



## End to audits

Church-based charities, including the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, are applauding the end of Canada Revenue Agency's political audit program.  
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## Restrictions unlikely

Physician-assisted death legislation could include competent children under the age of 18, a legal expert has told a parliamentary committee.  
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## Lecture series

Anglican Bishop Kenneth Kearon used the image of constructing a barn to reflect on the ecumenical movement during this year's De Margerie Series on Christian Reconciliation and Unity, held in conjunction with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Saskatoon.  
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## The Francis difference

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## Lenten readings

In the readings for the first Sunday of Lent, Bob Williston talks about God the master (Lego) builder, who takes the blocks of our lives and, together with us, helps build something beautiful.  
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## Being missionary

Archbishop Murray Chatlain writes that in the present day, the term missionary has a negative connotation. He reflects on what qualities are needed for a missionary today.  
— page 11

# La Loche embraces healing after tragedy

By Evan Boudreau  
The Catholic Register

In the wake of a shooting tragedy at La Loche, Sask., that left four people dead, a call for

healing and support has been embraced by the mother of two of the victims and the mother of the alleged shooter.

The mother of two teenage brothers killed on Jan. 22 and the

mother of the alleged teenaged killer have been supporting each other, Archbishop Murray Chatlain of the Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas said in an interview.

"As incredible as that is," Chatlain said. "I was very touched by their care for each other."

Chatlain was present when the mothers met. He also spent time with the family of the alleged shooter, who appeared in court Jan. 25 facing four counts of first degree murder, seven counts of attempted murder and unauthorized possession of a firearm.

Chatlain called the teenager's family "good people," and said that blame for the alleged actions should not fall on their shoulders.

"We're not blaming them," said Chatlain. "It's just this has happened and now how do we bring healing and support and try to find ways for our young people to have more hope."

In the early afternoon on Jan. 22 a 17-year-old, who's identity is protected under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, is alleged to have killed two brothers, aged 17 and 13, at their home and then spent about eight minutes terrorizing staff and students at nearby La Loche Community School with a firearm believed to be a shotgun. The youth was apprehended by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police after 11 people had been shot.

— FOCUS, page 4



F. Fliegel

**LA LOCHE VIGIL** — Teachers from three school divisions — Regina Catholic, Regina Public and Prairie Valley — along with friends, local, provincial and federal politicians, took part in a candlelight and prayer vigil held the evening of Jan. 27 in Regina in honour of the four people who were killed and seven others who were injured in La Loche, Sask., Jan. 22. They gathered first at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum on the north side of Wascana Lake and walked down the Albert Street sidewalk to the Legislative Building on the south side of the lake where they gathered for speeches, prayers and singing. The short speeches came from teachers and First Nations elders, not from politicians. After the speeches, participants deposited their candles and tea lights in the snow across the road from the Legislative Building.

# Live your faith during Lent, perform works of mercy: pope

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Lent is a time of conversion and a time to deepen one's faith, demonstrating and sharing it through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, Pope Francis said.

"Faith finds expression in concrete everyday actions meant to help our neighbours in body and spirit," the pope said in his message for Lent, which begins Feb. 10 for Latin-rite Catholics.

Feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, welcoming strangers, offering instruction, giving comfort — "on such things will we be judged," the pope wrote in the message, which was released at the Vatican Jan. 26.

Particularly during the Year of Mercy, he said, Catholics are called to recognize their own need for God's mercy, the greatness of God's love seen in the death and resurrection of Christ and the obligation to assist others by communicating God's love and mercy through words and deeds.

"The root of all sin" is thinking that one is god, something often expressed in a total preoccupation for accumulating money and power, the pope wrote. And just as individuals can be tempted to think they have no need of God, social and political systems can run the same risk, ignoring both God and the real needs of human beings.

"Love alone is the answer to that yearning for infinite happiness," Pope Francis wrote. It is the only response to the longings "that we think we can satisfy with the idols of knowledge, power and riches."

"The danger always remains that by a constant refusal to open

the doors of their hearts to Christ who knocks on them in the poor," he said, "the proud, rich and powerful will end up condemning themselves and plunging into the eternal abyss of solitude which is hell."

But through acts of mercy and charity, "by touching the flesh of the crucified Jesus in the suffer-

ing," he wrote, "sinners can receive the gift of realizing that they too are poor and in need."

"In the corporal works of mercy we touch the flesh of Christ in our brothers and sisters who need to be fed, clothed, sheltered,

— GOD'S, page 2

# Pope transformative in approach

By James Buchok

WINNIPEG — Wouldn't it be great if the Vatican divested itself of fossil fuels? And how about if the Catholic Church allowed priestly ordination for women?

"I'm a loyal Catholic, but because I care about the church I believe there is value in expressing these concerns," said Dr. Chris Hrynok, an assistant professor of religion and culture at St. Thomas More College at the University of Saskatchewan.

"I think Pope Francis is opening up space for some of these thoughts," he added.

Hrynok was speaking Jan. 29 at one of a series of noon-hour Brown Bag Lectures at the Arthur V. Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice at St. Paul's College at the University of Manitoba. The lectures are free and open to the public.

Hrynok presented a paper

entitled Caring for our Common Home in a Substantively Peaceful Manner: Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* and Nonviolence from a Transformative Perspective. In it, he states: "dichotomous views of male and female roles limits the prospect for gender justice and autonomy within the institutional Catholic Church . . . it becomes clear that principled non-violence and positive peace combine to require much transformation of Catholicism in this world."

Hrynok continues: "The associated values and practices of principled non-violence and positive peace as defined by peace studies theorists clearly call the institutional Roman Catholic Church toward deep transformation in terms of areas like its governance, wealth and differential gender roles."

In the preamble, Hrynok posits that both prior to and after



J. Buchok

Dr. Chris Hrynok

the release of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* last June,

— ENCYCLICAL, page 7



# Christianity ‘running on fumes,’ U.S. bishop says

By Simone Orendain

CEBU, Philippines (CNS) — Los Angeles Auxiliary Bishop Robert Barron said popular culture’s message of individuals being “infinitely right” is “repugnant to (Catholics’) eucharistic faith.” But he also said Christianity is “running on fumes” as it tries to counter the trend of people leaving the church or staying away from the eucharist.

“To stretch out like someone dying of hunger is the right attitude toward the eucharist,” Barron said at the 51st Inter-

national Eucharistic Congress. “What’s sad today is so many in the Catholic world have become blasé about the eucharist.”

The bishop said only 30 per cent of Catholics in the United States actually receive communion, calling this a “disaster.”

At a news briefing after his presentation at the congress, he said that, unlike the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche’s ideology of self-invention, Catholic faithful “did not invent (their) own story, we belong to a story” and that is “God’s drama.”

Barron — author of numerous

books and a longtime faculty member, then president of Mundelein Seminary, major seminary of the Archdiocese of Chicago — said the call of the church today is to retain Catholics and attract new ones.

“If the church can’t find a way to tell that story in a theo-dramatic way, people will drift away to this easy self-invention philosophy,” he said. “So it is a real challenge to the church. . . . We’ve got to be bold. We’ve got to be confident. We’ve got to be smart.”

Patrician Brother Peter John Hayes of Ballyfin, Ireland, was in the crowd of about 12,000 who listened, took notes and clicked cameras as the bishop drove home the message of the eucharist as a meal, a sacrifice and “the real presence” of Christ.

Hayes told Catholic News Service the problem of dwindling numbers of those taking the eucharist has been on his mind.

“When you wonder, ‘What do we have to do? What can we do? What can I do? . . . At an event like this . . . we get it that some of us are on the same road, anyway,’ said Hayes.

The bishop used a reading from the Gospel of St. Luke

as an example of the two disciples who did not realize that the risen Lord was right next to them on Easter.

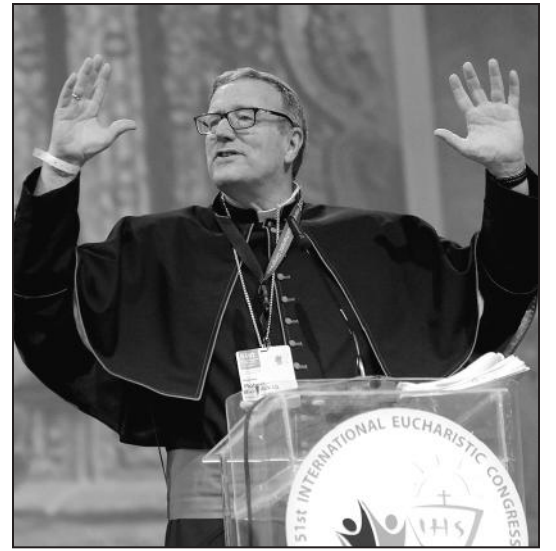
Barron said they were “walking the wrong way,” turning away from God as everyone does, since people are all sinners. And that made it hard to recognize Jesus in their midst. But once they heard his words and were compelled by the power of his life, then they begged him to stay. He shared a meal with them and gave the same command he had given the night before he died, “Do this in memory of me.”

People ignore Jesus’ commands all the time, said Barron, but “over the centuries that one dominical command has been massively obeyed.” That revelation of the pattern of Jesus’ life in the breaking of the bread is the moment the faithful “get it” and they are no longer walking the wrong way, he added.

The bishop highlighted the eucharist as a sacrifice, a theme that he said was the least-known and least-developed.

Barron emphasized that God does not need the sacrifices of the faithful because he “doesn’t need anything,” but by returning something to God, they “are united to him.”

“The little we bring, if offered to God in the right spirit, breaks



CNS/Katarzyna Artymiak

**Bishop Robert E. Barron**

against the rock of the divine self-sufficiency and comes back elevated and multiplied for our benefit,” he said.

Julius Maquiling, a eucharistic minister of 25 years from the Cagayan de Oro Archdiocese in the southern Philippines, said he was struck by this concept of sacrifice.

He also told CNS he was touched to be reminded “that the bread is the true bread, Jesus Christ.”

In the talk, Barron said, “Wealth, pleasure, honour, power . . . we sinners, we go lusting after them all the time, but they won’t satisfy us. Look for eternal things, eternal bread.”

When Jesus says his body and blood are given up for everyone, the bishop said: “If he’s the word of God, what he says is. What he says reaches into the very roots of something and changes it. Really, truly and substantially present, yes.”



CNS/Francis R. Malasig, EPA

**PHILIPPINES INTERNATIONAL EUCHARIST CONGRESS — A parade of flags marked the opening of mass during the 51st International Eucharistic Congress opening ceremony in Cebu, Philippines, Jan. 24.**

## Patch up family feuds, forgive, let go of painful past, says Pope Francis

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Let the Year of Mercy be the time to end all family feuds, to forgive each other and let bygones be bygones, Pope Francis said.

“I think about so many brothers and sisters who are estranged from their families; they don’t speak to each other,” he said during his weekly general audience in St. Peter’s Square Jan. 27.

“This Year of Mercy is a good occasion to meet up again, to embrace each other and forgive each other, to leave bad things behind,” he said.

The pope continued a series of talks dedicated to divine mercy, looking specifically at how God has always been faithful and merciful toward his people.

God never ignored the Israelites’ cry of suffering and he sent Moses as a “mediator” on his behalf to free his people and lead them to salvation, the pope said.

“We can do this work, too, during this Year of Mercy, of being mediators of mercy with works of mercy” that bring people together, foster unity and offer people comfort and relief, he said. There are “so many good things people can do.”

“Mercy can never remain indifferent before the suffer-

ing of the oppressed, the cry of those who are exposed to violence, reduced to slavery, condemned to die,” he said.

Such suffering has existed throughout history, including in today’s world, he said, and that can often make people feel “helpless, tempted to harden their hearts and think about other things.”

God, however, is never indifferent, as he always fixes his gaze

upon those in pain and intervenes by helping people become aware of and involved in the lives of those who suffer and are oppressed, he said.

In remarks to pilgrims from Iraq and other nations in the Middle East, Pope Francis again highlighted that God is not deaf to the plight of those facing “injustice and persecution.”

God always “intervenes and gives, with his mercy, salvation and assistance,” the pope said. “He practises patience with the

sinner in order to bring about conversion and he seeks the lost until they return because he ‘wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.’ ”

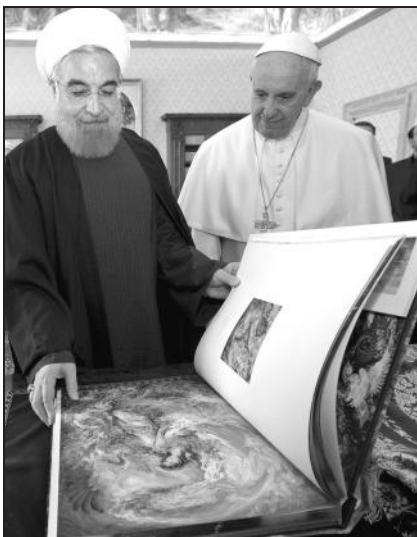
“May the Lord bless all of you and protect you from evil,” he said.

The pope also invited Catholic individuals and groups who are involved in charitable service to take part in a day of spiritual retreat.

Individual dioceses will be sponsoring such events during Lent, he said, and he asked people to take advantage of the special

occasion to reflect more deeply on God’s mercy and become more merciful.

The pope also greeted German-speaking pilgrims during the audience and welcomed members of the Independent Commission for the Protection of Victims in Austria, including Cardinal Christoph Schönborn of Vienna and Bishop Klaus Küng of Sankt Pölten. The national commission was launched by the bishops in 2010 to investigate allegations of sexual abuse by clergy.



CNS/Andrew Medichini, Reuters

**POPE MEETS IRANIAN PRESIDENT — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani exchanges gifts with Pope Francis during a private meeting at the Vatican Jan. 26. Pope Francis told him he had high hopes for peace. And while Pope Francis usually asks those he meets for their prayers, the Shiite cleric pre-empted the pope’s request and said, “I ask you to pray for me.”**

## God’s children must be merciful too

Continued from page 1

visited,” he wrote. “In the spiritual works of mercy — counsel, instruction, forgiveness, admonishment and prayer — we touch more directly our own sinfulness.”

In the Christian life, Pope Francis said, “the corporal and spiritual works of mercy must never be separated.”

Cardinal Francesco Montenegro, president of Caritas Italy and head of the archdiocese that includes the Italian island of Lampedusa, told reporters at a Vatican news conference that the pope’s message, like the Bible, “does not stop simply at reaffirming that God is merciful, but clearly indicates that his children must be merciful, too, by living a greater love, especially by

taking care of the little ones, the poor and defenceless.”

The cardinal said that from his own experience as archbishop of Agrigento, he has seen how people’s faith and joy have grown and become contagious when they not only go to mass, but also volunteer to assist the thousands of migrants who land on Lampedusa’s shore seeking safety and a better life for their families.

Msr. Giampietro Dal Toso, secretary of the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*, the office that promotes and co-ordinates Catholic charity, told reporters that Pope Francis wants to help Catholics rediscover the traditional corporal and spiritual works of mercy, which seemed to have been left on the shelf with dusty old books. Maybe, he said, “it was no

longer fashionable” to preach about the daily actions of believers or maybe “our ecclesial practice has become quite institutionalized and politicized.”

“The works of mercy are a very simple, concrete, direct, alive, daily, easy, accessible-to-all way of living the Jubilee of Mercy,” he said. “The works of mercy describe what we as Christians can actually do every day, and that is why I find them so fascinating.”

As part of *Cor Unum*’s celebration of the Year of Mercy, he said, it has developed materials for a retreat day for people engaged in church charitable activity. The materials are online — [www.corunumjubilaum.va](http://www.corunumjubilaum.va) — and can be adapted for use by a group, a parish or a diocese.



# Charities relieved special audits coming to an end

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Church-based charities, including the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, are applauding the end of Canada Revenue Agency’s political audit program.

The controversial audits, initiated in 2012, are being phased out under the Liberal government, according to a Jan. 20 statement from Revenue Minister Diane LeBouthillier. She said past audits showed “substantial compliance” with rules which restrict political activity by charities.

Twenty-four audits currently underway, including audits of Development and Peace and the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), will be completed as the program winds down.

“We’re glad government resources might be more directed to development programs than on political checkups on NGOs,” said Development and Peace In-Canada Programs deputy director Ryan Worms.

Development and Peace underwent a CRA audit in 2013, Worms said, and “we are still waiting for the results.”

“We are already under review and we will still be under review but we are confident we’ll not have issues raised with the audit,” he said. “We operate under strict guidelines regarding the followup of our projects, transparency of our finances and on limiting political activity.”

Registered charities are permitted to allocate a maximum of 10 per cent of their resources to what the CRA classifies as non-partisan political activities. Charities are not permitted to engage in partisan activities such as endorsing or criticizing specific politicians or their party’s policies.

Initially, the auditing program focused on environmental organizations but later targeted some poverty groups and NGOs. Like Development and Peace, the Canadian Council of Churches, which represents Catholic, Orthodox, mainline Protestant and evangelical denominations, is currently in the midst of a CRA audit. Several other charitable organizations have been audited, including Citizens for Public Justice, Project Ploughshares and the United Church of Canada.

“They don’t tell you why they chose you,” said Joe Gunn, executive director of Citizens for Public Justice.

“I don’t disagree there is a role for CRA to look at charities to make sure they are in the law,” said Gunn. “The problem is we have had an overly strict and a bit partial interpretation of this law to date.”

He said a CRA audit is not only time-consuming but also “it really creates a chill.” It has not been uncommon for some audits to drag on for several years.

“With a finite amount of government money available, to redirect the money that was spent on audits to other things might be

more helpful for the country,” said CCC General Secretary Rev. Karen Hamilton.

Even with the change, the rules regarding political action are open to interpretation. Hamilton said her organization sent a document that outlined their interpretation of the CRA guidelines to see if it complied with the regulations.

The CCC has 25-member denominations and is “the most inclusive church council in the world, and operates by consensus,” Hamilton said. Therefore it is “more likely to have strong statements about poverty and about the theological rationale of all us working together to combat poverty than we are about a very specific piece of legislation.”

The CCC has been “recording zero for political activities,” she

said. “When you read the definition very carefully, what it puts into the political category are comments and actions on particular legislation or lobbying a particular party.”

Hamilton said CCC comments on issues such as refugees or human trafficking are addressed to all political parties, and speak “more to principles” than any particular legislation.

Gunn said churches and charities should not be limited only to ministering to the poor through feeding or shelter programs. Their “experience on a range of issues” should enable them to “interact helpfully with policy-makers to suggest solutions.”

“That should be recognized as valuable for a democratic society.”

Offering solutions means

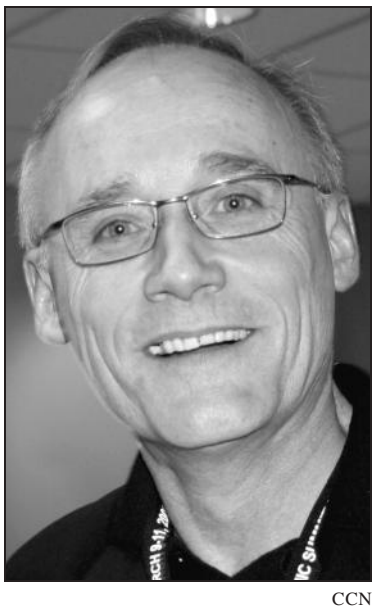
engaging on a political issue, communicating with a minister, writing briefs, he said.

“Most people recognize this as a good thing,” he said. “There’s a difference between that and partisan political activity.”

Leilani Farha, executive director of Canada Without Poverty, said ending the political audit program is “an important first step.”

“Reforming this legislation should be a priority, otherwise people living in poverty risk being silenced at the whim of government,” Farha said in a news release. “By limiting political activity in the ITA (Income Tax Act), the government creates conditions where charities are afraid to encourage systemic change.”

The CRA will continue its normal process of auditing 800 to



Joe Gunn

900 charities per year. Of 86,000 charities in Canada, CRA says about 500 report political activity.

# Ecumenism is not about the church, it’s about the world

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — Salt and light were the scriptural images highlighted during an Eastern-rite closing celebration for the Week of Christian Unity held at Sts. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Catholic Church in Saskatoon.

Participants lit candles from a common flame and tasted a pinch of salt in a ritual gesture of commitment to unity, reflecting Christ’s call to be “light to the world and salt of the earth” proclaimed in the Gospel reading.

Darren Dahl, director of the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism, which organizes the Week of Prayer events in Saskatoon, explained that the Eastern-rite service was developed from resources prepared for the global week by Christians from Latvia.

Homilist at the closing service was Bishop Kenneth Kearon, who was also the keynote speaker for this year’s De Margerie Series on Christian Reconciliation and Unity, held in conjunction with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Saskatoon.

“Ecumenism is not about the

church, it’s about the world,” said Kearon, the Anglican bishop of Limerick and Killaloe in Ireland. He served as director of the Irish School of Ecumenics at Trinity College in Dublin from 1999 to 2005 and as Secretary General of the Anglican communion from 2004 to 2014.

Kearon reflected on the challenge posed by the Week of Prayer’s 2016 theme from 1 Peter 2:9: “Called to proclaim the mighty acts of God.”

“We have a life-transforming message and yet we’re not that confident about promoting that message in public in our modern western society,” he said, noting the increasing push to “privatize” faith as an individual choice that should not be part of public discourse.

Pope Francis has captured the world’s attention by continually stressing that the Gospel message of Jesus Christ is not about the church, but rather about the world, said Kearon. “When he washes people’s feet, he doesn’t go into a fancy church, he goes into a prison. . . . It is about the world, it is not about the church.”

Kearon pointed to the roots of

the modern ecumenical movement in the realization by disappointed 19th-century missionaries that a divided church cannot effectively evangelize the world. “Because they had brought their own conflicts and divisions right into the mission field, people looking at Christianity from the outside weren’t that impressed. The division of the churches was hindering the message of the Gospel,” said Kearon. “What we now called the ecumenical movement rose out of that realization.”

The imperative for Christian unity is not that it is simply a good idea, a better use of resources, or a nice thing to do, he said. “The reason why we search for the unity of the Christian church is that we can’t preach the Christian Gospel with any sort of integrity into a fractured and broken world that badly needs that message, if we ourselves are divided,” stressed Kearon.

As part of the 2016 De Margerie series, Kearon also led a workshop for ministry leaders Jan. 22, and a public workshop on Being Church in the World Today Jan. 23 at the Cathedral of the Holy Family. Building an Ecu-

menical Barn was the theme of Kearon’s lecture for the De Margerie Series, held Jan. 21 at St. Thomas More College (STM) at the University of Saskatchewan.

The De Margerie Series is jointly presented by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, the Les and Irene Dubé Chair of Catholic Studies at STM, and the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism. The series was named in honour of Rev. Bernard de Margerie, a longtime leader in the local ecumenical movement.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity opened Jan. 17 with a service at Zion Lutheran Church in Saskatoon.

“Let the stone of division in the Body of Christ be rolled away,” said Rev. Bill Blackmon of Circle Drive Church during the opening homily.

“Life for Christian believers only comes from one source . . . that source is Christ alone,” he said. “There is no path leading to unity which does not go first by way of the cross and the empty tomb.”

Blackmon, who is a member of the Catholic-Evangelical dialogue underway in Saskatoon, reflected on the call to Christian unity and its roots in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

“Unity begins with the connection to the prayer of Christ that we become one as he is with his Father. Unity is empowered by our obedience to his command that we love one another. And unity is transferred to others by the power of the Holy Spirit in us, in our faith together.”

Reflecting on some 20 years of his own ecumenical growth and experience in Saskatoon, Blackmon said that Christians are called to come to the ecumenical table “bringing our best and confessing our worst” in a process grounded in authentic relationships.

The Week of Prayer continued with early morning worship each weekday in a different local church, as well as an evening of hymn singing, a lunch at Queen’s House, and a Ceilidh — a Celtic celebration of unity featuring music and dance — held Jan. 22 at the Cathedral of the Holy Family in Saskatoon.



K. Yaworski

**SALT AND LIGHT** — Participants processed to light candles from a common flame and to taste a pinch of salt during the closing celebration for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Saskatoon — an Eastern-rite prayer service held at Sts. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Catholic Church.



# Physician-assisted death could include children

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Physician-assisted death legislation could include competent children under the age of 18, a legal expert told a Parliamentary committee Jan. 26.

University of Ottawa professor Bernard Pelletier, who served on the three-person External Panel on Options for a Legislative Response to Carter vs. Canada, said Parliament could broaden the criteria beyond the Carter decision which permits physician-assisted death for competent adults.

The panel's legal expert told the parliamentary committee on physician-assisted dying that restricting access only to competent adults would be vulnerable to a legal challenge.

Pelletier's advice disagreed with that given the previous day by Peter Hogg, a leading constitutional expert who had argued on behalf of the federal government before the court in Carter. Hogg had said the legislation should stay close to the justice's criteria



CCN/D. Gyapong

**COMMITTEE HEARINGS — University of Ottawa professor Bernard Pelletier, who served on the three-person External Panel on Options for a Legislative Response to Carter vs. Canada, said Parliament could broaden the criteria beyond the Carter decision which permits physician-assisted death for competent adults.**

and not restrict it to only terminal patients, for example, or expand it to include minors.

Pelletier said Carter was decided on the basis the Charter's sec. 7 provision on life, security

and liberty of the person, but future litigation could argue on the Charter's sec. 15 equality provision to include competent children under 18.

Also appearing Jan. 26 were

the two co-chairs of the Provincial-Territorial Expert Advisory Group on Physician-Assisted Dying, Jennifer Gibson and Maureen Taylor. That group recommended competency, not age, should be the criteria so that children as young as 12 should qualify for a physician-assisted death if they are competent. Gibson pointed out it is already the practice in parts of Canada to let competent adolescents make end-of-life decisions.

Age limits were one of the challenges the federal external panel encountered in its travel to the countries in Europe and American states where euthanasia and/or assisted suicide is practised. Pelletier said they found "a general satisfaction with the law in the countries we visited."

"We were told that assisted dying works well in the context of a robust social safety net, well-founded health care services and high levels of trust in physicians," he said. "At the same time there is intense controversy about cases that push the boundaries, test the limits of the law, cases that challenged the age requirement, cases involving advanced directives, cases that arise from psychological existential or psychiatric suffering, or suffering related to chronic conditions that are not life threatening."

The joint-Parliamentary Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying is grappling with all these issues as it hears witnesses in preparation for advising Parliament with a report at the end of February.

Pelletier said the Carter decision applies to both physical and psychological illness and is not restricted to end of life. He said the Quebec law that allows assisted suicide "could be a very good model across Canada," but it doesn't go as far as the court did

in Carter because it restricts "medical aid in dying" to terminal patients. He said he would prefer the federal government did not intervene in the Quebec law.

Both the federal and the provincial-territorial panel witnesses confirmed the wish of Canadians for access to physician-assisted death across Canada. The provincial panelists said there was a wish to avoid a patchwork approach across Canada. They also said there was a desire for clarity from the federal government so health practitioners would know what they could and could not do under the Criminal Code.

"One of the key messages we heard consistently was we want to know that when we're talking about 'grievous and irremediable,' 'we want to know that we as clinicians are operating without incurring liability in what we do.'"

But while clinicians wanted to operate within the rules, they did not want them too "narrowly stipulated," she said.

Gibson and Taylor also said physician-assisted death should be enlarged to include other health care practitioners, such as nurse practitioners, especially when it comes to serving remote areas.

"We very strongly think that the Supreme Court decision, although it mentioned physician-assisted death, did not mean to exclude other health care professionals," said Taylor. "Anyone who understands how health care is delivered in this country knows that it is delivered not solely by physicians."

Senator Nancy Ruth asked about advanced directives for patients who develop dementia to have a physician-assisted death. Pelletier said their survey of Canadians showed 62 per cent of Canadians either strongly agreed or agreed with them.

## Campaign supports those with special needs

By Agnieszka Krawczynski  
The B.C. Catholic

VANCOUVER (CCN) — A national pro-life organization is launching a new campaign to promote adoption and save the lives of children with special needs.

"Over 97 per cent of women diagnosed with a special-needs child in utero will abort," said executive director Natalie Sonnen. Most of these children have Down syndrome.

"There are families out there who would love to adopt a child with special needs," she insisted, so LifeCanada has started a crowdfunding campaign in the hopes of raising enough money to spread that message across the country.

The new media campaign, Options of the Heart, will generate

articles, blogs, memes, posters, and videos.

Sonnen said projects such as these are "an area of specialty" for LifeCanada. They have launched several media campaigns in the past, including Adoption in Canada.

That project, set up in 2010, aimed to raise awareness about adoption as an option for parents facing unplanned pregnancies and to connect them to support networks.

"As a consequence of that, we were receiving contacts from individuals about children with special needs available for adoption or people seeking to adopt them," said project director Anastasia Bowles.

Like Sonnen, she maintained there are Canadian families seeking to adopt children with special

needs; she has about half a dozen names on a list.

"They recognize the value of children with special needs," she said. "Some may already have a child with special needs, and they are aware of the value those children bring to a home. They recognize that they are precious."

Bowles believes the Options of the Heart campaign will continue to raise the profile of adoption as a "viable, good, and positive loving choice to make."

LifeCanada is hoping to raise \$29,000 to get the project going.

Information about the campaign and how to donate is available at [www.gofundme.com/vjwads](http://www.gofundme.com/vjwads)

## Focus on healing rather than blame

Continued from page 1

Two staff members hired earlier this school year, 21-year-old teaching assistant Marie Janvier of La Loche and 35-year-old teacher Adam Wood of Uxbridge, Ont., were also killed.

Although Chatlain spoke of resisting the urge to place blame, he was not without criticism, particularly of an education system which cut funding for extra-curricular programs at the school over recent years.

"It is impossible to draw complete correlations but there is a need for the young people to have more support and programs," Chatlain said.

At a mass celebrated at Our Lady of the Visitation in La Loche, a largely Catholic town, Chatlain urged the congregation to focus on healing and support rather than placing blame.

"Anger is a very natural response," he said. "There are no easy words to make sense of this or take this pain away. There is need for great sympathy as the community tries to heal."

The Wood family expressed similar sentiments.

"It is in these moments, when tragedy strikes, that we are able to stop and consider life," reads the message from the Wood family. "We feel sadness and remorse but rarely do we use that to fuel change. (So) rather than looking for someone to blame or coming up with outside opinions of reasons why this occurred, we must stop and listen."

Chatlain travelled to La Loche, a northern community of fewer than 3,000, soon after hearing of the shooting.

"It is the church's role to accompany wherever there is suffering and storms," he said. "We have that responsibility to try to be present when there is the biggest need."

About 90 per cent of the residents of La Loche self-identify as Aboriginal. Unemployment is estimated to be about 22.3 per cent and about 38 per cent of homes are deemed unsuitable by the National Occupancy Standard. The town's suicide rate is three times the provincial average, according to a 2007-2008 health study.

Possible solutions to these issues were explored in a meeting following the mass. Among those who attended were First Nations

National Chief Perry Bellegarde, Federal Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale, a Saskatchewan MP, and Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall.

Wall said the province will help fund additional counselling services in the community as well as assist with costs for those travelling to be with the victims.

"You're going to need the supports and you will have them," said Wall. "You will not be walking through this alone. We just need to make sure (the resources are) not just there for the short-term but as long as necessary."

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau visited La Loche one week after the shootings, meeting with the injured, with family members of the dead, and with community leaders. He also had a town hall meeting with about 700 community residents.

"All Canadians mourn, continue to mourn, with the people of La Loche and the people of Saskatchewan," Trudeau said.

"We will and we must work together to address the deeper issues facing our country that have yet again been highlighted by tragedy and heartbreak one week ago."



Art Babych

**TRIBUTE TO MAURICE STRONG — Former governor general Adrienne Clarkson was among the Canadian and international political elite who paid tribute in Ottawa Jan. 27 to former public servant Maurice Strong, who died last November at the age of 86. Clarkson and her husband, author and philosopher John Ralston Saul, organized the celebration of Strong's life that included tributes from several speakers including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, former prime minister Paul Martin, and James Wolfensohn, former World Bank President. Strong was a key figure in establishing Canada's role in international aid and development. In a written tribute, former UN secretary general Kofi Annan called Strong the "father of the world environmental movement."**



# Homeless count aims to find solutions to problem

By Evan Boudreau  
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — York Region sent volunteers to canvass the streets and shelters to tally the homeless population as part of a federally funded initiative aimed at tackling homelessness nationwide.

About 100 volunteers set out Jan. 20 to spend 24 hours collecting the data. This is the first time for an initiative of this kind in York Region, one of 30 community-based counts to take place in Canada before the end of April. Other communities involved include Halifax, Victoria and Regina.

In addition to providing a snapshot of the homeless population and demographic in each community, the information will help provide a national outlook.

As the local partner of the federal government’s Homelessness Partnering Strategy, the United Way of Toronto & York Region oversaw the count and relayed the information to the federal government for analysis. A report is expected in the spring.

“Government and community partners are working together in collecting this information because we know it is a crucial foundation for making a real, sustainable impact to tackle homelessness in our communities,” said Pedro Barata, a United Way spokesperson.

Volunteers targeted emergency shelters, extreme weather shelters and transitional housing locations as well as the street seeking to record the existence of those who are sometimes forgotten. The hope is this information will help government and community agencies allocate aid more effectively by having a complete view of homelessness.

“Such information is critically needed since data on homelessness in Canada is limited and frayed,” said Rehana Sumar, executive director of the Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold program where volunteers were stationed during York Region’s homeless count. “We need comprehensive data in order to move toward a more coordinated systems approach to poverty reduction. If we don’t

know how many people are falling through the cracks, where they are and how they are falling through the cracks, we can’t effectively deal with the problem.”

Rehana said volunteers also sought information about income supports, access to housing and demographic data.

But accurately counting the homeless population is no easy task, said Dr. Stephen Hwang, a physician at Toronto’s St. Michael’s Hospital who has been researching homelessness for 25 years.

“The challenge relates to finding all the people who are homeless,” said Hwang. “It is also difficult to count people who are homeless in a uniform way across different types of community.”

The Government of Canada, which is funding the counts, said elements of the process are in place to combat this.

“When communities conduct counts in the same time of year using a common approach, the results can be used to build a better understanding of homelessness across communities in Canada,” reads the website for Employment and Social Development Canada, the arm of the federal government co-ordinating the initiative. “Core elements of the method have been standardized, leaving flexibility for communities to build on the approach, and adapt it to their local context.”

The uncertainty regarding the quality of the data being collected turned some major cities away. Calgary and Edmonton declined to participate, citing concerns over the quality of the data. Other cities such as Toronto, Vancouver and Ottawa aren’t counting their homeless at the moment but will provide the federal government with information collected during indepen-

dent research at a different time.

At the United Way Toronto & York Region, Barata acknowledges the limitations but still sees this initiative as a step in the right direction toward ending homelessness. His hope is that the results from the initial 30 participating communities will motivate others to carry on.

“Hopefully what will be happening more and more is that different regions and different communities across the country will increasingly take this up and we will begin to have a real cross-country picture,” he said. “It is a crucial foundation for making a real, sustainable impact to tackle homelessness in our communities.”



Art Babych

**DECISION A ‘COMPLETE VICTORY’** — The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) decision Jan. 26 that the federal government discriminates against First Nations children on reserves was a “complete victory” for children, says Cindy Blackstock (right), director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada. In 2007, Blackstock and the Assembly of First Nations filed a complaint with the CHRT against the government, arguing that Ottawa failed to provide First Nations children with the same level of welfare services available to other Canadians. The CHRT said the government has discriminated against First Nations children and families on reserve since the beginning of residential schools. It requires the federal government to work with parties to the case to identify a process for remedy, which includes returning to the CHRT in coming weeks for an order on remedies. It said the government must “cease the discriminatory practice and take measures to redress and prevent it.” But, Blackstock told reporters, “Why did we have to bring the government of Canada to court to get them to treat First Nations children fairly? Why would it ever be OK to give a child less than other children?” First Nations (AFN) National Chief Perry Bellegarde (left) said the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal decision was nine years in the making. “Today the kids win. Today the children are put first,” he said.

## Eastern diocese may be folded into Ottawa

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — A decision on the future of the Alexandria-Cornwall diocese and whether it will remain a separate entity or become part of the Ottawa archdiocese is expected to be resolved by June or July 2017, says Ottawa Archbishop Terrence Prendergast.

On Jan. 13, Pope Francis appointed Prendergast apostolic administrator of Alexandria-Cornwall after Bishop Marcel Damphousse’s move to the Sault Ste. Marie diocese.

Discussions concerning Alexandria-Cornwall’s future predated Prendergast’s 2007 arrival in Ottawa. The apostolic nuncio to Canada at the time, Archbishop Luigi Ventura, informed him his predecessor, Ottawa Archbishop Marcel Gervais, and then-Alexandria-Cornwall Bishop Paul-André Durocher, had already been in discussions about the possibility.

Prendergast said he did not think any more of it at the time, so the matter rested until Durocher was reassigned to Gatineau and the next nuncio, Archbishop Pedro Lopez Quintana, brought it up again.

“At the time, I didn’t have the energy or the resources,” Prendergast said.

Ottawa now has an auxiliary

bishop in Bishop Christian Riesbeck. With Damphousse’s move, current nuncio Archbishop Luigi Bonazzi told Prendergast: “We need to talk about the future of Alexandria-Cornwall.”

“It’s been one of those files on the backburner,” Prendergast said. “Now is the time for us to look at whether the future of the diocese should be with another bishop or in a co-operative arrangement with another diocese.”

When serving as Halifax archbishop, Prendergast acted as apostolic administrator for the Yarmouth diocese for five-and-a-half years. Two other apostolic administrators were named until it was folded into Halifax in 2009. Such a waiting period was too long, the archbishop said. He said he requested the decision about Alexandria-Cornwall be resolved in a quicker manner.

Alexandria-Cornwall is a suffragan diocese of the Kingston archdiocese, but it abuts the Ottawa archdiocese, with many Ottawa parishes along Highway 417 to Montreal close to Alexandria-Cornwall parishes, the archbishop said. It’s also a bilingual diocese, as is Ottawa, while Kingston is not.

“One of the main reasons for leaning more toward Ottawa is for the protection of the French

language,” Prendergast said.

Any new bishop of the diocese has to be functionally bilingual, he said, and “It’s a challenge for the nuncio to find bilingual priests” who can serve as bishops.

Another reason is the “tendency of many people in Cornwall to look to Ottawa for hospitals, shopping and work,” he said.

Prendergast has already met with the priests of the diocese’s College of Consultors twice. One of the priests told him it would be “a real loss not to have a bishop living with us.”

“We also have the issue these days of efficiency and sharing of resources,” Prendergast said.

Alexandria-Cornwall tends to be static in terms of population and finances and its resources are diminishing. While Ottawa faces similar challenges, it does have areas of growth.

Alexandria-Cornwall has 26 parishes and missions serving a Catholic population of 55,675 with 26 priests, one religious priest, 25 religious men and women and 17 permanent deacons. It is also one of the smallest dioceses in terms of geographical size. While small dioceses can offer a new bishop the chance to be tested and formed, having a bishop only for a short time creates instability, Prendergast said.

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Sarah Donnelly. Sat., Feb. 13, 9:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. Cost: \$35, includes lunch.

**Spiritual Formation Day: Prayer and Discernment**  
Bishop Gerry Wiesner, OMI. Sat., Feb. 13, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
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**Did You Ever Wonder? Common Witness Project of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada**  
Marie-Louise Ternier-Gommers. Wed. evenings, Feb. 17, 24, March 2, 9, 16, 7 p.m. - 9 p.m. Cost: \$10/session or \$45/series. **\*Please note: this series is being offered at St. Andrew’s Anglican Church in Humboldt.**

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**Living a Life Without Resentment: An Ecumenical Lenten Retreat.** Sarah Donnelly.  
Sat., March 12, 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Cost: \$55/lunch \$45 bring your own lunch.

**Exploring a Non-Violent God: An Ecumenical Lenten Retreat.** Sarah Donnelly.  
Sat., March 19, 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Cost: \$55/lunch, \$45 bring your own lunch

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# De Margerie lecture series features Anglican bishop

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — Anglican Bishop Kenneth Kearon used the image of constructing a barn to reflect on the ecumenical movement during this year's De Margerie Series on Christian Reconciliation and Unity, held in conjunction with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Saskatoon.

In addition to a public lecture, On Building an Ecumenical Barn, held at St. Thomas More College Jan. 21, the 2016 De Margerie series also included two workshops, one for clergy and ministry leaders Jan. 22 and another on Jan. 23 for the general public, entitled Being Church in the World Today.

Dr. Terry Downey, president of St. Thomas More College, opened the public lecture at STM with words of welcome. Held in conjunction with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the De Margerie series is jointly sponsored by STM, the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism, and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon. This year's lecture was available for the first time on live-streamed video (and is now posted on the diocese's YouTube channel).

Nicholas Jesson, ecumenical officer for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, noted that the De Margerie series is named for local ecumenical pioneer, Rev. Bernard de Margerie, one of the founders of the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism in Saskatoon and its first director. De Margerie is also the author of In God's Reconciling Grace, a book of prayers about Christian unity, reflecting his conviction that prayer and conversion must be at the heart of the ecumenical movement.

Bishop Donald Bolen of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon introduced Kearon, who was named the Anglican bishop of Limerick and Killaloe in Ireland a year ago. Previously Kearon served as director of the

Irish School of Ecumenics at Trinity College in Dublin and as Secretary General of the Anglican communion, during a period of reflection and some tension in global Anglicanism about the nature of communion and interdependence.

During his time with the Anglican Communion Office, Kearon met and worked with then-Msgr. Donald Bolen, who was on staff with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in Rome, and focusing on Anglican-Roman Catholic and Methodist-Roman Catholic relations.

"It was great to be a colleague of Kenneth during those years — trying years, but adventurous years," said Bolen. He also noted another connection: Bolen and Kearon wear identical Second Vatican Council episcopal rings.

Kearon expressed appreciation for Bolen's gifts of friendship and hospitality, saying "that was what rooted our relationship in that difficult time" and adding that the ecumenical dialogue is not merely a formal process, but is rooted in relationship.

Kearon wove together his own life experiences with the larger picture of striving for Christian unity in his lecture entitled On Building an Ecumenical Barn, in which he compared the ecumenical movement to a structure that is in use even as it is being built, with different levels of renovation, repair, construction, occupancy and use, all happening at the same time.

This barn in which the community of faith inhabits "was started in the first century AD and expanded over the centuries as numbers grew, and it was embellished as necessary by creeds and ecumenical councils," he said.

"The first major damage to that barn occurred about 1,000 years ago in the division between East and West, and there was, even further, major damage in the 16th and 17th centuries, in the



K. Yaworski

**DE MARGERIE LECTURE — From left: Dr. Terry Downey, president of St. Thomas More College, Rev. Bernard de Margerie of Saskatoon, Anglican Bishop Kenneth Kearon of Ireland and Bishop Don Bolen of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.**

period we call the Reformation. Since then, different groupings have continued to live in their separate damaged sections of the barn, with little contact with others until the early part of the 20th century, when first a limited number of communities began to discuss the concept of repairing the barn. And some other communities joined in at later stages, until formally, most of the communities living in the various parts of the disjointed and damaged barn are now working together on the work of restoration."

He continued: "At the start, work had to begin on the basic structural beams which were broken in the original damage. These beams are the main theological issues, which failed to hold the church together in times of challenge and crisis, and these major beams have been the subject matter of the various bilateral and multilateral dialogues of recent years.

"In this metaphorical barn, even though many of the beams

have not yet been repaired or replaced, many of the communities are already moving back in and beginning to use the barn again, even though the main structure has not yet been secured," he said. "Despite the fact that there are still huge gaps in the roof, we are beginning to move back in and use the barn."

Kearon noted that this analogy helps him to understand recent positive interest in Evangelical and Pentecostal circles about the ecumenical movement. "It's as though they are saying, 'Hey, wait a minute, what's going on? No one asked us, and actually when you do ask us, we're not sure that we really like the design you've been working on. It doesn't suit us.'"

Throughout his address, Kearon identified ecumenical phases through history and in his own life. He described how the Irish School of Ecumenics originally sought to serve the churches by being a critical friend, "studying the flaws and weaknesses of the churches, which kept the churches apart."

By the time Kearon became director, the school had developed a more nuanced vision, he said. "The ecumenical movement exists in order that the world may believe, and making the churches one is a step on that path. The Gospel of reconciliation means the breaking down of all divisions wherever they occur — divisions of gender, of race, of politics, of economic inequality, and so on."

He stressed: "Churches cannot preach this message of reconciliation in a divided world if they themselves are divided. That is why ecumenism is central."

Kearon described being appointed to the Anglican communion office in 2005, just before the Windsor Report was published, at a difficult time for Anglicanism.

"The issue of same-sex relationships had been on the agenda of the Anglican communion since 1978, but was not being addressed. During the 1990s it became a major social issue in many western countries, and negative reactions to such engagement became more vocal in other

countries, especially, but not exclusively, in Africa," he said. "This was reflected in our churches in these countries, and this came to a head at the Lambeth Conference of 1998, where a resolution restating traditional values on marriage was passed. The status of that resolution has been contested. In 2002 and 2003 the Diocese of New Westminster in Canada authorized public rites of same-sex blessing and in the United States the Diocese of New Hampshire selected Gene Robinson as bishop — a person in a same-sex relationship."

The Windsor Report was commissioned after those events — "not to address the question of same-sex relationships, but to examine ways in which the unity of the communion could be maintained in situations of division," Kearon explained.

This internal Anglican division also had an effect on ecumenical relationships with other denominations, he noted. "However, the ecumenical conversations themselves were also at a point of change."

Reception of the progress that has been made through ecumenical dialogues is now the issue, Kearon said. Beyond the formal reception of the work of ecumenical dialogues is the more important "reception by use," he said. "Ecumenical dialogue is increasingly the way we do our modern ecclesiology across the denominations."

Ecumenical "agreed texts" on matters that had divided Christians for centuries have transformed inter-church relations, he said.

Ecumenical dialogue begins with conversations about doctrinal issues, but a second phase is to begin asking at the same time, "What's the purpose of all this dialogue, do we have a vision of what the end result would look like, and why can't we just get on with it?"

Kearon suggested the next phase may include considering the internal question of how the emerging, ecumenical-oriented



Tim Yaworski

**CEILIDH — Highland dancers were part of the entertainment at a Week of Prayer for Christian Unity social evening held in Saskatoon Jan. 22. The ecumenical Ceilidh — a Celtic celebration of unity — included music by the Celtic band Back of the Bus, Irish dance, and First Nations jingle dress and fancy dress performances by the Oskayak Dance Troupe from St. Mary's Education and Wellness Centre. Some 250 turned out for the event held at the Cathedral of the Holy Family.**



# School the point of contact for home and parish

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — A changing church and a changing society requires that Catholic schools and Catholic parishes work together to preserve and grow Catholic education. That was the premise of a Jan. 28 presentation by Rev. James T. Mulligan, a Holy Cross priest from Welland, Ont., and author of several books on Catholic education. It was a morning exercise with the cafeteria at Miller High School offering a variety of fruits, muffins, coffee and tea for breakfast.

Declining attendance in church, fewer church marriages, funerals, baptisms and confirmations, young people not contributing to church coffers, children with parents in different relation-

ships, were all cited by Mulligan as making it difficult for teachers “to connect with their baptism and baptismal priesthood.” The number of “imported” priests who have language difficulties and who may not understand the culture also makes things difficult. Society, too, is changing, with new and often addictive technology. “Distractions that are way too much for our story to be told,” said Mulligan. “The picture should disturb us.” But, he said, “Pope Francis’ the Joy of the Gospel is the road map for Catholic education.”

He quoted Francis: “We are called to be in the middle of things as they are and not as we would like them to be.” People are not coming to us, Mulligan continued,

“we must go to them and school is where it comes together.”

He outlined his own experience with schools in Welland and his home parish of St. Kevin. He also referred to several passages in his most recent book *A Pastor’s Journal: Catholic Parishes and Schools Working Together*, which attendees had received as part of the presentation. It chronicles a year of activities in which school and church worked together celebrating Catholic holy days with special services and ceremonies.

They produced what he called the Green Binder to which everyone refers when planning for an activity, ceremony, or service. “School is the point of contact for home and parish. School and

parish have to work together,” said Mulligan. Parishes need to encourage teachers, he said. “Teaching is increasingly difficult. Remind teachers their teaching is an extension of their baptismal vocation.”

Catholic schools, said Mulligan, are marked by hospitality and compassion. The parish is a resource for teachers for theological and catechetical information. “The parish is the centre of the

church because of the eucharist,” said Mulligan. “Sunday eucharist is necessary for teachers,” and they need to be visible in church ministries, he said.

Following his presentation, participants engaged in table discussions prior to a question period. There were no questions asked but several priests spoke briefly about how they and their parishes interacted with their associated schools, teachers and students.

## Saskatoon reaches out to people of La Loche

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — In the days following the shooting at La Loche Community School in northern Saskatchewan, Saskatoon-area response has included expressions of support, prayers and fundraising initiatives.

Bishop Donald Bolen of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon sent a message to parishes across the diocese, inviting their prayers for the people of La Loche after the event, which left four dead and seven injured, with a 17-year-old in police custody.

The bishop also said that donations to meet the needs of the community and families affected by the shooting can be made through parishes in the Diocese of Saskatoon, with funds to be forwarded to the Archdiocese of Keewatin Le-Pas for Archbishop Murray Chatlain to distribute where the need is greatest.

Other community fundraising initiatives have also been launched. Andréa Ledding of Saskatoon has set up an account at the Sutherland SARCAN recy-

cling depot (350B-103rd Street E, Saskatoon) where donations of cash and/or bottle returns can be directed to La Loche families and community support. Efforts are underway to expand the idea to other recycling depots, including Prince Albert and La Ronge.

“There are seven families with people in critical or other conditions at Royal University Hospital, many who had only the clothes on their back when they came down, and have needed places to stay in the city,” Ledding noted.

St. John Anglican Cathedral organized a prayer service Feb. 2 to pray for the people of La Loche. “The purpose of the service is to offer an opportunity for the people of our city to show their support and solidarity to the people of La Loche in their time of sorrow, grief and loss,” said Rev. Scott Pittendrigh, rector and dean of the Anglican cathedral. Representatives from the ecumenical community, multifait groups, indigenous and civic leaders were invited to participate in the service.



K. Yaworski

**SHARE LENT PREPARATION** — Armella Sonntag, provincial animator for Development and Peace (right), recently facilitated workshops in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon to assist parishes in preparing for this year’s Share Lent campaign of awareness and support for the work that Development and Peace is doing with partners around the world. This year’s theme is Create a Climate of Change. Materials, resources, themes and ideas were shared during the gatherings held Jan. 24 in Bruno, Sask., and Jan. 26 at St. Philip Neri in Saskatoon. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 10.

## Encyclical contains ecumenical implications

Continued from page 1

much of the publicity around the document focused on its implications for addressing global climate change. However, according to Hryn timer, “the encyclical’s scope is much wider than a single environmental issue and offers an integral framework for transformative responses to several contemporary challenges, including that of climate change, but also violence.

“*Laudato Si’* is the first encyclical addressed to everybody (not only Catholics),” and it contains several important ecumenical implications, Hryn timer said. In the encyclical Francis mentions

Islam and refers by name to the former Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams and the leader of the Eastern Orthodox Church, Bartholomew I, “with whom,” Francis writes, “we share the hope for full union.”

Hryn timer writes that in *Laudato Si’* Francis “emphasizes that dominant techno-economic cultural models encourage the adoption of unsustainable ways of being in the world. As a result of their hyper-consumerist character, they also reinforce what Francis names as ‘an economy of exclusion and inequality’ because they are obtainable by only a small percentage of the world’s popula-

tion. For example, to cite a fact commonly named by ecological activists, if every person on the planet consumed at the same level as the U.S. national average, it would take the resources of five planets to maintain that standard of living.”

Hryn timer said Francis’ first encyclical, *Evangelii Gaudium*, and *Laudato Si’* are two documents of Catholic social teaching containing ideas that are “wonderful but not always effectively used in the life of the church.”

Hryn timer suggested that the documents be read “through a transformative lens. What would it mean if the words of Francis were applied to the life of the church? There is something that needs to change in terms of the structure.



K. Yaworski

**FUNDS FOR REFUGEES** — Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Saskatoon recently held a chili supper to raise funds for the parish refugee committee, in an evening that included draws, prizes, entertainment and information about sponsorship and the situation facing refugees. Speakers included (from left) parishioners Mesmer Mesmer and Kiyara and Henok Tesfamikael, who came to Canada as refugees from Eritrea. Refugee sponsorship in the Diocese of Saskatoon is coordinated through the diocesan Office of Migration, which has been busy in recent months as concerned parishes, groups and individuals have responded to the refugee crisis.

## Driving force is from laity

Continued from page 6

church relates to that part of the church which is not ecumenically committed. There is also an external question of “how the emerging, ecumenically oriented church sits with the rest of the whole created order, including humanity.” This includes matters related to the environment, as well as the economic and political order, secularism, interfaith questions, and “questions posed by fundamentalisms, both religious

and political,” he listed.

Kearon observed that in his experience as a bishop in rural Ireland, ecumenism is now a dimension of community life, and not primarily of church life. The driving force seems to come from the laity, rather than from church leadership.

“Seldom does an ecumenical event have its origins in decisions by clergy,” he noted. “The ecumenical initiative and the faith dimension of a community event is being devised by lay people.”

“Francis is transformative in his approach,” Hryn timer said. “He is so pastoral, he invites people in. How he is being received is evident and that changes hearts. It’s a moment of change that calls us to ecological transformation.”

Hryn timer, who is originally from Winnipeg and is a St. Paul’s College alumnus, believes banning fossil fuels goes far beyond the Vatican as he and colleagues at St. Thomas More College are working to have that institution do the same.



# Book-CD package a creative blend of word and music

Firmly grounded in the work of singer-songwriter Steve Bell, this book-CD package is truly a multi-modal feast, catering to the head, heart, and body. In words and music, it serves well as a 25-year retrospective of Bell's creative work based on 17 selections from the book of Psalms. In each chapter, the reader is able to read a particular Psalm (from the 16th-century translations by Coverdale), Howison's brief homily, Bell's



Ebonie Klassen Photography  
Steve Bell

song lyrics and a heart-felt sharing of how it came to be written. Switching to listening mode, one

shape of its container. Matties goes on to emphasize the spiritual travail that underlies Bell's writ-

**I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN:** A Songwriter's Journey Through the Psalms by Jamie Howison and Steve Bell. Winnipeg: Signpost Music, 2015. Paperback and music CD, \$29.99 (Signpost Music); 133 pages. Reviewed by Edwin Buettner and Cheryl Ferguson.

has access to Bell's recording of his rendering of the Psalm.

This collection highlights some important dynamics of the spiritual life; it is a kind of *lectio divina* in which a scriptural text is mined in order to seek meaning and guidance for the particularities of one's life. Both authors freely share how the Psalms have been a source of comfort, challenge, and practical guidance as they have worked through the opportunities for growth that life offers. In the book's introduction, Professor Gordon Matties of the Canadian Mennonite University observes: "... these songs are ... engaged 'readings' — vulnerable meditations on how the Psalms *have read Steve Bell*" (emphasis added). These ancient prayers have endured because they are able to show the sincere seeker how God is working in his or her life, much as a liquid takes on the

ing: "... the songs reflect a journey into and out of the Psalms."

Howison's commentaries often emphasize the essential "truthfulness" of the Psalms — how they "pull no punches" about the nature of life and humanity's responses to its capriciousness. While many of these canticles offer consolation, others paint a rather harsh picture of the ultimate futility of human strivings. Yes, there is exaltation and joy in some Psalms, but in others there are cries for murderous vengeance on enemies. The Psalms invite the pray-er to come to God in naked honesty: "The God met in the Psalms can cope with everything we can possibly say or feel or fear." Despite the universal experience of feelings of abandonment and despair in life's journey, in its wholeness the Book of Psalms is an expression of ultimate trust and hope in a

loving God: "Having known rescue and reorientation, faithful singers can balance an expression of trust with a plea for continued love and mercy, and find no contradiction."

Bell's music attracts a wide variety of people from many backgrounds. His music's popularity can be attributed to a combination of stylistic considerations, instrumentation, and accessibility to those with limited music education. It may well be that the broad appeal of Bell's music is due not to complexity, but rather to its simplicity. The clear melodies with accessible harmonies are easily appreciated, drawing listeners into the wisdom of the Word, enhanced and beautified by fine musical artistry. Bell's arrangements maintain the Psalms' laments and exultations; he very capably retains the original poetic lyricism of the Psalms as it is recast into a more familiar musical idiom.

Though some music critics might argue that Bell's representation of the Psalms is predictable and musically unsophisticated, therein lies this collection's strength. As the music is generally within the folk genre, it is easily understood and passed on. Folk tunes may be defined as a set of simple tunes



Bramwell Ryan/dispatches.ca

Jamie Howison

passed through generations by a cultural group or community in order to preserve the thoughts, stories, and perspectives of a people. Bell's renderings are folk tunes of the Christian people; each time a parent sings Bell's song to their children, or churches use them as congregational hymns, the message of the Psalms is kept alive among Christian communities.

— BELL, page 13

## It's never comfortable to call out worst aspects of ourselves and our culture

By Caitlin Ward

Right after an event happens is possibly not the best time to use that event to make some sort of larger political statement, and that's probably more true when someone dies. There have been many significant cultural figures who've died in the last little while, and I've been watching and wondering about how we discuss them. There have been many eulogies and conversations around each, ranging from praise to censure to humour, and sometimes a combination of all three.

### God Bless the Child Billie Holiday

It's something I struggle with myself, especially when it concerns people who are all at once symbols and human beings. In my last column, I said I wasn't sure how I was supposed to feel about David Bowie, and that feeling has not yet gone away. On the one hand, he was a thoughtful and intelligent man who had interesting ideas and created a persona early in his career that made people feel more comfortable to be themselves. On the other hand, he was one of many male musicians in the 1970s who got away with doing wildly inappropriate and damaging things by virtue of the fact that he was a male musician and it was the 1970s. The trouble

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is, one does not discount the other. He was both of those things, and that's something we all have to hold in tension.

The thing I find interesting about it, though, is how much more time I spent talking about how good he was than how bad he was. I dropped a not-insubstantial criticism into an article that was mostly about praising him. I didn't think it appropriate to roundly criticize his behaviour when he had so recently passed.

Now, Alan Rickman's death — that one was a little less complicated to navigate when it happened. Unlike the morally complex David Bowie, Alan Rickman was by all accounts a humble, talented and funny man who was devoted to his partner of 50 years, former Labour councillor Rima Horton. So we can just be sad about his passing and not worry about how we're supposed to feel about it *too* much.

That said, when it comes to someone of cultural import dying, be it Alan Rickman or David Bowie or anyone else, we have to remember that they are at once cultural symbols *and* human beings. You may think I wrote that back to front because I emphasized symbolism rather than personhood, but rest assured, I did not. It is, again, something that must be held in tension.

When famed English musician and Marxist pot-stirrer Billy Bragg talked about the deaths of these two men, for example, he was quick to point out: "It's not only the timing of his death and the fact that he too was 69 that links (Rickman) to David Bowie. Both were working-class kids from council estates who went to art school where they gained enough confidence in their own

creativity that they were able to go on to find fame and fortune. Is it still possible for working class kids to realize their potential in such a way? The art schools are almost gone, those that survive now charge a fortune. The social mobility that Rickman and Bowie experienced is increasingly stifled."

He wrote that the day of Rickman's death. He was not shouted down, as some were when Bowie was criticized upon his death. That's probably partly because the statement was not an indictment of either man's character, but rather expressed concern about the current social and economic climate in Britain. My first reaction to it was irritation, though, as I thought it was inappropriate to use someone's death as a clumsy segue to talking about class politics. My second reaction, though, was that he's not wrong. Statistics and anecdotes alike bear out the fact that a good education is key to lifting oneself or one's community out of poverty, and demographics bear out that across the western world, access to education is diminishing. With rising costs of living, prohibitively expensive tuition and an ever-increasing gap between have and have-not, we're reverting to an older time when only the wealthy can pursue higher education. And as a result, it's becoming harder and harder for anyone to get ahead. Billie Holiday said, "God bless the child that's got his own," but hard work only takes you so far when people keep slamming doors shut in your face.

The truly frustrating thing about this is that by and large it's the people who had access to free (or at least, affordable) higher education in the 1970s and 1980s

who are putting the screws to my generation and the generation below mine. I am staggered by the lack of empathy on many of their parts. Equally, I'm staggered by the lack of foresight. Creating disenfranchised underclasses has rarely worked in favour of elites in the long term.

Talking about all of this abstractly, though, doesn't necessarily mean that much. It's when we tie things to individuals that they become real. Perhaps upon their deaths, talking about Bowie and Rickman as now-improbable success stories is the best way to really draw attention to these issues.

When we talk about a man's clay feet, though, can we draw the same conclusion? Is Bowie's death the right time to talk about statutory rape? The fact of the matter is that we forgive important men for what they do to women, or we ignore it, or we deny it happened. All of those things facilitate the kind of behaviour that some criticized in Bowie upon his death, and that sort of behaviour is probably not going to stop unless we take steps to change our culture. Yet, upon Bowie's death, many said it was not the time to bring those things up. It was inappropriate. I myself thought it was inappropriate to get into it too much.

I have said "inappropriate" so very many times today. It's a non-specific sort of censure saying you're doing something wrong, and you should stop. It's a word that comes up a lot. I've noticed, when someone's pointing out an uncomfortable truth no one wants to discuss. "It's not the right time," we say, or we think. It's probably never the appropriate time. It's never comfortable to call out the worst aspects of ourselves and our culture. But if we're honest, it's inappropriate *not* to.

Them that's got shall have  
Them that's not shall lose  
So the Bible said and it still is news  
Mama may have, Papa may have  
But God bless the child that's got his own  
That's got his own

Yes, the strong gets more  
While the weak ones fade  
Empty pockets don't ever make the grade  
Mama may have, Papa may have  
But God bless the child that's got his own  
That's got his own

Money, you've got lots of friends  
Crowding round the door  
When you're gone, spending ends  
They don't come no more  
Rich relations give  
Crust of bread and such  
You can help yourself  
But don't take too much  
Mama may have, Papa may have  
But God bless the child that's got his own  
That's got his own

Mama may have, Papa may have  
But God bless the child that's got his own  
That's got his own

He just don't worry 'bout nothin'  
'Cause he's got his own



# The Francis difference and the future of the church

## Readings & Meanings

Gerald Schmitz



The last sentence of this penetrating volume by veteran Vatican reporter Marco Politi quotes Buenos Aires Archbishop Jorge Bergoglio addressing his fellow cardinals just a few days before the conclave that elected him pope in March 2013: *“I have the impression that Jesus has been shut up inside the church and that he is knocking because he wants to get out.”*

They can’t say they weren’t warned!

As pope, Francis has certainly lived up to the expectations of both those who hope for change and those who fear it. As he affirmed in an October 2014 homily at the beatification of his Vatican II predecessor Paul VI: “God is not afraid of new things! That is why he is continually surprising us, opening our hearts,

priests: “The church is not meant to control people, but to accompany them where they live.”

Pope Benedict XVI must be credited with the unprecedented voluntary resignation that cleared the way for a first Jesuit pope taking a name after St. Francis of Assisi. This epochal decision proved to be a transformational moment that marked a departure from the trappings of papal power and doctrinal defensiveness. Bergoglio was not unknown to the cardinals, having placed second to cardinal Ratzinger in the previous conclave. By making him their overwhelming choice despite his age (78), they signalled change and, above all, a desire for a strong administrator to clean up the Vatican bureaucracy, riddled by curial clericalism and careerism, shaken by the “Vatileaks” revela-

From the first there were, of course, those perturbed by the winds of reform and accountability upsetting the established order. Politi gives a blow-by-blow account of the continuing fallout. At the same time he also shows how effectively Pope Francis has disarmed his critics with his gift of plain speaking, his appeal for a “church of the poor,” his pastoral approach of being a servant and sinner not a “pontiff emperor.” As a genuine people person, he has ensured that he would not be isolated or cut off from ordinary concerns. The book is full of telling observations and anecdotes. For example, his favourite movie is the wonderful *Babette’s Feast* (1987) in which an exiled Parisian introduces dour Danish villagers to a banquet of delights that becomes a spiritual as well as sensory awakening. “Bergoglio believes in the joy of giving and in a faith as a life of happiness under the sign of the Gospel, not tormented by visions of God as policeman.”

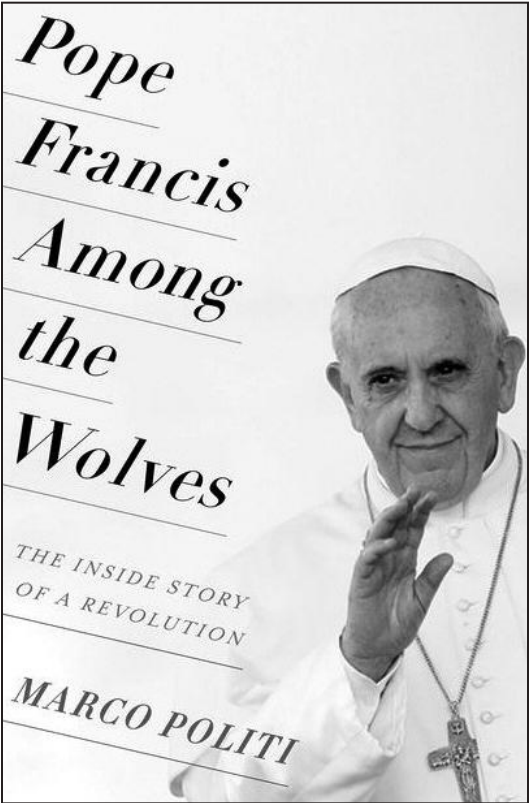
That said, never mistake his personal warmth and humble simplicity for naïveté. Francis is fully aware of the challenges he is up against. He has shown steadfast determination in making reform appointments, restructuring the Curia and other Vatican offices, and in advancing consultative conciliarism within the church through the synod of bishops. As Politi observes: “Francis is more than a charismatic figure; he is a political actor.”

Europe. Politi devotes a chapter to “hidden women priests” — women who are leading parish communities, performing the liturgy of the Word and other functions except for the consecration of the host. “To face up fully to the role of women in the church constitutes a ford in the stream that the Bergoglio pontificate must cross. The ecclesiastical structure built around the dominance of the male clergy is gradually breaking apart.”

An important factor in appreciating Pope Francis’ open-minded outlook is his own strong self-critique based on his experience in Argentina. He has made frank admissions that as the superior of the Jesuits he was authoritarian and made many mistakes. Politi deals extensively with the period of the Videla military dictatorship during which some activist priests were the targets of violent repression. Unlike some in the Argentine hierarchy, Bergoglio was never complicit with the regime. On the contrary, there is much evidence of how he protected and saved many. Later he was president of the Argentine Episcopal Conference when it issued a 2006 declaration of repentance for the church’s failings during that dark time. It’s true that Bergoglio did not share the radical political analysis of some “liberation theology.” (On a personal note, I visited Argentina in 1977, at the height of the “dirty war,” while doing doctoral research on this Latin American theological movement.) Nevertheless, the spirit of liberation theology, especially its option for the poor, can be seen in the profound socio-economic and environmental critiques that he has delivered as pope.

present rather than being trapped in a reactionary posture.

As much as Francis has attracted worldwide admiration, he has made enemies within. “The ill will in the corridors of the Roman Curia began on the evening of the election. . . . Bergoglio upset too many conventional expectations. . . . Francis’s language is irritating and scary to the ultratraditionalist sectors of the curia. . . . He unsettles them deeply because rather than



POPE FRANCIS AMONG THE WOLVES:  
The Inside Story of a Revolution  
By Marco Politi  
Translated by William McCuaig  
(New York, Columbia University Press, 2015)

and guiding us in unexpected ways.” (Cited in Robert Draper: “Will the Pope Change the Vatican? Or Will the Vatican Change the Pope?” National Geographic, August 2015.)

Where is Pope Francis intent on taking the Catholic Church? There is no better guide to that question than Politi. In a lengthy conversation at the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, recorded at the time of the September 2015 papal visit to the United States (watch it at: [www.carnegiecouncil.org](http://www.carnegiecouncil.org)), Politi observed that “This pope wants to reshape the papacy” and to advance a “program for revolution in the church.” But, as importantly, he doesn’t come with a set of doctrinal or ideological prescriptions to impose. Rather, his agenda is for a church that excludes no one from its works of mercy, a humble church that listens and “speaks to men and women as they are in contemporary society.” At the same time, in that overture he faces some formidable and entrenched resistance.

The 16 chapters of Politi’s book provide a richly detailed examination of the “Bergoglio difference” and its challenges, starting with his experience as head of a large cosmopolitan diocese on a non-European continent in which he immersed himself in the social conditions of the most marginalized. Humbly and courageously he truly lived the “preferential option for the poor” as a spiritual imperative. He would regularly visit the most crime-ridden violent shantytowns. He would say that the shepherds must “have the same smell as their sheep.” He would tell his

tions, the scandals of sexual abuse of minors, hierarchical coverups, and the dubious dealings of the Vatican bank.

The financial shenanigans, including money-laundering and other forms of corruption, are dealt with extensively in chapter 12. Elsewhere Politi reports on the new pope’s crackdown on episcopal extravagance and other misdeeds. In 2014 Francis directed papal authorities to take the unprecedented step of arresting and prosecuting the former Dominican Republic archbishop and nuncio on charges of sexual abuse and possession of child pornography. “In the Vatican, the shock was enormous.”

The pope knows that some conservatives and traditionalists will oppose, whether through private or public mutterings, his outreach to the world that encourages respectful dialogue with others including non-believers in the search for truth — understood as a relationship involving personal conscience, not as an absolute exclusive possession.

Within the church family, Francis has promoted a larger role for women, though stopping well short of the controversial question of women’s ordination. Nonetheless, given the shortage of priests and vocations, change is happening at the parish level in parts of

stay within the bounds of pious exhortation, he points in direct language to where the rot is.” There has been a growing conservative Catholic backlash including on social media. One website accused him of “populism, pauperism, and demagoguery.”

The pope who welcomes a God of surprises is not welcomed by insiders who do not wish him well because he threatens their certitudes and positions. “The most cunning enemies of Francis’ reform policies are nestled in the Vatican undergrowth among those accustomed to traffic with wheeler-dealers of various kinds.” Politi calls some of them “rapacious wolves.” He quotes Cardinal Roger Etchegaray: “I pray for the pope because one of these days, when the honeymoon is over and decision time arrives, they’ll try to back him up against the wall.” Politi observes that sectors of the Italian episcopate aligned with the political right have been “left dazed” by the pope’s program of reform that is opening windows of change within the church in order to respond to the lived experience of its members.

So far Francis has not been deterred from an approach that seeks pastoral solutions over doctrinal rigidity. This is apparent in the ongoing discussion of sensitive matters pertaining to the family and sexual morality, or on the vexed question of communion for divorced and remarried Catholics. The pope is not discarding fundamental church teachings. He is, through the deliberations of synods of bishops and the circulation of questionnaires to the laity, opening up a space for faithful



THE FRANCIS DIFFERENCE — Pope Francis appears on the central balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica for the first time after his election at the Vatican March 13, 2013. Pope Francis’ agenda is for a church that excludes no one from its works of mercy, a humble church that listens and “speaks to men and women as they are in contemporary society.” At the same time, in that overture he faces some formidable and entrenched resistance, according to Marco Politi, the author of a new book.

CNS/Paul Haring



# God’s ‘Lego blocks’ the stuff of our very lives



I have a nephew fresh out of high school whom I call a “master-builder.” The reason for this title is that since he was very young he could build anything using Lego blocks. What is so genius about this is his gift to take what once was a Lego kit designated to be a “pirate ship” and he could use these pieces for a completely different purpose in building a sophisticated castle or a rocket ship or anything his imagination could conjure up. I admire my nephew for his gift to translate an “idea” in his mind into something concrete using Lego!

It dawned on me that God does the very same thing. Our God is a master-builder, a planner, a designer, and God’s “Lego blocks” are the stuff of our very lives. The purpose and intentions of our life seem to often go astray, or at least in a direction that was unexpected. If we were to remember the plans we made for our lives, the choices we made and the goals we sought, and then compare this with what actually happened along the way, we would have to agree that many “surprises” took us in a different direction or caused us to radically change course.

Many people think God has a “holy blue print” designed for each of us, and our task is to pray hard enough, do enough penance, and surrender more completely so the day will come when we can truly see this “blue print” and obediently follow it. But what happens as we move forward? Life happens! Health issues arise, people we love and care for die. We lose our job or face diffi-

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cult financial pressures. Others we have trusted betray us. We may be tempted to despair that God even attends to our situation at all.

It is often through these dark times that we are asked to walk in trust that God walks with us, near us, and, through our broken dreams, God builds a new plan. Hearing our crying out, God gets creative and designs with us a new life! That is why we can pray with the Psalmist today: “Be with me Lord when I am in trouble, be with me Lord, I pray.”

On a personal note, the poignant irony of this Psalm is that a friend who taught me to sing it many years ago has just lost a six-year-old daughter to cancer. You want to know that my friend sings this Psalm with a depth of suffering few of us reach.

A deeper question is always asked by one with a broken heart: “Where is God in all of this tragedy and pain?” St. Paul answers this as a person whose plans were constantly altered by life and who endured tremendous suffering. In the second reading this Sunday we will hear Paul proclaim to the Romans: “The Word is near you, on your lips, in your heart.”

First Sunday of Lent	Deuteronomy 26:4-10 Psalm 91 Romans 10:8-13 Luke 4:1-13
February 14, 2016	

God is close. This is where our identity lies as Christians, in a God who is close to us. This is why the first reading from Deuteronomy is all about identifying God’s actions in both our personal and corporate history. “A wandering Aramean was my father.” It is the recounting of the story of God’s closeness to the People of Israel through their slavery in Egypt, their rush to freedom and the blessing of a land they can call home. This is a mark on the heart of a believer of what the promise of God is all about: “I will be with you . . . even in the hard times.”



God is the “master-builder.”

It is with this special backdrop in mind that our Gospel story of Jesus in the desert with the devil unfolds. All of the promises of the devil are meant to supplant the deeper promise of God, promises of bread from stones, worldly kingdoms as a reward for worshipping the devil, challenging God to rescue him by throwing himself off a cliff.

All of this is tempting when you are hungry, alone, feeling powerless and about to embark on a dangerous mission. Jesus hangs onto the promise of his Father, that he would stay near even through his suffering. It was from this desert that Jesus breaks into a public ministry with all the resolve of a son who knows his father’s promise.

We have begun a 40-day journey to Holy Week. We are asked to take the time to ponder our identity, as People of the Promise. We are asked to face with humble honesty the hurts in our life, both caused by others and those we have inflicted. However, on a deeper level, we are asked to see the hand of God that has delivered us from our slaveries, our attraction to power, and our tight-fisted holding of resentments. It is the divine mercy of a God that will lead us to real freedom. God will be with us always, in the person of Jesus. This creative God will take the shambles and chaotic circumstances of our “Lego” lives and together we will build something beautiful, something gifted and something eternal! What a Master-builder is our God!

## Our souls enter the world bearing God’s brand of eternity



What is the real root of human loneliness? A flaw within our makeup? Inadequacy and sin? Or, does Augustine’s famous line, *You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you*, say it all?

Augustine’s adage, for all its merit, is not quite enough. We are infinite souls inside finite lives and that alone should be enough to explain our incessant and insatiable aching; except there is something else, that is, our souls enter the world bearing the brand of eternity and this gives all of our aching a particularized colouring.

There are various explanations of this. For example, Bernard Lonergan, the much-esteemed theologian and philosopher, suggests that the human soul does not come into the world as a *tabula rasa*, a pure, clean sheet of paper onto which anything can be written. Rather, for him, *we are born with the brand of the first principles indelibly stamped inside our souls*. What does he mean by this?

Classical theology and philosophy name four things they call transcendental, meaning that they are somehow true of everything that exists, namely, *oneness, truth, goodness, and beauty*. Everything that exists somehow bears these four qualities. However, these qualities are perfect only inside of God. God, alone, is perfect oneness, perfect truth, perfect goodness, and perfect beauty. However, for Lonergan, God brands these four things, in their perfection, into the core of the human soul.

Hence we come into the world already knowing, however dimly, perfect oneness, perfect truth, perfect goodness, and perfect beauty because they already lie inside us like an inerascable brand.

Thus we can tell right from wrong because we already know perfect truth and goodness in the core of our souls, just as we also instinctively recognize love and beauty because we already know them in a perfect way, however darkly, inside ourselves. In this life, we don’t learn truth, we recognize it; we don’t learn love, we recognize it; and we don’t learn what is good, we recognize it. We recognize these because we already possess them in the core of our souls.

Some mystics gave this a mythical expression: they taught that the human soul comes from God and that the last thing that God does before putting a soul into the body is to kiss the soul. The soul then goes through life always dimly remembering that kiss, a kiss of perfect love, and the soul measures all of life’s loves and kisses against that primordial perfect kiss.

The ancient Greek stoics taught something similar. They taught that souls pre-existed inside of God and that God, before putting a soul into a body, would blot out the memory of its pre-existence. But the soul would then be always unconsciously drawn toward God because, having come from God, the soul would always dimly remember its real home, God, and ache to return there.

In one rather interesting version of this notion, they taught that God put the soul into the

body only when the baby was already fully formed in its mother’s womb. Immediately after putting the soul into the body, God would seal off the memory of its pre-existence by physically shutting the baby’s lips against its ever speaking of its pre-existence. That’s why we have a little cleft under our noses, just above centre of our lips. It’s where God’s finger sealed our lips. That is why whenever we are struggling to remember something, our index finger instinctually rises to that cleft under our nose. We are trying to retrieve a primordial memory.

Perhaps a metaphor might be helpful here: We commonly speak of things as “ringing true” or “ringing false.” But only bells ring. Is there a bell inside us that somehow rings in a certain way when things are true and in another when they are false? In essence, yes! We nurse an unconscious memory of once having known love, goodness, and beauty perfectly. Hence things will ring true or false, depending upon

whether or not they are measuring up to the love, goodness, and beauty that already reside in a perfect form at the core of our souls.

And that core, that centre, that place in our souls where we have been branded with the first principles and where we unconsciously remember the kiss of God before we were born, is the real seat of that congenital ache inside us which, in this life, can never be fully assuaged. We bear the dark memory, as Henri Nouwen says, of once having been caressed by hands far gentler than we ever meet in this life.

Our souls dimly remember once having known perfect love and perfect beauty. But, in this life, we never quite encounter that perfection, even as we forever ache for someone or something to meet us at that depth. This creates in us a moral loneliness, a longing for what we term a *soulmate*, namely, a longing for someone who can genuinely recognize, share, and respect what’s deepest in us.

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# A reflection on being missionary in our present time

The following is reprinted from the Winter 2015 issue of *Catholic Missions In Canada* ([www.cmic.info](http://www.cmic.info)) and is reprinted with permission.

By Archbishop Murray Chatlain

In our present day, the term missionary has a negative connotation. Daily, we are faced with the hurts and resentments that have surfaced from some of our previous efforts at missionary activity. Perhaps we will get to a point when people can be balanced in looking at the positives and negatives of past relationships. What I do know is that our morale is pretty low today. Having been shown where our good intentions have caused hurt, we are appropriately more cautious. So what does it mean to be a missionary today?

In this reflection I am using an address given by Dominican Father Timothy Radcliffe to representatives of all missionary groups of the Catholic Church in 2000.

What are the key qualities of a missionary today?

**Presence:** When we are called to be in a new area it is first to be there, not to do there. Father Timothy states: “This is not easy, and, above all, it requires fidelity. The missionary is not a tourist. The tourist can go to exotic places, take the photographs, enjoy the food and the views, and go back home proudly bearing T-shirts. The missionary is only a sign of the kingdom in staying there. As one of my brethren said, ‘You do not only unpack your bags, you throw your bags away.’” *I Call You Friends*, p. 192.

We know that the question we are asked most often is: “How long are you going to be with us?” Rev. Jean Pochat, an Oblate priest who spent 40 years in Behchoko, Northwest Territories, often talked about his response: “They will bury my bones here.” Now his bones are buried there. People are watching to see if we are running from something or if we are choosing to encounter something.

Of course, not all of us are called to “bury our bones” there, but it does remind us that one of the most important gifts we can offer is a consistent presence. When we come to another community, do we really commit to being present there? Do we “throw our bags away”? How might we be holding back? Father Timothy goes on to say, “To be present for, and with, the other is a sort of dying, so as to be a sign of the king-

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dom in which we will be one.”

When an American missionary living in China was diagnosed with cancer, his community asked him to return to the United States. He responded, “Now I am mostly Chinese, I will not feel at home in the United States.”

One of my moments of satisfaction as a missionary was on a canoeing trip with some teenagers from Black Lake, Sask. They were telling me about an RCMP officer who used to be in the community that they missed. The young man said, “He was like you; he was part Dene.”

Part of this ministry of presence is not to just talk to the people about Jesus, but to help them recognize Jesus’ presence with their ancestors and how he is present with them today. As Rod Lorenz, a Catholic writer, states, “Those who believe in the Gospel and follow Christ need not abandon anything that is noble, good and true in their traditions. The good things in the old ways already reflect him.”

**Mystery:** The missionary is meant to be a mystery to the people. Cardinal Suhard wrote that to be a missionary “does not consist in engaging in propaganda nor even in stirring people up, but in being a living mystery. It means to live in such a way that one’s life would make no sense if God did not exist.” Celibacy, well lived, continues to be an important part of that mystery.

I remember when the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal went to Delin , Northwest Territories, for Ehtse Ayah’s pilgrimage days. The people said in Dene, “See how much they have given up to

work for God.” They had travelled from New York; they wore simple robes and sandals; and they relied on the generosity of others to feed them and the poor that they work with. Not all of us are called to that kind of ministry, but people should wonder why we try to live a life that is not based on money or power or prestige. We, like the people, are not always sure why we are in these isolated communities, but that God has called us to be there is enough for us.

**Transformation:** As missionaries we do not offer escapism but transformation. We do not provide prayer or healing services that seek to numb pain with religious fervour. We must first be present to the Good Fridays of our people. Our holy role is then to help them recognize the presence of the resurrection in these sufferings. There is resurrection. There are transformations. In little ways, sometimes in big, we see that the Spirit is active and working. Often it takes the objectivity of an outsider to see that positive things are happening. These movements are not cheaply earned. It is when we are immersed in the pain that we also see the grace.

Just the other night, I was at a meeting and a young fellow shared some of his frustration. He is trying to walk a sober walk in his own life, and he sees so many of his family and community struggling with addictions. He complained, “Don’t they realize people are seeing them; they are giving a reputation to our community and to all our people. When I say where I am from this is what people think of me, too.” I think God uses frustration and even anger. These can be holy

momentum producers to work at transformation with our Creator.

We are called to promote transformation in the leadership roles that the local people are taking on. We need to help people recognize and use the spiritual strength that is in our communities. There are some tremendous spiritual battles being waged and we try to help the

people come together and trust the power of their prayer.

So as missionaries we are in a different time. We do not have the rousing speeches and the romance of a hundred years ago but that is OK. We are still important; we are still called. In presence, mystery, and transformation may we share in Jesus’ mission in his Northern land.



CMIC

**PRESENCE** — Sister Norma Samar, a member of Our Lady of Missionaries congregation, attends to a baby at a community gathering in her mission in La Ronge, Sask.

## Mercy come call on my cynical heart: a prayer



### Porch Light

Stephen Berg

When Pope Francis announced a year dedicated to Divine Mercy, I saw the beauty of this — was buoyed by its hope. And then, as quickly, the old cold front moved in and I caught myself thinking that this will change nothing. Cast back into a disillusionment that I know too well, I recognized that if I was to be remotely responsive to this call, I had to confront my own hide-bound skepticism, my own lack of faith in divine mercy.

I came to it that the only way I had of chipping away at this frozen surface was to write my own prayer. (It is, of course, possible that not much will change, but it is also possible that those who live with mercy as their constant watchword might personally change — which is the only way greater change happens.) As it is, I offer the following as one of the year’s possible prayers:

Mercy, come call on my cynical heart. Doubt I can live with, walk with, use as a candle to my

path. But cynicism rots me while convincing me of its propriety.

So scour this soul, to receive the song of a dawn sparrow, to rekindle the wonder I once held like flames in cupped hands.

Raise these eyes to behold, and be *held*, by beauty kindness, gentleness . . . that fruit-of-the-spirit list against which there is no law.

Lift me to see the shining presence in all these faces that pass by.

Heal the hope that’s been tarred and feathered, mocked by corruption, scorned by powers, utilized, brutalized and blown up on the streets.

Keep me from ascribing meaning to all this violence, and so falling headlong into the tribalism of hate.

Free me from envy and bitterness — those cousins of cynicism. (May the earth and all its lovers forgive my careless footprints.)

Call up my mystic and rebel, let my voice find its voice, my prayer, its prayer, my offering, humility.

And when I feel blessed, let me receive it with gratitude — not tax it through assessment — but recline in it, without reserve.

When I want to die, or wish to live forever, help me listen to the wisdom of seasons. Let life and

death be what they are, without making idols — and the days that remain, lived free.

Mercy loves empathy! so let me not forget Brian, Angel, John, Ally — who live on the streets, pick bottles, beg, expose my complicity, my poverty, my addictions, yet receive, welcome, humanize me, through their own halting, uncharted, quiet presence — with whom, on more than one occasion, I have been lead to divine the spirit of one identity.

Let the cool rain of *mercy-loves-empathy* soak through my nearest, dearest relationships, which can, without intention, be the ones left drying under a hot sun.

And shine a light on that shadow within, that other me that carries the burden of me, with its pain and disappointment. May there be a reunion of me with that other me, and so a truer me, you’ll meet.

Mercy, build a house for love, with a billion rooms for guests. Build it on a hill so love can be seen tending love’s garden, heard singing from the valleys, shouting the festal shout across the seas, calling welcome to all pilgrims leaving the caves of cynicism, entering the meadows of generosity, and waiting for the rest . . . waiting for all to undergo the burden of Love — so light a burden.

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Berg works for Hope Mission, a social care facility for homeless people in Edmonton’s inner city. His poetry and prose have been in staged performances and have appeared in such publications as the *Edmonton Journal*, *Orion*, *Geez*, and *Earth Shine*. He blogs at [growmercy.org](http://growmercy.org)



# Catholic educators: nurturing their own faith growth

## Catholic Connections

Marie Graw

As educators in a Catholic school system, our vocation calls us to permeate our faith in all we do, both for and with our students. Indeed, there are resources and curriculum for teaching about our faith, as well guidance as to how to permeate our faith throughout all subjects. But what about living one's faith, or growing in one's faith to enrich our lives and become role models of faith? Do we, as Catholic educators, take the time to nurture and discern our own faith journey?

While the journey is indeed personal, and will be different for everyone, Light of Christ Catholic Schools has ensured that all staff members have an opportunity to explore his or her own faith journey. Opportunities are provided for staff to take the time for self-reflection, spiritual direction and, of course, prayer through a detailed design that includes adding a faith component in our division strategic plan, support from the local school board, and direction from a diverse faith development committee.

It is sometimes difficult to immediately discern the results of one's faith development. Faith, and

*Graw is the Religious Education Co-ordinator for Light of Christ Catholic School Division #16 in North Battleford, Sask.*



the application of it, is deeply personal yet fundamentally important to Catholic education. In addition to our faith guiding all we do in Catholic schools, we are also obliged to be accountable as publically funded schools. Part of this accountability is built into our strategic planning processes.

During the 2013 - 14 school year, 28 school divisions and the Ministry of Education, developed the first-ever provincial Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP). The ESSP is reviewed and updated annually by directors of education, Ministry of Education, and partner organization representatives. The goals and targets therein are then used by school divisions, including Light of Christ Catholic Schools, to develop their division-level and school-level strategic plans.

This alignment has been instrumental in providing focus to the work being done in Saskatchewan schools. Because the ESSP is a provincial plan designed for all school divisions, a faith development component was not included in the plan at the provincial level. So, our division, like other Catholic divisions, developed our own local outcome for our school division strategic plan for faith development and Catholic instruction. The framework used for its development is the same as the provincial framework. It includes actions, deliverables, timelines, measure-

ments for success, and consideration for risk and mitigation.

Four actions key to our success this year are:

— Staff will participate in faith development opportunities in order to be positive faith role models.

— Create opportunities in each of our schools for staff and students to be active in their faith.

— Schools, with the assistance of the faith development committee, will continue to encourage and provide opportunities for staff and students to take part in parish activities.

— Religious education co-ordinator will seek resources to support the religion curriculum.

These actions are further supported with detailed plans including two-and-a-half faith development days that are provided by the school board on an annual basis. In response to a survey of all staff members that was conducted by the faith development committee, one full day is division-wide and one-and-a-half days are school-based. In addition to funding for these faith development days, the board has also committed to provide funding for staff to attend various conferences, workshops, retreats and pilgrimages. All staff are invited to apply for funding.

Through these opportunities, the board is ensuring that all staff have the opportunity to participate in faith development activities in order to become positive faith role models. The belief being, in education, "lifelong learners" are role models in academia; in faith development, "lifelong learners" are role models in our faith.

Though valuable and enlightening, faith development days alone cannot sustain a year's worth of guidance, encouragement and growth. The faith development committee meets monthly to plan opportunities for staff to explore



Light of Christ  
**NURTURING FAITH — The staff of Holy Family in North Battleford brings the joy of music to seniors.**

our faith in unique ways, while being a part of a larger, general theme.

The faith development team is representative of each school in the division, central office staff and the school board members. This ensures two needs are met: the voice of each group is heard and the information regarding opportunities and directives is taken back to the members of each group. The diversity of the committee has allowed the voices, specific needs and ideas of each group to be represented within the whole division. This diversity, along with aligning with the ESSP, has resulted in many opportunities being created for staff and students to be active in their faith: through prayer chains to the creation of prayer books, through family masses to multi-parish "backpack blessing" activities.

Invitation and welcome are key

in all that the faith development committee pursues. Also, it was through the faith development committee that the division's new three-year faith development theme and ongoing mission evolved: Pray, Educate, Serve. An invitation to explore each of the three concepts will become the focus for a school year, beginning with "Pray" in the 2015 - 2016 year.

While it is sometimes difficult to immediately discern the results of one's faith development, as Catholic educators we must not neglect nurturing our faith. Our journey is indeed personal, and will be unique for everyone. Having a plan to guide faith development, promoting opportunities provided by the school board and having division-wide representation in planning, Light of Christ Catholic Schools has ensured that all staff members have the opportunity to take time to nurture that growth.

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# With a life of warnings, luck could eventually run out

## Around the Kitchen Table

Donald Ward



I was stopped by the police the other day — lights flashing, siren blaring — on Eighth Street, one of the major arteries running through Saskatoon. I didn’t know what I had done. My conscience was clear, but I was embarrassed by the idea of people stopping to stare as I searched for a safe place to stop. Eventually I turned onto a side street next to a McDonalds and pulled up next to the parking lot.

I was relieved to see that the officer didn’t have his hand on his firearm as he got out of his car. So far, I thought, so good. He called me “sir,” which augured well for our encounter. He had stopped me, he said, because I had turned into the far left lane from the right-hand lane of a parking lot exit, crossing two lanes in the process. Apparently that’s against the law. I knew from my long-ago driver education that it was inadvisable, but I didn’t know that it could incur a \$230 fine.

The officer took my driver’s licence and returned to his car. Making a run for it didn’t occur to me. I knew from experience that he was checking my name for outstanding warrants. He let me off with a warning: you’re supposed to turn into the nearest

## Bell invites participation

Continued from page 8

The intentionally simplistic instrumentation (guitar, piano, percussion, and voice) and chord structure, not only appeals to all, it also invites others to become participants in the music. Nearly all of Steve Bell’s live performances include an invitation to audience participation, thereby making for a deeper and more personal connection to the words of Scripture.

Bell’s work is highly conducive to meditation and prayer, in both formal and informal settings. Imagine the CEO of a large corporation driving home through rush-hour traffic with Bell’s songs bringing her mind and soul to a place of peace and solace before greeting her children at the supper table. Or, imagine a child hearing the music being played at home and singing the beautiful words of the Psalms, learning the faith outside of the traditional catechism classroom.

The songs on the CD are presented in the order Bell wrote them, rather than the order in which those Psalms appear in Scripture. This affords a glimpse into the mind and heart of Bell on his journey as a musician who has devoted his career to enlivening scriptural wisdom for all seekers.

lane, not the farthest.

This was not my first foray into a life of crime. Three cars and one truck ago I was stopped in the early morning for speeding on the highway to Prince Albert. I was taking Colleen to a class she was to teach at the college there, and I was behind time. According to the radar, I was going 130 kph. “No way!” I said to the RCMP officer who had stopped me. He, too, took my driver’s licence and checked for outstanding warrants. He, too, let me off with a warning.

When I come to think of it, I’ve been given an awful lot of warnings over the years. When I was a teenager and driving my mother’s ancient Austin, I was frequently stopped after dark because the left tail light was bare; the covering had been smashed. My mother, the one time she was stopped, was told by a helpful police officer to simply paint the bare bulb with red nail polish. She was let off with a warning (perhaps it’s genetic), and dutifully painted the bulb red. But the nail polish burned off after a few minutes — light bulbs get very hot — and I spent weeks painting it back on until we finally got it fixed. In the meantime I was issued warning after warning by police officers who couldn’t believe that my mother had been told to paint the bulb with nail polish.

Even as a pedestrian I was issued warnings. As a young man I used to take long walks through the city in the wee hours, and I was routinely stopped by patrol officers who took down my name

and required to know what I was doing. “Just walking,” I would say, and they checked for outstanding warrants as I sat in the back of the car.

Once there actually was an outstanding warrant for a Donald Ward, but his middle name was Hartley, whereas mine is Bruce, so I was let off with a warning that I would be stopped by other police officers if I persisted in walking through the streets after dark.

The only ticket I was ever issued was for walking against a

red light at a busy intersection near the university. There were dozens of us and three police officers in plain clothes picking us out at random. My officer was very friendly, not censorious at all. When I pointed out that there were no cars coming, he pointed out in turn that a red light was a red light. I thought he was being needlessly legalistic, but on reflection I realized that he was only doing his job; the tickets he issued that day would probably cover his salary for several months.

I don’t speed any more and I don’t cross lanes without signalling. In fact I have become quite legalistic myself, mentally issuing tickets to people I see breaking the law. If people pass me on the highway, I reflect that they are getting poor gas mileage and are not really saving time. It takes me six minutes longer to get to Saskatoon from Muenster going 90 kph than 110, and I don’t have to worry about speeding tickets. I think I have run out of warnings.

## God’s instruments bring harmony to others

By Alma Barkman

I had decided to grab an extra hour of sleep when an unexpected phone call jerked me from my nice warm bed and sent me scurrying down the hall. In the dark chill of a January morning, it seemed much earlier than it really was.

“Hi, Mom? It’s me. I forgot my trumpet. Can you bring it right away?”

I admired the way our teenage son dragged himself out of bed morning after morning to attend early band practice at the local high school, but if it was *that* important, how in the world could he have forgotten his trumpet, of all things?

“Mom? Are you awake? Band practice starts in 11 minutes!”

The anxiety in his voice smothered my indignation. “I’ll bring it right away, if only the car will start.” Not anticipating the little errand at hand, I had left the block heater cord hanging on the porch railing. Like a snake with rigour mortis, it had frozen into a stiff coil.

The car door creaked open in protest. Bundled up heavily against the cold, I packed myself in behind the wheel. I still had my pajamas on under my slacks, my gloves didn’t

match and I hadn’t combed my hair. I was hoping nobody would recognize me, that my son would come out to meet me, that I’d still get there on time and that the car would even start under such cold conditions. *Why, oh why did it have to be the coldest day of winter?*

The key turned heavily in the ignition and the starter whined and complained as if to mimic my own resentful attitude. The motor fired once or twice, sputtered and coughed but kept running — reluctantly. I had to ease out the driveway ever so carefully and inch along between stop signs, scraping the windshield free of frost every few seconds.



A. Barkman

**GOD’S INSTRUMENTS** — “I like to think God smiled a little as I chugged obediently down that frozen stretch of road to deliver a trumpet to a praying teenager,” writes Alma Barkman. “And I have since discovered that God can use me, his instrument, in many other ways to help bring harmony into the lives of those around me.”

As I lurched to a stop in front of the school, our son came tearing out the door, babbling profuse apologies amid a deep sense of relief.

Not until later in the day did he have time to explain that he was supposed to play a solo part, but in his anxiety to do well he had forgotten the most important item of all — his trumpet. As he told of his chagrin at opening an empty case, I cringed inwardly.

When God needed me to be *his* instrument at a crucial moment, was I only an “empty case?” Our son said he had prayed fervently. Had I not been available to do my part, what then?

I thought of the times when

every ounce of my humanity had cried out against God’s expectations, when I had claimed it was too cold to attend church, too hot to help an elderly gardener, too inconvenient to give someone a ride, too time consuming to visit a shut-in. And yet all along I had given the impression that I was one of God’s instruments, when in fact I was nothing more than an “empty case.”

Looking into my heart that cold winter morning, I was certain God took no pleasure in my initial attitude. But I like to think God smiled a little as I chugged obediently down that frozen stretch of road to deliver a trumpet to a praying teenager. And I have since discovered that God can use me, his instrument, in many other ways to help bring harmony into the lives of those around me. All I have to do is make myself available.

## Pope Francis wants to bring the church to the people

Continued from page 9

reflection and debate on the pastoral responses appropriate to the conditions of today.

This is very much a pope who wants to bring the church to the people, not drive people away. That is what it means to proclaim the “joy of the gospel” and the abundance of God’s mercy.

Politi portrays Francis as a man of deep holiness and prayer who realizes that he may not have a long time and is determined to make the most of it. With Benedict XVI’s resignation the tradition of the “papacy for life” has been broken. This is therefore a critical moment in the life of the church. As Politi concludes:

*If he (Francis) succeeds in transforming the Synod of Bishops into a permanent instrument of coparticipation in papal government, in making them into little councils that assist the church to chart its course on the ocean of*

*modernity — involving the faithful, laymen, and laywomen — the revolution of Jorge Mario Bergoglio will become irreversible. “I only ask the Lord,” the pope confided to an Argentine friend, as the third year of his pontificate loomed, “that this change which I am pursuing for the sake of the church, at great personal cost, will endure, and not be like a light that suddenly goes out.”*

\*For further reading, Pope Francis is the subject of three other notable books published in recent months: Robert Draper, *Pope Francis and the New Vatican*; Paul Vallely, *Pope Francis: The Struggle for the Soul of Catholicism* (revised paperback edition); Gianluigi Nuzzi, *Merchants in the Temple: Inside Pope Francis’s Secret Battle Against Corruption in the Vatican*. And, not least, the pope himself is the author in the book-length interview *The Name of God is Mercy* published on Jan. 12, 2016.

Barkman is a freelance writer from Winnipeg (almabarkman.com).



Saved by mercy

Christians are gearing up to observe the annual season of Lent. In St. Benedict's Rule, he says Lent is a preparation for Easter. The new life God gives us — not our sinfulness — is the principal preoccupation for Christians.

In his lenten message this year, Pope Francis asks us to recognize our own need for God's mercy and to assist others by communicating God's love and mercy through words and deeds. He especially advocates practising the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

If we are accustomed to dwell on our lenten "sacrifices," we can broaden our lenten vision by reflecting on the abundance of God's mercy. In his Internet meditation for Jan. 27, Rev. Richard Rohr opens this up for us as an alternate motivation for Lent:

"I strongly believe that good theology has two important tasks: to keep all people free for God and to keep God free for all people. In my opinion, most churches do not allow God much freedom. God is always so much bigger than the theological and churchy boxes we build for 'him.'

"Without recognizing it, many people have an operative image of God as Santa Claus. He's 'making a list and checking it twice, gonna find out who's naughty or nice.' He rewards the good kids with toys

(heaven) and punishes the bad kids with lumps of coal (hell). If you don't have a mature spirituality or an honest inner prayer life, you'll end up with a Santa Claus god, and the Gospel becomes a cheap novel of reward and punishment.

"That's not the great Good News! An infinitely loving God is capable of so much more than such a simplistic trade off or buy out.

"Bringing social acceptability to Christianity has not helped in this regard. After Constantine made Christianity the established religion of the Roman Empire in 313, the great biblical concepts of grace and forgiveness gradually were controlled by formulas and technique. Empires cannot afford too much mercy or forgiveness.

"Soon the church created equations: this much sin results in this many years in purgatory or hell; this much penance results in this much time released from purgatory. Grace and forgiveness became juridical and distant concepts instead of deep spiritual realizations. Disobedience or disloyalty were seen as much more sinful than any failure to love or serve or show mercy.

"The work of the priesthood became sin management much more than the marvellous work of transformation and inner realization that we see in Jesus' ministry. Church largely became a 'worthiness attainment system' managed from without, instead of a

transformational system awakening us from within.

"When forgiveness becomes a weighing and judging process, then we who are in charge can measure it, define who is in and who is out, find ways to earn it, and exclude the unworthy. We have then destroyed the likelihood that people will ever experience the pure gift of God's grace and forgiveness.

"When you fall into the ocean of mercy, you stop all counting and measuring. In fact, counting and weighing no longer make sense; they run counter to the experience of grace. As long as you keep counting, you will not realize that everyone is saved by mercy anyway.

"I recently visited the 9/11 Memorial at the site of the Twin Towers in New York City. A huge waterfall drops down into the darkness of a lower pool whose bottom you cannot see. It struck me deeply as a metaphor for God: mercy eternally pouring into darkness, always filling an empty space. Grace fills all the gaps of the universe.

"Counting and measuring can only increase the space between things. Even better, water always falls and pools up in the very lowest and darkest places, just like mercy does. And mercy is just grace in action."

Changing our motivation for celebrating Lent can transform our approach to life. And isn't that the whole purpose of any spiritual exercise? — PWN

There are special provisions in canon law relating to abortion



Canon Law For Today  
Rev. Frank Morrissey

Among the various offences committed today, abortion certainly stands out among the most horrific. Since, in many countries, including Canada, there are not provisions in the criminal law in relation to this act, we should not be surprised to see that canon law

Morrissey is a professor emeritus of canon law at Saint Paul University, Ottawa, and has been very active over the years in the field of canon law, especially as it applies to dioceses and religious institutes. This is his 42nd article in a series.

compensates by instituting serious penalties for those who are directly involved in it.

Canon 1398 simply states: "A person who actually procures an abortion incurs a *latae sententiae* (i.e., automatic) excommunication." However, the canon was completed in 1988 by a formal response approved by Pope John Paul II on May 23 of that year. The new elements are presented in the form of a question: "Whether abortion, mentioned in canon 1398, is to be understood only as the ejection of an immature fetus, or also of the killing of the same fetus in whatever way or at what-

ever time from the moment of conception it may be procured? Answer: *Negative* to the first part; *affirmative* to the second."

In other words, in canon law, the term "abortion" now applies in any case in which the intended termination of the life of the fetus takes place, whether or not implantation has already occurred. This official interpretation can be considered to be an "extensive" interpretation, that is, one that extends somewhat the original terms of the canon.

Canon 1329.2 notes that even if accomplices are not specifically mentioned in a canon, they incur the same penalty if, without their assistance, the crime would not have been committed. In other words, the physician who performs the abortion is also subject to the same penalty.

Some people would like to extend unduly the role of accomplices. But it would be important to keep in mind the provisions of canon 18: "Laws which prescribe

a penalty, or restrict the free exercise of rights, or contain an exception to the law, are to be interpreted strictly." This does not mean interpreted rigidly, but rather, that all the conditions foreseen in the law must be fulfilled.

For all censures, as with excommunication, this implies: grave matter, full knowledge, and full consent. Although there is no doubt about the gravity of the mat-

— IMPORTANT, page 15

On the Christian meaning of suffering

By Gerald Wiesner, OMI retired bishop of Prince George, B.C.

The Christian meaning of suffering is one of the big subjects of discussion in our world today, especially relating to the topic of euthanasia, physician-assisted dying or assisted death. Very often at the centre of this discussion is suffering that is prevalent and endured by so many.

At the very beginning of these reflections it needs to be noted that suffering is an evil. In other words, suffering is not to be sought after; it is to be avoided at all cost, and every effort should be made to alleviate and overcome it. In her official teaching the church affirms the meaning-

lessness of human suffering unless it is seen in light of Jesus' healing death and resurrection.

It is central to Christian faith that the world has been redeemed through the suffering of Christ. "By suffering for us Christ not only gave us an example so that we might follow in his footsteps, but he also opened up a way. If we follow this path, life and death are made holy and acquire a new meaning. . . . For since Christ died for everyone, and since all are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the Paschal Mystery. . . . It is therefore through Christ and in Christ, that light is thrown on the mystery of suffering and death which, apart from his Gospel, overwhelms us" (Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 22).

There we see how Christians are called to actively alleviate suffering, especially as it results from unjust social and political structures; and whenever possible we are to eradicate its causes: "Christian charity should search out, comfort and care for them and give them assistance that will relieve their needs" (Vatican II, *Laity* 8).

The church teaches further: "Christian charity is extended to all without distinction of race, social condition, or religion, and

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BLIZZARD EVENTS IN EASTERN U.S. — The Jan. 23 record-setting blizzard in the eastern U.S. occasioned some unusual incidents. At left, William McLaughlin spins his new bride, Jenna (Hull), in the middle of a deserted street Jan. 23 in Old Town Alexandria, Va. The couple braved near whiteout conditions during the height of the blizzard to attend their relocated wedding reception at a nearby hotel. On the right, Rev. Patrick Behm of Le Mars, Iowa, celebrated mass Jan. 23 at an altar constructed of snow alongside the Pennsylvania Turnpike. The group from the Diocese of Sioux City, Iowa, was returning home from the annual March for Life rally in Washington.



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# Pope's challenge is to expand vision of mercy

By Rhina Guidos

WASHINGTON (CNS) — During this Year of Mercy, one of the biggest challenges Pope Francis has thrown at us is to expand our vision of mercy.

That's the message Rev. David Garcia delivered during a Jan. 24 Catholic Social Ministry Gathering presentation about how to actively live out the Year of Mercy and what that means.

Garcia, a senior adviser for clergy outreach with Catholic Relief Services, said the pope "doesn't want us to sit around the church and look at each other and say, 'OK, let's have mercy on each other inside the church.'" Instead, the pope is saying that "he wants this mercy taken out" of the

church, and diffused among those who need it most, in our midst, but especially around the world.

In particular, the pope wants to combat two things: the culture of waste and the culture of indifference, Garcia said. Both go back to Scripture and to Jewish roots. In a holy year, or jubilee year, the Bible says in Leviticus 25, that the land shall rest and its fruits given to the poor, debts are to be forgiven, slaves liberated, neighbours dealt with fairly and family members cared for.

In other words, Garcia said, God tells us: "The way you will show me you love me is the way you treat each other and the way you love creation."

Garcia showed a cartoon of a man watching TV, falling asleep

as news of over 4,000 dead in Africa is announced over the television, but later the same person is alarmed and in panic over one person dying in Dallas.

Though we should be generous with those around us, we have to be brothers and sisters to people in Latin America, Asia, Africa, in all parts of the world, Garcia said, and not just be concerned with those we consider "our own."

"Otherwise, you're not Catholic," said Garcia, a San Antonio archdiocesan priest. "He's just asking us to be Catholic. That's about as simple as it can be."

To heed that call in Philadelphia, the city's St. Aquinas Centre is hosting "days of encounter and mercy," said Bethany Welch, its director, who attended the Jan. 23

- 26 social ministry gathering in Washington. Recently, the centre hosted an event in which a woman, a refugee from Eritrea, was invited to cook and to share her story with others. She was paid for her services, providing her with the dignity of work. In turn, the event also provided others the experience of learning about the plight of refugees from that part of the world, Welch said.

"Mercy is relational," Welch said, adding that there's spiritual beauty in the pope's challenge.

Another attendee offered the story of his parish, home to one of the country's holy doors, which the pope has encouraged Catholics to walk through, symbolizing leaving behind sin and walking into grace to encounter God.

Garcia said there are three ways of showing mercy this year:

sacramentally — through the sacrament of reconciliation; an extra sacramental way — through our works of mercy; and by making a pilgrimage.

Melissa Wheeler, of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend in Indiana, attended Garcia's presentation and said that at the Catholic high school where she works, students are being encouraged to focus each month on one of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. It has resulted in moments of silence and reflection when normally you'd have a "boisterous" crowd, she told Catholic News Service.

Her hope is that opening up the conversation to topics such as forgiveness during the Year of Mercy will "soften the edges of those things that divide us," Wheeler said.



CNS/David Agren

**CANADIANS VISIT CHIAPAS IN MEXICO** — Canadian Jesuit Father David Shulist and retired Canadian Oblate Archbishop Sylvain Lavoie participate in the celebration of the eucharist Jan. 22 in the indigenous community of Acteal, Mexico. They led a group of Catholic Canadians in a visit to Chiapas state to learn more about the local diocese's ministry with indigenous peoples.

## Doctrinal congregation must work collegially

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Diversity in the Catholic Church springs from its reality as a communion of different people with different gifts, and a collegial approach to facing challenges ensures that those differences strengthen communion rather than harm it, Pope Francis told members of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

"On all levels of church life, a correct synodality must be promoted," the pope said Jan. 29, referring to a process of discernment and decision-making based on listening with respect to differing opinions and experiences and discussing them in an atmosphere of prayer.

The members of the doctrinal congregation, which is charged with promoting and defending authentic Catholic teaching and practices, were holding their annual plenary meeting at the Vatican.

Pope Francis used his audience as an opportunity to thank the theologians and other specialists who collaborate with the staff and cardinal members of the congregation, and he encouraged the congregation "to continue and intensify collaboration" with bishops' conferences and individual bishops around the world.

The congregation can make an important contribution "to the

renewal of church life" through its ongoing study of "the complementarity of hierarchical and charismatic gifts," the pope said. Pope Francis has spoken often of the importance of recognizing the gifts of the church's order and structure — the hierarchy — while not being frightened by new gifts — the charismatic — given by the Holy Spirit, often to church members who are not ordained.

"According to the logic of unity in legitimate diversity — the logic that characterizes every authentic form of communion in the People of God — the hierarchical and charismatic gifts must collaborate harmoniously for the good of the church and the world," the pope said.

"If recognized and welcomed with humility," he said, the diversity of God's gifts helps the church renew itself in every age.

"Here one can clearly see how the synodal dynamic, if correctly understood, is born of communion and leads to a communion that is more effective, deeper and broader in the service of the life and mission of the People of God," he said.

The doctrinal congregation's "ultimate foundation and its appropriate justification," the pope said, lies in the fact that while God himself is a mystery, his mercy took concrete form in Jesus Christ, who became man

for the salvation of humanity.

"The Christian faith, in fact, is not only knowledge to be committed to memory," he said, "but truth to be lived in love. Therefore, along with the doctrine of the faith, it is also necessary to safeguard the integrity of conduct, particularly in the most delicate areas of life."

Faith in Christ "implies both an act of reason and a moral response to his gift," the pope said, which is why the doctrinal congregation also handles cases involving priests accused of sexually abusing minors. Pope Francis thanked the congregation for "your commitment and the responsibility you exercise" in dealing with the cases.

Faith reflected in deeds is also part of the Year of Mercy, he said. Catholics need to be aware that at the end of their lives "we will be asked if we gave food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty and, equally, we will be asked if we helped people leave behind their doubts, if we worked to welcome sinners, admonishing and correcting them, and if we were able to fight ignorance, especially regarding the Christian faith and living a good life."

The tasks people will be judged on are known as "the corporal and spiritual works of mercy," he said. "They are not a devotion," but "concretely how Christians carry on the spirit of mercy."

## Chaldean patriarch details acts of discrimination

MARRAKESH, Morocco (CNS) — Iraq's Chaldean Catholic patriarch said increasing incidents of discrimination against Christians in Iraqi society were inciting fear and causing an exodus of Christians from their homeland.

In a speech circulated at a conference on the rights of religious minorities in the Muslim world, Chaldean Catholic Patriarch Louis Sako of Baghdad cited Muslim contractors refusing to build homes, monasteries, etc., for Christians, whom they identify as infidels; the display of posters, even in public offices, asking Christian girls to wear a veil, following the example of Mary; a judge in Baghdad who dismissed a Christian from court, claiming that Christians are not accepted as witnesses in Iraqi courts; and militias in Baghdad who confiscated homes, lands and other properties of Christians.

Because of visa issues, Sako was unable to attend the Jan. 25 - 27 conference in Marrakesh. The conference, which included Muslim leaders from more than 120 countries as well as non-Muslim observers, was held under the auspices of King Mohammed VI of Morocco and was organized by the country's Ministry of Endowment and Islamic Affairs and the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies, based in United Arab Emirates.

In his written text, Sako said the current "miserable situation" in Iraq was due to the "intervention of external 'players'" with their own ambitions in the region. He said they were using "democracy and freedom as a cover to deprive our natural resources, peace, liberty as well as creating chaos and terrorism in Iraq and the Middle East."

He pointed to the year of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and stated: "Since 2003, Iraq is drifting under a systematically well-

planned agenda aiming to dispose (of) Christians and other religious minorities, dismissing them from their own land and destroying their mutual history, values and morals."

Sako cited indicators that he said showed "Iraq is living now outside the scope of modern countries, away from the minimum limits of human rights and respecting the uniqueness of each group and religion," most particularly Islamic State's attack on Christians and Yezidis.

He called for opposing extremism by "dismantling terrorism and eliminating it from its roots," which he said could be accomplished through a culture of tolerance and a refusal to be complacent with those who encourage and call for violence and fanaticism.

Jesuit Father Fadi Daou, chair of Adyan, a Lebanese foundation for interfaith studies and spiritual solidarity, attended the conference. "Globally speaking, the conference is an important moment for Muslim reflection and internal debate about citizenship and religious diversity," he said.

He said the Marrakesh Declaration, released Jan. 27, advocated "for a new Muslim position based on acknowledgment of citizenship and adopting it as a value in coherence with Islamic teaching." This school of thought proposed "equal rights between Muslims and others and shared responsibility and participation," Daou said.

Some Muslims were "attached to tradition and not ready to adopt new, modern language and reflection about citizenship," Daou said. "They are more in a defensive apologetic attitude about Islam and the past, although condemning extremism and attacks to others."

The challenge, he added, "is how to transform the political support to religious reform, with respect to democratic values."

The Bible tells us to love our neighbours, and also to love our enemies; probably because generally they are the same people.

— G.K. Chesterton