not help them once they are in, then they may be condemning them to death — or to an intolerable life in the shadows, without sustenance and without rights,” states the UNHCR website.

The moral imperative to “welcome the stranger” in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon has for several decades included living out the diocese’s role as a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH). As a SAH, the diocese has signed an agreement with the federal government to resettle refugees through private sponsorship. SAHs can sponsor refugees themselves or work with others in the community to privately sponsor refugees.

Besides permitting private sponsorship, Canada also welcomes government-sponsored refugees — including many being brought in as part of a recent government promise to welcome some 25,000 fleeing violence and persecution in Syria.

Through the diocesan Office of Migration, Zyla co-ordinates the

diocese’s role as a SAH, working with parishes, organizations and family members to privately sponsor refugees, including covering costs associated with resettlement, and providing a welcoming community of support for the newcomers.

“Getting applications ready to go and then helping newcomers settle certainly requires a team effort,” stressed Zyla, expressing appreciation to parish refugee committees who are working extremely hard to follow through on work initiated and supported by the diocesan office.

“In the past year, we welcomed 10 newcomer families at the Saskatoon airport. They came from Syria, Pakistan, and Eritrea,” reported Zyla. “We lost one Syrian father and his three-year-old daughter to smugglers. Thankfully, they did make it to Greece and are now making their way through the European system.”

In 2015, the diocesan office initiated applications for 39 individual refugees. “These include three Syrian families and 19 Eritrean families or singles and two brothers from Pakistan,” she said. “Our current diocesan waiting list has more than 60 files on it, and many of those are for families, mostly Eritreans.”

SAHs across Canada have been told that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada is currently working on determining the allocations for sponsorships for the new year, and the diocese’s numbers for 2016 should be announced some time in February, she said.



Kip Yaworski

PPC WORKSHOP — A workshop about the role of a Parish Pastoral Council was held Jan. 23 at St. Francis Xavier Parish in Saskatoon, led by Blake Sittler, director of Pastoral Services for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon. Available to all parishes, the diocesan workshop focuses on the pastoral focus and visioning role of a parish council.

Gonzaga to support students of all backgrounds

By James Buchok

WINNIPEG — Manitoba's newest Catholic school, Gonzaga Middle School, will open in September serving Winnipeg's Point Douglas and North East Downtown neighbourhoods.

"Gonzaga will operate inclusively, being open to a variety of cultural traditions and expressions of spirituality, including Christian and indigenous traditions," says principal Tom Lussier. "We want our students to learn and respect their own faith and spiritual traditions, to understand where they come from and who they hope to become. Leaders from the community have provided their advice and expertise as planning for the school has moved forward."

The school will start with 20 Grade 6 students and will grow to about 60 students (Grade 6 - 8) by 2018. Tuition is free but, in return, students and their families must

commit to a longer school day of 8 a.m. to 5:15 p.m., which includes time for tutoring and homework, and at least two weeks of summer programs, including camps.

"The primary factor will be need. It's for kids beneath the poverty line or very near," said Lussier, who brings over 30 years of experience as a teacher and 11 years as principal of St. Paul's High School in Winnipeg.

Gonzaga is modelled after Nativity schools run by the Jesuits in inner-city neighbourhoods across the United States. Mother Teresa Middle School, which opened in Regina in 2011, was the first such school in Canada.

The 10,000-square foot Gonzaga Middle School property at 174 Maple Street North is a renovated former Ukrainian Catholic school building, and includes a kitchen, library, gymnasium and staff rooms.

The school's board will lobby

private business, foundations and corporations for funding to cover costs, including school uniforms, transportation to and from school, summer programming and daily meals of breakfast, lunch and snacks. The school can apply for provincial grants after a three-year waiting period.

The first school for boys from low-income families having difficulty with high school was founded by the Jesuits in 1971 in New York City and was called Nativity Mission Centre. Since then, more than 60 Nativity-model schools for all-boys, all-girls and co-educational classes, based on the best-practices and success of the original school, have been created and sponsored by Catholic and

non-Catholic groups.

Through the 1990s and 2000s a group of similar schools were started by the De Lasalle Christian Brothers under the Miguel school banner. A network was formed known as the Nativity Miguel Network that brought together all of these schools.

According to the school's website at www.gonzagamiddleschool.ca, Gonzaga's philosophy is "to lower barriers to educational advancement and success through its academic program, longer school day, before and after school programming, extended school year, enrichment activities and mentoring and graduate support programs."

"Gonzaga seeks to develop

'men and women for others' while preparing students for success in high school and post-secondary study. It will strive to graduate students who are loving, intellectually competent, open to growth, spiritually alive and committed to doing justice."

"Gonzaga will support its students of all cultural and faith backgrounds in their growth toward becoming hopeful, confident, morally responsible leaders for love and service to their families and communities. Gonzaga Middle School will provide an educational option for parents of children from a variety of faith and cultural backgrounds, including Indigenous, New-Canadian and other communities."

It all started with a leap of faith on young man's part

Continued from page 6

should be sponsoring a Syrian family." Zyla pulled out the file of the family living in Lebanon.

As a result, Dormition is now partnering with Sts. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Catholic Parish in Saskatoon to sponsor one of the older brothers and his wife, and a younger 18-year-old brother.

The young man who initiated the email won't be part of this sponsorship — he is scheduled for mandatory military service, and the family together decided it was best if the two other brothers came to Canada. "But it all started with a leap of faith on this young man's part, as he sent that email," said Zyla. "I'm flabbergasted by what God can do if we just make the smallest room."

Another email connection with a Syrian family that has fled to Saudi Arabia — a father, mother and two young boys — has also led to a sponsorship in Saskatoon by three Christian churches that approached the diocese seeking the support of a local SAH. St. Andrew's Presbyterian, Third Avenue United and Knox United Church are going to sponsor the family, whose circumstances have been steadily deteriorating since the family first made contact with the diocesan Office of Migration with a random email. "I just felt like I needed to keep the conversation going, that God had a plan," said Zyla.

"I could see how things were slowly getting worse for this family. Their resources were dwindling. The two little boys were no longer allowed to attend school. The wife couldn't work or even go outside the home unaccompanied by a man under Saudi law," she described, adding that their permission to stay in Saudi Arabia was coming up for review in March and there was a real fear that the family would have had to leave the country. With the three Saskatoon churches willing to take on this private sponsorship, the forms have been filled out in

record time, and the family has been issued a file number, and can safely stay in that country until the process of getting to Canada is complete.

"I know we can't help the millions, but who only knows how many lives will be affected by this family, because they have been given a chance?" said Zyla. "That ripple effect is God's work, and we have a tiny part in it."

Zyla marvels at the dedication and generosity of people who want to make a difference in the lives of suffering people around the world. She noted that among those coming forward to ask about sponsorship are those without any affiliation with a parish, church or organization.

This fall, two nurses approached the Office of Migration, asking about how to initiate a private refugee sponsorship. Both had served overseas in Haiti and had a good understanding of what was involved. Zyla recommended they get a larger group together, and within a few weeks the two nurses had created a group they dubbed Saskatoon Refugee Sponsorship Group, which had commenced with fundraising and collecting donations.

When it came to choosing whom to sponsor, they asked Zyla to suggest some possibilities. Ultimately they asked for the case that would be most difficult to find sponsorship for — a family of five from Eritrea presently living in Sudan who has been on file since 2012.

"They have a family member living here and the group is already developing a friendship. When the family arrives, the friendships will have already started," she said. "This is exactly what we want — the building of friendships, the building of hope."

For more information about refugee sponsorship, contact Christine Zyla at the diocesan Office of Migration at the Catholic Pastoral Centre in Saskatoon or email migration@saskatoonrcdiocese.com



Kiply Yaworski

AGM — Financial Administrator Tanya Clarke presented the audited financial statement for the 2014 - 2015 ministry year in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon at an Annual General Meeting Jan. 16 at the Cathedral of the Holy Family. The meeting also included a report from Director of Pastoral Services Blake Sittler about ministry in the diocese, and comments from Bishop Donald Bolen, noting highlights of the year. The diocese's Annual Report has been posted on the diocesan website at www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/newsletters

Prison ministry includes mercy

By Paula Fournier

PRINCE ALBERT — "For a person to receive mercy, one has to realize there is brokenness and sin that needs to be forgiven and mercy shown, not just the rigours of justice," said Rev. Michael Averyt, a Catholic chaplain at the Saskatchewan Penitentiary in Prince Albert.

He works alongside Deacon Brad Taylor, caring for the inmates in all areas of the penitentiary. The chaplaincy team also includes Charles Kahumba, a Presbyterian minister, and Imam Mumin, who serves the Muslim population.

Each chaplain ministers from his own faith tradition; however, they also serve those whose faiths are not locally represented. For example, a Jewish chaplain in Ontario sends them updates and information about such things as Kosher diets and upcoming events in the Jewish calendar.

Faith activities in various traditions can include Sunday services, with Bible studies and adult faith formation classes during the week. The chaplain's daily routine

also includes seeing inmates one on one.

Volunteer ministry at the penitentiary is basically one of presence. Volunteers in the Person to Person program (P2P) converse with inmates, play cribbage or other card games when they visit their assigned inmate once a month.

"It's part of a program to help the inmate have contact with someone in the outside world, someone who is there for them as a person, non-judging, accepting and encouraging," said Averyt.

A lot of people there want to be good, but they don't know how, he explained. They come from backgrounds that are horrible beyond belief. Volunteers show by their example that there is another way of living, one that leads to self-fulfilment, happiness, harmony.

"Jesus came not to call the righteous, but the sinners; not those who are whole, but those who are sick. They are people that need the Gospel, some of them are ready to hear it. Sometimes a person has to hit rock bottom before they recognize the need for faith."

As with twelve-step programs,

first one has to recognize there is a problem, that it is beyond their control, and that help is needed from a higher power. When the person in need realizes that, we in the church have the responsibility of pointing people toward God.

"I know from experience and being a pastor who has seen the life of others that God does work miracles. So the joy for me is when someone comes into my office and feels comfortable enough to be open, to risk being vulnerable. When they leave the office with hope and a smile, you know that God has touched somebody. To be able to do what you feel called to do is its own joy. But the joy is seeing other people find hope, encouragement and with that a new resolve to straighten out their life, to clean up their act, confident that they can do it."

The board is trying to branch out in other areas of restorative justice ministry. One program for circles of support and accountability, known as COSA, is designed to help high risk offenders reintegrate into the community. He says

— DESPERATE, page 17

Informed citizenry needs investigative journalism

By Bill Tammeus
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A few months before Robert W. Finn became bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, I interviewed him for The Kansas City Star about the challenges he might face when he replaced the much-loved Bishop Raymond Boland.

Of course, neither Finn nor I had any way of knowing that a decade-plus later he would resign in disgrace, having been convicted of the misdemeanor crime of failing to notify law enforcement authorities about a suspected child-abusing priest in the diocese — a priest who now spends his time in prison.

I looked back on that 2004 interview recently and was shocked

by the difference between Finn’s words and his later actions (or, more to the point, inactions) especially in light of the recent movie *Spotlight*, which was nominated for six Academy Awards on Jan. 14 including best picture and best original screenplay.

The movie describes how the Boston Globe’s investigative reporting team uncovered wide-

spread child abuse at the hands of priests and a coverup by Boston’s then-archbishop, Cardinal Bernard Law. Indeed, the film ends with a long list of cities around the world in which this abuse scandal played out, and Kansas City is on that list.

At one point Finn talked to me about the need for the church to “transform the world and the culture.” I asked him what he meant, and he noted that he recently had met with some Protestants about a coalition against pornography. He described porn as a “growing addiction, especially because of the Internet.”

So Finn’s own words show he knew what to be on the lookout for. But when Rev. Shawn Ratigan’s laptop computer showed up in the hands of diocesan officials with child porn on it, neither Finn nor anyone else in the diocese notified law enforcement authorities. Instead, Finn tried to cover it up by fixing it from the inside. Which is exactly what authorities in Boston did — year after year and priest after priest.

Finn went on to describe how Pope John Paul II had noted that we live in a “culture of death.” Perhaps if he had cut out the words he said next and pasted them on a sign on his desk he might have remembered them when confronted with the Ratigan case: “A ‘culture medium’ would be like the dirt that something is planted in. If something’s growing in that, it just very uncon-

sciously absorbs this through the roots and we start losing our sensitivity to what is wrong, what is dangerous, what is poisoning us.”

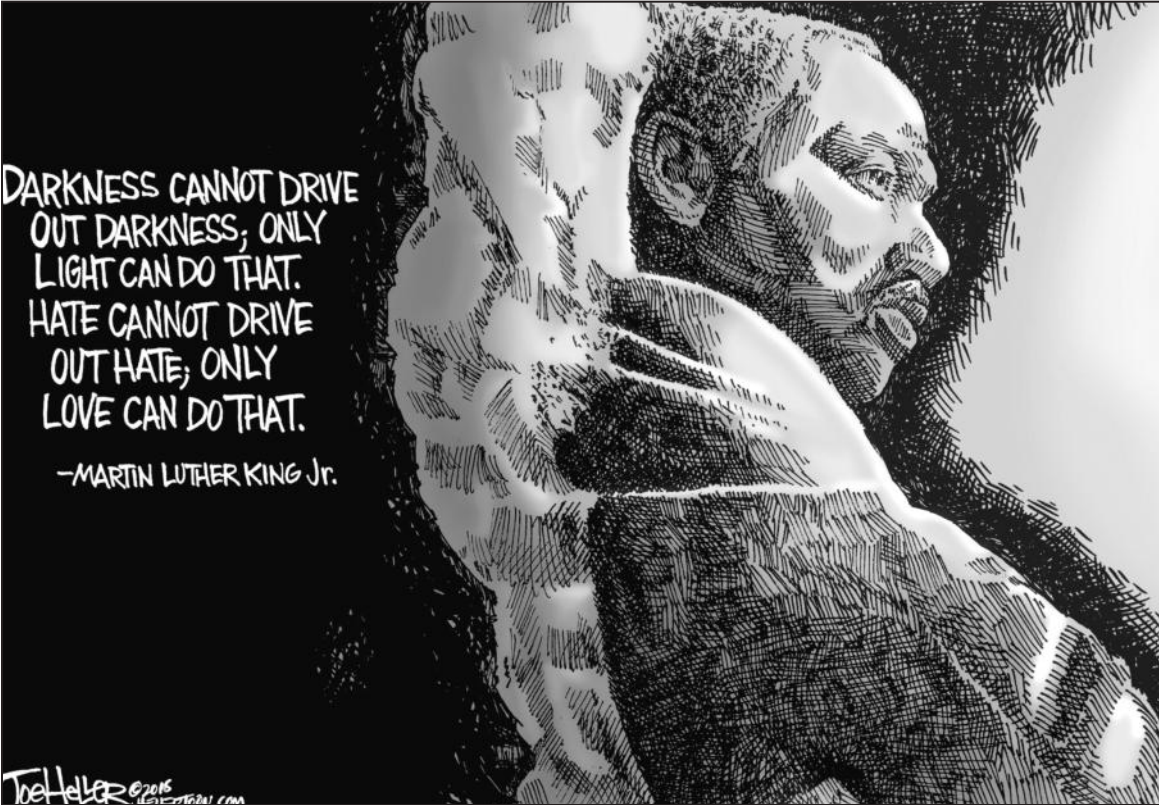
So Finn is gone and the new bishop, James V. Johnston Jr., is asking the church to repent and “to look honestly at who we are, how we’ve failed and the people we’ve wounded.” It’s the right attitude. But whether it will prevent a repeat of the crimes the diocese has witnessed is impossible to predict.

In a 2015 column I wrote for the *National Catholic Reporter*, I made the point that an informed citizenry needs the kind of investigative journalism represented by the *Spotlight* team in Boston. But newspapers are shrinking and it’s unclear how the public will learn about future crimes and sins that public (to say nothing of religious) officials want kept secret.

This diminution of investigative newspaper reporting places on all citizens — especially on members of faith communities — a deeper responsibility to seek out the truth and to insist on transparency from authorities. So far there’s little evidence that the public understands this. But if citizens fail, it will put at risk our most cherished political and religious institutions, and endanger our children.

When I asked Finn in 2004 what the sexual abuse scandal had taught him and the church, his answer reflected knowledge I wish he had remembered when it came time to do the right thing: “I think it will always change us in terms of being more vigilant. . . . I don’t think that we can ever become complacent or so confident that that’s all taken care of because these problems are deep-seated and there’s a lot of denial, there’s a lot of hiding and secretiveness and so forth.”

What all of us need to remember is that sometimes the denial, hiding and secrecy happen at the highest levels of authority.



CNS/Joe Heller

Books

Book sees connections between Buddhism and Christianity

LIVING BUDDHA, LIVING CHRIST by Thich Nhat Hanh. 20th anniversary edition. (New York, Riverhead Books, ©2015, 219 pages. Reviewed by Shannon Hengen.

Thich Nhat Hanh finds many connections between Buddhism and Christianity — including the life of the Spirit that teaches understanding and love in each of us — but his aim is beyond an intellectual exercise in comparison. His aim is to show how the genuine practice of the two sets of beliefs brings practitioners to peace. How timely that the 20th anniversary edition should appear when peace between disparate believers seems as difficult and remote.

As the book’s title implies, Buddhism and Christianity are both realized fully only when lived, not when approached through concepts and notions. Meditation leads the practitioner to a way of living that is mindful of the interconnectedness and the impermanence of all things. As a result of mindfulness, we become both aware of the world’s suffering and committed to relieving it. We are able to bring joy.

The author invokes an image of touching often in the book. For example, without the practice of touching the Spirit (of Jesus, of Buddha) deeply, as in meditation, we cannot touch our own suffering. Such an ability to know ourselves allows us to know reality as well. He writes: “We are all filled with violence, hatred, and fear Meditation can help. Meditation is not a drug to make us oblivious to our real problems. It should produce awareness. . . . Looking deeply at our own mind and our own life, we will begin to see what to do and what not to do to bring about a real change” (p. 76).

Referring to the global milieu of 20 years ago when the book was originally published, in particular the rule of Saddam Hussein, he states: “Trying to overcome evil with evil is not the way to make peace” (p. 75). We cannot help but sense a strong relationship to the current violent extremist forces in the Middle East and our responses to them.

Buddhist and Christian teaching converge in emphases on healing and peace. The author states: “Jesus did not say that if you are angry with your brother, you will be put in a place called hell. He said that if you are angry with your brother, you are already in hell” (75). “Jesus healed whatever he touched” (p. 15). “The Buddha was called the King of Healers” (p. 14).

The author draws not only on the primary sacred texts of the two religions but also on great Christian and Buddhist spiritual interpreters to show their commonalities. With profound intuitive skill, he points at similarities between Buddhist precepts and, for example, the Trinity, eucharist, and resurrection.

Claiming that we understand our own tradition better when we truly appreciate another’s as it is lived authentically, the author calls us repeatedly to act as Jesus acted. To do so is to overcome our fear and anger, to live in joy, and to enable dialogue. To act as Buddha did is to understand ourselves and reality deeply and to show respect for all of creation.

Thich Nhat Hanh emphasizes the need for disciplined spiritual practice, without which we act out of emptiness. Our young need teaching in practices that can fill them with loving kindness, teaching that for him arises not from our preaching but rather from our genuinely living Buddha, living Christ.



Tammeus, a former columnist for The Kansas City Star, writes the daily Faith Matters blog for The Star’s website. Email him at wtammeus@gmail.com. This commentary is part of the KCPT and Hale Center for Journalism project Beyond Belief, a series of stories and discussions about faith and the different faith traditions in Kansas City.

Schools welcome all

Continued from page 3

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada numbers 115,000 members in 525 congregations. It is a member of the Lutheran World Federation, the Canadian Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. The ELCIC began in 1986 with the merger of two Lutheran groups which resulted from earlier mergers before that.

The ELCIC Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod is made up of 65 congregations with 14 in Winnipeg, six in Ontario (as far east as Thunder Bay where there are three congregations) and the majority in other cities and towns in Manitoba.

The Lutheran World Federation has initiated the Reformation Challenge for 2017, with Lutherans across Canada invited to join together to: Sponsor 500 refugees to Canada through Canadian Lutheran World Relief; plant 500,000 trees; raise \$500,000 for the Lutheran World Federation Endowment Fund; and provide 500 scholarships for Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land schools. The schools operate despite conflicts in Pales-

tine and Israel and welcome children of all faiths, providing education, job skills and leadership formation. A scholarship of \$1,400 will allow a student to attend school for one year.

“These are practices we believe the church should be focused on,” said Sauer, adding that the Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod has set its goals at sponsorship of 60 refugees, providing 60 scholarships, planting 60,000 trees and raising \$60,000 for the LWF.

Sunday school children at Messiah Lutheran Church in west Winnipeg have already started collecting loonies and toonies for scholarships, and St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Brunkild, Man., so far has raised \$1,000 to plant trees and another \$700 to put toward sponsoring refugees.

Lutherans have a long history in Manitoba, with the first Lutheran services in Canada held in Churchill in the fall of 1619, by Rev. Rasmus Jensen, a chaplain with an ill-fated Danish expedition searching for the Northwest Passage. The denomination continues to flourish in the province with the highly anticipated 2017 National Convention of the ELCIC to be held in Winnipeg.

Hengen, who now lives in Ontario, spent many years living in Saskatchewan and was an occasional contributor to the Prairie Messenger during that time.

A celebration of documentary excellence from 2015

Screenings & Meanings

Gerald Schmitz



I'm currently in Park City, Utah, in the thick of the 32nd Sundance Film Festival, a showcase for top documentaries from around the world, about which more next month. The documentary field has grown enormously — the 40-plus premiering at Sundance were selected from thousands of submissions — and the best can be counted on for outstanding cinematic experiences. One on many lists is Joshua Oppenheimer's Oscar-nominated *The Look of Silence*, a followup to his extraordinary *The Act of Killing* on the aftermath of the 1960s Indonesian genocide. It topped my best of 2014 though was not released beyond the festival circuit until this year.

With that in mind here are my top 10 and five honourable mentions:

1. Salt of the Earth (France/Brazil/Italy)

This luminous homage to the work of renowned photographer Sebastião Salgado has received numerous awards and an Oscar nomination since its acclaimed debut at the 2014 Cannes festival. Co-directed and written by his son Juliano Ribeiro Salgado and German master Wim Wenders, it offers a remarkable window on the human condition. Some of Salgado's indelible images starkly capture the heart of social extremes; others open up planetary wonders as explored in his latest epic project *Genesis*.

2. Racing Extinction (U.S./ China/Hong Kong/ Indonesia/ Mexico/U.K.)

Oscar-winning director/oceanographer Louie Psihoyos (*The Cove*) leads an intrepid crew in a globe-spanning investigation, sometimes involving risky undercover operations, of human activities, from resource depletion to climate change, that threaten the survival of other species in this "anthropocene" age. More optimistically the film also highlights potential remedial actions that could avert, or at least mitigate, the prospects for a sixth mass extinction.

3. Democrats (Denmark)

Director Camilla Nielsson gained behind-the-scenes access

to the protracted, often tense, negotiations over a new constitution for Zimbabwe that took place between the party of autocrat Robert Mugabe and the main opposition party. The fascinating result is a remarkable achievement awarded the top prize by the Tribeca festival jury "for filming in conditions where simply to be present is a triumph; and for prioritizing dignity, courage, and our common struggle for humanity."

4. (T)ERROR (U.S.)

The first film by co-directors Lyric Cabral and David Felix Sutcliffe is also the first to secretly probe and expose the shady details of an undercover FBI counterterrorism "sting" operation against several Muslim suspects. It turns a timely critical lens on the tactics of those charged with keeping us safe, earning plaudits from juries at Sundance and the International Documentary Association.

5. Welcome to Leith (U.S.)

This multiple award winner by directors Michael Nicols and Christopher Walker is a chilling account of how notorious white supremacist Craig Cobb and a band of neo-Nazi supporters attempted to take over a tiny town in North Dakota, intimidating the longtime local residents until they fought back. It's an unsettling look into a dark corner of racist extremism in America.

6. Meru (U.S.)

The Himalayan summit of Mount Meru is considered the world's ultimate climbing challenge and this Sundance audience award winner captures the extraordinary attempts to conquer it by a three-man team, finally successful in 2011. Veteran Conran Anker is the driving force. Another member, Jimmy Chin, co-directs and works the camera along with the third member, Renan Ozturk.

Their personal stories are as compelling as the cinematography is stunning, fully justifying the movie's tagline, "Believe in the impossible."

7. Haida Gwaii: On the Edge of the World (Canada)

Awarded best Canadian documentary at Toronto's HotDocs festival, director Charles Wilkinson's exploration of the British Columbia coastal islands delves deep into their significance as the homeland of indigenous cultures facing the modern challenges from resource development threatening ecosystems and ways of life. The resilience of the Haida in overcoming "cultural genocide" and the preservation of some of the earth's most beautiful natural habitats strike notes of hope in this gorgeously filmed feature that also took the jury prize at the Ottawa One World Film Festival.

8. Something Better to Come (Denmark/Poland)

It will be hard to top the dedication to a difficult project of director Hanna Polak who devoted 14 years to following the fate of Yula from girlhood to young adulthood. Yula and her alcoholic mother are encountered on society's extreme margins among those whose home is Europe's largest landfill outside of Moscow. Even more extraordinary than what Yula endures is how she survives, eventually escaping to find a new life and motherhood.

9. TransFatty Lives (U.S.)

Recently my local MP, Mauril Bélanger, destined to become Speaker of the House of Commons, was instead diagnosed with ALS, an incurable degenerative condition with a survival expectancy of only a few years. When the devastating news was given to Patrick Sean O'Brien, a popular New Jersey DJ nicknamed "TransFatty," he didn't



© 2015, Sony Pictures Classics

SALT OF THE EARTH — The epic still photographs of Brazilian artist and environmentalist Sebastião Salgado (right) take pride of place in the documentary about his life and work. Directed by Wim Wenders (left) in association with Salgado's son, Juliano Ribeiro Salgado, *The Salt Of The Earth* was awarded *Un Certain Regard* Special Jury Award at the Cannes Film Festival in 2014 and was Oscar nominated.

withdraw into despair. Instead he had the camera turned on himself in a journey that has included both terrible challenges and the joys of becoming a new father. Winner of the Tribeca festival's audience award, the moving intimate result is utterly remarkable.

10. Becoming Bulletproof (U.S.)

More than a movie about people struggling with disabilities, Michael Barnett's engaging feature shows what they can do *making* their own movies. The film-making collaborative Zeno Mountain Farm runs actors' camps in which disabled participants learn how to produce short films, including a shoot'em-up western in the one delightfully showcased here. Sometimes creating cinema together is the best therapy.

Honourable mentions

How to Change the World (Canada/U.K.): Writer-director Jerry Rothwell tells the story of how in the early 1970s a small ragtag group of Vancouver-based anti-nuclear and environmental activists created Greenpeace, becoming a movement that despite conflicts among the original members, grew to become the world's largest envi-

ronmental protest NGO.

This Changes Everything (Canada/U.S.): Naomi Klein narrates the screen version of her award-winning book on the radical imperative of confronting the climate change challenge. As directed by husband Avi Lewis, it effectively dramatizes the human impacts through the stories of people and communities on the environmental frontlines in nine countries on five continents.

Listen to Me Marlon (U.K.): This one stands out among numerous documentaries on artists, notably musicians (three on stars who died tragically at age 27: Amy on Amy Winehouse; Kurt Cobain; Montage of Heck; Janis: Little Girl Blue). Drawing from Marlon Brando's previously unheard personal archive of hundreds of audio tapes made over the course of his career, director Stevan Riley does a masterful job of bringing to the screen the legendary actor's reflections on his extraordinary life — in his own words and voice.

Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief (U.S.): Prolific filmmaker Alex Gibney was busier than ever, making several award-winning features for HBO, including for television the excellent four-hour *Sinatra: All or Nothing* on the turbulent career of America's greatest singer-actor. *Going Clear*, which won multiple Emmy awards after premiering at the Sundance festival and a brief theatrical release, is an incisive and highly critical probe into the cult that has attracted some of Hollywood's biggest names (most notably Tom Cruise).

Hitchcock/Truffaut (France/U.S.): In 1962 famous French New Wave director Francois Truffaut, formerly a critic for *Les Cahiers du cinéma*, conducted a lengthy interview with the master of suspense, later published as a seminal book *Cinema According to Hitchcock*. In this feast for cinephiles, writer-director Kent Jones captures the encounter's enduring influence on subsequent generations of filmmakers.



BEST CANADIAN DOCUMENTARY — Awarded best Canadian documentary at Toronto's HotDocs festival, *Haida Gwaii: On the Edge of the World*, is director Charles Wilkinson's exploration of the British Columbia coastal islands and delves deeply into their significance as the homeland of indigenous cultures facing the modern challenges from resource development threatening ecosystems and ways of life.

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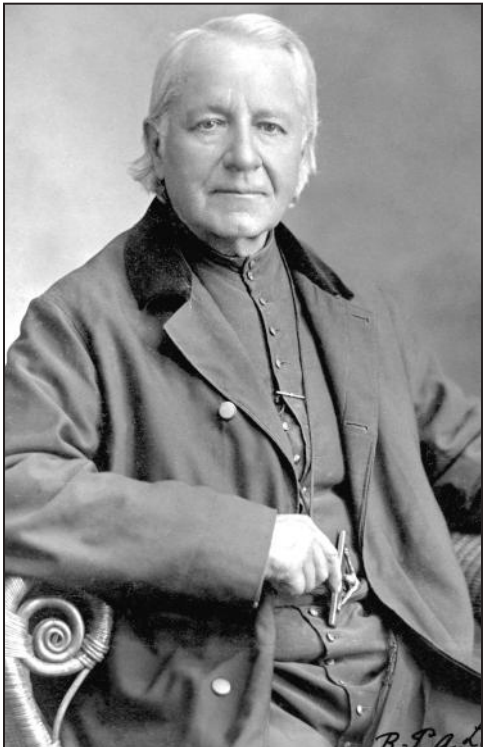
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Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

Two hundred years ago the French aristocrat Eugene de Mazenod gathered a few priests into a kind of evangelical gang in southeastern France. They went into neglected, impoverished parishes preaching in the local dialect of Provençal, not French, sharing their lives and the Gospel with poor people who had been left behind by modern France.



Rev. Albert Lacombe is remembered for having brokered peace between the Cree and Blackfoot during his mission in Manitoba from 1865 to 1872.

This was not long after the French Revolution. The old order, the *ancien regime*, had been expelled, humiliated and murdered. But in Provence, people lived on the land just as they had in the high Middle Ages — suspended halfway between the old pagan gods and practices and a Christianity that had arrived but never really made a home.

De Mazenod’s gang decided this would be their home. Provençal would be their language. These poor, forgotten people would be their mission, their work, their life.

“We give ourselves to the Father in obedience even unto death and dedicate ourselves to

God’s people in unselfish love,” reads the Oblate Constitutions and Rules. “Our apostolic zeal is sustained by the unreserved gift we make of ourselves in our oblation — an offering constantly renewed by the challenges of our mission.”

The young nobleman and priest behind this enterprise was most certainly turning his back on revolutionary France and on Napoleon’s anti-clerical, anti-Roman administration. The pope had been imprisoned in Fontainebleau (not a bad prison, as prisons go) and de Mazenod had grown up a refugee in Venice and Palermo.

The unexpected twist in this history was that de Mazenod’s royalist, anti-revolutionary, ultramontane priests would become the instrument for opening up and evangelizing Canada’s western and northern frontiers.

By 1826 the de Mazenod group had taken on the name Oblates of Mary Immaculate and received papal approval for their congregation. By 1841 they had come to Montreal — their first foreign mission. By 1845 they were in Manitoba learning to speak and preach in Cree.

It turns out you can’t just turn your back on something without turning toward something new.

Canada, along with Sri Lanka at almost the exact same time, was a whole new direction for the Oblates — new and even unexpected. The order was not born dreaming of foreign frontiers and the adventure of carrying the Gospel to new cultures. Foreign missions were again a new concept in 19th-century France, which had turned inward after the age of Jesuit exploration and evangelization a century earlier. De Mazenod was not a natural innovator. He was a man of tradition — a natural conservative.



A group of Oblate priests are pictured at Fort Chipewyan, circa 1930.



This sketch from 1974 of an Oblate retreat house in Arnprior, Ont., is by Rev. Toby McGivern, OMI, an artist, illustrator, and musician. McGivern studied for the priesthood and was ordained for the Montreal diocese. He died in April 1992.

But his conservative, even reactionary, religious order wanted to go to the wild and unexplored extremities of North America. It made sense for men who wanted their lives to be an offering, an oblation. And as the Oblates get set to celebrate their 200th anniversary on Jan. 25 — it still does.

“For me, it’s a question of trying to look at the same zeal that inspired St. Eugene de Mazenod



originally — to have a heart as big as the world,” said Oblate Lacombe Province superior Rev. Ken Forster.

When Forster looks at Oblate history, he sees that being an Oblate is about taking on challenges.

“To be able to really have the heart and the courage to take on difficult missions — I think that’s something we Oblates have really been known for, especially out west and in the north. We were pioneers in many of those areas,” he said.

The pioneering is the most common way in which Oblate history is understood today, said University of Lethbridge historian Raymond Huel.

“If you went by today’s standards, you would probably not even consider their religious work,” said

Huel, the author of *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*. “Our society doesn’t seem to put too much emphasis on that. They think you’re kind of stealing cultures from people and making them little clones of yourself.”

But that was certainly not how Alexandre Taché, Albert Lacombe, Emile Grouard or Valentin Vegreville, or any of the other pioneering Oblates of Canada’s West, understood what they were doing. They weren’t interested in making little French men out of the Dene, the Bloods, the Pegan, the Blackfoot and the Cree. They learned their languages — wrote them down in dictionaries and grammars that are still used today — so they could preach the Gospel to them in their own words; so they could bring their cultures into an encounter with Christ.

In Alberta, Oblate Father Jean-Marie Lestanc both honoured and Christianized Aboriginal culture beginning in 1889 by promoting an annual summer pilgrimage to Lac Ste. Anne, which had been a sacred site before Christianity arrived. In native spirituality, honouring the grandmother of Jesus made sense, pilgrimage made sense and the sacredness of water and nature made sense. It still does and the annual pilgrimage attracts more than 30,000 people every year.

“They (Oblates) contributed to preserving Native languages,” notes Huel. “Not for the reasons we would do it today, but because they associated the English language with Protestantism.”

Look at a map of Western Canada and you will find Oblate names attached to towns, rivers and lakes because they were the

men who built hospitals, schools and churches in those places. When the CPR came through the railway had to ask Father Lacombe where they could lay their tracks. The railway and the government needed a peaceful frontier and they relied on Lacombe to negotiate a treaty with Blackfoot leader



Bishop Emile Grouard was well-respected by the Aboriginal peoples of Athabasca, Sask., and became fluent in Cree, Chipewyan and Beaver languages.

Crowfoot. Later Lacombe persuaded Crowfoot to keep his fighters out of the Northwest Rebellion, thus keeping the West in Canada.

“They were explorers, they were discoverers . . . they influenced government to extend

— CONTINUED, page 11

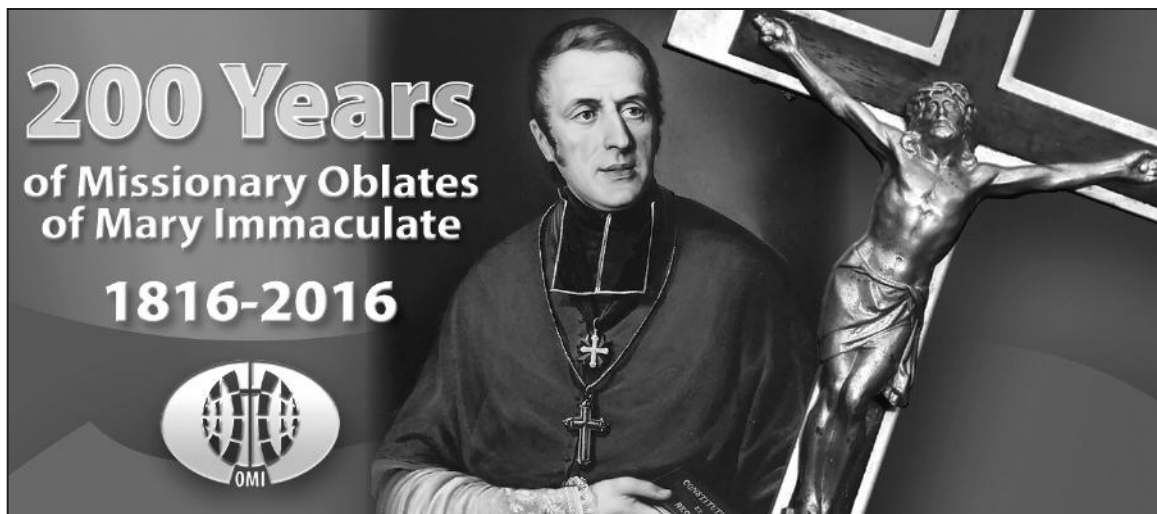
Mary Immaculate: 200 years

Continued from page 10

treaty, especially in the Athabasca region,” said Huel.

But it wasn't just a mission to Aboriginal Canadians. The Oblates were there when waves of German, Ukrainian, Polish and other immigrants arrived in the West. Partly to protect them from the protestantizing influence of English, the Oblates found ways to honour and protect these languages by publishing newspapers, magazines and books — launching the whole tradition of the ethnic press in Winnipeg.

Having established dioceses, parishes, schools and more long before the diocesan, secular clergy arrived in the West, the Oblates became part of Canada's Catholic DNA. There were Oblates everywhere — from the Arctic to the big cities. By 1861 the Oblates took over the College of Bytown, renamed it College of Ottawa and began its evolution into the University of Ottawa under the motto *Deus scientiarum dominus est* (God is the Lord of wisdom). When the U of O became a gov-



along with some Germans, who established the Oblate province in Poland — today one of the largest, youngest and strongest branches of the global order.

Today, those Polish Oblates have boomeranged back as missionaries in Canada. Bishop Tony Krotki of Churchill-Hudson Bay extends pastoral support to the Inuit of Nunavut with the assistance of priests named Gregory Oszust, Lukasz Zajac and Daniel Szwarc.

The Assumption Province of mostly Polish Oblates serves immigrant communities from Vancouver to Ottawa, including Mississauga's giant St. Maximilian Kolbe Polish Parish. The 54 members of Assumption Province are all a good 10 to 15 years younger than the average priest in Canada. Their average age is 51.6.

They've come to a rich country to serve the poor, but their sense of poverty goes deeper than the material, provincial superior Rev. Marian Gil told The Catholic Register. Gil senses a kind of cultural poverty that has devalued family life and pushed families out of the mainstream.

“Who are the poor in today's society?” Gil asks. “Our founder founded this congregation serving the poor, the most abandoned.”

To Gil, the poor are young people who are never told they are loved by God or that they belong inside a global communion in Christ, that crosses borders and spans generations. He sees poverty in well-to-do families who lack a faith that will hold them together — a faith that will allow them to see their families both as blessed by God and as a pathway to God.

Along with Rev. Paul Ratajczak, currently completing his PhD at the Gregorian University in Rome, Gil wants to transform the Our Lady Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga into a centre for families. Under Ratajczak's leadership, the retreat centre will continue to do what it has done since Oblate Father Michael Smith started it in 1963 — offer opportunities for families and couples to grow closer together and closer to Christ. But it will also become a platform for serious study of the issues modern families face.

“These are real challenges, real

poor people who live around us. If we forget about them then we are not doing our ministry,” said Gil.

Gil believes in parishes and believes they can do more to support Christian life.

“To respond to challenges of our society, we cannot just do one single part of the needs of today's family. We need to respond in many different ways,” he said. “The best way to respond to the poor and the challenges is based on parish outreach.”

But Gil won't restrict his province to parish work. He would like Assumption Province to be more involved in university and high school chaplaincy, to fill what he sees as an absence of spiritual formation in Canadian education. He also wants to send his men out to other parishes to preach retreats and missions.

“We don't have personnel at the present time to accept this challenge, but this is something that we are looking at in the future,” he said.

Among the Oblates who find themselves grateful for Oblate history in Canada is Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops president Bishop Doug Crosby.

“The Oblates today are still trying to proclaim the Gospel, trying to reach out to the poor in one way or another,” the bishop of Hamilton said.

Crosby recalls how, when he first became a bishop serving the communities in western Newfoundland and Labrador, he inherited a legacy from Oblate Bishop Lionel Sheffer

— the man who gave his name to Shefferville. Crosby was aware that by 1997, when he became bishop, he could fly into Shefferville. But even in 1966 Bishop Sheffer spent weeks on a boat getting from Ottawa to his diocese.

“You know, these guys made a major, major personal commitment.

It came out of their faith and it came out of their formation that they got with the Oblates,” said Crosby.

The Oblates are still a part of Canada, but it's not the same Canada that it was even two generations ago.

“The Oblates are changing. The Oblate community is older. So they have to make decisions about the kinds of ministry they can undertake. And they are doing that,” said Crosby. “And I think doing it courageously. I think they are making some good decisions about how they can continue their ministry into the future. It takes courage to do that as you get older. There might be some fear about what the future holds. But they're not acting out of fear. They're acting out of faith.”

This kind of sacrifice doesn't get old. It resonates today in the

church of Pope Francis.

“Pope Francis has a love for the poor and so did Eugene de Mazenod. Pope Francis wants the poor to know that they are loved by God, and I think so did Eugene de Mazenod. His (de Mazenod's) preaching was directed to them that way, so they could understand it, so they could receive it,” said Crosby. “So, there might be some comparisons (with Francis).”

Perhaps the greatest disservice the Canadian church has done to the Oblates is to turn their name into a kind of brand — a word without any meaning, like Sony, Kodak, Twitter or Kia. But the Oblates do mean to make their lives a sacrificial offering. And they offer themselves in the name of Mary, a mother not only to Jesus but to the church and to all people. The mother these Oblates claim is pure, elemental, immaculate.

The Oblates were not just pioneers in Canada; not just linguists



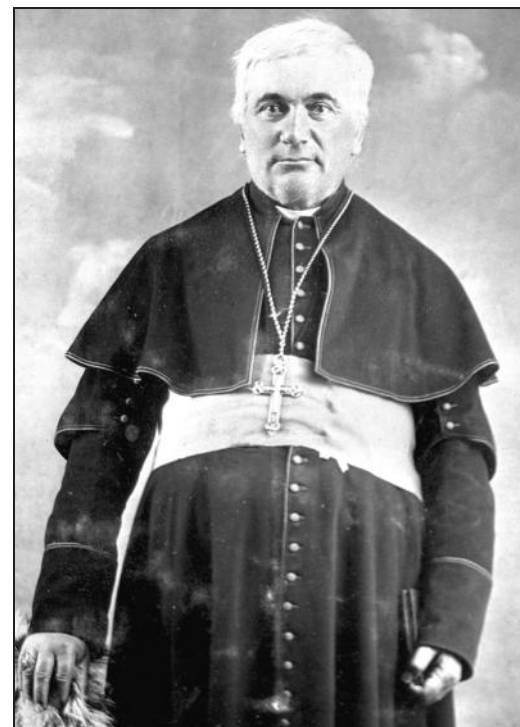
Rev. Etienne Bazin, OMI, in Pond Inlet, circa 1929.

ernment enterprise in 1965, the Oblates hived off Saint Paul Pontifical University.

During the depression, it was Oblate professors at the University of Ottawa, principally Rev. André Guay, who brought the community together to figure out how to help families survive. They called their group of priests and laypeople the Catholic Centre. It's aim was to hold families together and keep them close to the church. The Catholic Centre became Novalis, Canada's Catholic publishing house in English and French which still produces liturgical and pastoral materials with the same goal.

There were once as many as 2,000 Oblate priests in Canada, almost four times as many as there are now. Oblate numbers along with their institutions and experience in missionary work became the basis for a Canadian, Catholic missionary outreach to the world.

In 1920 it was Canadian Oblates,



Bishop Vital Grandin was the first bishop of what is now the Archdiocese of Edmonton.

or teachers or leaders. They are all these things to us and for us in the name of our mother, Mary, and in the hope that their lives would be a worthy sacrifice patterned after the sacrifice of Christ.



PILOT PRIEST — Rev. Brian Ballard was one of two pilot priests that flew back and forth to serve First Nations Missions across Northern British Columbia. Ballard and Rev. Ivan McCormack tragically died in a plane crash in 2001 en route to a mission conference. A memorial cross was placed at the summit of Mount Pope in their memory.

Keeping our hands to the plough is an invitation

Breaking Open the Ordinary

Sandy Prather



I am generally pretty good at starting things. My problem is in finishing them. I invariably begin new projects with great enthusiasm but too soon my interest wanes. Thus, I am somewhat dismayed when I hear of Jesus’ admonition that once you place your hand on the plough, you need to keep it there. No stopping or turning back. One goes on and on until finished. At best it sounds like an endless duty, at worst, a joyless obligation. Who doesn’t want a break now and then?

Taken at one level, this might be true, but if we go deeper, as Jesus always invites us to do, there is a wisdom that touches our everyday lives. The command to “Keep our hand on the plough” is really an invitation to stay the course in being true to our deepest selves.

I thought of this while listening to a political radio show a few months ago. Broadcast just prior to the Canadian federal election, it featured a panel of experts discussing a notable change of party policy taken by the leader of a major party. There was a great deal of cynicism about the leader’s motives, with most of the panel charging politi-

cal expediency as the driving force for the change. The host asked whether such “flip flops” in a party’s position were generally a matter of “getting on the bandwagon of public opinion,” and thus insincere and self-serving, or whether they could be a true sign of authentic growth and wisdom.

One panelist responded that it is not necessarily wise to hold anyone rigidly to a “party line.” On the contrary, it is good to be able to change one’s mind: inflexibility is generally not deemed to be a virtue. However, she cautioned about what she labelled “flip-flopping” in one’s thinking, i.e., simply switching because of expediency. The way to judge whether a change of either mind or heart was sincere or merely expedient, she advised, was to consider whether or not the new position was in line with one’s core values. Does the new way, she asked, lead you to be more deeply in line with what you truly believe, and is therefore most likely a true growth in maturity, or does it go against what you stand for and therefore not authentic?

It is in this context that Jesus’ commandment to hang on to that plough handle makes sense. When we consciously choose something because we believe in it, when we put our hands to a particular plough, we are committing to something that reflects the deep truth and reality of who we are. To the extent that our choice is authentic, if we turn back from it, we are betraying our own best selves. Furthermore, this is something we live every day.



REMAINING FAITHFUL — “Whether it is the gym, our marriages, our faith commitments, or anything else that reflects who we really are, it is here, when we are tempted to turn from our choices, that Jesus’ words come to strengthen us: Keep your hand to the plough. In doing so, we remain faithful to who we really long to be,” writes Sandy Prather.

A simple example is something as minor as an exercise program. Perhaps your New Year’s resolutions involved, as mine always do, getting to the gym more often. Ideally, we choose to do so based on some core values we hold: a belief in the necessity of taking care of our bodies; our commitment to good health; our desire for more energy. Putting our hand to the plough, we sign up for a gym membership. We start strong, but as the weeks go by and our energy wanes, we regret signing up. We start skipping our workout times: we take our hands from the plough. In doing so, however, we are betraying our own chosen values.

A more complex example involves relationships. A young man I know, his marriage at stake, fortunately learned what it meant to keep his hand on the plough. In the first years of mar-

riage, while deeply in love with his wife and seemingly happy to be married, he was also reluctant to forgo some of the routines of the single life. He frequently spent Saturday nights with his buddies, occasionally pulling an “all-nighter.”

His wife tried to understand but there were arguments. The issue simmered for a few years but grew into a huge problem once they had children and the “boys’ nights out” increasingly interfered with the entire family’s routines and needs. The marriage came close to breakdown before the husband finally recognized who he really was and where he really wanted to be. He recommitted to his wife and children and ceased trying to be “one of the guys.” He put his hand back to the plough and in doing so, was true to his own deepest desires.

We put our hands to the plough in many ways. It might be as a priest or a religious sister or brother in service to the church. It might be as a spouse and parent, committed to giving ourselves over to our partner and children. Baptized disciples put their hands to building the kingdom. And even as these choices reflect our deepest desires, there are times when we grow tired, frustrated and lackluster. We long for the days prior to our commitments when we felt care-free and unburdened. But whether it is the gym, our marriages, our faith commitments, or anything else that reflects who we really are, it is here, when we are tempted to turn from our choices, that Jesus’ words come to strengthen us: Keep your hand to the plough. In doing so, we remain faithful to who we really long to be.



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It’s difficult to hear God’s call above the daily din



Liturgy and Life

Michael Dougherty

During the Christmas holidays I purchased some bagels at a bakery in Ottawa, and now on a website I regularly use, pop-up ads for this company have begun appearing. Not long afterward a couple of my online inquiries for flight information triggered an onslaught of onscreen notices for airlines and trip sites offering me deals.

Not only on our computers but everywhere and during almost every one of our waking moments, we face unrelenting attempts to direct our choices and our lives. We consciously but mostly unconsciously walk through an environment saturated with well-tailored calls seeking to grab some of our money, time or concern.

Consider for a moment the myriad of small choices we must normally make on our daily rounds. Can you feel yourself being poked and prodded by the “invisible hand” to act in a particular way?

“Well, it’s a non-stop blitz of advertising messages,” ad executive J. Walker-Smith noted in a CBS News article I ran across. “Everywhere we turn we’re saturated with advertising messages trying to get our attention.”

Walk down any store aisle. Social psychologists to economists, product designers to copy writers all have a hand in choosing the host of factors from label colour, print font and message to shelf placement to give their items the most effective chance of stopping us in our tracks to grab them. Even the overall floor layout of megastores has been carefully crafted to influence our choices. The longer we spend wandering in front of their shelves, they know the more we buy.

Endless repetition of products has seen the average number items stocked in a grocery store rise from 5,800 items in the late 1950s to over 42,000 items now, according to the Food Marketing Institute. The same exponential growth is evident in our exposure to ads, billboards, labels, flyers, pop-

ups, jingles, TV commercials, etc., as well. We are psychologically awash in these messages calling out for our attention.

How can we possibly hear God’s call amidst all this cacophony? The siren calls of consumerism and the cant of corporate and political honchos drum incessantly for this system and the profits it generates. These threaten to overwhelm all other sensibilities.

Isaiah in the first reading, awestruck in the presence of the Lord, cried out: “Woe is me, I am lost.” This could be our lament as well, but in the face of these contemporary false gods and their promises.

On critical reflection all of us can think of key decisional points in our lives. Eva and I over our now 40 years of marriage can look back and see the pattern in the choices we made. It often seems that only by looking back can we see the options we picked that moved us forward to where we are today.

Our decision to join a community that moved us from Morris, Man., to Melfort, Sask., then to strike out on our own buying a house in Prince Albert, shaped our lives. Joining St. Joseph Parish there after a time of alienation from the formal church marked another major turning point. Answering the invitation to consider a job possibility in the Yukon dramatically altered our life trajectory. Bishop Thomas Lobsinger of Whitehorse coming to our new



OVERWHELMING — Endlessly stocked store shelves are carefully displayed to attract our attention — we are awash in messages from ads, labels, flyers, pop-ups and jingles, writes Michael Dougherty. “How can we possibly hear God’s call amidst all this cacophony?”

Gennesaret or, as we know it, the Sea of Galilee. Listening to Jesus while keeping his boat steady “a little way from shore” the soon-to-be apostle entered into a face-to-face experience of the *mysterium tremendum* similar to what Isaiah had felt. The numinous engulfed each of them. Both proclaimed their unworthiness. Jesus told Peter, “Do not be afraid.” Peter and his partners, the sons of Zebedee, made their choice. “They left everything and followed Jesus.”

Most of the choices we face aren’t as momentous and ultimately world-changing as Peter’s, or as spiritually profound as Isaiah’s. We aren’t privileged to have seen the risen Lord as the “more than 500 brothers and sisters” Paul speaks of. But we too are called.

Somehow we have to find a way to hear our own true calls above the daily din. To help us sort the wheat from the chaff we have aids like the Scriptures, the social encyclicals, voices both current and ancestral to give us a hand. But most of all we have each other. Answering our call we can bring the message of Jesus alive today and then as the Catholic Worker street philosopher Peter Maurin said, “The future will be different if we make the present different.”

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time February 7, 2016	Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8 Psalm 138 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, 5-6 Luke 5:1-11
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home there and asking for our help certainly was a call. From the mundane to momentous, can we see the hand of God in these moments of our lives? Did we answer the call?

The year of the death of Uzziah or Ozias, the long-reigning leper king of Judah, marks the time of the scene so richly described by Isaiah. It is very unlikely that we can expect to hear a clarion call from the Lord like the prophet heard. “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” If we did, would it move us to say, “Here am I: send me!”

We can’t have the encounter Simon Peter did with an itinerant rabbi from Nazareth on the shore of Lake

Bowed head is sometimes a sign of a broken spirit, rather than humility

In Exile

Ron Rolheiser, OMI



At the end of every Roman Catholic liturgy, there is an invitation given to the people to receive a blessing. That invitation is worded this way: Bow your heads and pray for God’s blessing. The idea behind that, obviously, is that a blessing can only truly be received in reverence, in humility, with head

bowed, with pride and arrogance subjugated and silent.

A bowed head is a sign of humility and is understood, almost universally, as our proper spiritual posture. Spiritual writers have rarely questioned or felt the need to nuance the notion that spiritual health means a head bowed in humility. But is it really that simple?

Admittedly there is a lot of wisdom in that. A head bowed in reverence is a sign of humility. Moreover, pride heads the list of deadly sins. Human pride is congenital, deep, and impossible to uproot. It can be redeemed and it can be crushed, but it always remains in us, necessarily so. There is no

health without pride, but pride can also derail health. There is something inside of human nature, inherent in our very individuality and freedom, which does not like to bend the knee before what is higher and superior. We guard our pride fiercely and it is no accident that the archetypal image of resistance to God is expressed in Lucifer’s inflexible, pride-anchored statement: I will not serve!

Moreover, we do not like to admit weakness, finitude, dependence, and interdependence. Thus all of us have to grow and mature to a place where we are no longer naive and arrogant enough to believe that we do not need God’s blessing. All spirituality is predicated on humility. Maturity — human and spiritual — is most evident in someone whom you see on his or her knees praying.

But, while pride can be bad, sometimes pride and arrogance are not the problem. Rather, our struggle is with a wounded and broken spirit that no longer knows how to stand upright. It is one thing to be young, healthy, strong, arrogant, and unaware of how fragile and finite we are (and that illusion can survive and stay with us into old age); but it is quite another thing to have one’s heart broken, one’s spirit crushed, and one’s pride taken away. When that happens, and it happens to all of us if we are half-

sensitive and live long enough, wounded pride does some very negative things in us: it cripples us so that we can no longer truly get off our knees, stand upright, raise our heads, and receive love and blessing.

I remember as a child, growing up on a farm, watching something that was then called “breaking a horse.” The men would catch a young colt which had until then run completely free and they would, through a rather brutal process, force the young colt to submit to halter, saddle, and human commands. When the process was finished, the colt was now compliant to human commands. But the process of breaking the horse’s freedom and spirit was far from gentle, and thus yielded a mixed result. The horse was now compliant, but part of its spirit was broken.

That’s an apt image for the journey, both human and spiritual. Life, in ways that are far from gentle, eventually breaks our spirit, for good and for bad, and we end up humble, but we also end up somewhat wounded and unable to (metaphorically) stand upright. Conscripted humility has a double effect: on the one hand, we find that we more naturally genuflect before what is higher; but, on the other hand, because the pain of our brokenness, as is so often the case with pain, we focus more upon

ourselves than on others and we end up handicapped. Bruised and fragile, we are unable to properly give and receive and are stuttering and reticent in sharing the goodness and depth of our own persons.

Spirituality and religion have, for the most part, been too one-sided on this. They have perennially been vigilant about pride and arrogance (and, admittedly, these are real and are forever the deadly sins). But spirituality and religion have been too slow to lift up the fallen. We all know the dictum that the task of spirituality is to afflict the comforted and comfort the afflicted. Historically, religion and spirituality, while not always being very successful with the former, have been too negligent of the latter.

Pride and arrogance are the deadliest of all vices. However, wounded pride and a broken spirit can equally derail us.

So, perhaps when the church blesses its congregation at the end of a liturgy, it might, instead of saying, “Bow your heads and pray for God’s blessing,” say instead: “Those of you who think you are not in need of this blessing, please bow your heads and pray for God’s blessing. Meanwhile, those of you who feel beaten, broken, and unworthy of this blessing: Raise your heads to receive a love and gift that you have long despaired of ever again receiving.”

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Provincial climate challenges and faith responses

Journey to Justice

Joe Gunn



Pope Francis recently highlighted “efforts to bring world leaders together at COP21 in the search for new ways to confront climate change” as optimistic signs of a bright new future for humankind.

The pope’s World Day of Peace message on Jan. 1, entitled Overcome Indifference and Win Peace, cites different reasons for a hopeful future. But Canadian efforts to lower our carbon emissions are vastly more complicated depending on the province in which you live.

The Paris climate agreement, while not perfect, includes some principles that many Christian observers (including the pope) want to see lived out in national and international policies. It set a goal of not allowing global temperatures to rise above two degrees Celsius, with a stated preference of keeping warming at 1.5 degrees. It agreed that emissions must be peaked as soon as possible, and zero emissions achieved by the end of this century. Billions of dollars were committed to assist developing nations to transition to renewable energy and adapt to already-evident climate impacts.

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

At these negotiations, Canada doubled its international commitment to \$2.65 billion, officially encouraged the 1.5 degree target, and promised that previously stated national emissions reductions goals (set by the previous government) would only be a floor for a new, more ambitious commitment. Before March 11, the federal Liberals have committed to meet with provincial leaders to

jointly develop this new target, to be announced by Earth Day, April 22, 2016.

Now is when the hard work begins. Canada’s new federal government should not leave our nation’s commitment for emissions reductions up to the vagaries of different provincial whims, pressures from industry groups or special interests.

The vast majority of Canada’s clean energy is in the form of electricity, which is a provincial matter. Fortunately, almost 80 per cent of Canadians live in provinces that produce some of the world’s least climate-polluting electricity. Quebec leads in this area, but Ontario has eliminated two-thirds of the total climate pollution from its electricity supply in the last eight years — by shut-

ting down all the province’s coal-fired power plants.

The average climate pollution produced to obtain a gigawatt hour of electricity in Canada is 160 tonnes — but rises to 770 in Saskatchewan and 820 in Alberta. Alberta, for its part, burns more coal for electricity than the rest of Canada combined. (As a comparison, the carbon-intensity of electricity production in China is similar to both these provinces.)

Saskatchewan and Alberta have yet to develop sufficient climate-safe sources of alternative energy and are the only two provinces in Canada that have increased their climate pollution levels since our nation’s climate-pledge baseline year of 2005.

New strategies for a carbon-constrained future are overdue.

November’s release of the Leach Plan in Alberta showed how progress could be made, by recommending the phase-out of coal by 2030, limiting tarsands emissions, and establishing a price on carbon. Remarkably, industry leaders as well as environmentalists were present with Premier Notley as the report was released. At the same time, more ambitious initiatives will be required, since these measures (including an unpopular carbon tax) will not do enough to limit emissions to prevent warming from peaking under two degrees Celsius.

The Saskatoon Environmental Society has also made recommendations for climate change solutions to Premier Wall of Saskatchewan. They estimate that the province must reduce emissions by 35 per cent over current levels, envisioning a 26 million tonne greenhouse gas emission reduction in Saskatchewan over the next 10 - 15 years. Such action must contemplate very serious reductions in emissions from the oil, gas and mining, transport, and electricity generation sectors.

Journalist Barry Saxifrage notes that those provinces that have already taken action to address climate change, and those provinces with lots of clean energy, will have the advantage in meeting Canada’s climate commitments. He specifically mentions Saskatchewan and Alberta when stating, “It has been an audacious gamble to so completely bet on climate-damaging energy this deep into the climate crisis. The businesses and families living in these provinces will soon find out if it was a smart bet to make.”

Prairie Christian communities can join Pope Francis in leading the way in building public support to take the necessary but difficult steps to love our neighbours, protect the vulnerable and honour the Creator by caring for God’s creation.



GFW Canada

COAL MINING — This photo shows a coal mine in Western Canada. November’s release of the Leach Plan in Alberta showed how progress could be made on reducing climate pollution levels by recommending the phase-out of coal by 2030, limiting tarsands emissions, and establishing a price on carbon, writes Joe Gunn.

The real work of Christmas should be underway in Ordinary Time



Everyday Theology

Louise McEwan

A month into the ordinary days of winter, the feel-good generosity and goodwill of Christmas has faded. With the Salvation Army Christmas kettles out of sight, the needs of others are out of mind.

Howard Thurman, an African American whose thought and spirituality influenced Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement, challenged the tendency to

forget about others once the Christmas season comes to an end. “When the song of the angels is stilled/ When the star in the sky is gone/ When the kings and princes are home/ When the shepherds are back with their flocks/ The work of Christmas begins.”

In his poem, Thurman goes on to paraphrase a section of chapter 25 from the Gospel of Matthew that informs part of the social doctrine of Christianity. Here Jesus of Nazareth outlines some of the behaviours he expects from his disciples. These include feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, welcoming the stranger, visiting the imprisoned and caring for the sick. Furthermore, the disciple should

undertake these actions with an attitude of humility and joy.

While the tasks that we associate with Christmas — shopping, baking, decorating, and socializing — can be tiring, it is more difficult to live the social teaching implicit in Christmas throughout the rest of the year. The work of Christmas calls us out of our self. It asks us to honour the dignity of every person, regardless of that person’s circumstance and in spite of our own negative biases. The work of Christmas invites us to walk with others in their hour of need, even when the walk is inconvenient and comes at a personal cost.

Years ago I had a lesson in what it means to live Christmas beyond the month of December. A gentleman with whom I sat on a board made a comment when asked about his day. He said his day was wonderful; he had had a number of unexpected opportunities to help others. At that time, I was a young mother busy with the demands of three small children; unexpected opportunities to help others were, in my mind, unwelcome interruptions in my sched-

ule. His self-giving attitude amazed me, and his comment challenged me to look at my own selfishness.

The social teaching that Thurman championed in his poem does not require us to engage in grand gestures to save the world, or to dramatically right some wrong. While there will be individuals, like King, who are remembered in the annals of history for having an impact on social change on a grand scale, most of us will never be the subject of a Wikipedia entry. Our actions are more likely to be ordinary than heroic and will remain largely unknown to the world.

Life, God, the Spirit, or however you choose to name it, calls most of us to act in small ways. As Mother Teresa once said, “Do ordinary things with extraordinary love.” The attitude behind the gesture can make the simplest action grand.

In some ways, the work of Christmas stands in opposition to our annual custom of formulating New Year’s resolutions, which typically focus on improving the self or one’s situation. Year after

year, our most common resolutions — to lose weight, to spend less and save more, to quit smoking, to get organized and to spend more time with family — have little to do with incarnating the spirit of Christmas.

Christmas, as one of my neighbours put it, should kick-start our giving; it does not restrict our generosity and goodwill to a few weeks of the year. Although we feel good when we drop some coins into the Salvation Army kettle, the season of giving reminds us of the manner in which we are to live from January to December.

There is no question that preparing and celebrating Christmas can be a whole lot of work, but the work is short-lived. When the beauty, wonder and merrymaking of Christmas have past, when we have returned to our humdrum nine-to-five routines, it is time to get down to the hard work of Christmas. It is time to carry the generosity and goodwill of Christmas forward into our daily interactions with others. It is time to incarnate love into a broken world.

Trail, B.C., resident Louise McEwan is a freelance writer, religion columnist and catechist. She has degrees in English and theology and is a former teacher. She blogs at www.faithcolouredglasses.blogspot.ca. Reach her at louisemcewan@telus.net

In Year of Mercy, Pope Francis features indulgences

By David Gibson
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Pope Francis has fascinated the public in large part because of how willingly he upends long-standing traditions and promotes a “revolution of tenderness” to set the Catholic Church on a new, more pastoral course for a new, more merciful era.

To help fulfil this vision, Francis is also relying on an old-fashioned ritual — indulgences. They are a way of winning remission from penance — in this life or in purgatory.

The most recent example of the pope’s penchant for indulgences was his announcement of a special holy year, or jubilee, dedicated to the theme of mercy and featuring a variety of ways for pilgrims to receive indulgences.

But indulgences have a rather notorious past. In the 15th century, they were sold throughout Europe to generate income for the church and, most consequentially, by Renaissance popes to help fund the rebuilding of a grander St. Peter’s Basilica.

The exploitation of indulgences by medieval clerics who trafficked in them as a way to gain money infuriated reformers and sparked the rise of Protestantism.

“As soon as a coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs” ran a well-known couplet attributed to Johann Tetzel, a German friar whose unexcelled salesmanship in indulgences scandalized Martin Luther, among others.

Gibson is a national reporter for RNS.

In one of his 95 denunciations of Rome, Luther himself wrote: “Those who believe that they can be certain of their salvation because they have indulgence letters will be eternally damned, together with their teachers.”

And given next year’s anniversary of the Reformation — marked from the day in October 1517 when Martin Luther nailed his critiques on the door of a German church — “the emphasis on indulgences this year does clang a bit,” said Christopher Bellitto, a church historian at Kean University who specializes in the Middle Ages.

“Surely some believe indulgences are best left to the proverbial dustbin of history. They definitely have taken the church into some sordid chapters,” he added.

So what is an indulgence?

Explaining it is not a simple feat, and Vatican officials have been known to grow testy when asked.

As briefly as possible, it is an “extra-sacramental” means by which a penitent can perform a duty — a pilgrimage or some similar act — to eliminate all or part of the penance they must complete after confessing a sin. An indulgence can also reduce the time spent in purgatory after one dies, or reduce it for someone else who is already in purgatory awaiting final entry into heaven.

There are both full (plenary) and partial indulgences, and the means for obtaining them can vary. (See Section 1471 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.)

After the outbreak of the Reformation, the Council of Trent doubled-down on the doctrine on indulgences (while trying to elim-

inate abuses).

Still, the whole concept of indulgences continued to bother and even embarrass some church leaders, and at the Second Vatican Council, which gathered all the world’s bishops for four years in the 1960s to update the church, a few pushed to abolish indulgences. But Pope Paul VI in 1967 reaffirmed the doctrine, and his tradition-minded successors, St. John Paul II and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, also promoted indulgences.

Now we have Francis continuing the practice, despite his reputation as an iconoclast. But in fact Francis has always valued popular devotions, often more than what he dismisses as the arid theological arguments of church intellectuals.

Indeed, his first recourse to indulgences came early in his pontificate, when Francis declared that all those attending World Youth Day in Brazil in July 2013 would merit an indulgence if they also went to confession, took communion at mass and prayed for the pope’s prayer intentions.

He also said that those who could not make the event in Rio could obtain an indulgence if they followed the events on television or radio or “by the new means of social communication” — such as Twitter.

That led to misleading reports that Francis was offering time off purgatory to those who follow the pontiff on Twitter, as a tactic for boosting the pope’s social media stats.

But the pope was not dissuaded by the controversy, and now with this special Holy Year, Francis has greatly expanded the chance for



CNS/Paul Haring

HOLY YEAR — Pope Francis opens the Holy Door as he begins the Holy Year of Mercy at the start of a mass with priests, religious, catechists and youth at the cathedral in Bangui, Central African Republic, Nov. 29.

the faithful to gain an indulgence — though he delivered the news with his own version of a consumer protection warning:

“Be careful. Beware anyone who might be a little fast and very clever who tells you you have to pay” to pass through a Holy Door, Francis told a crowd in St. Peter’s Square in December. “No! You don’t pay for salvation. It is free!”

Francis decreed that during the jubilee year, not only can pilgrims who cross through the special Holy Door in St. Peter’s Basilica or other Roman churches obtain an indulgence — that was always the tradition — but for the first time each diocese around the world will also have a Holy Door in one or more churches to make it easier for those who cannot afford to travel to get an indulgence.

In addition, Francis made a provision so that those who are home-bound or in prison can gain an indulgence, and that those who perform works of mercy can as well: “I wish that the Jubilee Indulgence may reach each one as a genuine experience of God’s mercy, which comes to meet each person in the Face of the Father who welcomes and forgives, forgetting completely the sin committed.”

Still, good intentions don’t always lead to broad agreement, especially when it comes to a teaching that carries as much baggage as indulgences.

“Such a practice promotes a vending-machine notion of God,” longtime Vatican-watcher Robert Mickens wrote in a blistering — and historically informed — column in Global Pulse against what he called the superstitious “dark side” of the Holy Year that “depends on people’s fears and

Name change points to what Catholic health care means

Catholic Connections

Sandra Kary



I never liked my middle name, Lois (sorry Mom and Dad), and as a kid I used to dream up new middle names for myself. The name felt “old” and didn’t seem to suit me. Names are important, they mean something to us personally, they define us to others.

Emmanuel Care, formerly the Catholic Health Ministry of Saskatchewan, believed it was time to rebrand, to choose a new name that meant something more — to them personally, and to those they served. Emmanuel means “God with us,” a fitting name for a canonically commissioned, bishops-owned organization that offers leadership and governance to the majority of Catholic health care organizations in Saskatchewan. It also speaks to the

Kary is executive director for the Catholic Health Association of Saskatchewan.

approach of Catholic health care which, as Scott Irwin, president and CEO, states, “believes we are all made in the image of God, and we serve and care for others around us as though God is with us.”

This is also evidenced in the tagline that was chosen — *With you* — which portrays, much like the parable of the Good Samaritan, the commitment to be with those in need, offering care with compassion and respect.

In my interview with Irwin, I asked, “So why not Emmanuel Health rather than Emmanuel Care? Wouldn’t that have identified you more specifically as health care?”

He pointed back to the Good Samaritan parable, speaking to the broader sense of care that was illustrated — yes, the wounds of the traveller were tended to, but so too were his housing and financial needs. “By choosing the name

Emmanuel Care, it allows us to aim for a broader sense of what Catholic health care means. It positions us to branch out to other unmet needs in the community, such as housing or poverty,” Irwin adds.

The new logo also provides rich meaning to express the work of Emmanuel Care. Within the symbol are four different elements:

1. heart — which speaks to the compassion and care for those on the journey;
2. shepherd’s staff — which reflects the ownership of the bishops, and the pastoral aim/duty to serve those who are marginalized or in need;

3. cross — which represents our Catholic/ Christian roots;

4. the letter e — which represents Emmanuel.

It is also worth noting that the new corporate colour is a rich magenta, similar to the bishops’ identifying clerical colour.

Finally, Emmanuel Care will utilize in its corporate and adver-

tising materials the positioning statement “A Catholic Health Organization.”

“We are proud of our faith tradition as Catholics, and don’t want to minimize it, yet in our growing secular society, this can be perceived as a barrier by some to the welcome and embrace that we wish to convey,” states Irwin.



Names are important: they mean something to us personally, they define us to others. As I get older, I find myself embracing my name more. The Hebrew meaning of Lois is lion, warrior, one who is strong — not such a bad name to grow into. Thanks Mom and Dad.

Religious education a significant social contribution

Big Picture, Small Steps

Ryan LeBlanc



Two years ago I looked out over my first Christian Ethics classroom in Saskatchewan. I was excited, even more so than I had been in my 11 years of teaching in Catholic schools in British Columbia. I was excited because, unlike in B.C., almost all my students were not Catholic. And who they were instead blew my mind.

While that semester went on to be a challenging one, it wasn't because of the diversity of faith. The nature of faith, evangelization, catechesis, and even religion, is not well or widely understood in our culture. This lack of understanding offers the most foundational challenge to religious education in the high school classroom today, whether that class consists of 100 per cent Catholics or 10 per cent. But the spiritual diversity in my class does suggest a question: Just what is the purpose and benefit of religious education for a pluralistic classroom?

The Catholic tradition has a clear and well-developed understanding of the civic duty of the Catholic school, which is to educate and form future generations to participate positively in public life. In that light, religious education becomes a significant social contribution. In addition to teaching moral and civic responsibility as a tangible benefit for society, religious education also is a fundamental right of every person because it "helps (students) attain

a vital harmony between faith and culture," according to the Congregation for Catholic Education in 2009.

Writing to national conferences of bishops, the Congregation pointed out that, even though "Religious education in schools fits into the evangelizing mission of the church," it is not the same as catechesis. "(C)atechesis aims at fostering personal adherence to Christ and the development of Christian life . . . , whereas religious education in schools gives the pupils knowledge about Christianity's identity and Christian life." Religious education also "does not require the assent of faith."

I took heart in this, considering who I had for students. In my survey of religious affiliation, I identified one student who regularly attended Catholic mass. A few were non-attending Catholics. A strong handful attended an Evangelical church. One Lutheran. Several Confucians. A Buddhist. A Muslim. An agnostic. A few students who participated in First Nations spirituality. And the rest kind of shrugged off the question: I don't really know what I am. What on earth attracted these students to enrol in Catholic schools, with its requirement of Catholic religious education?

I believe the answer lies in the remarkable consistency across all students, whether they identified as believing or not. When I invited them to consider religious questions so as to explore the Catholic perspective, I was struck at how little-practiced they seemed to be in reflecting on and discussing questions of faith. I do not mean they did not understand

Catholic orthodoxy (they didn't) or that their religious expression was different in form and style from my own (this always happens). What I mean is that my students needed introduction to the very idea that one could consider religious questions, let alone play around with some possible religious answers. That's where we started from, and declared religious adherence did not seem to make a difference.

I speak of a lack of "religious literacy." Whether in families, certain age groups, or the wider culture, it could be a reasonable assumption that religious ideas are not widely discussed. What might be the consequences of this? Pope Benedict XVI commented, in 2009, that "the religious dimension is in fact intrinsic to culture. It contributes to the overall formation of the person and makes it possible to transform knowledge into wisdom of life." And later, "the religious dimension . . . is an integral part of the person from the very earliest infancy; it is fundamental openness to otherness and to the mystery that presides over every relationship and every encounter with human beings. . . . (It) makes the person more human." I wonder if he was right.

If he was right, we might see the reason and the purpose for Catholic schools, and within them religious education, in the province of Saskatchewan. This work of mine and my colleagues does not restrict freedom, but takes place in the context of a "positive spirit of secularism which makes it possible to promote a constructive civil coexistence, based on reciprocal respect and loyal dialogue." If we are to participate in this kind of respect and dialogue, then clarification of the purpose of religious education is crucial in the social context of a secular culture. For Catholic education to effectively engage secular culture,

including unchurched students and families, and still be true to the animating ethos of the Christian faith, it needs to indicate just what it means to accomplish through a religious education program.

What was accomplished in my class? I have to admit, I was always curious about the one Muslim student in the class. After fleeing the Taliban and being a refugee in Iran, this student chose Catholic education in Saskatoon. What I wondered was, why? I

thought there might be a cultural respect for worldwide Catholic institutions of learning, or perhaps having some kind of faith in education was preferable to a secular environment. In discussion about those first experiences after Iran, that student shared with me that it was the caring and compassionate welcome which the people in Catholic schools extended to a stranger that made the difference. Diverse students make Catholic schools more human.



Art Babych

ART AND RECONCILIATION — Sophie Grégoire-Trudeau, wife of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, chats with former prime minister Joe Clark at the National Arts Centre (NAC) in Ottawa before listening to a panel discussion on art and reconciliation. The event, which launched Jan. 14 with an exhibition, 100 Years of Loss, followed by a panel discussion on art and reconciliation, was the NAC's response to a statement in the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that "artists have a profound contribution to make in expressing both truth and reconciliation."

Doing works of mercy more important than counting them

Continued from page 15

gullibility."

"(W)alking through a so-called holy door, either in the Eternal City or in Timbuktu, will mean nothing if it is tied to the idea that it earns a child of God a reduced sentence from some sort of detention centre that precedes eternal life with his or her heavenly Father," Mickens wrote.

On the other hand, Sara Maitland wrote in the Tablet of London, a leading Catholic weekly, that she finds the idea of indulgences very appealing, and she thinks the practice can, and ought, to be rescued from its shady past: "I am going to keep trying because a 'plenary indulgence' is simply an outward and visible sign of the fullness of God's mercy and indulgence towards us — divine courtesy, kindness and treating us with such favour as we have no claim

to, but desire or like," she said. "It is a matter of free grace."

Perhaps if anyone can rehabilitate indulgences, it is in fact Francis, "the pope of mercy."

"Francis wants a big-tent church with room for a wide variety of devotions," Bellitto said. "The key for Catholics will be to remember that doing works of mercy is still more important than counting them up."

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Our faith impels us toward unconditional welcome

Around the Kitchen Table

Lorraine Ratzlaff

The Sufi poet Rumi writes, “What is praised is one, so the praise is one too, /many jugs being poured into a huge basin. /All religions, all this singing, one song. /The differences are just illusion and vanity. /Sunlight looks a little different on this wall than it does on that wall /and a lot different on this other one, /but it is still one light.”

Recently my Facebook community exposed its true self when posts started appearing in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Shockingly, many people felt free to make bigoted and generally hateful comments about the plight and the future of the Syrians who were fleeing their homeland. I was appalled to note that many of the most egregious and unapologetic comments came from so-called Christians, defending “our” Canadian way of life. As a white Christian Canadian, I felt the need to take issue with them and to do some un-friending. Many Canadians were genuinely interested in helping or supporting Syrian and other refugees, but the unabashed Christian opposition was distressing.

Since I was 10 or 11, I believed that if my religion stopped me from having a relationship with someone, there was something wrong with the religion — not with me. I also thought about why religious people were often the first to create thicker walls to protect their fixed view of life, and how, from

behind those walls, their prejudices and fears festered, thwarting their potential for awareness and understanding. Around me the dominant voices at church, at school, and in the community proclaimed that some people belonged and others didn’t. (I am not referring to extremists; I mean those who fervently defend the status quo.) As the years passed, the rhetoric of the status quo changed but the walls still did not come down.

I was raised in a very “flexible” Catholic family from whom I learned that religion was a means to live by, not to hide in. The tenet of my Christianity was centred on hospitality as in Matthew 25:35: “for I was hungry and you fed me. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home.” Consequently I was comfortable interacting with a diverse community. I became idealistic about the potential for communal well-being when we are hospitable and welcoming and was drawn into teaching — into a career-long desire to create truly inclusive spaces at school, where understanding and respect were valued as much as intellect and ability; where investing in humanizing structures took precedence over bombs, basketball or test-scores.

As a Catholic educator I knew I should do better. When I embarked on a graduate program in inclusive education, I researched the theme of hospitality in biblical, literary, and psychological writings and discovered the ideal of hospitality in many of the world’s religious writings and ancient stories, and myself rediscovered the Gospel values of peace, justice, and unconditional



L. Ratzlaff

DIVERSE COMMUNITY OF STUDENTS — Lorraine Ratzlaff’s EAL classrooms were diverse micro-communities in which she worked to make students experience an unconditional welcome.

love. I imagined Catholic educators would embrace Henri Nouwen’s assertion that: “Hospitality, therefore, means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but offer them space . . . (where they are) free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances; free also to leave and follow their own vocations. Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt the lifestyle of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to live (her) own.”

Soon enough I was disappointed by a collective lack of interest in doing the work needed for deep change, even though my career

was in the Catholic system. Instead, there was a preoccupation with scientific and technological advances that propelled us even further from human community. Despite the contemporary reality around us — its diversity, the teachings of our sacred books, and the language of globalization — many educators continued to value the winners, and to reward speed, beauty, and prestige, mirroring the prevailing values of society rather than universal values and most particularly in secondary schools which seemed to cultivate a culture of powerful and powerless.

Since I was an English as an additional language teacher, my classrooms were as diverse as you might find anywhere. In

these micro-communities, we experienced the effects of unconditional welcoming as Nouwen described them. Unfailingly, when students felt less welcome, they struggled to imagine their potential as humans, citizens, or students. I hope my students experienced unconditional welcome in my classrooms, learned about openness, and in their voyages through life will embody and pass on intercultural and ecumenical awareness. In this period of unprecedented migration, perhaps they will “remember always to welcome strangers . . . for some people have entertained angels without knowing it” (Heb 13:1-3), and in entertaining angels may become more genuinely human.

Desperate need for family support

Continued from page 7

there is also a desperate need for support for families of inmates.

“It’s not just the inmate that serves time; it’s their wives and children. Many families of inmates move here to Prince Albert.”

Many in today’s society believe the penitentiary system to be centred on punishment, Averyt said. Punishment is not an end in

itself. The idea is to correct and rehabilitate and assist the offender’s reintegration back into the community.

One of the challenges facing chaplains is the general public not accepting or supporting previous inmates. Chaplains’ work, he explains, can be destroyed in literally 10 minutes. In his experience, it can happen again and again, making the previous inmate feel

deceived and write the experience off.

“The people who have been in prison have done their time,” said Averyt. “The challenge to us, made clear by Pope Francis, is that it is our task when inmates are released, to show them mercy, welcome them back like the prodigal son and to help them become what God created them to be.”

Lorraine Ratzlaff is a retired high school EAL (English as an additional language) teacher who is currently teaching adult ESL. She and her husband, Lloyd, live in Saskatoon.


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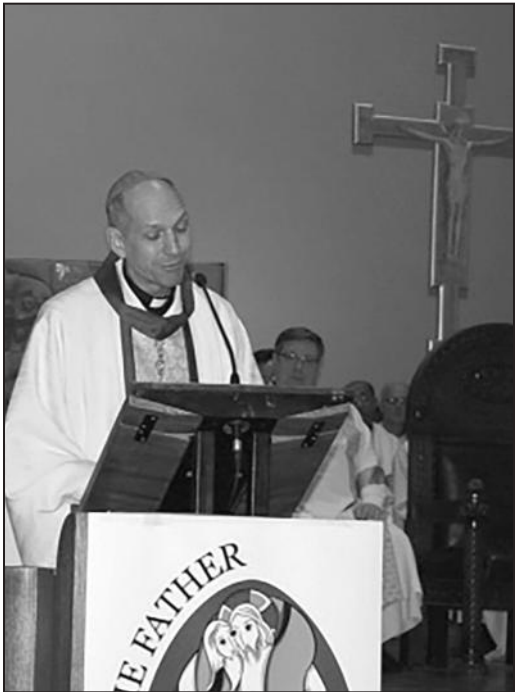
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A tribute to Archbishop Daniel Bohan: homily

Dear brothers and sisters, one and all, we stand this morning before the living God praying prayers of thanksgiving, of sorrow, of hope for one who has been an important part of our lives.

Bishop Dan has given us a cue in how we are to celebrate this morning's funeral mass by the way in which he lived, the way that he prepared for the end of his life. The way he faced his illness is the way that we'll approach the funeral: with faith and hope.



Frank Flegel

Bishop Don Bolen preached the homily at the funeral of Archbishop Bohan.

Bishop Dan's faith was deep, but it was not too complicated, and that served him well till the end. Shortly after he was diagnosed with lung cancer and told it was inoperable, he said, "I placed myself in God's hands a long time ago. I have been held in God's mercy for a long time. There's no need for that to change now."

When on Boxing Day at his home I could see he was getting worse, I said, "I'm worried." And in so many words, he said, "Well, that's a waste of time and energy. Worrying isn't going to help anything. Trust in God."

I don't know whether he ever read Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and the five stages of dying/grieving. He probably did, and probably thought it was fine and good. But he didn't seem to go there; like other trusted friends and family, I tried to create a space for him to lament, to grieve this diagnosis. Bishop Dan chose instead to keep to what was at the heart of things: putting his trust in God and holding firm to that; and that was about it. I found strength in that faith; found a refuge in his faith; many did.

God is near

What was Bishop Dan's hope, and what is ours?

His faith was that God is near, that God is deeply a part of all it is to be human. The last feast he celebrated was Christmas, the Incarnation, here at the cathedral. He was not well enough to preside, but was able to give a blessing at the end, which he did with all the energy he had.

In the Incarnation God comes in search of us, like the shepherd who leaves the many sheep to go in

search of the lost one, like the woman who loses a coin and searches everywhere till she finds it, like the father who has lost a son and joyfully celebrates his return. Our God comes in search of us. Pope Francis noted, "it was to have hands he became human." This Christmas, he tweeted, "God is in love with us. He becomes small to help us love him in return."

Bishop Dan's motto was *miseri-cordis et fidelis* — mercy and faithfulness. God is merciful and faithful. It evokes Ps 85: "Mercy and faithfulness have met, justice and peace have embraced." And it comes from Hebrews 2:17: "For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, making atonement for the sins of the people." This is who Christ is for us. . . .

Our faith, Bishop Dan's faith, is in a God who dwells in the midst of all that is human, summoning us to life. God blesses us with human life, and comes into our world, our human condition, in order that we might have life.

Today we are reminded that this earthly life is fleeting. But in it God whets our appetite for life itself, in its fullness. God gives us a body, lets us live in space and time, in order to give us a taste of the joy of being, of relationship, freedom, self-gift, love, the experience of creating, celebrating, standing in awe and wonder at something we can't fully understand.

We ourselves are part of that mystery. Our God is a God of life, a God who creates life, sustains it, heals it, makes it whole, promises it, and restores it.

The bread of life

In today's Gospel (John 6:51-58) we heard part of the bread of life discourse from John's Gospel: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. . . . The bread that I will give for the life of the

world is my flesh. . . . Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. . . . The one who eats this bread will live forever."

Jesus gives us his very self. His whole life is this self-gift, culminating in his complete gift of self on the cross, the sign of God's boundless, relentless and all-consuming love. And his resurrection is the joyous assurance that love will have its way; it is the first and last word in creation, in God's dealings with us. And the eucharist is the gift which allows us to receive this gift of Jesus' life, death and resurrection even now, even today.

The eucharist plays an important part in the life of most Christians, and it plays a central part in the life of a priest, a bishop.

Intimacy

There is a great intimacy in holding the body of the Lord, bringing his self-gift to the people — a disarming intimacy which evokes a feeling of deep unworthiness, yet the Lord invites us into that mystery and to be at home there.

It has an echo of the intimacy Mary knew as she held the eternal Word in her arms. Perhaps it is similar in some way to the intimacy that a woman knows, that parents know when they participate so intimately in bringing new life into the world. Others, I trust, know this intimacy in different ways.

For the priest, there is a shocking intimacy when, in the fraction rite, he holds the body of the Lord and breaks it, and shares somehow in God's great redeeming act of self-gift in love for the world.

In Bishop Dan's diaconal ordination he was told: "Believe what you read. Teach what you believe. Put into practice what you teach." In his priestly ordination he was instructed to be shaped by the eucharist he celebrates, to be moulded by it, transformed by it, day after day, year after year: to share in this self-gift, to be rooted in it ever more deeply; to let himself be broken for others.

This is a disarming intimacy which costs everything, changes everything and redeems everything.

Proclamation of hope

The very heart of our faith is set before us in today's second reading (Romans 8:31-39). This is the



Frank Flegel

Archbishop Bohan with Deacon Joe Lang and Archdiocesan Youth Coordinator Michelle Braden at prayer in the park.

crowning passage of St. Paul, and perhaps of the whole New Testament; the most bold proclamation of our hope. It poses a series of the most foundational questions, and gives a strong answer.

"If God is for us, who is against us? . . . Who will separate us from the love of Christ?"

Bishop Dan loved beauty, loved beautiful liturgies. He wanted our liturgies, our prayer, to be beautiful, to elevate us, to bring us into an encounter with the holy. One beautiful aspect of liturgies are litanies, and this reading from Romans 8 contains two extraordinary litanies.

Asking "who will separate us from the love of Christ?" it is as though St. Paul goes through the list of obstacles, things which could end or damage a relationship: "Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

Then the rousing anthem, the testament of faith, which rings out with an extravagant hope: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Core message

That was the centre of the message Bishop Dan proclaimed, and it is what we proclaim here this morning. When Bishop Dan

was ordained a bishop, the Book of the Gospels was held over his head. Now as he lies before us waiting to be buried, it rests over his body still. This is the word of life and hope he was given to proclaim.

These are some of the instructions a new bishop is given in the context of his ordination: "You are to serve rather than to rule . . . to love all those whom God places in your care. Love the priests and deacons. . . . Love the poor and infirm, strangers and the homeless. Encourage the faithful to work with you in your apostolic task; listen willingly to what they have to say. . . . Receive the Gospel and preach the word of God with unfailing patience and sound teaching."

It is the call to shepherd. It is not easy being a shepherd.

Here's a story about Bishop Dan from Bernadette Kutarna. She was out with a group of young carollers before Christmas and, as agreed, they went to Bishop Dan's home. He welcomed them there. One of the young carollers was blind and used a walker. Bishop Dan talked to the young people about the candy cane as a symbol of the shepherd's crook — an image of God shepherding us.

He added that bishops also use a staff, also in the shape of a candy cane. The blind youth asked what a staff was. Bishop Dan brought out his staff and let the young fellow explore the staff with his hands. The young man was delighted!

Limitations

I think that bishops are much like the visually impaired young fellow who feels the shepherd's crook, but can't quite understand what it is. We try to understand it, to understand and faithfully follow what is being asked of us. But we know well that we also have our limitations. Big ones.

The first group of apostles did too. They were not the most influential, the most gifted, the most beautiful, but they were touched by God's mercy, and called. In some sense, the bishop experiences an utter dependence on Christ because we know we can't do this, or more truthfully, what we come to learn day by day, can't do it on our own. We can only carry out this work with the help of God — God who is merciful and faithful. . . .



Frank Flegel

Archbishop Bohan blesses children in the new All Saints School in Swift Current.

Bohan touched many people's lives with gentleness

Continued from page 18

Shepherding takes many shapes. And Bishop Dan touched many people's lives. Father Tom Rosica, CSB, of Salt and Light wrote: "He was a true, kind, gentleman who engaged people, loved them and respected them. He was always so thoughtful and grateful for the least little thing I did for him."

Encounters

Several of his ecumenical brother and sister bishops wrote little tributes about his work to heal the wounds and divisions of the Body of Christ. They spoke of his kindness, approachability and humour, his perseverance in dialogue, and gentle way of witnessing.

Many stories about Bishop Dan were sent to me, but he would be sorely annoyed with me if I read them; they mostly related stories of individual encounters, which took place in nursing homes or the cancer ward; stories of reaching out to the grieving, of a pastoral meeting with a gay couple, of wanting to do more regarding refugees, of setting up a committee for the reverence for life.

Of course there are limitations to be mentioned here. He was not always available, not always there. Of course he left behind some unfinished business, for that's the way it always is in this human life. And different kinds of unfinished business.

Unfinished business

My relationship with Bishop Dan was multi-faceted. He was my bishop. And of course our names are very similar, Daniel Bohan and Donald Bolen, and people were constantly getting our names mixed up. Happily we both enjoyed this.

And then he ordained me a bishop. And that led to the use of nicknames in written correspon-

dence: I called him Paul and he called me Timothy. But this Timothy didn't always do what Paul would have liked, and was too often stubborn. And this Paul too had his limitations in serving us.

There's a crack in everything; that's how the light gets in. We lift that unfinished business to the Lord as well, for the Lord to heal it all by his grace.

Two litanies

I would offer you two little litanies, just as St. Paul offered them to us. The first is a litany of glimpses, images and memories of the life he received, a litany of thanksgiving for the life lived, the life God gave his son Daniel:

- Singing O Danny Boy and Christmas in Killarney.
- Childhood days at the sea.
- Sunday dinners with family.
- Family ties that didn't weaken with distance.
- Daily calls to his mother.
- Listening to opera.
- Preparing and giving fine homilies.
- Friendships which gave life.
- A sense of aloneness.
- A profound dependence on God.
- Reaching out.
- His fatherly gentle presence.
- Beauty as a way to God.
- The beauty of this land, its parishes, the people.
- Rabbits in his backyard,
- Cooking wonderful meals,
- Watching a sunset on a prairie road after a confirmation.

For this we give thanks.
And a second litany, a litany which echoes St. Paul's efforts to identify all those things that might have stood in the way of the love of God, but ultimately, can't.
Hear Bishop Dan say, "For I am certain of this. Not cancer, not pastoral challenges, not stubborn

friends, not unfinished business, not poor liturgies nor ill-prepared homilies, not ecumenical impass-es, not the lack of enough hours in the day, not our weariness, not the slow or rapid failing of our body, not declining membership in rural parishes, not our brokenness, our failings, our inner contradictions. Not the falling apart of our bodies, not bodily death. Will these stand in the way? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that nothing, nothing, nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

This is God's faithfulness, his mercy. . . .

Going home

When Bishop Dan was named a bishop, as auxiliary of Toronto, it meant moving away from his beloved home, New Brunswick. Being away from his mother, siblings, loved ones, and away from the Maritimes, which were very much in his heart, and remained there. Then moving to Regina, and further away still.

He made trips home when able, and called home daily, staying deeply connected to his close-knit family, where despite titles and responsibilities, he was Danny, big brother, loving son. It was hard to be away from home. Now Dan's going home.

In the first reading today we heard the prophet Isaiah's image of going home (Isaiah 25:6-9): "a feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-matured wines strained clear. . . . Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces, God will swallow up death forever." Home.

And from the Gospel of John, chapter 15: "In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also." Going home.

And again, from John 15: "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them." Home.

And from St. Paul (2 Cor 5:1): We know that when this earthly tent we live in is folded up, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Going home. We are made for life with God.

Ancient legend

A couple of years ago, Bishop Dan was giving the homily at the funeral of one of his uncles; at the end of that homily, he told of an ancient legend which holds that



Frank Flegel

Archbishop Bohan with Rev. Uttam Barua at a Buddhist holiday celebration.

when an infant is created God kisses its soul and sings to it. As its guardian angel carries it to earth to join its body, the angel also sings to it. The legend says that God's kiss and his song, as well as the song of the angel, remain in that soul forever.

Bishop Dan noted, "It is a legend, but it helps us understand the human reality that deep within us, at the most profound part of our being, there is a longing to return to that intimate embrace of God

and to have that song of God and his angel surround us once again with its beauty."

Dear friends, hear the Lord say now: Daniel my son, it's time to come home. Time to come home.

May Bishop Dan know the touch of God's tender mercy.

May he be held in the light of the risen one and be utterly filled with that light.

May he rest in peace and rise to see the glory of the face of God. Amen.



G. Schmitz

Winter's Sting

The trees are bare,
Stripped of their Fall finery.
A pall descends,
Filling the days
With somber soliloquy.
The wind, in anxious discourse
Shrieks
And
Howls
In its rapid race to leave
Full impact of
Winter's sting.

By Jeanette Martino Land



Frank Flegel

First Nations drummers greeted Archbishop Bohan at his episcopal installation. They closed the circle of his ministry with a drum song of farewell at the end of the funeral mass beside his coffin.

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CATHOLIC JOURNAL

Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to:
Circulation Department
100 College Drive, Box 190, Muenster, Sask., S0K 2Y0
Fax: (306) 682-5285 pm.circulation@stpeterspress.ca
Published by the Benedictine monks of St. Peter's Abbey.
Printed by St. Peter's Press, Muenster, Sask.

Editor: Abbot Peter Novacosky, OSB 306-682-1772
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Circulation: Gail Kleefeld 306-682-1772 <pm.circulation@stpeterspress.ca>
Regina diocesan editor: Frank Flegel 306-586-7316, 306-352-1651
Saskatoon diocesan editor: Kiply Lukan Yaworski 306-242-1500, 306-651-3935
Prince Albert: Chancery Office 306-922-4747
Winnipeg diocesan editor: James Buchok 204-452-2227
Saint-Boniface Chancery Office 204-237-9851

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Member of
Canadian Church Press
and the CCNA

Subscriptions: \$37.00 per year (45 issues); \$67.00 for two years; tax included; U.S. \$126.00 per year. Foreign \$152.00 per year.
Single copy: \$1.00 GST#10780 2928 RT0001
Copy and advertising should arrive 12 days before publication date.
Change of address: Please allow 3-4 weeks for processing and send both old and new addresses.
Website: <http://www.prairiemessenger.ca>
We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund of the Department of Canadian Heritage.
CN ISSN 0032-664X Publication Mail Agreement No. 40030139

Pope apologizes for how Catholics have hurt others

By Cindy Wooden

ROME (CNS) — After walking across the threshold of the Holy Door with an Orthodox metropolitan and an Anglican archbishop, Pope Francis invoked God's mercy upon divided Christians and apologized for times Catholics may have hurt members of other denominations.

"As bishop of Rome and pastor of the Catholic Church, I want to beg for mercy and forgiveness for un-Gospel-like behaviour on the part of Catholics against Christians of other churches," the pope said Jan. 25 at a prayer service concluding the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

"We ask most of all for forgiveness for the sin of our divisions, which are an open wound on the Body of Christ," Pope Francis said.

"At the same time, I ask all my Catholic brothers and sisters to forgive if, today or in the past, they were hurt by other Christians," he said. "We cannot erase what happened, but we do not want to allow the burden of past faults to continue to poison our relationships."

As is customary, Pope Francis led the service at Rome's Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, which tradition holds as the burial site of the apostle. Orthodox Metropolitan Gennadios, representing

the ecumenical patriarch, and Anglican Archbishop David Moxon, representing the archbishop of Canterbury, joined the pope in prayer at St. Paul's tomb at the beginning of the service.

St. Paul and countless Christian martyrs throughout the centuries gave their lives for their faith in Christ and now enjoy "full communion in the presence of God the father," the pope said in his homily. He prayed the martyrs would sustain today's Christians with their prayers and their example.

The annual week of prayer ended Jan. 25, the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. Pope Francis told those gathered in the basilica that "the superabundance of God's mercy" was the only basis for Paul's conversion from being a persecutor of Christians to a preacher of the Gospel. Mercy saved him, and proclaiming that mercy to others was the mission he received.

For the 2016 week of prayer, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the World Council of Churches chose the theme, "Called to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord," which is drawn from some translations of the second chapter of the First Letter of Peter.

The passage (1 Peter 2:9), Pope Francis said, originally was addressed to "members of small and fragile communities," yet calls

them "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own."

Being chosen for salvation, the pope said, inspires "comfort and constant awe" among Christians today just like in the days of Sts. Peter and Paul. "Why me, Lord? Why us," Christians should and do ask.

The answer, Pope Francis said has to do with "the mystery of mercy and of God's choice: The father loves everyone and wants to save all," so he chooses people and sends them out to share God's mercy and love with others.

"Beyond the differences that still separate us," he told the ecumenical gathering, "we recognize with joy that at the origin of the Christian life there is always a call whose author is God himself."

The path to Christian unity, he said, is not simply about drawing closer to one another, but has more to do with each person drawing closer to Christ and finding each other there.

"When all Christians of different churches listen to the word of God and try to put it into practice," the pope said, "they truly take important steps toward unity."

"It is not only the call that unites us," he said, "we are joined by the same mission: to proclaim to all the mighty acts of the Lord."

"Walking together and work-



CNS/Paul Haring

PRAYER SERVICE FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY — Orthodox Metropolitan Gennadios of Italy, Pope Francis and Anglican Archbishop David Moxon, the archbishop of Canterbury's representative to the Vatican, give a blessing at the end of a prayer service at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls Jan. 25. The service concluded the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

ing together, we will become aware that we are already united in the name of the Lord," he said. "Unity is made by walking."

Church leaders condemn vandalism at Christian sites

By Judith Sudilovsky

JERUSALEM (CNS) — Two teenagers were arrested in connection with the vandalism of two Christian sites next to the Old City.

Because of their age, 16 and 15, authorities released few details about the incidents in which anti-Christian slogans in Hebrew were discovered scrawled on the walls of the Benedictine Dormition Abbey monastery and the neighbouring Greek Orthodox seminary, both located on Mount Zion next to the walls of the Old City.

The vandalism occurred Jan. 16 and 17, a week after a Christian cemetery was desecrated outside of Jerusalem.

Israeli police spokesperson Micky Rosenfeld told the media that police were continuing their investigation to determine whether there is a connection between the latest vandalism and other anti-Christian incidents in the Old City. He said security has been heightened in the Old City.

The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem denounced the acts and repeated its belief in the importance of education toward tolerance while urging "followup" against those who incite intolerance against Christians.

"It is regrettable that such episodes of hatred come 50 years after *Nostra Aetate* which initiated the inter-religious dialogue of the Catholic Church with other religions, and turned a new page between Catholic Church and Judaism," the patriarchate said in a statement Jan. 17. "We hope that the perpetrators will be arrested before proposed threats are carried out."

Auxiliary Bishop William Shomali, chancellor of the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem, later said on the patriarchate's website

that the young age of the two suspects shows that a change in the education system is needed for young people who are "encased in intolerance."

For the Dormition Abbey, which is believed to have been built on the spot where Mary died, it was the fifth time the building was vandalized in recent years. A fire that broke out at the monastery in February was determined to be arson, and another arson incident took place just after Pope Francis' visit to the monastery in May 2015. In 2012 and 2013, anti-Christian graffiti also appeared on abbey walls.

Authorities said the graffiti appeared to be written by different hands. Photographs depicting the graffiti showed statements such as "Christians go to hell," "Death to the heathen Christians, the enemies of Israel" and "Let his (Jesus') name and memory be obliterated."

Benedictine Father Nikodemus Schnabel, spokesperson for the abbey, said in a statement Jan. 17 that the red and black paint the Israeli police used to crudely and unsuccessfully try to cover up the graffiti did even more damage.

He noted that between the nights of Jan. 16 and 17, there had been a loud and aggressive gathering with music and chanting by "Jewish right-wing radicals" in their neighbourhood near the contested Tomb of David site. He said such disruptive gatherings have taken place nearly every Saturday for three years.

The graffiti, he said, was found in an area of the monastery that is not monitored by security cameras despite what he said was promised by Israeli security authorities in the summer of 2013 when several monastery cars were badly damaged and hate graffiti was discovered on monastery walls.

Pope Francis opens foot washing to all

By David Gibson and Rosie Scammell

VATICAN CITY (RNS) — Pope Francis has changed the rules to allow priests to wash the feet of women and anyone else in the community and not just men, as church law had previously decreed.

The change, announced Jan. 21, reflects Francis' own groundbreaking gesture when, just two weeks after his election in 2013, he washed the feet of young people — including women and a Muslim — at a youth detention centre outside Rome.

That act upset many traditionalists who argued the pope should follow church law to the letter; many priests have often washed the feet of women, though others continue to bar women.

Critics of a change say the rules were written to require that only men be chosen because the rite re-enacts Jesus' washing the feet of his 12 male disciples at the Last Supper.

The Catholic Church believes that episode, on the night before Jesus was crucified, marks the formal institution of the all-male priesthood. So any move to broaden those whose feet are washed by the priest — taking the role of Jesus — could raise questions about ordination.

"This inevitably makes the all-male priesthood itself harder to understand," read a statement by the Latin Mass Society of England and Wales. The society, which supports the older rites, added that said the pope's move "reinforces the trend which has seen priests increasingly surrounded by women

during mass."

The pope's action is likely to further inflame those debates, though Pope Francis has previously reaffirmed that he believes the Catholic priesthood should continue to be restricted to men only.

In fact, this change to the Holy Thursday rite seems connected to the pontiff's push to make the church more inclusive, and to reiterate his view that priests should be humble servants and not clerical "careerists," as he has said.

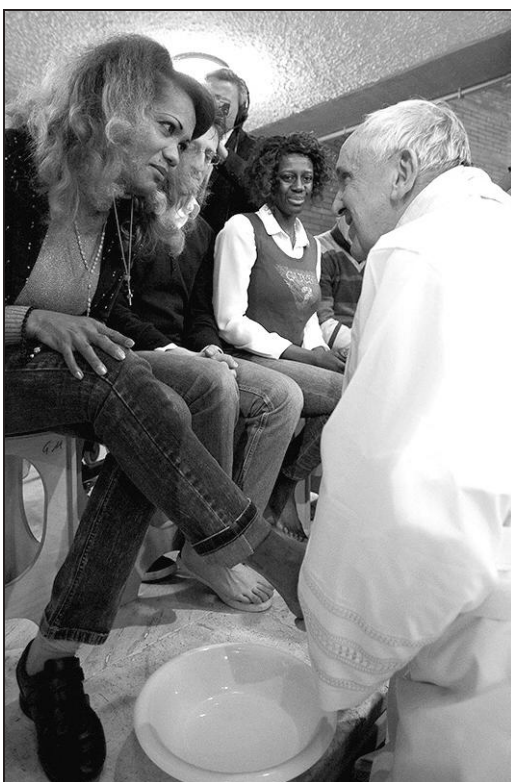
"Small steps are also taken with feet," Rev. Antonio Spadaro, an Italian Jesuit who is close to the pope, quipped in a tweet. "And step by step," he added parenthetically.

As the new decree states, pastors picking a dozen people to stand in for the apostles at the foot-washing rite "may choose a group of faithful representing the variety and unity of every part of the People of God."

"This group may consist of men and women, and ideally of the young and the old, healthy and sick, clerics, consecrated persons and laypeople." Pope Francis had been pushing the rule change for some time.

While the new law was announced

in a decree issued Jan. 21 by Cardinal Robert Sarah, head of the Vatican liturgy office that sets rules for celebrating mass and other rites, the Vatican also released a letter from Pope Francis to Sarah in December 2014 in which he asked him to make changes so that the rite "might fully express the significance of the gesture performed by Jesus at the Last Supper." There was no immediate explanation for the lag time.



CNS/Reuters/L'Osservatore Romano

NEW FOOT-WASHING OPTIONS — Pope Francis washes the foot of a female inmate during the Holy Thursday Mass at Rebibbia prison in Rome in this April 2, 2015, file photo. Following a request by Pope Francis, the Vatican issued a decree Jan. 21 specifying that the Holy Thursday foot-washing ritual can include women.

Prayer is less about changing the world than it is about changing ourselves.

— David J. Wolpe