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Art Babych

*We ask the risen Jesus, who turns death into life, to
change hatred into love, vengeance into forgiveness,
war into peace.*

– Pope Francis, Easter homily 2013

Challenging questions are a sign of a mature faith

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — At the end of a lenten retreat focused on questions in the Gospels, Servite Father Ermes Ronchi told Pope Francis and senior members of the Roman Curia that it is tempting to bristle when the faithful ask challenging questions, but he is certain it is a sign of how seriously they take the faith.

"It gives me hope to see how, among the people of God, questions continue to grow and no one is content with the same old answers," Ronchi told the retreatants March 11 during his last talk before the pope and Curia members returned to the Vatican.

"When everyone silently accepted the word of a priest was it a time of greater faith," he asked. "I think the opposite is true and even if this means more work for us, it is also an 'alleluia,' a 'finally.'"

Mary's question — "How can this be?" — in response to the Annunciation was Ronchi's focus for the final meditation at the March 6 - 11 retreat at a centre run by the Pauline Fathers in Ariccia,



CNS/L'Osservatore Romano

CURIA LENT RETREAT — Pope Francis enters the chapel during a weeklong lenten retreat in Ariccia, Italy.

40 kilometres southeast of Rome. While the retreat was private, Vatican Radio and *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper,

provided coverage of Ronchi's talks.

"Being perplexed, asking questions is a way of standing before the

Lord with all of one's human dignity," the Servite said. Like Mary, "I accept the mystery, but at the same time I use my intelligence."

"No one ever said that a rock-solid faith is better than a faith interwoven with questions," Ronchi said; questioners know and show that they need God and need dialogue with him.

In a reflection March 10, Ronchi looked at the risen Jesus' words to Mary Magdalene outside the empty tomb, "Woman, why are you weeping?"

"The first words of the Risen One in the garden on Easter," he said, "have an extraordinary tenderness: 'Tell me about your tears; they are more important to me than anything.'"

The preacher insisted that "God's archive, his memory," is not full of lists of people's sins, but of their tears and suffering.

Stopping, listening and touching those in pain was Jesus' response to tears and must be the response of his followers, Ronchi said. But, unfortunately, "centuries of moralism have turned the works of mercy into reluctant

obligations, as if they were the price of salvation."

His talk about tears followed an evening meditation March 9 on Jesus' question to the woman caught in adultery. After Jesus told the crowd that whoever was without sin should cast the first stone, the crowd left and Jesus asked the woman, "Has no one condemned you?"

Ronchi said, "Those who love to accuse, who get drunk off the defects of others, think they are safeguarding the truth by stoning those who err. But it is how wars are started" between countries or within communities, including churches.

In the Gospel story, he said, "the judgment against the woman caught in adultery boomerangs against the hypocrisy of the judges: No one can throw the first stone because they would be hurling it at themselves."

The Gospel story does not minimize the woman's sin, he said, but illustrates Jesus' focus on helping her turn her life around; "Go, and from now on do not sin any more," Jesus tells her.

With drought, Ethiopian church feeds kids to keep them in school

By Bronwen Dachs

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (CNS) — Feeding children to prevent them dropping out of school is a priority for the church in Ethiopia, which is experiencing its worst drought in about 50 years, a church worker said.

"Children don't go to school if they have empty stomachs," Argaw Fantu, regional director for the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, told Catholic News Service March 11 in a telephone interview from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital.

"We have limited resources and so we have had to focus on the northern parts of the country" where the effects of the drought are worst, "but we heard yesterday of a school in the southern diocese of Hosanna where 236 of its 552 pupils have dropped out because of hunger," Fantu said.

More than 10 million people of Ethiopia's population of around 100 million require emergency humanitarian food assis-

tance because of the El Nino-driven drought.

With more than 83 per cent of Ethiopians living in rural areas, where most rely on rain-fed agriculture, "the bulk of our assistance is to people in rural areas," said Matt Davis, Catholic Relief Services' representative in Ethiopia.

While soaring food prices due to shortages "have put food out of many people's reach in urban areas, food is still available in markets" in the cities and towns, he said March 10 from Addis Ababa.

"If we are able to provide sufficient relief now, in these dire circumstances," the drought will cause the country to "take only one step back and then continue on the development track it has been on for the past decade," Davis said.

Ethiopia has long been one of the world's poorest countries, but with rapid industrialization it has had double-digit growth for the past 10 years.

"The commitment of the church in Ethiopia is tremendous,

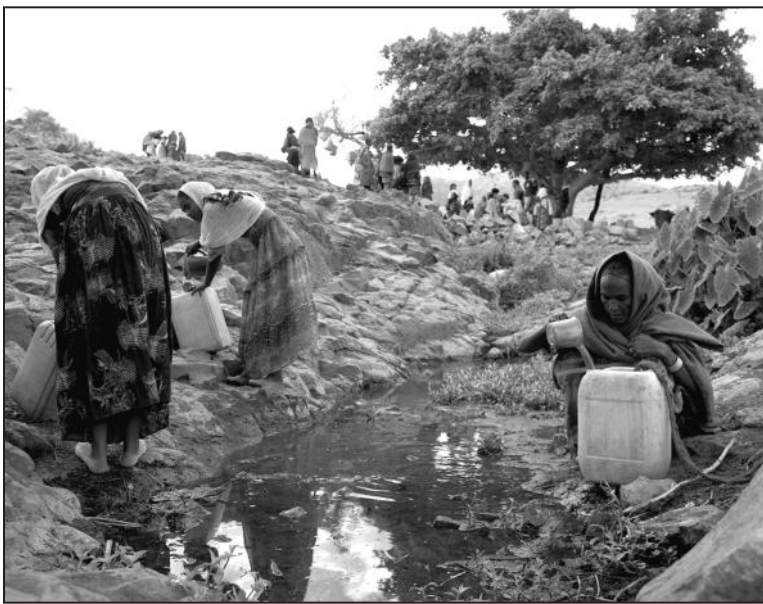
and it punches above its weight," Davis said, noting that only one per cent of Ethiopia's population is Catholic, yet the church is the second-largest provider of health and education services, after the government.

With strengthened social protection and other systems, Ethiopia "is far more resilient than it was in the 1980s, when hundreds of thousands of people died" of famine-related causes, he said.

"We're not going to see that in 2016," he said.

The emergency response programs are particularly important because, as well as providing food, they protect "families from being dispersed" and save "the youth from migration," the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ethiopia said in a Dec. 22 statement, signed by its president, Cardinal Berhaneyesus Souraphiel of Addis Ababa.

"It is not difficult to imagine the fate" of young people among the displaced "taking the risk of migrating to other countries



CNS/Katy Migiro, Reuters

DROUGHT CHALLENGES ETHIOPIA — Women collect water in the Amhara region of Ethiopia Feb. 13.

through illegal means in search of work and a better life," the bishops said.

"With food shortages, it's always the young people who try to move away," Fantu said.

"To avoid this, we are trying to meet their food needs where they are" in the rural areas, he said, noting that children as young as 10 years old are coming to Ethiopia's cities, where they beg for food and money.

"In some places, we have turned rural Catholic schools into temporary feeding centres," he said.

The emergency relief efforts are crucial to avoid the decimation of the country's farming communities, Davis said, noting that "we expect a strong agricultural yield if we can dig ourselves out of this hole."

Agricultural development programs are in place and a normal rain year is expected, "which will give farmers the opportunity to plant," he said.

Noting that the state has invested in infrastructure such as early warning systems to track the threat of famine, Davis said that "the government has taken leadership, and this is a collective effort to make sure that the damage does not push the country off its track" of progress.

Couple shares faith as vocation 'of the baptized'

By Mike May

OMAHA, Neb. (CNS) — Instructing the uninformed — one of the spiritual works of mercy — might sound challenging, or even intimidating.

But for Scott and Julie Tylski, it has simply been answering the Holy Spirit's call to share their faith.

Since 2014, the Tylskis have helped others prepare to enter the Catholic Church at Easter as leaders of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults classes at St. Stephen the Martyr Parish in Omaha.

"It's part of our vocation as the baptized to share the faith, but it's also something that has helped us develop in our own faith," Scott

told the Catholic Voice, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Omaha.

The Tylskis conduct classes every Sunday, this year for 14 candidates and catechumens, from September through the end of Lent. Classes include a discussion of the day's mass readings, helping participants understand the context of the readings and how to internalize and apply them to their daily lives, Scott said.

They also cover one topic from the Catechism of the Catholic Church each class, Scott said.

"By the time the course is over, we will have been through the entire catechism," he said. "We try to make the conversation a blend of learning . . . here's what the church teaches, and we

also try to make it interactive, so the folks have the opportunity to apply it to their lives, to respond, to ask questions.

"Here's a group of people hungry to be part of the Catholic Church, and we simply are helping them understand what that means," Scott said. "It's through the Holy Spirit that they're touched, and we are a vehicle, an instrument — but it's really the Holy Spirit working in their hearts."

Julie agreed: It's the work of the Holy Spirit.

"I pray every Sunday before class that the Holy Spirit will guide our words and open their hearts to whatever he has to say," she said. "I pray 'please let your words, not my words, be what

come out in class.'"

Rev. James Tiegs, St. Stephen the Martyr pastor, said the parish's RCIA program tries to create within an RCIA group a taste of what the Catholic Church is, by "experiencing the church through their interactions with each other."

A key part of that is how the Tylskis communicate their deep faith and love for God, Tiegs said. As they exercise their work of mercy, "they're not just teaching, they're witnessing," he said.

"We're simply instruments of God's mercy," Scott said, describing their mission to teach as a spiritual work of mercy. "This calling to help instruct in RCIA is just one of those ways to simply share our faith."

Physician-assisted death coming to Canada

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — Physician-assisted death is coming to Canada but universally available palliative care services are not,



K. Yaworski

Dr. Vivian Walker

and that should be causing anger and concern, says a Saskatchewan palliative care physician.

"One is being legally mandated, and the other is not, and that leaves me cross," said Dr. Vivian Walker, co-director of palliative care at St. Paul's Hospital in Saskatoon. "The seismic shift in our culture toward physician-hastened or physician-assisted death is big, especially in the context of what we know to be poorly accessible palliative care services nationwide."

Walker spoke at a public presentation March 8 at St. Paul's Hospital, reviewing the recent history of the legalization of

assisted suicide and euthanasia in Europe, in some U.S. states, and in Canada, raising concerns about "assisted death," and expressing strong support for palliative care.

There is an urgent need to expand quality palliative care across the country, which right now is available to only some 30 per cent of those who need it, she said.

A Feb. 6, 2015, Supreme Court ruling struck down the ban on physician assisted death for "a competent adult person who (1) clearly consents to the termination of life and (2) has a grievous and irremediable medical condition (including an illness, disease or disability) that causes enduring suffering that is intolerable to the individual in the circumstances of his or her condition."

In consultations after the decision, an External Panel on Options for a Legislative Response to Carter vs. Canada was one of the committees and groups that have stressed the need for palliative care, reported Walker.

"The panel heard on many occasions that a request for physician-assisted death cannot be truly voluntary if the option of proper palliative care is not available to alleviate a person's suffering," she said, quoting the panel's executive summary.

"Why is medical aid in dying to be nationally available and mandatory, but not palliative care? Or excellent psychiatric care? Or chronic pain services?" she queried.

"Every single study says that

people should have access to palliative care. Why should we have this legislation for physician-hastened death, and nothing for palliative care? 'Medical Aid In Dying' will be nationally available. It will be publicly funded. What about palliative care?"

Right now in Saskatchewan there are only 2.7 palliative care doctors, she said. "There are not enough of us to do the job that needs to be done, (or) to teach the students how to do good pain management," she said.

A survey of the Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians in January 2015 showed that a majority of palliative care doctors are opposed to the legalization of euthanasia or assisted suicide. Some 74 per cent believe that if assisted death is legalized it should not be provided by palliative care services or palliative care physicians, Walker said.

She expressed her own hope that physician hastened death can be kept separate from palliative care. "You know, a guy that I cared for recently said, 'I was so afraid to come in here, but these days have been some of the best days of my life.' He was so afraid to come into palliative care. Well, if we are doing euthanasia alongside palliative care, what do you think that's going to do for his fear?"

Walker reviewed a range of practices in other jurisdictions — in some places assisted suicide is accomplished by a doctor providing a prescription that is self administered, in others, euthanasia is accomplished by an injection

administered by medical personnel. In Switzerland, for instance, assisted death happens outside medical institutions in stand-alone facilities.

She noted that Canadians are confused about end of life issues, about the meaning, differences and implications of such things as euthanasia, assisted suicide, "do not resuscitate" orders, palliative sedation, the right to refuse treatment, the right to refuse hydration, etc., and tend to lump everything together, rather than recognizing their many important distinctions.

Walker described the history

and the philosophy of palliative care, quoting Dr. Cicely Saunders, pioneer of the modern hospice movement: "We will help you live until you die."

The World Health Organization definition of palliative care says that it is "an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problems associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification, impeccable assessment and treatment

— PALLIATIVE, page 6



Catholic Register/Swan

PAPAL BLESSING — Cardinal Thomas Collins presents a framed papal blessing to Rabbi Erwin Schild and his wife, Laura Saxe, March 6. The pope blessed the Schilds' 70 years of marriage.

Muslim-Catholic dialogue matters

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — There can be no question that Muslim-Catholic dialogue matters. More than one billion Catholics and over two billion Muslims combine to cover the globe, penetrate every culture and express their ideas about the world, human life and God in hundreds of languages.

In the year of mercy, Catholics and Muslims have a common vocabulary at their disposal and with it an unprecedented opportunity to advance the dialogue, scholars, clergy and journalists told a gathering at Toronto's University of St. Michael's College March 3.

In a year which Catholics have dedicated to thinking, praying and acting on God's mercy, we can't help but notice that every Muslim begins every prayer, five times per day, "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful." Of the "99 beautiful names of God," the Most Merciful has a status higher than any other.

The common ground of mercy inspired the Turkish-Canadian Intercultural Dialogue Institute to organize a Catholic-Muslim conference under the Shakespearean title of *The Quality of Mercy is Not Strained*.

In the 51 years since *Nostra Aetate* declared the church open to dialogue with other faiths, the dialogue with Muslims was first slow to take off and then stum-

bled over Pope Benedict XVI's 2006 speech quoting 14th-century Byzantine Emperor Manuel Paleologos II on the question of faith and violence in Islam. The speech touched off worldwide protest, resulted in the murder of a nun in Somalia, burning of church doors in Nablus and a fatwa calling Muslims to kill the pope issued by a terrorist network in Pakistan.

But the speech and its aftermath also resulted in *A Common Word Between Us*, a Muslim initiative to encourage dialogue which was signed by significant leaders in every branch of Islam.

"A Common Word is a most uncommon document," Franciscan Friar of the Atonement Elias Mallon told the conference. "They were able to come together for this most amazing document. We Christians couldn't do the same."

Mallon is a scholar of ancient semitic languages who has spent 30 years in interfaith dialogue — a particular priority of the Atonement Friars.

For Muslims, mercy isn't only a description of God, it is also an absolute commandment of God, said Haroon Siddiqui, emeritus editorial page editor of *The Toronto Star*.

"Hell is portrayed as full of tyrants. Heaven is full of the poor," observed Siddiqui.

The point of dialogue between Muslims and Catholics is not to simply tick off similarities between the two Abrahamic faiths,

said Mallon.

"The worst kind of dialogue is what I call the dialogue of the mirror," said Mallon. "We discover that we have a great deal in common, we declare the dialogue a success and go home unchanged."

By ignoring the "irreducible particularity of every religion" we short circuit dialogue which has the potential to deepen the faith of each partner as they rearticulate the truth they know and examine it in light of the other.

Real dialogue is also the only antidote to demagoguery, demonizing and constant conflict, said Siddiqui.

"Not all Muslims live up to the Islamic ideal," said the journalist. But confusing misguided bands of terrorists with an entire religion only obscures the true nature of forces at play in the Middle East, North Africa and Northern Nigeria.

"We fall into the trap of this propaganda that this is a war of Christians against Muslims. It's not. These are geopolitical issues," he said.

The chaos unleashed by the 2003 American invasion of Iraq, 1991's Operation Desert Storm and the 1980 to 1988 Iran-Iraq War has very little to do with Scriptures and theology. But if we want to talk about deeply held faith and high ideals we need peace and democracy as a basic pre-condition, Siddiqui said.

"We have been duped into fear," he said. "To the point where we have lost our democratic values."

Honouring bridge-builders: carrying light into the future

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — After Cardinal Thomas Collins had offered a prayer in Hebrew, with a framed papal blessing displayed behind him, 96-year-old Rabbi Erwin Schild took to the Adath Israel Synagogue pulpit to expound upon the Talmud and the last 50 years of Catholic-Jewish dialogue.

"God is a pluralist. He wants diversity," said Schild. "The divine image yields not conformity, but variety. I cannot replace you and you cannot replace me."

Before him, Collins had told the Jewish congregation that the vocation of the pope belongs to us all — Christians and Jews.

"One of his titles is pontiff, or bridge-builder," Collins said. "We all must be bridge-builders. . . . We need to be bridge-builders, carriers of light into the future. It lifts us up and it is a joy and hope for the future."

Schild and his wife Laura Saxe are likely the only Jews in Toronto to have their marriage blessed by Pope Francis.

The papal blessing was an idea of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue of Toronto, a 54-year-old organization that likely would not exist

without Schild's constant advocacy.

It took the Sisters of Zion and their contacts in Rome to secure the papal blessing on the Schild's 70-year marriage.

The Schild's 70th wedding anniversary actually took place in 2014, but the blessing served as an occasion to celebrate a history of Catholic-Jewish dialogue in Toronto that actually stretches back before the Second Vatican Council issued its most revolutionary document, *Nostra Aetate*, on relations between Catholics and non-Christian religions.

Schild was the founding rabbi at Adath Israel and remains a towering figure in Toronto Jewish history, even if he only stands about five feet four inches.

More than 200 members of the Adath Israel congregation and a long list of invited guests came out to honour Erwin and Laura Schild and see Collins present the papal blessing on March 6.

"I was extremely happy to see Cardinal Collins so comfortable at this pulpit," said Schild.

Since the Second World War and the Holocaust, Catholic-Jewish dialogue has been "a liberation from fear to hope and from suspicion to trust," Schild said.

Alliance issues Vulnerable Persons' Standard

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — A broad alliance of Catholic and other organizations opposed to assisted suicide is urging that upcoming legislation provide explicit protections for disabled and other vulnerable people including a review by a judge or independent authority prior to the killing of any patient.

The recommendations are contained in a document titled the Vulnerable Persons' Standard, released March 1 in Ottawa. It contests a parliamentary committee report that recommended a "permissive" regime in which assisted suicide be made widely available to not only terminally ill patients, but to anyone, including minors under 18 and psychiatric patients, who meet a broad criteria.

The parliamentary report was "dismaying," said Michael Bach, executive vice-president of the Canadian Association for Community Living. It expressed concern about vulnerable people but that concern "appears to be rhetorical," he said, because rather than talk about treatment the parliamentary report focused on a procedure that "will bring about someone's death."

Bach said a prior judicial or legal panel review is essential, because "this is a state-authorized exception to the ban on assisted suicide."

Bach's organization is just one member of a large alliance that includes L'Arche Canada, the Catholic Health Alliance of Canada, the Catholic Organization for Life and Family (COLF), Living with Dignity, the Physicians' Alliance Against Euthanasia, the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition and many other groups that promote life and care of the mentally and physically disabled.

The alliance wants physician-assisted death restricted to "end-of-life conditions for adults in a state of advanced weakening capacities with no chance of improvement and who have enduring and intolerable suffering as a result of a grievous and irremediable medical condition."

Even then, every case should be subject to an "arm's-length authorization" that includes "an expedited prior review and authorization by a judge or independent body with expertise in the fields of health care, ethics and law."

Among more than 40 advisers, the alliance includes two representatives from the three-member panel created last summer by the Stephen Harper government, chair and palliative care expert Dr. Harvey Chochinov, and disability rights expert Catherine Frazee. Alliance advisers also include Sister Nuala Kenny, who served on the Provincial-Territorial Expert Advisory Group on Physician-Assisted Dying, McGill University



CCN/D. Gyapong

PROTECTIONS FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE — Michael Bach executive vice-president of Canadian Association for Community Living, spoke to journalists after the Supreme Court granted an extension on the Carter decision in January. A broad alliance of organizations opposed to assisted suicide is urging that upcoming legislation provide explicit protections for disabled and other vulnerable people.

bioethicist Margaret Somerville and the so-called "Father of palliative care in Canada," Dr. Balfour Mount of Montreal.

The federal panel under Chochinov "did by far the most extensive research" on assisted death, Bach said. It heard from far more witnesses and conducted a survey of nearly 15,000 Canadians which showed majority support for strong safeguards.

"There's a health side and a legal side," Bach said. One of the

criteria for a physician-assisted death is "not being vulnerable."

The alliance is calling for "equal protection for vulnerable persons" to ensure that Criminal Code amendments on physician-assisted death do not "perpetuate disadvantage or contribute to social vulnerability." It called for careful regulation and public reporting so any adverse impacts "will be identified and addressed without delay," as well as insisting on "voluntary and capable

consent" and encouragement for patients to pursue alternatives such as palliative care. It would prohibit advanced directives.

The alliance also believes every suicidal patient should have a suffering and vulnerability assessment. It would include a "careful exploration of the causes of a patient's suffering as well as any inducements that may arise from psychosocial or non-medical conditions and circumstance."

Michael Shea, president and CEO of the Catholic Health Alliance of Canada, said his group supported the Vulnerable Persons' Standard because legalizing assisted suicide poses potential harm for vulnerable people. The federal government has until June 6 to enact legislation in order to meet a Supreme Court deadline.

"We are concerned about a number of the recommendations of the parliamentary committee on this matter," Shea said. "The potential impact on vulnerable persons is clearly a concern."

John O'Donnell, director of outreach and communications for L'Arche Canada, said his organization is morally opposed to assisted suicide but supports the goals contained in the Standard.

"We signed on because we believe it's the best we're able to do under the circumstances," he said. "We still have to be in on the conversation and signing the Standard is one way to do that."

Toronto and Ottawa prelates step up campaign against euthanasia

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Catholic archbishops in two of Canada's largest English-speaking dioceses stepped up their campaign against euthanasia and assisted suicide, calling the faithful to action March 5 - 6.



CCN/D. Gyapong

Archbishop Terrence Prendergast

Both Cardinal Thomas Collins and Archbishop Terrence Prendergast issued pastoral letters that were read in parishes during masses over the weekend of the Fourth Sunday of Lent, garnering much mainstream media coverage as a result.

"Physicians across our country who have devoted their lives to healing patients will soon be asked to do the exact opposite," Collins wrote. "They will not be asked to ease their suffering by providing them with treatment and loving care, but by putting them to death. In fact, killing a patient will no

longer be considered a crime, but will actually be seen as a kind of health care, complete with legislation to regulate it."

Collins said recent recommendations of a parliamentary committee "should shock us to the core." The recommendations open the possibility of euthanasia for minors; include advanced directives so those diagnosed with dementia can "pre-schedule" their deaths; and recommend allowing euthanasia for those with psychiatric conditions.

The committee also recommended doctors who refuse to kill their patients find someone else to do it, he said. "No other country in the world requires such a violation of conscience."

"It is unjust to force people to act against their conscience in order to be allowed to practise as a physician or, in the case of a health care facility, in order to qualify for government funding. It is not tolerant of religious diversity," Collins stressed. "It is religious discrimination that punishes those who so faithfully serve everyone who comes to them, and have done so since before Canada existed but who, in good conscience, cannot perform some procedures, such as helping to kill their patients."

Collins urged Catholics to join the Coalition for HealthCARE and Conscience via its website Canadiansforconscience.ca. It represents an array of groups, including the Toronto archdiocese and physicians' organizations that wish to protect the conscientious rights of health care workers and religious institutions.

"Mindful of the inherent dignity

of each person, it is time for families across the country to have a difficult but necessary conversation about the reality of death," Collins said. "We need to understand the destructive implications of these legal changes, and offer truly loving and merciful alternatives."

He urged Catholics to use the site to help them in contacting their elected representatives.

Prendergast also called on Catholics to share their concerns with their federal and provincial representatives.

"Talk to your friends and co-workers about the grave threat to human dignity and life that assisted suicide and euthanasia pose to our most vulnerable neighbours," he said. "Explain to your children, grandchildren, friends, and associates the importance of reverencing human life that begins at conception in the womb and ends in natural death."

Prendergast explained Catholic teaching that taking one's life or that of another is "morally unacceptable."

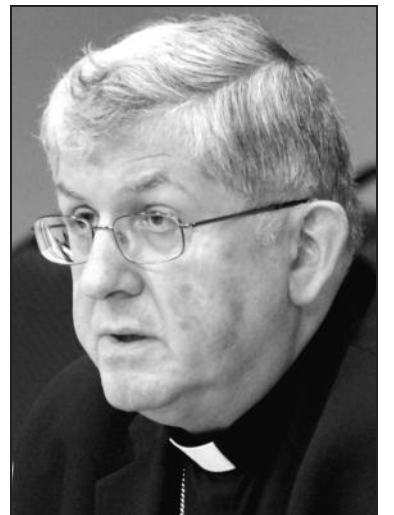
"To formally co-operate in the killing of the disabled, frail, sick,

or suffering, even if motivated by a misplaced compassion, requires a prior judgment that such lives do not have value and are not worth living," he said. "But all human life has value. The law should protect all life. No one forfeits the right to life because of illness or disability."

The Ottawa archbishop called on all Catholics to fast and pray that parliamentarians "heed our concerns," he said. "Let us pray that our legislators at the national and provincial levels will protect life, especially that of the most vulnerable, and that they will respect the right of medical professionals to refuse to take part in assisted-dying."

In news coverage, following the remarks, Prendergast said those who request a doctor-assisted death would not be able to receive the Last Rites. A priest could come and pray with them, and perhaps try to dissuade them, he said.

"Take courage," the archbishop said in his pastoral letter. "Do not be afraid to stand up for the value and dignity of life. Catholic



CCN/D. Gyapong

Cardinal Thomas Collins

Christians have a special role to play in resisting this culture of death. I call on all Catholics to be strong supporters and proponents of the Gospel of Life. Make your voice heard."

The archbishops' pastoral letters are but the latest in a series of interventions by bishops from across the country and by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops on this matter.



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Faith groups urged to stay active on climate change

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Faith communities must stay hopeful and engaged to ensure governments live up to climate change commitments, says the leader of the United Church of Canada's delegation to COP21.

Mardi Tindal, the former moderator of the United Church of Canada, was among speakers at a panel discussion March 9 on the theme "What's next for faith communities" following the COP21 international climate change talks in Paris last December and the recent first ministers' meeting on Canada's commitments in Paris.

The event, co-sponsored by United Church Conference of Ottawa-Montreal, Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ), Faith and the Common Good, the Ottawa Roman Catholic Archdiocese, the Canadian Food Grains Bank, the Polaris Institute, and Ecology Ottawa, featured an interview with Tindal by Pulpit and Politics author Dennis Gruending and a panel of representatives of some sponsoring groups.

Appearing via Skype to reduce her carbon footprint, Tindal said she and other representatives of faith communities and civil society groups were struck by how differently they were treated by the Canadian government's representatives at COP21 than at previous climate talks. They found themselves included and welcomed in the process, kept informed at every stage and consulted. "It was a shock, but a good shock," Tindal said. "We had to shift to accept their invitation to work with them."

But since Paris, Tindal said she is still "bumping into a lot of denial about climate change" and even some "personal resentment" against herself "for saying this is something people needed to be concerned about."

She praised Canada's role in making sure respect for the human rights of all, including indigenous peoples; a just transition for the workforce in a move to a decarbonized future; and the creation of a just and sustainable economy. She praised Canada's commitment to holding the warming of the planet to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

"We now have, basically, to hold the government accountable," she said.

Tindal had four overall suggestions on next steps:

First, faith communities must "accept responsibility to contribute to a climate of hope," she said, noting she encounters many who say, "It's too little too late," and who fall into a "climate of despair."

One must resist the temptation to fall into pessimism on one hand and "ungrounded idealism on the other," she said. The safest and best place to be is to be open to each other, and to help each other "find our way to hope."

The "best hope lies in our quiet and determined resolve" of communities to help each other adapt, she said. Progress "cannot be taken for granted," because even now politicians are taking into consideration how much



CCN/D. Gyapong

PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE — Citizens for Public Justice senior policy analyst Karri Munn-Venn, Polaris Institute's Tony Clarke, and Ecology Ottawa's Graham Saul participated in a panel on what's next for faith communities after the climate change talks in Paris last December.

political capital they can spend on this issue. "We have to be part of the public engagement," to encourage the politicians, she said.

Second, faith communities can also provide spiritual nurture and prayer on combating climate change. Tindal said "it meant a great deal to see the non-stop prayer cycle" initiated by CPJ so that every hour of the COP21 talks was covered by prayer.

Third, faith communities must "take seriously the need to live with integrity," Tindal said. That means reducing our own carbon emissions on our own properties as much as we expect the government to do.

It also means committing to help people in the Global South who suffer disproportionately from climate change impacts caused by the north. "The south does not have the resources there to adapt to decarbonization."

"We have to contemplate a completely renewable, non-carbon economy by 2050," she said.

How are we in the churches going to reduce our carbon emissions and deal with our leaky buildings and our transportation? she asked.

Fourth, faith communities must work with and encourage those working in various levels of government and in other civil society groups to have an "ethical conversation," Tindal said. Working together will help us all figure out the next steps. Faith groups must also continue their advocacy, she said.

Tindal said the conversations must also include people in the oil and gas industry. While in 2009, Tindal was the only Canadian faith leader at the Copenhagen talks, she was pleased to see so many diverse groups at Paris, among them indigenous groups, faith communities, unions, community organizations and chambers of commerce. "We all need to be in the room," she said, urging faith communities to "find out when the conversations are taking place" and to offer their buildings as venues for these conversations.

While scientists might be able to warn of the impacts of climate change, faith communities can provide the moral dimension. "It is wrong" when inaction on climate change would cause so many people to "lose their lives through starvation" and "see their nations sinking under the sea."

Tindal urged faith communi-

ties to offer encouragement and to celebrate progress instead of always criticizing. "Some are risking considerable political capital to move us toward the environmental goals," she said.

"We are talking about a huge social transformation," she said.

During the panel discussion, Polaris Institute director Tony Clarke said taking on the envi-

ronment means also taking on the economy. The system is broken, he said, noting high unemployment and poverty in the midst of affluence. He urged joining in the One Million Climate Jobs campaign to create employment in a green economy; public investment in renewable energy; a renewable buildings campaign to make them energy efficient; and a commitment to public transit, inside cities and between them.

Ecology Ottawa founding director Graham Saul spoke on grassroots efforts to turn Ottawa into "the green capital of Canada." He also pointed out Canada has 35 years to "transition from our dependency on oil and gas. "We have to make sure the choices we are making are going to invest in the jobs of tomorrow," he said.

CPJ's senior policy analyst Karri Munn-Venn spoke of how the federal government is not going to be able to live up to its commitments without the provinces. "They need to be emboldened by our action," she said.

Munn-Venn said they will be looking to the upcoming federal budget to see what commitments there are to the environment and whether subsidies to oil and gas will remain. In the meantime, faith communities can commit to learning about the subject, sharing what they learn, study the issue and pray, she said.

Maternal health funding concerns pro-life

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Pro-life groups expressed concern overseas abortion funding is being restored in a March 7 announcement of over \$80 million in new funding for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

On the eve of International Women's Day, International Development Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau said her government "is committed to a better and more comprehensive approach to supporting the health of women in developing countries."

She described this approach as "based less on ideology and more on evidence and outcomes; an approach that fully recognizes the importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights, an approach focused on the health of women, children and adolescents which also looks at ending childhood early and forced marriages."

"Ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and empowering women and girls is central to achieving gender equality," she said.

Bibeau announced three measures to "illustrate our commitment to a more integrated approach to women's reproductive health and rights, and our commitment to the UN Population Fund."

With United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) executive director Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin at her side, Bibeau said she would provide \$15.6 million toward the 2016 UNFPA budget; contribute \$5 mil-

lion to the UNFPA contraceptive supplies program; and contribute \$11 million over five years to the UN Population Fund to help prevent pregnancies among adolescents.



CCN/D. Gyapong

Marie-Claude Bibeau

She also announced \$50 million to the UNFPA to "train midwives and other front-line health care providers in South Sudan, a country which has some of the world's worst maternal mortality rates."

Bibeau did not mention abortion in her statement, and subsequently denied the new funding was related to abortion. But Campaign Life Coalition UN observer Matthew Wojciechowski said when people say, "sexual and reproductive health and rights," almost always comprehensive

sex education, abortion, contraception and sterilization are part of it."

"What we're always trying to do is fight against this kind of language so it won't be part of any agreed statement," he said.

Both Wojciechowski and REAL Women of Canada national vice-president Gwen Landolt viewed the announcement as a restoration of overseas abortion funding, which they both said is expected, considering Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's campaign promises. Landolt pointed to a motion the Liberal party put forward to include abortion in former prime minister Stephen Harper's maternal and child health care initiative, one that was defeated with some votes from within the Liberal caucus.

In an interview with the Globe and Mail following her announcement, Bibeau said, "We are... supporting in different ways, through different partners, numerous countries to improve their health system. Providing the service of safe abortion, maybe in some countries where it's legal, it's part of (reproductive health) and we're not against it. This is a difference. But we're not promoting it right now."

According to the Globe, an email from Bibeau's office the previous week said "the inclusion or exclusion of certain health services, such as abortion, is under the purview of recipient countries, meaning Canadian development aid could be used to fund abortions."

Arts enhances the liturgy

By Judy Gatin

SASKATOON — The Diocesan Commission for Liturgy in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon sponsored a workshop Jan. 30 at Holy Family Cathedral in Saskatoon. The topic for the day was Creating Vibrant Liturgy through Art and Environment and featured presentations by Rosa Gebhardt.

Gebhardt is a fabric artist who has been involved in Art and Environment ministry for many decades in several parishes. She was part of the design committee for the Cathedral of the Holy Family and currently leads a team of volunteers there.

The workshop began with a presentation about the basic principles of liturgical art and environment ministry. Quoting from the document, Environment and Art in Catholic Worship, Gebhardt explained that “liturgy flourishes in a climate of hospitality. A simple and attractive beauty in everything that is used or done in liturgy is the most effective invitation to this kind of experience. One should be able to sense something special in everything that is seen and heard, touched and smelled and tasted in liturgy.”

She explained the four basic principles for art and environment in liturgical spaces: noble simplicity and beauty, quality and appropriateness, authenticity, and use of the whole space.

Throughout the day, Gebhardt expanded on these principles and gave more detailed information on how to enhance each of the liturgical seasons of the year.

Photographs provided ideas and examples for decorating in parishes. Several examples of hangings that Gebhardt and her

team of seamstresses have created were also on display.

This workshop was videotaped

and will be available for viewing on the Saskatoon diocesan website.



K. Yaworski

ART AND ENVIRONMENT — A workshop entitled Creating Vibrant Liturgy through Art and Environment held Jan. 30 at Holy Family Cathedral in Saskatoon featured presentations by Rosa Gebhardt, a fabric artist who has been involved in art and environment ministry for decades.

Annual appeal highest since the year 2000

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — It is the largest amount ever collected by the Regina Archdiocese Annual Appeal since its inception in 2000: \$1,335,026 when the books closed at the end of February on the 2015 annual appeal.

“Christina Attard (former development director who left in May 2015) laid the groundwork for the campaign,” said archdiocesan Donor Services co-ordinator Denise Walsh. “We had an exciting kickoff in September. The video received many positive viewings and the ministry staff explained to their parishes, when in contact with them, that the appeal supports their ministry,” said Walsh, explaining the campaign’s success. She also credited Diana Demaria who, as one of her duties in the chancery office, is support staff for the annual appeal for her work in updating parish information.

The campaign goal has been set at \$1.4 million for the past several years and this is the closest to the goal it has come since the campaign began in 2000.

Walsh noted the campaign realized increases in almost all categories: of the 136 parishes who had campaign goals, 134 responded, which was an increase from previous years, and the number of parishes that exceeded their goal was also higher.

Parishes that exceed their goal are allowed to keep 80 per cent of the overage. Approximately \$70,000 will be returned to the 33 who exceeded their goal.

“The number of donors increased from last year; we had online giving on the website (again

attributed to Attard) and we saw a huge increase in that because we put it as one of the options on the gift card, and some people who gave in previous years increased their donation,” said Walsh.

The appeal supports 21 archdiocesan ministries and eight third-party organizations (called partners). A committee decides how much each ministry and each partner is to receive and this is usually established by the time the campaign is actually launched. The annual appeal begins in January and ends in December of each year, but the official kickoff occurs in September and the books close at the end of February the following year. Thus the campaign actually runs for about six months.

Health care, which supports chaplains in hospitals and care homes, receives the highest amount at \$148,000, followed by support for priests and parishes at \$128,000; the permanent diaconate program receives \$111,000 and the youth program receives \$106,000, rounding out the top four ministries. Ecumenism receives \$1,475, the lowest amount, but much of that ministry is delivered by individuals working in other ministries.

The above are listed in the campaign brochure, but the campaign also receives requests from non-listed organizations for special projects and supports them when it has the funds. Last year several such requests were supported with \$60,000 in grants. The 2015 campaign is not really running once the new year starts, as that would suggest people could still contribute to the 2015 campaign, when they can’t. They are just finishing up the books that closed on Dec. 15, 2015.

Palliative care does not prolong or hasten death: Walker

Continued from page 3

ment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual.”

“Palliative care doesn’t prolong or hasten death,” said Walker, noting that we live in a death-denying culture, which has created issues that surround the dying process.

“We spend a lot of money denying death, denying that we are sick, or that we are even palliatively ill. Patients who are palliative often don’t like the word palliative,” she said. “We want to bring good, symptom-managed care, comfort, family-centred care — but we can’t do it if we are not allowed in because the word palliative is offensive, or because all we will talk about is cure.”

By taking every treatment to “buy more time,” sometimes all that patients are getting is more sick time, she said, calling for a clear and compassionate look at end-of-life issues, and the right to refuse burdensome treatments. “We need to get ready for our own dying journeys and not be so fearful about what they are going to look like. We need to be a society that makes dying filled with kindness and compassion.”

Walker shared images and sto-

ries demonstrating the beauty of the dying process when patients and families are fully supported and cared for — for instance by a palliative care team. “It is always a team in palliative care. We don’t presume that one person can deal with this on their own. Suffering is not a one-person job,” said Walker.

Responding to pain requires a holistic approach, she said. It involves “responding to ‘total pain’ — to pain coming from our social relationships, our physical condition, our psychological vantage point, and yes, even our spiritual point of view.”

There is also pain for family members who accompany someone through the dying process — at times, more pain than there is for the patient, she observed. “Sometimes the request to hurry things up comes from kids who are having a lot of pain at the bedside of watching their loved ones die.”

However Walker noted that pain is not the main reason that people request physician-hastened death or medical aid in dying. In Oregon the top reasons that physician-assisted suicide is requested is the fear of losing autonomy (93 per cent) and the fear of being a burden on family and friends (49 per cent) with fear of pain or other

symptoms the reason only about 28 per cent of the time.

Autonomy and dignity are two big words that underscore physician-hastened death, she said. “But are you undignified if you have an illness that takes you to a vulnerable place?” she asked.

“Somehow dignity has come to mean that I am under my own control, but the quality of being excellent, worthy or honourable is actually the definition of dignity, and it has nothing to do with function.”

Dying doesn’t make patients unlovable, she stressed, rather in their vulnerability they attract care and compassion.

“But people are very worried that they are just going to be a nuisance, that they are going to be a burden. They don’t feel that they are lovable, that they are worth the care,” she said. As an aside Walker urged her listeners to reach out to the elderly and others who “don’t know that their lives count any more.”

Although euthanasia is strongly advocated to relieve pain and suffering, doctors have increasingly “good recipes” to treat physical pain, she said. “But what do we do with other pain and suffering as a society? With voiced hopelessness? With loneliness?”

Walker pointed to vulnerable groups who are concerned about the legalization of physician-assisted death. “The Saskatchewan Association and Canadian Association for Community Living are worried about what this law will speak to the disabled in our society. What is their life worth? Or what of the freshly injured spinal cord patient — who almost universally wants you to pull the plug, (who) wants you not to treat them? And yet they go on to be absolute heroes to our society. What do we speak to them?”

There are also a lot of unanswered questions about how physician-assisted death will change palliative care, change perceptions of dying, or change grieving processes, she added.

“Will it change palliative care? I don’t know. Our living and dying? I don’t know. Will it become an expected norm for those who are aging and feeling hurt?”

Walker also raised the question of Medical Aid In Dying being promoted as a cost-saving measure. She encouraged those with concerns about any aspect of the issue to speak up and to get involved. “I would suggest that you let your government reps know — let the legislative persons know what you think. And if you have

concerns, let them know.”

Conscience protection is vital, she said. “We need to figure out how we respectfully allow physicians to be who they are. I would hope that we would not insist that a physician step over their conscience in providing this. We haven’t done that in other issues that are controversial, and I hope that we would have the same respect now.”

She added: “The Supreme Court did say ‘willing patient, willing doctor.’ But some of these committees are now saying ‘no, that’s not adequate,’ and they are defining what effective referral looks like. What about conscientious objection? Choice is everywhere in the media. Well what choice will docs have? What choice will I have in whether I want to participate?”

This will be the law in Canada whether we approve of it or not, she said. “But I still want to be able to live with myself at the end of each day, and live according to whatever I feel is my rightful conscience, my conscientious duty. I hope we can find our way in a system that will respect both.”

She added again: “But shame on us if we think that 30 per cent palliative care access in Canada is acceptable.”

Event held in support of persecuted Christians

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — An evening of awareness and fundraising was held March 6 in support of persecuted Christians around the world.

Proceeds from the event went toward a newly established start-up fund to assist parishes interested in sponsoring refugees. The Sponsorship Fund has been named in honour of Victor and Lucille Granger of St. Bruno Parish in Bruno, who were also sponsors of the fundraising dinner.

The Bruno couple took the initiative of sponsoring the new fund as a way to respond to the

refugee crisis, in which millions are fleeing from violence and persecution around the world, explained Victor. "We decided this was a way we could help out, and encourage parishes that can undertake sponsorships."

"This fund will provide seed money to assist parishes in beginning the process of refugee sponsorship," said Myron Rogal of the diocesan Justice and Peace Office. "This is such an important area of need in our society."

East-Indian cuisine, door prizes, displays, entertainment, children's activities, videos and a program presenting information about the persecution and violence

experienced by Christians in Pakistan were features of the third annual event, sponsored this year by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, Rock of Ages Church, Knights of Columbus Council #8215 and the Friends of Pakistan.

Nadeem Imtiaz Bhatti of Friends of Pakistan described life in Pakistan under Islamic blasphemy laws which permit widespread persecution of Christians and other religious minorities.

He said that the dire situation facing religious minorities in Pakistan is not adequately recognized by the global community. At the same time, "even super powers find it hard to stop these brutal attacks," he said. "Pakistan's blasphemy laws are used as an excuse to attack, persecute and terrorize Christians."

Many Pakistani Christians have fled to other countries to escape persecution in their homeland, he said. Thousands have sought asylum in Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Thailand, and endure heartbreaking situations as refugees, Bhatti added.

"Many times they are not allowed to work or to attend school" or are kept in migration detention centres. "I plead with all



K. Yaworski

PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS — During a recent event highlighting the plight of persecuted Christians, Rev. Kevin McGee, vicar-general for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon (centre), expressed appreciation to Victor and Lucille Granger of Bruno for their establishment of a fund to assist parishes with some of the costs of undertaking refugee sponsorship.

churches," said Bhatti. "Please sponsor refugees from these countries. Your help will change people's lives."

He expressed hope that more persecuted Christians can find a safe haven in Canada. "Canadians are the most generous people in the world."

Until the end of April, donations can be made to the Victor and Lucille Granger Refugee Sponsorship Fund by contacting the Diocese of Saskatoon Catholic Foundation at the Catholic Pastoral Centre in Saskatoon.

Saskatchewan election kicks off for April 4

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — Saskatchewan's official 28-day election campaign got under way March 8 and will end April 4.

The campaign has really been underway since just before Christmas 2015 with the NDP, Sask. Party, the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (SFL), the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses (SUN), the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), as well as other groups participating in ad campaigns supporting or criticizing one side or the other. Saskatchewan's four-year fixed election date was Nov. 2, 2015, but that conflicted with the federal government's fixed election date, Oct. 19, 2015, so the Saskatchewan Government opted to move it to April 4, 2016.

Six political parties are in the running with only the NDP or the governing Sask. Party given any chance of forming the next government. The March 1, 2016, poll conducted by Mainstreet Research has the Saskatchewan Party and leader Brad Wall well out in front with 49 per cent support followed by the NDP and leader Cam Broten with 28 per cent. Progressive Conservatives, with the Liberals, Green, and Western Independent Party all show in single digits. It shows a three-percentage point gain for the Sask. Party from the February poll and a two per cent drop for the NDP.

Sask. Party leader Brad Wall has said his party will campaign on its economic record while NDP leader Cam Broten says his party will attack what it calls the govern-

ment's waste and mismanagement. The Sask. Party will point to the number of new schools under construction to show its support for education; the Regina bypass, although controversial, will be touted as the largest single infrastructure in the province's history, creating over 8,000 jobs; the increase in the number of medical personnel — doctors and nurses — the continuing increase in Saskatchewan's population 1,138,879 (Oct. 1, 2015 StatsCan); exports continuing; employment numbers up from January 2015 (but down from December 2015) and the Saskatchewan unemployment rate at 6.1 per cent seasonally adjusted to 5.6 per cent.

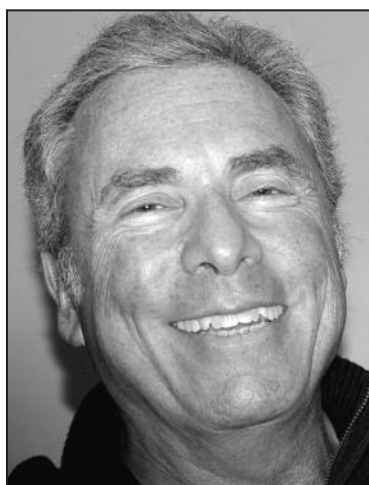
The NDP will attack the Regina bypass as a good idea gone bad with a ballooning costs and big contracts going to out-of-province contractors. The government's LEAN program in the health sector will be a favourite NDP target, as will increasing surgical wait times and what it calls neglect and lack of standards in care homes for the elderly.

Broten has said that getting rid of government waste will help finance new programs and put more money in the pockets of Saskatchewan voters. Wall has said his party does not intend to make many promises because the government cannot afford them with the downturn in resource revenues, oil and potash particularly, and has promised spending restraints rather than tax increases to control the projected deficits over the next two budget cycles. The 2016 - 2017 budget is expected to be brought down sometime after the election.

Multi Faith sponsors refugee family

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — Regina Multi Faith Forum's member organizations have come together to sponsor a refugee family in a living



F. Flegel

Rabbi Jeremy Parnes

example of what ecumenism is all about. "We wanted to demonstrate to the wider community that different faiths can work together and set an example to

work such a humanitarian cause," said Gagan Deep Singh, Regina Multi Faith Forum president.

The forum had never undertaken anything like this before, concentrating mainly on its initial purpose of promoting the understanding and acceptance of different faiths. It counts among its members most Christian denominations, several Eastern and Middle Eastern Faiths — including the Muslim and Jewish faith who are often seen as warring communities on the international scene.

Gagan Deep Singh said the members were canvassed to gauge interest and received a very enthusiastic response. "Because we had never done anything like this before we held a meeting with people who had experience, who advised us what to do," said Deep Singh. A committee was formed with Rabbi Jeremy Parnes of Beth Jacob Synagogue as chair.

"There are two groups involved," said Parnes in an interview with the PM. "Multi Faith partnered with the Roman Catholic archdiocese because they are the agreement holder that makes it possible for us to do this without us having to go through all the hoops and paper work of getting our own agreement in place with government." The committee began gathering resources, including money, and have pledged just under \$27,000,

\$2,000 above what is considered the norm to provide for a family for one year.

They have not yet secured a residence for the family because the size of the residence depends on the size of the family and here the synagogue can help out because it has a settlement officer. "We (the synagogue) have a settlement agreement with the government to help settle newcomers. It's for anyone not just Jewish newcomers." The synagogue is one of several Regina organizations that offer settlement services.

The morning of the interview, Parnes was informed that a family has been offered to them. "They're a family with grandparents, a daughter and two children aged about five and seven. The husband of the daughter disappeared about four years ago," said Parnes.

He believes the family is Syrian and have been living in a camp in Lebanon, and have family already living in Regina. A meeting has been scheduled with the committee to see if this family is acceptable.

"Once the paperwork and everything has been approved I would imagine that the next available transport would mean that we could bring them in." He doesn't know exactly when that would be, but expects it could happen quickly.



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Jane Philpott: interview with a Liberal minister

Jane Philpott was elected to Parliament and appointed Health Minister last fall. Prior to that she worked as a family physician in Canada and also Niger from 1989 to 1998. Philpott and her husband Pep have four children and attend Community Mennonite Church in Stouffville, Ont. The minister spoke by phone with Will Braun on Feb. 29. The following interview has been edited for length and clarity.

By Will Braun
Canadian Mennonite magazine

WB: What Liberal action are you most proud of so far?

JP: Our work to bring 25,000, and now more, Syrian refugees to Canada and to welcome them as permanent residents of Canada, and in doing so to respond to one of the greatest humanitarian crises of our time.

WB: During the campaign you said the election was "about the soul of our nation" — how do you think the soul of a nation is shaped?

JP: I think the soul is shaped by the values that feed into it and feed into the decisions that are made. I feel like the campaign was a choice between whether we wanted a nation where decisions were made on the basis of fear and division and sometimes anger. I was proud that my party was offering policies that were driven by compassion and generosity and equity. I want to be part of a nation that looks on people fundamentally from the perspective of, how can we care for one another. I think ultimately that's how Canadians look upon one another and I think that's part of why we were successful.

WB: In Manitoba's Bible Belt, where I live, a majority of people vote Conservative and don't like

Braun lives on a farm near Morden, Man., and writes for Canadian Mennonite magazine, in which this article first appeared.

the word liberal, whether it is capitalized or not — what does the word mean to you?

JP: To me it means generosity of spirit; it means fair access to opportunities. As a person of faith, to me liberal policies are very much in keeping with my values of serving people and looking out for the interests of others.

WB: Many Canadians are old. Your mandate letter from Mr. Trudeau charges you with increasing the availability of home care — do you have a sense of when changes could be expected?

JP: The work on home care will be part of my work toward negotiating a new health accord with the provinces and territories who are primarily responsible for the delivery of care. So it's probably a number of months away. It's going to take us the better part of this year to negotiate the details of that accord. In the mean time I think some provinces are starting to try to work on improving access to home care.

WB: Legislation to guide physician-assisted dying is required by June 6 — what is your assessment of the safeguards recommended in the recent special joint committee report?

JP: The report just came out a few days ago. I've read it all and I'm in the process of reviewing it. I will be spending some time this week talking to colleagues in my department and in justice in terms of how to respond to it. I appreciate the work of the committee.

We're starting to hear some

consensus around some of the challenging issues in terms of the work of this special joint committee lining up closely to some of the other reports we've received from the external panel and from the provincial and territorial committee as well so I think that will be quite helpful to us.

WB: Health care costs in Canada were an estimated \$220 billion in 2015. Hospitals, drugs and doctors are the big-ticket items. What role do you see for preventive measures that reduce the need for them?

JP: I'm responsible for the Public Health Agency of Canada so I'm actually spending quite a bit of time with them looking at some preventative health measures — things like making sure Canadians are more active, that they're making healthier choices in eating.

The other thing that I would say is that — you've possibly heard the term "social determinants of health" — and that in fact what helps people to be healthy is to be able to access a job, get a good education, have adequate housing, to be able to rise out of poverty. So I've said to my cabinet colleagues that in terms of actually making people healthy it's everybody's job in the cabinet.

WB: Health indicators in indigenous communities are grim and diet is a significant factor contributing to many health issues, including diabetes. One remote Manitoba First Nation is addressing health and other issues by growing healthy food locally. Ironically, a carrot imported by the non-indigenous monopoly retailer is subsidized by Ottawa's Nutrition North program, but a locally grown carrot is not. Would you see potential for using health dollars



Dr. Jane Philpott

to put First Nation-grown food on equal footing with subsidized fly-in food?

JP: I will look into that situation. Because, of course, if people can get access to good quality, healthy, locally grown food then that is certainly preferable.

WB: On election night, Mr. Trudeau said, "Conservatives are not our enemies, they are our neighbours." How do you include the other parties in your work?

No party has a monopoly on

good ideas. I try wherever possible to encourage the good work of my colleagues, whatever party they're from. If people are asking me questions (in the House) that I think are good questions or they are referring to good work that they're doing, I am happy to support and endorse the work of my colleagues regardless of the party that they are in. I think our emphasis will continue to be that we need to work together and if possible not make these issues partisan issues. (In) the matters that I'm facing, like the health of indigenous communities, there's no room for partisan politics.

I don't have patience for political games in those kinds of matters. If you've got a good idea I don't care what party you're from, tell me your idea and let's try to find ways to look for solutions.

WB: Is there anything else you would like to say?

I would just say the things that I value about the Mennonite heritage are the focus on peace and social justice and caring for the earth and I think those are values that are tremendously important to someone like me in trying to serve my community in a political portfolio.

Queen's House Retreat and Renewal Centre

Retreats & Workshops

Spiritual Formation Days — Fr. Kevin McGee

Saturday, March 19. Cost: \$40 includes registration, presentation & 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.

Maranatha Yoga — Kate O'Gorman.

Mondays, March 21, 7:15 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Cost: \$10 drop-in.

Authentic Transformation

A Richard Rohr Webcast with Sarah Donnelly.

Tuesday March 22, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m., supper and Webcast. Cost: \$20. Webcast only, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. Cost: \$10.

A Day Away — Gisele Bauche.

Second Wednesday of the month, 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

April 13 May 11. Cost: \$25, w/lunch.

The Book of Exodus — Paul Fachel, OMI.

Wednesdays, April 6, May 4, June 1 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. Cost: \$15.

Knights of Columbus Brother's Keeper Breakfast

Second Tuesday of each month. Next gathering April 12, 7 a.m. - 8 a.m. followed by breakfast and fellowship.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION DAYS: as part of Spiritual Direction Formation Saturdays 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

April 16 Stages of Faith on the Spiritual Journey — Sr. Teresita Kambeitz, OSU

May 28 Eco Spirituality and the Cosmos — Sr. Maureen Wild, SC

June 18 Monastic Way: Benedictine Spirituality for Today — Sr. Mary Coswin, OSB

July 9 Biblical Spirituality: Spirituality of the Psalms — Bp. Wiesner & G. Bauche

Cost: \$40 per session (includes registration, refreshments and lunch).

Ongoing Events at Queen's House

Centering Prayer: Monday evenings 7 p.m. ♦ **Taizé Prayer for**

Christian Unity: Second Tuesday of the month, 8 p.m. ♦

Personal Day(s) of Private Prayer: Book anytime ♦

Queen's House Weekly Celebration of Holy Eucharist:

Wednesdays, 3 p.m. (call to confirm time — all are warmly welcome!) ♦

24-Hour Eucharistic Adoration:

Fourth Monday of the month, 12 p.m. - Tuesday, 12 p.m.

For program details visit www.queenshouse.org

To register please call 306-242-1916

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Easter's rising tide of faith-based movies no mystery

Screenings & Meanings

Gerald Schmitz



Get ready for another wave of commercial Hollywood movies hoping to cash in on the paschal season in the Christian calendar. The good news is that they are much superior to the god-awful Gods of Egypt which deservedly tanked at the box office. The less good news is that, in aiming to please the faithful, they offer little in terms of a deeper exploration of the meaning of faith.

That Christian targeting is made quite explicit by Rory Bruer, Sony Pictures' president of worldwide distribution. As he told *TheWrap*, faith-based film "helps bring a whole other audience to the movies, which is something we all want and . . . is really good for our business." This is then pitched to a broader audience by the theatre chains. For example, a promotional blurb from Cineplex promises that: "These films all deal with religion in different ways, and can be enjoyed by everyone, regardless of personal faith." In other words, expect movies that are inoffensive and unchallenging.

Risen The Young Messiah Miracles from Heaven

Risen (<http://www.risen-movie.com/>), the first to be released, comes from Affirm Films, the Christian division of Sony Pictures. The pivotal character is not Jesus, called "Yeshua" (Cliff Curtis), but the Legion commander Clavius (Joseph Fiennes), loyal tribune of Pontius Pilate (Peter Firth), the nervous Roman in charge of Judea. The movie opens at the time of the crucifixion as Clavius is otherwise occupied slaughtering rebellious Jewish zealots. He gets no rest, being sent by Pilate to the execution site to finish the job. The earthquakes and other biblical allusions occur.

We get an abbreviated version of how the Jewish religious authorities have conspired to have the Nazarene "messiah" eliminated once and for all despite his promise

to "rise on the third day." Their concern to make sure the body of Christ stays dead and buried is shared by Pilate who wants order restored before an imminent visit of the emperor Tiberius. Although Sanhedrin member Joseph of Arimathea and Jesus' disciples are allowed to take his body for burial, Clavius gets to oversee securing the entombment sealed by a huge rock with guards posted to prevent any body snatching.

Of course as we know the body disappears as though the tomb was blasted open. Mary Magdalene (Maria Botto) makes an appearance and word circulates of sightings of the risen Yeshua even as the frightened disciples are hunkered down wondering what to do. Anxious to put a stop to the rumours spreading of divine resurrection, Pilate sends Clavius and his soldiers on a fruitless search to come up with a crucified corpse he can present to squelch the stories. What happens instead is that while watching the disciples with suspicion, Clavius is present when the risen Lord appears to them. From persecutor, the heathen warrior undergoes a conversion, casts off his armour and becomes himself a follower. He even observes Christ's ascension into heaven, visualized here as a fantastical absorption into the sun rising over the horizon.

To put it mildly, *Risen*, filmed in Spain and Malta, features a good deal of invention as though the gospel accounts needed some extra confirmation by introducing the witness of a hardened skeptical Roman soldier. (A much deeper probing of the last days of Jesus and the empty tomb is *Story of Judas* by French-Algerian actor-director Rabah Ameur-Zaïmeche,

which screened at the Toronto Film Festival last year. But it's very unlikely to get any significant North America theatrical release.)

Risen's added new testament won't test anyone's faith given its reverential intentions. That is the polar opposite from Belgian director Jaco Van Dormael's absurdist satire "*Le tout nouveau testament*" (*The Brand New Testament*), which premiered at the Cannes Festival last May to strong reviews. It portrays God as a cranky middle-aged man living in Brussels with a frumpy wife and unruly young daughter. Older brother "JC" is a statue that periodically comes to life. Those wacky proceedings are not meant to be taken seriously unless one lacks a sense of humour. Still, I would not recommend it to the easily perturbed.

moving." Rice returned to the Catholic Church in 1998 but is a controversial figure. Her book is a reverential imagining of one year in the boyhood of Jesus from age seven, necessarily inventive since we know almost nothing of detail from the gospel accounts of these early years. A first attempt to bring the novel to the screen was shelved in 2009. With the Iranian-American Nowrasteh at the helm, who has described himself as "Muslim by birth, Christian by marriage, and Jewish by inclination," this version stays faithful to the book's biblical spirit.

The Israel of the boy Jesus Bar-Joseph (Adam Greaves-Neal) is torn by civil strife and suffering under brutal Roman rule. Well-known actor Sean Bean plays a Roman commander, Severus. The

the Christ for the entire family. We even hope that, in some small way, our film leads viewers to the transformation and grace that Jesus extends to us all."

The third faith feature, Patricia Riggen's *Miracles from Heaven*, in theatres March 16, is like *Heaven is for Real* (2014), a purported story of a child's seemingly miraculous recovery from a near-death experience. The story is based on the eponymous book by the child's mother, Christy Beam, which carries the subtitle *A Little Girl, Her Journey to Heaven, and Her Amazing Story of Healing*. In Burleson, Texas, 10-year-old Annabel (Kylie Rogers) is diagnosed with a rare incurable digestive disease (pseudo-obstruction motility disorder) that requires her to use feeding



G. Schmitz

EASTER STORY — The crucifixion scene from *Capilla de las Animas*, Santiago de Compostela in Spain at left, and Jesus rises from the dead at right, tell the Easter story. Films hoping to cash in on the paschal season offer little in terms of a deeper exploration of the meaning of faith, writes Gerald Schmitz.

There's no fear of any Christian backlash from our second faith movie *The Young Messiah* (<http://www.theyoungmessiah.com/>), adapted from the 2005 Anne Rice novel *Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt* by director/co-writer Cyrus Nowrasteh and Betsy Nowrasteh. The filmmakers have taken no chances by holding advance screenings for select American faith leaders including Boston's Cardinal Sean O'Malley whose promotional blurb calls it "captivating, inspiring and deeply

holy family has had to flee to Alexandria, Egypt, to escape the murderous wrath of King Herod. When Jesus is seven they return from Egypt to Nazareth while still facing considerable dangers. Although the older Herod has died, his son of the same name (Jonathan Bailey) is just as anxious to eliminate any potential messiah. Jesus has yet to make his presence known in the temple in Jerusalem but it is evident from supernatural abilities that he is no ordinary boy. At the same time, Joseph (Vincent Walsh) and Mary (Sara Lazzaro) wrestle with how to relate to their miraculously conceived son. As Joseph puts it rather awkwardly: "How do you explain God to his own son?" Indeed.

The fictional stuff, largely filmed in Italy, is at least biblically based and the filmmakers' ambitious intentions notably faith driven. As Nowrasteh puts it: "While we hope that our film finds a place alongside other Jesus classics, it's more important to us that it inspires people to visit, or revisit, the Jesus story from a fresh new angle. As believers, we hope that children will be attracted by another child's story — Jesus' story — and that this can be a Passion of

tubes. In 2011, following a freak accident falling nine metres, Annabel has the near-death episode that instead seemingly cures her of the disease. Annabel speaks of having visited heaven. The mystified doctors who treat her have no explanation for the disappearance of her symptoms.

The devoutly Christian Beam family have no doubts as to its divine source. They always believed in miracles and that miracles had already touched other people in their church. Christy Beam is played by prominent Texas-born actress Jennifer Garner (who recently filed for divorce from actor-director Ben Affleck). Interviewed after the film's Dallas premiere last month she enthused: "I love the message in the film, and I love the message of hope. I love how inspiring the film is." She has no doubt Annabel's story is totally sincere.

One might ask what the Easter promise of eternal life is really about if the portal to a heavenly afterlife can be accessed through such odd accidents. Viewers will have to judge for themselves whether childlike faith and belief in miracles are any help on their own life's journey.

May the celebration of Easter energize you with the gift of reconciliation and with new life in the Spirit.



Abbot Peter Novecosky
and Monks of St. Peter's Abbey

Characters' struggles on Downton were universal



Everyday Theology

Louise McEwan

"All's well that end's well," "everything comes out in the wash," and "they all lived happily ever after" describe the grand finale of *Downton Abbey*, the wildly popular British period drama about life in one of England's grand country houses.

Charles Dickens would have been proud. Coincidences, meddling, and the triumph of goodness all contributed to the final episode with the hopes and aspirations of almost every character coming to fruition.

I was hooked on *Downton* from the very first episode. The acting, the set, the costumes (could there have been more beautiful dresses than the ones on display in the finale?), the character development, the social commentary, and even the incredible plot twists that occasionally tried my patience, kept me engaged.

Dame Maggie Smith's character, Violet the Dowager Countess, had me laughing with her flawless delivery of hilarious, usually biting, and frequently wise one-liners. (As someone prone to over-thinking, I heartedly agreed with her when she said, "In my experience, second thoughts are

vastly over-rated.")

But I appreciated *Downton* for other reasons, too. I could relate to the characters and their struggles. Even though my modern-day middle-class lifestyle bears no resemblance to the upstairs/downstairs lifestyle that was the series' lifeblood, themes of change and transformation united us.

It was easy to empathize with Carson the butler, who was suspi-

cious of the telephone, or with Mrs. Patmore the cook, who was afraid of an electric mixer, because I was once hesitant to accept new technology. In 1995, when we bought our first home computer, I resisted my children's pleas to sign up for the Internet. I felt like the Dowager Countess when she quipped, "First electricity. Now telephones. Sometimes I feel as if I were living in an H.G. Wells novel."

It was difficult, too, for the characters of *Downton* to adapt to changing social and moral norms. After the Great War, the idyllic and idle existence of the privileged crumbled beneath the aspirations of a generation that fought in the trenches and kept the home fires burning. Like the great houses slated for demolition, a way of life was coming to an end.

Dissatisfied with the roles thrust upon them by an accident of birth, servants like Daisy looked to education to change her lot, while Ladies Mary and Edith challenged conventions to become successful businesswomen.

As the familiar gave way to new possibilities, the interior struggles reshaped characters from the inside out. Over six seasons, the characters grew, becoming a little more holy, as they came to grips with their imperfections and unhappiness. Haughty Lady Mary became less selfish, mean-spirited Barrow grew in kindness, and "poor little me" Lady Edith discovered her self-worth. Character transformation kept me watching *Downton Abbey* religiously on a Sunday night.

Religion, though, was curiously absent from *Downton*, except for a few notable exceptions. Alastair Bruce, historical expert for the series, said in an interview with *The Telegraph*, that the executives wanted to keep religion out of it: "Everyone panics when you try to do anything religious on the telly."

Still, religious traditions and morality played a role in the lives of the characters. Values such as decency, kindness, loyalty, kinship, and concern for others, called forth the best from characters as they struggled to overcome their pettiness. And Christian rituals, even when undertaken out of a sense of tradition rather than faith, marked life's rites of passage. Baptism celebrated birth, Christian burial accompanied death, and wedding ceremonies united lovers. Prayer too made an occasional appearance. With an honesty and poignancy that echoes the reality of prayer, Lady Mary knelt to pray for Matthew (whom she eventually marries after much plot wrangling). "Dear Lord, I don't pretend to have much credit with you. I'm not even sure that you're there. But if you are, and if I've ever done anything good, I beg you to keep him safe."

In *Downton Abbey*'s final season, characters embraced the winds of change; even Carson began to come around, wistfully admitting, "The world is a different place from the way it was." But it was Violet, the Dowager Countess, who once again hit the nail on the head: "It makes me smile, the way we drink every year to what the future may bring."

While the future is uncertain, change is inevitable. *Downton Abbey* wrapped that theme up beautifully in the form of good entertainment.



pbs.org

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL — "While the future is uncertain, change is inevitable. *Downton Abbey* wrapped that theme up beautifully in the form of good entertainment," writes Louise McEwan.

Trail, B.C. resident Louise McEwan is a freelance writer with degrees in English and Theology. Her blog is www.fair-colouredglasses.blogspot.com. Contact her at mcewan.lou@gmail.com

Holy Saturday: the devastating pause between death and resurrection

By Caitlin Ward

I've been thinking about Holy Saturday. Liturgically speaking, it doesn't get paid much mind as far as Triduum goes. Holy Thursday is the beginning of our solemnity, Good Friday its crisis. Holy Saturday passes without

Lord, Have Mercy on Me Junior Kimbrough

much comment most years. It's on Thursday that the eucharist is instituted and Jesus is betrayed. It's on Friday that the sky goes dark, the temple curtain is rent in two, and Christ's side is pierced, his body lifeless but no bone broken.

Then we skip over to Easter,

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

and Holy Saturday just hangs out in the middle. I mean, sure, the vigil is Saturday night, but strictly speaking Holy Saturday ends at dusk. By the time we get to the vigil, we're looking to the dawn: the sunrise, the stone rolled away. Christ risen, and the world saved.

But there's that bit in the middle, isn't there? There's Saturday, named Holy though we don't pay as much attention to it as we do to the rest. I don't suppose it's that surprising. On this plane of existence, the holy day is characterized almost entirely by nothing happening. For Christ's contemporaries, it was the Sabbath, and there was nothing that could be done until Sunday. For Christ's followers now, we're waiting for something to happen tomorrow, and we can't begin to really understand what's happening in the moment on Saturday. Once upon a time it was spoken of as the Harrowing of Hell, though I don't think I've ever actually heard it referred to as such in person. I'm not sure how one goes about commemorating

something so far removed. We can talk about Triduum and Easter in concrete terms more easily. We can recount the stories, as we do on Passion Sunday, and then again during Holy Week. Christ died. Christ rose.

But there's still that bit in the middle: the pause between death and resurrection, the moment stretching into eternity when God is dead. It's that devastating bit in the middle where there is nothing to be done but breathe through the trauma of Friday in the hope of reaching the glory of Sunday.

This lenten season is the first time I've thought much about Holy Saturday. Years ago, I read that Cornel West pinned his theology on that day, but I didn't explore it much at the time. For some reason, though, I've been thinking about the uneasiness of Holy Saturday. I have been known to give litanies of All the Bad Things, in person and in these pages: wars, injustice, death, pain. I have also been known to go on about some very good things, albeit not as often:

hope, kindness, joy. I'm not sure how much space I have left in my mind for the breath between trauma and resolution, though: that moment between death and salvation.

So I went back to Dr. West, who said his people were Holy Saturday people. His theology told me that we cannot rush to the salvation of Easter Sunday, because there are too many still twisting in the violence of Good Friday. There is too much pain to be remembered, and there are too many injustices to be recalled. Victory does not come quickly, or easily, and it cannot come at all without God.

In saying so, I don't believe West is asking anyone to be paralyzed by the shame of past wrongs. Rather, he's asking us to understand what happened on Holy Saturday in spiritual terms. Christ descended into hell. He carried the weight of human sin — he carried every act of violence, oppression, inattention. He saved us because we could not save ourselves.

In West's terms, this is the blues sensibility: it's responding

to catastrophe not with violence, but with compassion. It's based on the incredible sincerity and absolute absurdity of the human condition: the fact that there can be so much wrong and yet so much right in people; so much pettiness and so much nobility.

This sensibility is named for the musical form, but it's not necessarily tied to it. As I was listening to Junior Kimbrough's song *Lord Have Mercy on Me* this week, though, it occurred to me just how entwined the blues can be with that notion of compassion, when the blues are at their best. The song is a Holy Saturday song. It's the silence of a stripped altar. It's our long dark walk from Calvary to the opened tomb — it's a walk I'm going to pay more mind to, this Triduum.

Done anybody wrong
I done anybody wrong
Have mercy on me

If I did anybody wrong, oh
Have mercy on me

Spiritual paintings have inspired many for decades

By Nancy Wiechec

TUCSON, Ariz. (CNS) — Arizona Artist Ted DeGrazia left behind a huge body of work, with religious and spiritual paintings that have been inspiring people for decades. Yet he was not a churchgoing man and thought he was not holy enough to paint for the church.

"His artwork has its own unique style," said George Maki, who was visiting DeGrazia's gallery in the foothills of the Santa Catalina Mountains for the first time.

Maki, and his son, Chris, both of Durango, Colorado, sat in the room with the DeGrazia Way of the Cross series for half an hour.

"I think they are wonderful," the elder Maki said of the paintings. "They are very emotional, very intense, moving . . . a young lady that was in here was actually crying."

DeGrazia died in 1982. Among his tens of thousands of surviving works are the Way of the Cross; multiple depictions of Our Lady of Guadalupe; a series on Jesuit Father Eusebio Kino, a missionary to the Southwest; and a mission, which the artist designed, built and dedicated to Kino.

"I don't know how many religious paintings he did, but he did a pretty good share," said Lance Laber, executive director of the DeGrazia Foundation, the organization DeGrazia founded to preserve his art.

According to Laber, DeGrazia's Catholic heritage, the faith and spirituality of the Indians he befriended and his admiration of Kino were inspirations for his religious works.

"DeGrazia never considered himself a churchgoing man," said



CNS/Nancy Wiechec

WAY OF THE CROSS — Shown is a detail of the eighth station — Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem — in Ted DeGrazia's Way of the Cross series on exhibit at the DeGrazia Gallery in the Sun in Tucson, Ariz. The artist painted the series in 1964 for the Newman Center at the University of Arizona.

Laber. "The mission (he built) is dedicated to Father Kino in honour of Our Lady of Guadalupe. . . . He could say what he wanted about not really being religious, but he certainly was."

A priest approached DeGrazia about painting the Stations of the Cross for the St. Thomas More Catholic Newman Center at the University of Arizona.

Laber said DeGrazia at first refused the job. "He thought he was not holy enough to do that."

But he had a change of heart and fulfilled the request in 1964.

DeGrazia focused heavily on the project, according to journalists James W. and Marilyn D. Johnson, authors of the 2014

biography De Grazia: The Man and the Myths.

"He slept little and didn't smoke or drink until the entire series had been completed," they wrote. "He called it a 'deep religious experience. It was simple,

yet exciting — a work on the sensual unity of mankind.'"

Laber said the paintings hung in the Newman Center for a couple of years but were removed and brought back to the DeGrazia gallery because of security and

insurance concerns. The artist's work had been increasing in value. Prints of the series still line the walls of the university's chapel.

In a recorded statement that accompanies the paintings, DeGrazia said the story of Christ's crucifixion was "very close to me because I was born Catholic. I was brought up with the Way of the Cross."

DeGrazia said he painted Christ alternately as black, red, yellow and white "because Christ is in the image of the beholder," in the image of all people.

He used bold, bright colours as well as muted ones. Yellow, he said, for light, hope and strength; blue for hope and tenderness; red for intensity and suffering. In the landscape of the paintings he incorporated saguaros that cast shadows in the shape of crosses.

The fourth station — Jesus meets his mother — is tender and light. A splash of white and yellow rises from the ground as if to hold the pair up. DeGrazia framed the embracing mother and son with flowers.

At the start of the DeGrazia stations, Christ shoulders his large cross. "He's carrying the

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National Catholic Mission to be broadcast

By Evan Boudreau
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — As Catholics worldwide prepare to celebrate Easter, Rev. Thomas Rosica is challenging them to extend mercy to the marginalized. "I suggest to you this week as

we prepare for the Holy Week . . . to put mercy into practice," he said. "Open your hearts and your life to those who are on the fringe. Show compassion and goodness and kindness to them."

For anyone unsure of how to act this way, Rosica recommends they study the actions of Pope Francis.

"Mercy in action, what better words to describe Pope Francis," said the Basilian priest, who is CEO of Salt+Light TV. "(A) revolution he's launched is the revolution of normalcy because everything that he is doing and showing and mirroring and modelling for us is normal Christian behaviour."

Such behaviour allows Francis to captivate the minds and touch the hearts of the world's population, bridging borders, religions and race. It is a genuine display of mercy which all Catholics can manifest within themselves, said Rosica.

Rosica's words reverberated off the eloquent stone walls of the chapel at Loretto Abbey Catholic Secondary School. With about half the senior student body occupying the pews, Rosica gave a lenten mission on the topic of mercy.

As the students listened, a film crew recorded his words, which will air on television as the National Catholic Broadcasting Council's two-part annual National Catholic Mission. It will be shown by Vision TV on March 21 and 22 and Salt+Light on March 22 and 23.

Part one focuses on mercy as the identifying characteristic of Pope Francis and God.

"When God logs onto a computer his user name is Mercy," Rosica said.

In part two, Rosica examines mercy as portrayed in one of the Bible's most well-known parables, "through the lens of the

prodigal son."

Deacon Michael Walsh, executive director and president of the National Catholic Broadcasting Council, hopes this year's program will help bring the church closer to Catholics with hardened hearts and a wayward faith.

"The message of mercy is something that hearts need," he said. "The thing we need to do is bring closeness and proximity and warm the hearts of the faithful. The church needs to be more like a field hospital."

The National Catholic Broadcasting Council's mission program began in 1995 and supplements the Daily Mass program which has more than 2,000 regular viewers.

"The mission is kind of a tradition in the church," said Sister Evanne Hunter, a Loretto Sister who sits on the broadcasting council's board. "During Lent many parishes would have had missions where they would have brought in a special speaker for a couple of evenings. So this is keeping with that tradition."

And while the mission itself is held in a chapel, its message travels well beyond those walls.

"The goal is to infiltrate the worlds where God has been excluded. We've got to be there, we've got to find every niche," said Rosica. "Look at your own life. There are people in your own life who have not been recipients of your mercy."

After the mission is aired, the program will be uploaded to YouTube to allow broad access to Rosica's message of mercy.

"Not only is this going to go around Canada it is going to go all around the world," said Rosica. "When this is posted (online) a lot of people . . . will be aware of it and might even tune in."

"This is what Easter is: it is the exodus, the passage of human beings from slavery to sin and evil to the freedom of love and goodness." — Pope Francis



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Doubt is a necessary step toward true faith

This editorial by Andrew Britz, OSB, titled "The glory of doubting," is from the April 29, 1984, Prairie Messenger and is featured in his second volume of editorials, Rule of Faith: as we worship, so we believe, so we live.

It is not easy to sing the song of Easter. It is easy enough to proclaim that the Lord rose from the tomb some 2,000 years ago, but the church has not made that its Easter song. We are called upon instead to sing that Jesus Christ is risen today.

It is in our less than perfect lives that we must announce the good news of Easter. It is in this world that so lacks justice and fair play that we must present the Saviour.

It is easy for the world to conclude that only fools would ever

proclaim that the glory and power, the wisdom and sheer goodness of the risen Lord now reigns supreme. Realists are always ready to point to the sinister factors that too often motivate our western leaders — to say nothing about those in the East.

Practically everything about us acknowledges that the only power the wise in this age know is guns and money. Yet in the presence of

these very things, the church insists on its song: today Jesus is Lord.

To state the obvious: The church has a credibility problem. This problem, however, has been around since the beginning. Doubting is not something new, as St. John masterfully reminds us in concluding his Gospel. It is in the story of the Doubting Thomas that we find the culminating profession of Christian faith: My Lord and my God.

St. John has prepared us in his Gospel for this story. Thomas has a basic loyalty about him, but he tends to be rather pessimistic (see 11:16), dense and ignorant (see 14:5). This is hardly surprising since these are the very qualities that usually get in our way when we want to sing of Easter.

With such qualities, Thomas is bound to doubt. By placing this doubt within the apostolic college, St. John teaches us that doubting definitely has its good points.

Doubt has been brought right into the story of the Passover from death to life. Just as death is no longer an evil but a necessary step to true life, so too is doubt.

Doubt makes us part with childish or shallow belief to accept a faith that cuts more deeply into our lives. To make doubt an evil is usually a self-defence against a call to faith which would summon us to a new level of existence.

What we have not doubted is usually not worth believing. Only by doubting was Thomas led to discover that true lordship and

divinity was indeed still present in his life and in his world — even though many of his hopes had died with Jesus' death.

It is hard to imagine a more paradoxical solution to Thomas' doubts. What a strange proof of divinity: to touch human flesh. What a ridiculous affirmation of lordship: to put a finger into the very causes of the death that so puzzled him.

We tell ourselves we would be better able to sing the song of Easter if there were not so much evil around, if our family and friends were more authentic persons, if our own prayer life were in better shape.

The Gospel narrative of the Doubting Thomas gives us the secret to sing of Easter. It is found in touching the death about us, in acknowledging the flesh, the weaknesses that often overwhelm us all.

The temptation to handle our doubts by withdrawing from the world and its problems must be squarely resisted. Such is the ghettoism that Jesus strongly resisted, even to the point of death. Our Easter faith, by its very nature, comes to life in the political, social and economic issues of this age.

We must accept the paradox of Easter: that death gives birth to life, that doubt is the mother of true faith, and that involvement in the plight of this age refines our vision so that we can discover the lordship and divinity the Father has put at the centre of everything created.



P. Paproski

SIGN OF HOPE — A cross, formed by snow lining some willows, announces the presence of the holy and speaks of hope for better things to come. It reminds those gazing on it that there is something beyond the dark, cold winter. When the snow disappears there will be new life in the season of spring.

There is hope in all things as new life emerges from the ashes

By Paul Paproski, OSB

Some 40 days ago, I was asked by two people about the meaning of having ashes placed on our foreheads during Ash Wednesday. I said the ashes remind us we are going to die. Our life on earth is temporary. The conversation was short and if circumstances had permitted I would have added that the ashes also symbolize another death, our spiritual death that is fuelled by such things as pride, judging, division, distractions, etc. We are human and often miss the "mark," which is known more commonly as sin. Anyone who has experienced the loss of peace or suffered through disappointments, broken relationships and friendships, understands this. But, there is hope. New life rises from ashes.

The notion of our life coming to an end is not something pleasant to think about even though it is a natural part of our existence. From the moment we are born our bodies begin a process that ends in the death of the flesh. There is a line in the Rule of St. Benedict that reads: "Day by day, remind yourself that you are going to die." This advice sounds harsh, even depressing, and cer-

tainly goes against the flow of the world, which celebrates beauty and youth. Death is not a common topic over coffee or a meal. Who wants to talk about death?

The advice, "Day by day, remind yourself that you are going to die," is actually meant to be encouraging. St. Benedict wanted his monks to free themselves from the attachments of the world and remember that there was something beyond this existence. When death approaches, he taught, rejoice that there is more beyond this life. New life emerges after this one ends.

This wisdom of St. Benedict comes to the forefront when I visit people in short- or long-term care facilities. Many seniors, entering their final years of life, struggle in their new environments. They are elderly and it is natural for them to find it difficult to do things they once took for granted. Everyone is being confronted with painful health issues and the difficult reality of having to leave a home full of memories. And they are coping with losing both their independence and privacy. Some are more at peace with their situations in life than others.

The memory of one senior sitting near the entrance to her new care home still reverberates in my mind. She had just moved in and was ready to move out. The new resident said her children made her live there and she wanted out. She waited for them to take her

back home. Another, who had already been in the care facility for several years and had no family, never accepted the loss of her former home. One lamented that some of her children never came to visit. There were unresolved issues in her family. These were among a number of people who felt isolated and alone in a world too busy to notice them.

Conversely, there were others who were more at peace. Among them was Adrianna who was generous in offering gratitude for my presence. Anne enjoyed talking about the past and her life on the farm. She was very prayerful and once expressed how the past "seems like a dream." Laura enjoyed discussing her vocation as a teacher. The roads were trails when she started teaching in one-room schools. She was proud of having been a teacher who rode a horse to school. Alice always reminded me that every day was a blessing. Though, in pain, she was grateful for the gift of life and never forgot to count her blessings. Etta was always gracious to have a visitor and promised her prayers. Fred was in a lot of pain but that was overshadowed by his warm, gentle demeanour. Joe enjoyed telling jokes and laughing.

Christianity is the only religion that began after a man went through a gruelling passion, died and rose from the dead. Everything seemed hopeless for his friends and followers when this

man was condemned, crucified and left for dead. He miraculously left his tomb and appeared to those who had given up on him. His enemies thought they had reduced him to ashes, but he disappointed them.

Easter is the most important Christian celebration because it celebrates the most important Christian event — the resurrec-

tion of Jesus. If the resurrection had not happened, Christianity would not be here today. The resurrection teaches us that the final stage of life is not the end. There is hope in everything, even the most trying circumstances. When all seems hopeless and loss and death strikes, new life emerges from the tomb. Death is not the end.

McDonald, Wilma M (nee Smith)



Passed away on February 27, 2016. She is survived by her husband of 69 years, Hugh; two sons, John William (Susan) of Atlanta, Georgia and Robert James (Heather) of Vancouver; two daughters, Dawn Maureen of Calgary and Barbara Anne of Vancouver; six grandsons, James, Andrew, Jeffrey, Douglas, David, and Evan; and great granddaughter, Grace Eliza.

She is also survived by sisters-in law, Margaret Smith (Saskatoon) and Mary Smith (Meadow Lake); and brothers-in law, Lloyd McDonald (Rose) of Edmonton and John McDonald (Sheila) of Toronto as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by her parents, William and A. Marie Smith of Humboldt, SK; her three brothers, Norman, Cletus and Alfred; and two sisters, Hattie and Theresa. Wilma was born in Watson, SK. She later relocated with her family to Humboldt, SK where she attended Humboldt High School and she met her future husband, Hugh. After graduation, she travelled to Saskatoon, SK to attend the St. Paul's School of Nursing, graduating in 1946. She married Hugh in May of 1947. After many years in Saskatchewan, the family moved to Vancouver in 1963.

A mass of Christian burial will be celebrated at St John the Apostle Church, 5457 Trafalgar St., Vancouver on Saturday, March 5 at 10:00 a.m. A reception will follow the service in the church hall from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The Burial will take place at the Gardens of Gethsemani in Surrey at 2:00 p.m.

Floral tributes are declined. If desired, memorial donations may be made in her name to the St. Paul's Hospital Foundation, Vancouver, BC. Online Condolences may be left at www.kearneyfs.com.

Paproski is a Benedictine monk of St. Peter's Abbey and pastor of St. Peter's Parish, Muenster, Sask.

The face of Easter can appear across a tractor

Porch Light

Stephen Berg



A fit of cursing at life and its demented incursions into my free time was cut short by the face of my father — appearing as it did on the other side of a Cockshutt 1550 tractor, hooked to a 14-foot International cultivator.

I was refuelling before taking

to the field, my plans for a Saturday ruined by a reminder to work the summer fallow, a request I had already put off one week. Thinking I was alone and out of range, my cursing covered most everything — farming, clear weather, God — with particular attention

to paternal connections. In response to this cloud of vitriol, the face of my father carried no anger, a touch of sadness, certainly, but mostly, what I saw was concern, and love.

Nothing unsettles like well-placed mercy. Undone, all I could do was finish refuelling, get on the tractor and drive to the field. And for that day my discomfort was complete. I welcomed the diversion of dust and diesel smoke. But all I saw was my father's face approaching me in open compassion and forgiveness. And all I could do was recoil from it.

It would take time before I could sink into the potential of that forgiveness. A forgiveness offered before I knew I needed it, and before I could conceive of asking for it. The kind of forgiveness, I've discovered, that's at the heart of Easter.

For most of my life I've had a melodramatic understanding of Easter as a kind of emotive the-

Berg works for Hope Mission, a social care facility for homeless people in Edmonton's inner city. He blogs at growmercy.org

atrical event that played itself out in black and white. The sort of understanding that a film like Mel Gibson's *The Passion of Christ* reinforces. Here, if you recall, the categories of good and evil, victim and villain(s) are clear. The in and out groups easily defined, and the choice of where to line up, simple.

Following this logic, Easter, like a theory, was something I could get right. That is, as a result of the fall, (our prideful rejection of God and his gifts at the outset of creation) God, desiring to be merciful while still being held to the demands of Divine justice, enacts a plan of expiation. He sends his Son as a human and divine sacrifice which both appeases his wrath at our offence, and satisfies the payment we could never make. And now, as long as we stay under the cover of that blood sacrifice, within the bubble of right belief, as long as we're faithful to the formula, we're saved.

I didn't see that this formula simply mirrors a kind of Aztec understanding of sacrifice and projects violence on God, a violence that Christ supposedly saves us

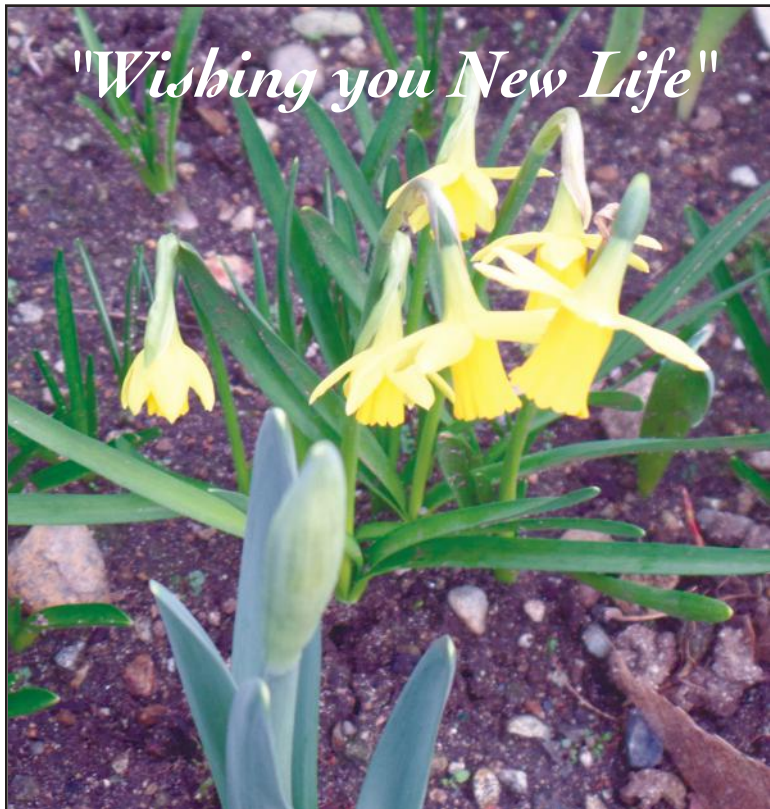
from. I didn't understand that Easter exactly reverses this understanding — that at the centre of Easter stands the "lamb of God," exposing and overcoming our wrath and sacrificial violence through an over-the-top non-violent love.

Easter introduces us to a God entirely without wrath. Easter reveals that it is our wrath that demands appeasing, our cursing and ostracizing violence that Christ takes upon himself. And it is his face that then approaches us in forgiveness and love.

The "atonement" of Easter, far from being a matter of right belief, as James Alison has said, is something that happens toward us. It opens within us a faltering but persistent realization that there is something so dark about us that we can't see it until we are forgiven of it. But undergoing the mercy of this realization forever unsettles all our old ways of self-preservation — from abject subservience to passive aggression to herd violence. And the degree that we sink into this forgiveness is the degree our world expands into possibility. And not for us alone.

Awake to Easter, we can detect the "crucifixions" played out around us wherever someone is expelled for the sake of the group, party or nation. Far fewer are the resurrections. But they are there. We've seen them in Gandhi, King, Bacha Khan, Dorothy Day, Daniel Berrigan who, having been malevolently excluded, stand back up, and without resentment, draw wider human circles — that are open always to their victimizers.

And we see them close to home. My father is long passed on, but I still carry with me the face I saw on the other side of the tractor. I didn't know it was the face of the resurrected Jesus.



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3:00 p.m., 7:00 p.m. PT 4:00 p.m., 8:00 p.m. MT 5:00 p.m., 9:00 p.m. CT 6:00 p.m., 10:00 p.m. ET 7:00 p.m., 11:00 p.m. AT 7:30 p.m., 11:30 p.m. NFLD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5:00 p.m., 9:00 p.m. PT 6:00 p.m., 10:00 p.m. MT 7:00 p.m., 11:00 p.m. CT 8:00 p.m., 12:00 a.m. ET 9:00 p.m., 1:00 a.m. AT 9:30 p.m., 1:30 a.m. NFLD

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At Easter we are reminded of how much we are loved

Liturgy and Life

Lorette Noble



It is a humbling experience to approach writing about liturgy and life for Easter Sunday. Easter is, as our new Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us, the central Christian feast (638) and the "Feast of feasts, the 'Solemnity of solemnities'" (1169). Easter is the celebration of the day when Jesus Christ rose from the dead, a fact witnessed first by Mary Magdalene in the garden outside the tomb where Christ had been buried on Good Friday, as we hear in the Gospel. He then appeared to Peter and the

Noble was pastoral animator in an elementary Catholic school for 30 years, produced community television programs for 11 years in the 1980s and '90s, was animator for her diocesan English Region from 2000 - 2006 and is past national president of the CWL (2006 - 2008). She lives in Candiac, Que.

Apostles on more than one occasion, inviting Thomas, who experienced doubt, to touch his wounds, eating with them on the shore of Lake Galilee, and in Emmaus with two other disciples. It is after Christ's resurrection that those who believed became known as Christians.

In Quebec, where I live, the Catholic faith once was very strong, with a high level of attendance at daily and Sunday mass. Sadly this is no longer the situation. The liturgies of the mass throughout the year no longer seem to be part of everyday life of Catholics. In the relatively new small town where we live we have never had a church building. Instead, we have the use of one end of the main

Easter Sunday

March 27, 2016

Acts 10:34a, 37-43

Psalm 118

1 Corinthians 5:6b-8

John 20:1-18

hall of a large new city community centre, which has a raised sanctuary for the altar, closed off during the week. This entire hall is full at our Christmas Eve mass, which is understandable as it is about God coming to earth to live as one of us.

We are delighted to see and welcome all the families that come each year to celebrate this happy event, but it is not the same at Easter, the "Feast of feasts." Even though Easter heralds spring and new life, perhaps the difference is because we feel it is a more serious event, dealing not

only with life but also with death?

In fact, it is impossible to talk about Easter without the three days leading up to it, the Triduum. The story of the last days of Jesus' life on earth: the introduction of the eucharist at the Last Supper on Holy Thursday, leading to Christ's torture and death on Good Friday, which Peter in the first reading at Easter refers to: "They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day. . . ." On Holy Saturday, the day after the devastating death of Christ, the readings relate the story of God gradually revealing himself from creation through to his prophets.

Jesus Christ, Son of God, one person of the Holy Trinity, came to earth and from his birth to his death experienced every aspect of human life — no experience any of us can ever have in our lives has not been experienced by him.

On Easter Sunday we learn that we can all live in the hope of forgiveness of our sins and in the hope of eternal life. As Paul reminds us in the second reading: "When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory."

At one time or another we have all heard that there is no greater love than that someone should give up their life for another. How profoundly blessed each of us is to be so loved.

This is what we are reminded of every Easter, and it is a time to rejoice and "Share the Good News, singing joyfully: His death is victory!" (Sequence).

The dying process 'midwives' us into a deeper, wider life

In Exile

Ron Rolheiser, OMI



In a deeply insightful book, *The Grace of Dying*, Kathleen Dowling Singh shares insights she has gleaned as a health professional from being present to hundreds of people while they are dying. Among other things, she suggests that the dying process itself, in her words, "is exquisitely calibrated to automatically produce union with Spirit." In essence, what she is saying is that what is experienced by someone in the final stages and moments of dying, particularly if the death is not a sudden one, is a purgation that naturally lessens the person's grip on the things of this world as well as on his or her own ego so as to be ready to enter into a new realm of life and meaning beyond our present realm of consciousness. The dying process itself, she submits, midwives us into a wider, deeper life.

But that does not come without a weighty price tag. The dying process is not a pleasant one. Most of us do not die peacefully in our sleep, comfortable, dignified and serene. The norm rather is the kind of death that comes about by aging or by terminal disease. What happens then is not comfortable, dignified or serene. Rather there is a painful, sometimes excruciating, almost always humiliating breakdown of the body. In that process

we lose basically everything that is dear to us: our health, our natural bodily beauty, our dignity and sometimes even our mind. Dying is rarely beautiful, save in another aesthetic.

And so how is the process of dying calibrated to help ease our grip on this world and more gracefully move on to the next world? Dying matures the soul. How so?

Writing about aging, James Hillman poses this question: Why have God and nature so constructed things that as we age and mature and are finally more in control of our lives, our bodies begin to fall apart and we need a bevy of doctors and medicines to keep functioning. Is

there some wisdom in the very DNA of the life-process that mandates the breakdown of physical health in late life? Hillman says, yes. There's an innate wisdom in the process of aging and dying: *The best wines have to be aged in cracked old barrels*. The breakdown of our bodies deepens, softens and matures the soul.

Jesus teaches us this lesson, and it is a truth he himself had to accept, with considerable reluctance, in his own life. Facing his own death the night before he died, prostrate on the ground in Gethsemane, he begs his Father: "Let this cup pass from me! Yet, not my will, but yours, be done." In essence, he is asking God whether there is a road to glory and vision of Easter Sunday without passing through the pain and humiliation of Good Friday. It seems there isn't. Humiliation and depth are inextricably linked. After his resurrection, talking with his disciples on the road to Emmaus, he says to them: "Wasn't it necessary that the Christ should so suffer?" This is

more a revelation of truth than a question. The answer is already clear: the road to depth necessarily passes through pain and humiliation. Kathleen Dowling Singh and James Hillman simply format this positively: pain and humiliation are naturally calibrated to move us beyond what is more superficial to what is deeper. Pain and humiliation, and there is invariably a certain dying in these, help open us up to deeper consciousness.

And we know this already from common sense. If we honestly assess our own experience we have to admit that most of the things that have made us deep are things we would be ashamed to talk about because they were humiliating. Humiliation is what humbles and deepens us. Our successes, on the contrary, which we do like to talk about, generally produce inflations in our lives.

The famed psychologist/philosopher William James submits that there are realms of reality and consciousness that lie beyond what we presently experi-

ence. All religion, not least Christianity, tells us the same thing. But our normal consciousness and self-awareness literally set up boundaries that prevent us from going there. Normally, for us, there's this world, this reality, and that's all! The dying process helps break open that contraction in our perception, awareness and consciousness. It is calibrated to open us up to a reality and a consciousness beyond what we presently deem as real.

But there are other paths to this too, outside the process of dying. Prayer and meditation are meant to do for us exactly what the dying process does. They too are exquisitely calibrated to loosen our grip on this world and open our awareness to another. As Singh puts it: "The path to the transpersonal realms, which the saints and sages of every age have known through the practice of meditation and prayer, appears to be the same transformative path that each of us traverses in the process of dying."

That's consoling: God is going to get us, one way or the other.

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Hallelujah is our Song!

Wishing you all the joys
of the Resurrection.

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

Giving everything,
Love rises...
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Life out of death.
Easter Blessings!

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Loving hands: if I don't do it, it won't get done . . .

Both Lungs

Brent Kostyniuk



A young lady told me that one of her most poignant memories of her father was watching him make hamburger patties one day. The meat was still partially frozen and it was obvious his hands were suffering from the cold. She asked him why he was doing it if it hurt so much. He replied, "If I don't do it, it won't get done."

Life is like that. We are often presented with situations which, if given the choice, we would rather avoid. I used to feel that way about Lent, or the Great Fast as it is known in the East. It seemed to be a mournful time when treats were given up and food was more plain than usual. I especially didn't like to have to think about the end of Lent, the time of Jesus' passion and death.

Of course, like so many other things, I got it wrong. True, Lent does involve additional fasting from meat, on Wednesdays, as well as the usual Fridays. Monday, the first day of Lent, and Good Friday are held as black fasts; no meat or dairy products are eaten. However, the whole concept of fasting should not be viewed as an imposition. Rather, and this took me a long time to

appreciate, fasting is a spiritual exercise. Its purpose is to remind us the needs of the body are nothing compared to the needs of the soul, "... in order to show you that not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the Lord" (Dt 8:3). The passage, referring to manna from heaven, was later quoted by Jesus in Luke 4:4 when the devil tempted him to change a stone into bread.

The spiritual exercise of fasting helps us to understand we need God, who provides everything for both the body and the soul. Fasting teaches us to depend on God more fully. It helps us to enter the spirit of *kenosis* — self-emptying — the self-emptying of one's own will and becoming entirely receptive to God's divine plan.

Fasting is meant to aid us on our spiritual journey. It helps us pray more easily.

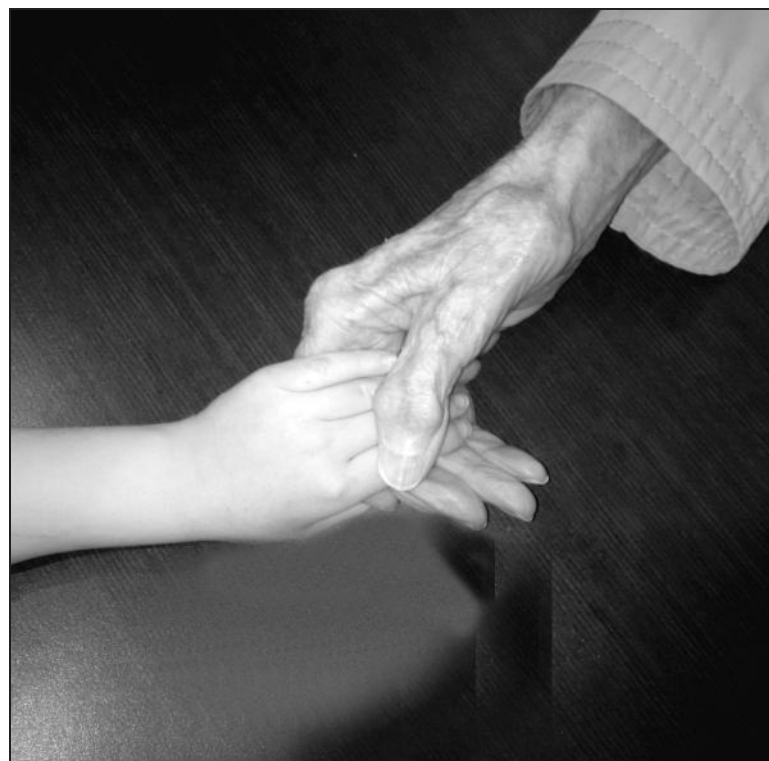
An empty stomach helps us to have compassion for the poor and hungry. Moreover, fasting from food, or a particular item such as chocolate, during Lent reminds us we are also to fast from sin. Indeed, St. John Chrysostom teaches that fast from sin is far more important than fast from food.

"Besides controlling what goes into our mouths, we must control what comes out of our mouths as well. Are our words pleasing to God, or do we curse God or our brother? The other

members of the body also need to fast: our eyes from seeing evil, our ears from hearing evil, our limbs from participating in anything that is not of God. Most important of all, we need to control our thoughts, for thoughts are the source of our actions, whether good or evil."

The Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian, traditionally said frequently throughout Lent, helps us to take control of our actions. *O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, faint-heartedness, lust of power, and idle talk. But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love to your servant. Yes, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own sin and not to judge my brother, for you are blessed from all ages to all ages. Amen.*

Just as we accept the burden of fasting, often our hands accept roles which are difficult, roles which we would rather have avoided but take on because we know if we don't do it, it won't be done. We take them on freely through love. As we go through Lent, gladly accepting fasting, we look at the hands of Jesus, nailed to the precious and life-giving cross. We are reminded that he, too, struggled. "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me, yet not as I will, but as you will" (Mt 26:39). Lovingly, he stretched out his hands for our salvation.



Katherine Bily

LOVING HANDS — Loving hands are separated by four generations. "Just as we accept the burden of fasting, often our hands accept roles which are difficult, roles which we would rather have avoided but take on because we know if we don't do it, it won't be done," writes Brent Kostyniuk.

So I learned that Lent is not a mournful time. Rather, it is a time of preparation. All of our activities — fasting from food and sin, almsgiving, an intensified prayer life, emptying ourselves to the will of God all serve to help us prepare, to focus on the great event which

awaits us, the resurrection of Christ. Thus, having "put on Christ," we will be able to rejoice on Easter and joyfully sing the *troparion*:

Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life!

Homily of St. John Chrysostom

The following is the paschal sermon of St. John Chrysostom (349 - 407), which is traditionally read in Ukrainian churches at some point during Lent.

If any man be devout and love God, let him enjoy this fair and radiant triumphal feast.

If any man be a wise servant, let him enter rejoicing into the joy

of his Lord.

If any have laboured long in fasting, let him now receive his recompense.

If any have wrought from the first hour, let him today receive his just reward.

If any have come at the third hour, let him with thankfulness keep the feast.

If any have arrived at the sixth hour, let him have no misgivings, because he shall in no wise be deprived.

If any have delayed until the ninth hour, let him draw near, fearing nothing.

If any haven't arrived even until the 11th hour, let him also be not alarmed at his tardiness; for the Lord, who is jealous of his honour, will accept the last even as the first; he gives rest unto him who comes at the 11th hour, even as unto him who has worked from the first.

And he shows mercy upon the last, and cares for the first; and to the one he gives, and upon the other he bestows gifts.

Any he both accepts the deeds, and welcomes the intention, and honours the acts and praises of offering.

Wherefore, enter ye all into the joy of your Lord, and receive your reward, both the first and likewise the second.

You rich and poor together, hold high festival.

You sober and you heedless, honour the day.

Rejoice today, both you who have fasted and you who have

disregarded the fast.

The table is fully laden; feast sumptuously.

The calf is fatted; let no one go hungry away.

Enjoy the feast of faith; receive all the riches of loving-kindness.

Let no one bewail his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed.

Let no one weep for his iniquities, for pardon has shone forth from the grave.

Let no one fear death, for the Saviour's death has set us free: he that was held prisoner of it has annihilated it.

By descending into hell, he made hell captive. He embittered it when it tasted of his flesh. And Isaiah, foretelling this, cried, "Hell was embittered when it encountered thee in the lower regions."

It was embittered for it was abolished. It was embittered, for it was mocked. It was embittered, for it was slain. It was embittered, for it was overthrown. It was embittered, for it was fettered in chains. It took a body, and met God face to face. It took earth, and encountered heaven. It took that which was seen, and fell upon the unseen.

O Death, where is your sting? O Hell, where is your victory?

Christ is risen, and you are overthrown. Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and life reigns. Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave. For Christ, being risen from the dead, is become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. To him be glory and dominion unto ages of ages. Amen.

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Travelling to Good Friday strips away our layers



Questioning Faith

Mary Marrocco

A thing about “real life” that movies and shows rarely portray is the way people talk over each other. In artful dialogue, characters take turns speaking, and respond to each other’s speeches. In human dialogue, what we often achieve is more like cacaphony, or clashing swords.

Spouses wonder why they have the same argument over and over. Work colleagues finish meetings frustrated that they can’t get their work done. Customers leave service representatives astonished that, yet again, they’ve been mis-filed, mis-directed, mistaken on their transactions.

“Why can’t he ever listen to me?” “When will she stop and hear me?” It’s hard to carry on a conversation when such intensive inner interrogation is happening along the way. We look as though we’re discussing; in reality, we’re

Marrocco is a marriage and family therapist, teacher of theology, and writer, and co-ordinates St. Mary of Egypt Refuge. She can be reached at marrocco7@sympatico.ca

preparing arguments to justify ourselves, producing rationales and witness statements to bolster our position. Listening disappears while self-defence takes over.

We habitually, reflexively defend ourselves. It’s unrelentingly human to engage each other this way without noticing. It sounds like conversation to us, while we’re walking the same worn-down stone pathways that lead nowhere.

A part of us is relieved. If we’re not really talking or listening, then we never move. We’re safe. Safe from the other. Most of all, safe from ourselves, from what we’ve done and why, and what’s going on inside us. We don our favourite coverup clothes and prepare our dazzling distracting laser displays. Our words are there, our defensive or combative stance is there, but our true selves are nowhere to be seen. The other person doesn’t seem to notice or care that we haven’t even shown up in the discussion. We’re confirmed in the belief that the true self is better hidden away, from others, from ourselves.

And from God.

“Where are you, Adam? Where are you, Eve?” God calls

out, walking in his garden in the cool of the evening, but missing his usual companions. The voice of Love floats through the trees to them, yet they don’t respond. They hide. They’ve already hidden from each other by making coverup clothes. When their Beloved asks what’s happened, they try to distract him: Adam points to Eve, Eve points to the serpent (Genesis 3:7-13). Not me, not me; look at her, look at him.

Does our prayer sometimes sound like that?

Our dis-ease with ourselves, our shame and fear before God and each other, get so protected by our distraction devices that we hardly know we’re feeling this way. We forget our longing to be seen and known as we are. We lose sight of our true selves, and forget the way to them, thus arriving at the unhappiest of all predicaments: we don’t even know we’re ill.

Just in time, along comes the Lenten Advantage. The church has not forgotten us; it belongs, after all, to Christ whose dearest treasure we are. It opens the door to the desert, and marks out in purple the path to Silence and Surrender. By the time we get to deep Lent, we may have shed many layers of our self-defence clothing and our don’t-look-at-me distraction displays. As we come closer to silence, we can hear the babbling of our defences and blaming, and let them go. We don’t need them here in the desert, where Love has brought us. It’s the silence, not of accusation, but of utter Presence.



Anne Wicks

LENTEN ADVANTAGE — We don’t need our babbling defences “here in the desert, where Love has brought us,” writes Mary Marrocco. “It’s the silence, not of accusation, but of utter Presence. Here, we can hear our Beloved calling to us: ‘Where are you?’ And the cry of our heart, bubbling up like a spring of water out of the desert sands: ‘I’m sad.’ ‘I’m lonely.’ ‘I’m hurt and afraid.’ ‘I long for life.’ ‘I have a love, a joy, in me that can’t get out.’”

Here, we can hear our Beloved calling to us: “Where are you?” And the cry of our heart, bubbling up like a spring of water out of the desert sands: “I’m sad.” “I’m lonely.” “I’m hurt and afraid.” “I long for life.” “I have a love, a joy, in me that can’t get out.”

In another garden, Love himself was betrayed and captured by the descendants of Adam and Eve. On the night of the Last Supper, Jesus is seized in Gethsemane. So eager are his friends to flee that one of them, wearing only a linen cloth, breaks free and runs away naked (Mark 14:43). In a shocking reversal of Adam and Eve’s self-protective coverup, in the darkness of the darkest night of all, this young man is stripped of defences. Sin and doubt expose his real self, and he has to run even from Jesus.

Don’t we recognize that fellow? Don’t we know there’s a part of us, too, that would abandon Jesus rather than encounter our naked self?

Travelling to Good Friday takes us beyond our well-worn defences. It strips away our covering layers. Together, freed of what imprisons our true selves, we emerge from the trees where Adam and Eve hid. We answer God in his search for us.

“I will fervently embrace Thy sacred feet . . . Thy feet at whose sound Eve hid herself for fear when she heard Thee walking in Paradise in the cool of the day,” sings an ancient Christian poem.

It’s the great risk: does judgment await, or mercy? death, or life-beyond-death? mere emptiness, or overflowing light and love?

We all need to awaken more fully

Outlooks from the Inner Life

Cedric Speyer



“We are the ones we’ve been waiting for.” — Hopi Elders

“Sometimes it happens that I awaken at night and start to worry about some great difficulty. I decide I must speak to the pope about it. Then I awaken more fully and remember that I am the pope.” — Pope St. John XXIII

We all need to awaken more fully. Everything shifts when we live up to a higher or nobler version of ourselves, the one made in God’s image and aspiring to the “be ye perfect” injunction of Jesus. Yet on the way there, we do have to deal with the small matter that we are made of earthly matter and situated on a planet that isn’t “as it is in heaven” yet! That brings us smack dab against the gap — the discrepancy between our ideal self-concept and our flawed

Speyer is a Benedictine Oblate as well as clinical supervisor of e-counselling for a major employee and family assistance program, and creative director, InnerView Guidance International (IGI).

human nature, with its propensity to be “intrinsically disordered” or in simpler terms, predisposed to the egotism underlying all sin.

What to do? It’s a human and universal predicament, when we are all too aware of various forms of dysfunction on one end of the human scale, and the redemptive vision motivating us on the other, given the courage and compassion to keep faith with it. There are two escape routes from the soul work it takes in the crux of this middle ground. One is denying the ideal as unrealistic and retreating to a superficial or cynical reality (supported by the culture of distractions, fantasies, and addictions). The other involves keeping the ideal but giving up hope of being qualified for it. Depression then fills the gap.

There is a third alternative. The awareness of each endpoint of the spectrum can cue a self-forgiving space for the gap between the two, the same place where creativity and art forms emerge. We’re in the middle by default and called to bring awakened consciousness to the journey. It’s the flashlight beam that shines a few yards forward in the

dark woods, or the tuning fork sounding the keynote in our souls. It’s enlivened when we identify with moral heroism in a movie or rise in love with someone who reflects our image of the numinous.

Basic human courage and compassion provide the evolutionary momentum we need. Yet there are also maps for the inner journey to guide us on the Way, such as the fourfold path for integrating the great divergences in this life: witness, presence, essence and guidance.

Witness (a quality of mind) involves the capacity to step back and take a dispassionate, reflective view of life’s drama. Witnessing is fostered through mindfulness and meditative practices and allows for the equanimity of “seeing the big picture” with all its contradictions.

Presence (a quality of heart) dissolves the duality between higher and lower such that we can hold the space for wildly divergent poles of our common humanity without judgment.

Essence (a quality of soul) is otherwise known as the “true self” or “point vierge” — who we would be without mind, memory, or association; our unconditioned, unconstructed identity. It allows us a backstage pass, so to speak, to the value and worth of persons.

Guidance (a quality of spirit) is the grace of divining where a particular life situation meets the potential evolution of a person and can serve as a spiritual summons or wake-up call.

Our Church is a Family of Families



As we approach Easter, we walk toward the event of the death and resurrection of Christ. May your journey of faith celebrate these feasts with as much joy as the first Easter, when Peter and John visited the empty tomb.

Most Reverend Albert Thévenot, M. Afr.
Bishop of Prince Albert

Catholic schools and parishes work together



Catholic Connections

Miles Meyers

"We are called to be in the middle of things as things are, not as we would like them to be." This quote serves as the mantra of well-known Catholic education writer Rev. Jim Mulligan, CSC, but could also serve as a mantra for all Catholic schools and parishes. Mulligan addressed the trustees and administrators of Regina Catholic Schools along with some priests and pastoral assistants from Regina, as well as some invited guests from Holy Family and Christ the Teacher Catholic Schools Divisions, on the topic of Catholic Schools and Parishes Working Together, on Jan. 29, 2016.

Mulligan began his presentation by describing the reality of the changing cultural and church context, which presents greater challenges to Catholic schools and parishes than ever before. Despite these challenges, Mulligan encouraged Catholic schools and parishes not to despair but rather to be in the middle of things as they are and build on the "slivers of faith"

among those parents who bring their children to Catholic schools, but not to Sunday eucharist.

With great passion and humour, Mulligan reminded his audience of the call of Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* for all Catholics to "renew our personal encounter with Jesus Christ daily" and to share the joy of the gospel with everyone whom we encounter. Mulligan then shared what Catholic schools, parishes and parents need from each other to help in their duty to educate and form children in the faith. He invited his audience

to share questions, concerns and examples of how Catholic schools and parishes are working together.

One of our attendees, Rev. John Weckend, shared how he responded to a person who asked how large the priest's staff was. He replied, "Over 100 people," and added, "I minister to two Catholic elementary schools in Regina but I am not the only minister. Every staff member at these schools is also a minister so I consider them to be part of my staff." Weckend continued that he also had a special commissioning service for the school staffs at

Sunday eucharist at the beginning of each school year. In this way, his parishioners saw the important role that the school staff members played in evangelizing and catechizing children.

Weckend also shared how the local elementary school had worked hard to connect the staff and students with the parish. Students were brought to the church for school celebrations of the eucharist. Both staff and students volunteered to "look after" a mass once a month meaning that they would fill all of the ministries for that particular mass. As well, students chose an Advent service project which consisted of cleaning and decorating the church in preparation for Christmas. Weckend felt that the relationship between the school and parish was excellent and that both groups were benefiting from the endeavour.

Weckend concluded his remarks by sharing how the excellent relationship with the school had resulted in a marked increase in baptisms. He explained that those parents who have been away from the church for a while often feel embarrassed or uncomfortable about approaching the church to have their child baptized. Thus, he decided to meet the parents at school where they felt comfortable. He attended parent evenings (meet the teacher night, reading nights) and spoke to the parents about having their child baptized. He then met at the school with those parents who were interested in having their child baptized. Some of the baptismal preparation was done with the parents at the school and some at the parish. The child was then baptized at the church.

Weckend shared that at all



RCSO

SCHOOLS AND PARISHES WORK TOGETHER — Rev. John Weckend, seen here with students, ministers to two Catholic elementary schools in Regina. Weckend says the elementary schools work hard to connect the staff and students with the local parish.

stages the school had been incredibly supportive in a number of ways: 1) The school invited parents to come and see what baptism would mean for their child. 2) In religion class, teachers reinforced what the students were learning in their baptismal preparation sessions. 3) A number of staff members served as godparents for the students. Weckend concluded that he couldn't have hoped for a better relationship between the church and school.

A Regina principal shared how the pastoral presence of Rev. Basil Malowany, a local Ukrainian Catholic priest, has had a wonderful effect on both staff and students. Malowany has invited and welcomed staff and students to his parish where he has taught them

about the Ukrainian Catholic rite and celebrated divine liturgy with them. In addition, he has visited the school regularly just to get to know the staff and students. His warm, gentle and welcoming nature left a positive impression about the church on staff, students and their parents.

It is indeed encouraging to hear such stories of Catholic schools and parishes being in the middle of things as they are, building on the "sliver of faith" of those to whom they minister, and working together to share the good news with students and parents.

I also thank God every day for the gift and privilege of working in a Catholic school division whose staff and students make it a priority to be "Growing in wisdom and grace."



Meyers is co-ordinator of Catholic Education Services for Regina Catholic Schools



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God weaves the threads of an unravelling life

Barefoot and Preaching

Leah Perrault



I remember being an eager child, dying to practice all the things I was learning, from math to music, skipping to science. When I could not figure something out or did not have it mastered, that only motivated me to practice harder, to prove that I could do it. I still love a good challenge, but somewhere along the way, I stopped enjoying the practising as much as the accomplishment.

I became aware of this a few weeks ago when a friend who doesn't have children asked me if pregnancy is terrifying. It was an interesting question, I answered, and rambled my way to hearing myself say that I find pregnancy difficult because it challenges me to let go of things I don't want to: my physical strength and endurance, my sense that my body is entirely my own, my time and energy. At the same time, I said that while I know pregnancy is great practice for other situations and stages of life, I find it difficult to let go with intention, even when all the excitement, perfection and sleeplessness of a new baby await me at the end.

The conversation, like so many other moments in my life,

seemed insignificant at the time, but soon after God started to use it to weave together several threads that have been hanging around the seams of my life lately. Threads about dying on the seams of the way I practice living.

I suspect the threads are always there, hanging off the edges of my life even when I'm unaware of them, but when I feel like my neatly packaged life is coming unravelled, my first instinct is to tidy up. Perhaps you can relate? I see the threads, which were happily flying in the wind, pulling at the stitches ever so gently, and I start trying desperately to hide them, tuck them away, or pull them out without doing more damage. No matter how carefully I try to fix them, I cause more unravelling.

I think this is God's way of things. God is in all his glory in the unravelling where I don't know what is happening and cannot see where I am going. Right in the middle of my unravelling life, God starts weaving. Back to the conversation. I went on to say that pregnancy invites me to practice things I will need at other stages of my life: resting when I am tired, modifying my schedule and expectations when my body can no longer do things it used to, and allowing others to help me. These skills will be critical for aging and for dying. And it turns

out I am not dying to practice the skills I will need for dying well.

The public discussions about physician-assisted death and a new job in health care have me reading a great deal these days about aging and dying. I have been letting go of the things I loved about my old job to make room in my heart for the things I will love in the new one. I find it more uncomfortable and unfamiliar to practice, to fail and try again than I have in many years. And here I am, not knowing and not seeing, and my life is beautiful, actually. Thanks for asking.

Our world desperately needs to see us actually die by living well in the places where we do not know and cannot see. We are all afraid of suffering, and we make it worse by resisting the places that scare us. I do not know why living involves dying and I cannot see what God will do with the ashes. This very moment, a friend of mine is grieving and living through her own dying and writing about it with a strength that makes me want to practice letting go every chance I get. Two sets of our friends are fighting for the very lives of their babies. How often we do not know and cannot see and must practice casting ourselves and those we love into the hands and heart of God.

I desperately need to practice living through the deaths that surround me, both so I can see and share in whatever gifts are given in the dying and so I will be better prepared to live my own dying well, whenever that universal experience becomes my imminent reality.

God of unravelling threads, deepen my enthusiasm to practice living. Teach me to delight in the undoing of my life, to anticipate



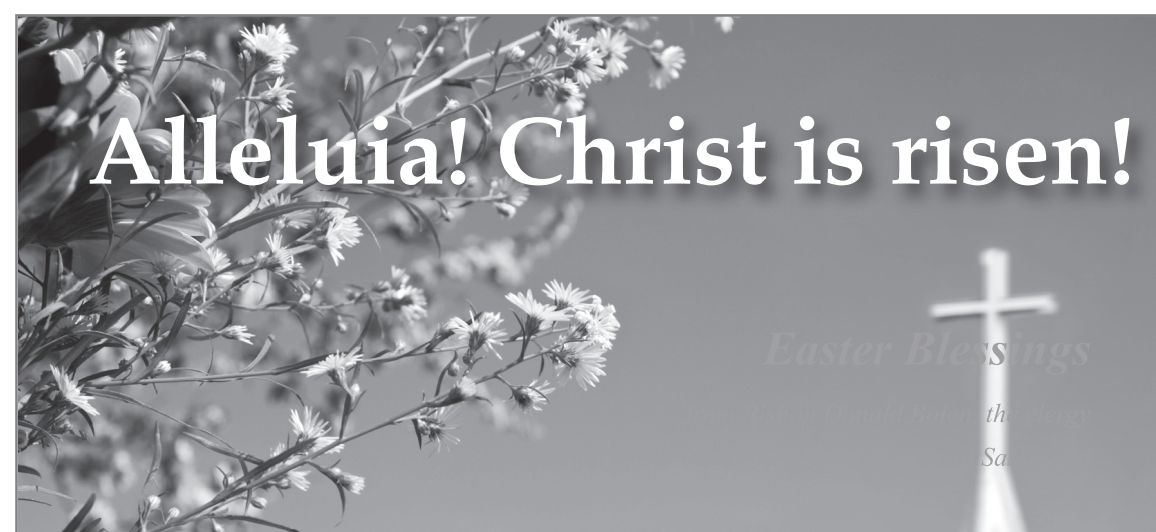
Weber

THE THREADS OF OUR LIVES — Soon after a seemingly insignificant conversation, Leah Perrault related that “God started to use it to weave together several threads that have been hanging around the seams of my life lately. Threads about dying on the seams of the way I practice living. I suspect the threads are always there, hanging off the edges of my life even when I’m unaware of them, but when I feel like my neatly packaged life is coming unravelled, my first instinct is to tidy up.”

the glory of a future I cannot see, and to trust that what I know now is enough to face now. And where-

ever dying awaits me, help me to live it fully, with an eagerness to meet you even there. Amen.

Perrault is a wife and mom, a grateful employee of Emmanuel Care, and a speaker, writer and consultant at www.leahperrault.com

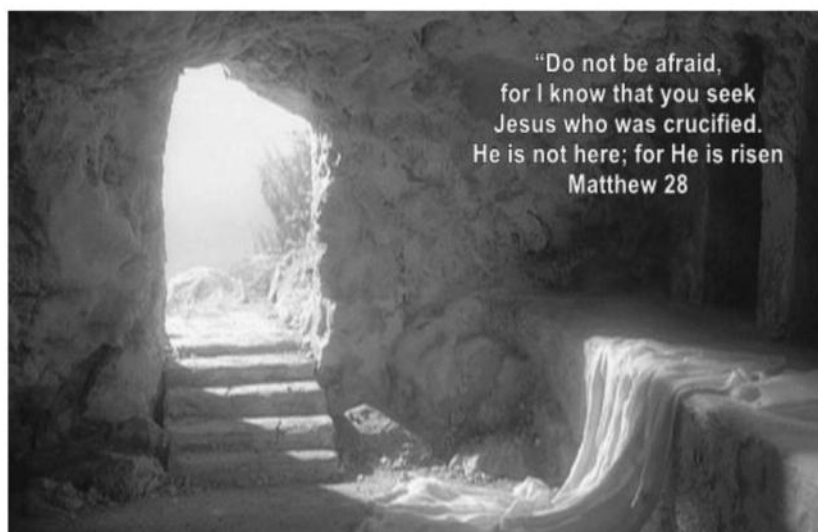


Have a Blessed

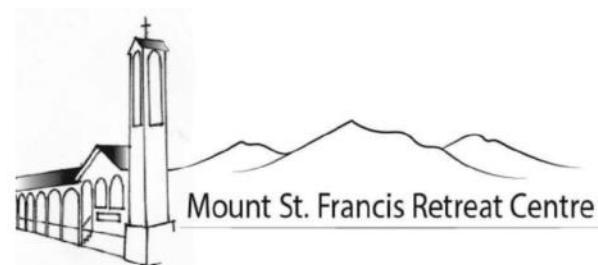
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V. Rev. Lorne D. Crozon,
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“Do not be afraid,
for I know that you seek
Jesus who was crucified.
He is not here; for He is risen
Matthew 28



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Templeton Prize awarded to Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

By Chris Herlinger
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Lord Jonathan Sacks, Britain's former chief rabbi and a prominent leader in efforts to promote interfaith understanding among people of all faiths, has won the 2016 Templeton Prize.

Sacks' vision of a better world and his "future-mindedness" were key reasons he was chosen for the honour, said Jennifer Simpson, who heads the John Templeton Foundation Board of Trustees.

"After 9/11, Rabbi Sacks saw the need for a response to the challenge posed by radicalization and extremism and he did so with dignity and grace," she said in a statement announcing the award.

"He has always been ahead of his time and, thanks to his leadership, the world can look to the future with hope, something we are very much in need of right now," she added.

Sacks, 67, served as Great Britain's chief rabbi from 1991 to 2013 and was often praised for his work in revitalizing Jewish institutions. During his tenure, the John Templeton Foundation said, he "built a network of organizations that introduced a Jewish focus in areas including business, women's issues and education, and urged British Jewry to turn outward to share the ethics of their faith with the broader community."

At the same time, Sacks became a prominent public figure in advocating for religious institutions to turn away from extremism in an era of terrorism and violence.

In his most recent book, *Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence* (see review, PM, Dec. 16, 2015), Sacks writes



CNS/Paul Haring

TEMPLETON PRIZE — Rabbi Jonathan Sacks is the winner of this year's Templeton Prize.

specifically of the need to counter extremism.

"Too often in the history of religion, people have killed in the name of the God of life, waged war in the name of the God of peace, hated in the name of the God of love and practised cruelty in the name of the God of compassion," he said. "When this happens, God speaks, sometimes in a still, small voice almost inaudible beneath the clamour of those claiming to speak on his behalf. What he says at such times is: 'Not in My Name.'"

In an interview with RNS before the formal announcement in London, Sacks said he was humbled by the award and viewed it as evidence the issues

he was raising, a long side others, were gaining a larger hearing.

"It's a sign that the kind of work I and others are doing is resonating," he said.

Sacks said he was particularly proud of his work developing close relations with Muslim groups in Great Britain, saying he often stressed how much Judaism owes Islam for its intellectual traditions, particularly during the Middle Ages. "I have found a warm and sympathetic reception in the Muslim community," he said.

Despite such comity, Sacks acknowledged serious problems in the world today. He said he has been shocked and dismayed by the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe, calling it "the most horrific thing in my life," adding "the hate that begins with Jews never ends with Jews."

When things go wrong with a nation, he said, societies can either ask "What did we do wrong?" or say "Who did this to us?" Historically, he said, Jews have borne the brunt of blame when nations fixate on the latter.

"It was untrue in the Middle Ages, it was untrue in the 19th and 20th centuries, and it is untrue today," Sacks said. "Hate destroys the hated but it also destroys the hater."

The future hope for various religious traditions, he said, is in supporting and engendering the talents of young leaders of all faiths "who are willing to take a risk for peace."

"We need leaders to stand up and say, 'God does not want this.'"

Sacks said the \$1.5-million prize money would help him in that quest. "This wonderful prize will deepen, extend and intensify those efforts," he said.

Long called the most prestigious prize in the field of religion, the Templeton Prize is one of the world's largest annual awards given to an individual. The prize honours a living person "who has made exceptional contributions to affirming life's spiritual dimension, whether through insight, discovery, or practical works," said the John Templeton Foundation, which is based in West Conshohocken, Pa.

Sacks joins the distinguished

company of other Templeton winners, including Mother Teresa, Rev. Billy Graham, the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu. (All but Graham were also Nobel Prize laureates.)

Last year's Templeton Prize winner was Jean Vanier, a lay Catholic, prominent advocate for people with developmental disabilities and creator of an international network of residential communities championing the rights of residents.

Investor and philanthropist Sir John Templeton created the prize in 1973.

Rabbi Sacks will be formally awarded the Templeton honour at a May 26 ceremony in London. Sacks' other honours include honorary doctorates from the University of Cambridge and a number of universities in Israel. In 2009, he was made a Life Peer in the British House of Lords as Baron Sacks of Aldgate in the City of London.

Series ends with Resurrection

Continued from page 11

weight of the world. He's carrying the weight of us, the sinners," DeGrazia said.

In later stations, the cross nearly overcomes Jesus and his body begins to contort under its burden.

The series ends with the Resurrection, a non-traditional station DeGrazia chose to add. The church acknowledges 14 traditional stations, ending with Christ's burial in the tomb. Some modern prayer books now include the Resurrection and St. John Paul II added it in 1991 when he led the Way of the Cross at the Colosseum in Rome.

DeGrazia said he didn't consider the Way of the Cross complete without the risen Christ: "To me this is the way the Way of the Cross should end, with Christ risen. Alleluia."

Angels, dancing children and a Yaqui deer dancer celebrate Christ in glory in the Resurrection painting.

DeGrazia's paintings of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection are exhibited each Lent and for a few months after Easter at the DeGrazia Gallery in the Sun.

This year the gallery also is showing several of his depictions of Our Lady of Guadalupe. His paintings of Kino are part of the permanent exhibit.

DeGrazia was known to favour booze and carousing and to have a weakness for women. He also displayed a charitable side, giving paintings to people who could not afford to buy original artwork. He often gave rights to his art to charities for fundraising.

A struggling art student, DeGrazia went on to achieve success as an impressionistic painter, making millions from his artwork. His paintings were popular but critics and traditional galleries were not among his admirers.

In 1961 the Arizona Historical Society published a book of DeGrazia's paintings of Kino and a copy was sent to the Vatican. The Holy See responded with an apostolic blessing from St. John XXIII and a letter that said the pope saw in the album "touching evidence of filial loyalty and devotion."

More information about the DeGrazia and the Gallery in the Sun and Mission is available at <http://degrazia.org>



Mural image St. Thomas More College Chapel. Artist Lionel Thomas

"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." John 11:25-26



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Canada wants to play leading role on climate change



Pulpit & Politics

Dennis Gruending

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called the first ministers together in Vancouver recently to begin mapping out a plan for Canada to meet commitments made at December's Paris Climate Conference. The Paris meeting was a last-ditch attempt to prevent the most dramatic impacts of global warming caused by the burning of fossil fuels whose emissions remain trapped in the atmosphere.

Gruending is an Ottawa-based writer and a former member of Parliament. His blog can be found at <http://www.dennisgruending.ca>. This piece appeared in a shorter and somewhat different form on Gruending's United Church Observer blog (www.ucobserver.org) on March 3, 2016.

At that gathering 195 nations reached an accord committing them to lowering greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) although they did not say by exactly how much.

Canada's record on the climate change file has been poor but Prime Minister Justin Trudeau along with Environment Minister Catherine McKenna assured other nations meeting in Paris that Canada is back and wants to play a leading role. For the government the negotiations in Paris, as difficult as they may have been, were the easy part.

Trudeau and McKenna went to Paris using the Harper government's commitment of reducing Canada's 2005 level of GHG emissions by 30 per cent by the year 2030. McKenna called that a "floor" and promised Canada will

do more than that — but it's a tall order. Rather than going down in recent years, GHG emissions in Canada have been rising. Meeting the promised reductions by 2030 could require GHG cuts equal to all of our current emissions from cars, trucks, electricity production and from buildings across the country.

Most experts agree that the way to a low carbon future lies in putting a price, or tax, on carbon so that people use less of it and switch to other fuels and technologies. For example, more expensive gas at the pumps could lead to a greater demand for hybrid or electric vehicles which in turn would promote greater innovation in building and marketing them. Other ways forward include more stringent regulations around building codes and support of rapid transit.

But one premier, Brad Wall of Saskatchewan, has already said that he wants no part of a carbon tax. It would ultimately reduce the demand for the oil which his province produces. Premier Wall is facing an election in April and his reaction points lucidly to the difficulties in making long-term decisions in the context of a four-year political cycle.

There are other sensitive issues on the table as well. The Alberta economy is heavily invested in continued development of the oilsands. However, the province already accounts for 40 per cent of all GHG emissions in Canada. Further development there would make it impossible for Canada to make significant reductions in national emissions.

There is also a determined effort by industry to build more pipelines to get the oil to markets, but mining more oil and gas would simply lead to an increased level of GHG emissions. That is incompatible with Canada's desire to move to a carbon free economy.

All of this appears daunting and scientific arguments along with the eye-glazing statistics they generate have been difficult for ordinary people to absorb.

In that regard, actions being taken by Pope Francis and other religious leaders are proving to be of great help. For one thing, the pope's 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'* (On Care for our Common Home) helped to move the debate from a scientific and technical one to the deeply personal ground of religious and moral values. The



Art Babych

Catherine McKenna

pope argues that we have a sacred duty to care for the earth and that it is the poor who suffer most from environmental destruction caused by consumerism and greed.

Mardi Tindal, a former moderator of the United Church, attended the 2015 Paris climate conference as a member of the Canadian delegation. She believes that Environment Minister McKenna and the prime minister are sincere in what they wish to accomplish and she cautions against cynicism. "Ultimately, we need to understand that we are all in this together," Tindal says. "We must each commit ourselves to taking the most ambitious actions we can while remaining encouraging and challenging."

The first ministers meeting in Vancouver did not go nearly as far as most of us would have hoped. It is important that we keep the pressure on, telling them that they must make the hard decisions. We can make some decisions at a personal level as well, starting with less driving and especially less flying.

Zechariah reminds us to rejoice in the small things



Figure of Speech

Dr. Gerry Turcotte

"For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice."
— Zechariah 4:10

One of the most unexpected joys of coming to St. Mary's University in Calgary was the opportunity to write this column. While it is a most modest affair, I confess to enjoying the process and discipline of writing a monthly reflection, and especially value the opportunity to discourse at will on whatever subject happens to take my fancy. As readers of the column will know, often that interest revolves around activities undertaken by my university: its extraordinary capacity for volunteering, its support for the sacred arts, our acquisition of the Saint John's Bible, or its remarkable celebration of the Liberal Arts and Sciences at a time when these core disciplines are often under threat.

The columns have also given

Turcotte is president of St. Mary's University in Calgary.

me an opportunity to meditate on the key holidays — sacred and secular. In the process I have learned a fair bit about topics I knew only a bit about: from calendars to Valentine's Day, ordinary days to sacred time. And through these ruminations readers have sent me ideas that have steered me in other wonderful directions: church bulletins, panic buttons, ashes and mercy.

What I didn't expect was that there would be sufficient interest for the columns to be reproduced in multiple newspapers and journals, or that they would be gathered into a modest collection. And yet both have hap-

pened. In fact, on April 1, *Small Things: Essays on Faith and Hope*, will be launched by Novalis, a collection of three years of columns, organized as weekly readings. The collection takes its title from Zechariah, and his odd pronunciation: *For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice*. As I explain in the introduction to the book, Zechariah was a priest who appears in both the Bible and the Quran. The passage

in question arises when the Jews return to their homeland and build a temple of thanks. The ancients among the tribe bemoan the fact that the effort lacks grandeur; that it does not live up to its Solomonic predecessor. The younger folk rejoice at what they've built. Zechariah chastises those who do not appreciate the accomplishment, urging them to see the beauty and the glory of "small things" and to recognize that their greatness lies elsewhere.

Zechariah reminds us to rejoice in the small things; urges us to

understand that our puny, human efforts will be raised up by a higher power and made mighty. For me it was a serendipitous moment that reminded me to continue with my infinitely small task of writing in the hopes that my words might become part of something greater. This is what I learned from the exercise of writing these columns. I would like to thank the many editors and readers who have encouraged me to keep writing, and I hope that you will have a chance to encounter *Small Things* when it is released in April.

PRAIRIE MESSENGER PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY

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It has been said that there's nothing like grandchildren

Around the Kitchen Table

Maureen Weber



In the dark cocoon of the January nights of 1982 I had the opportunity to reflect on the life that was beginning to form within. I was 23. Too young, I felt. Too immature, too ill equipped. It was a time of more uncertainty than joy. I can feel the moment, and see the yellow kitchen light, on an evening 34 years ago when after a medical appointment I returned home and, exhausted, leaned against the doorjamb of our tiny apartment and told Russ I was indeed pregnant.

In the darkness of a *recent* January night, the memory came back. We were Skyping with our daughter Leigh and her husband Nohé when they held a positive pregnancy test up to the screen. I'm not easily taken by surprise, but this unexpected news would have brought me to my knees had I not been sitting down. Instead it brought me to tears.

With three married daughters and son soon to be married, I have often thought about the possibility of being a grandparent, but couldn't actually imagine the reality of it. Mostly I thought

about the difficulties of raising children: the total physical and mental exhaustion, the worry, the responsibility, the sheer terror of keeping them safe, and you sane. Parents tend to want to protect their children from harm, no matter how old they get, and the notion of them having their own children seemed, well, dangerous.

Over the years I have heard many times, from many people, that "there is nothing like grandchildren." I've smiled and nodded when I've heard it said, because I remember my own mother and the power of the love she had for my children, but I never quite got it. It's like they share a private club that can only be understood by becoming a member.

I may be starting to get it. The impact of the news has taken my breath away. There's a sense of connection with this little one that I cannot explain — it's almost cosmic, the sense that this child is floating in an infinite universe that I am a part of. I can feel her (or his) presence as easily as I can feel my heart beat.

Spring is nearly upon us, and

we anticipate the Easter season with a longing that always follows the end of a dreary winter. Dying and new life — we experience both on small scales and large every day. When my mother and then my father died, I felt myself inch a little closer to eternity. No one left ahead as a buffer between death and me. It took some getting used to. Mixed with the excitement of a grandchild in my future is a similar feeling, only the nudge toward eternity is from behind, pushing me forward into the realization that my life is gradually giving way. A new generation is ready to take over.

It's sobering, but also liberating. The things that worried me about parenting are no longer mine to own, because that phase of my life is over. I can let them go and embrace loving this child with the freedom that is bestowed upon grandparents.

Two weeks ago late in the afternoon on a plain old Monday my iPhone notified me of an incoming Snapchat from Leigh. The image that flooded my screen turned my world upside down, much like the little one floating in the ultrasound photo. In front of my eyes was the cosmic universe in which my grandchild is being formed. How worry can melt like winter snow and turn into a spring-like pool of love is part of the mystery of the universe that grandparents inhabit.

Welcome Easter, and welcome new life — for young and for old.



M. Weber

GRANDCHILDREN — My mother, Carmel, with her first grandchild, my daughter Janice. The devotion is evident on Mom's face. "There's nothing like grandchildren," I have heard many times. This fall I will find out first-hand.



THIS EASTER...

We welcome and pray for Bishop Héctor Felipe Vila, the new Bishop of the Diocese of Whitehorse, Yukon.

Bishop Vila will serve the Diocese of Whitehorse which comprises the northern quarter of the province of British Columbia and the entire Yukon Territory.

Geographically, the diocese is one of the largest in the world with 723,515-sq km area, and 40,000 people. The Catholic population of 7,500 is served in 23 parishes

and missions by seven priests, one deacon, two religious sisters, six lay pastoral administrators and dedicated faithful.

In 2016, Catholic Missions In Canada will provide funding to Whitehorse diocese for missionary travel, maintenance of churches, ministry to First Nations and religious education.

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Machines getting smarter

Easter is one of the most revolutionary events in history. Jesus' death and resurrection released a power — the Holy Spirit — that has revolutionized not only individual people's lives, but has also deeply influenced human cultures.

There is another revolution going on today, one that many are unaware of. It is called the "information revolution."

It is the creation of artificial intelligence (AI).

Its most recent achievement occurred on March 9. A computer beat a professional human player at the complex board game called Go. The game, which originated in ancient China, "is considered to be the pinnacle of game AI research," said artificial intelligence researcher Demis Hassabis of Google DeepMind, the British company that developed the AlphaGo program.

AlphaGo swept a five-game match against three-time European Go champion and Chinese professional Fan Hui. Until now, the best computer Go programs had played only at the level of human amateurs. Go is a game with extremely simple rules

that lead to profound complexity. "Go is probably the most complex game ever devised by humans," said Hassabis, a former child chess prodigy.

The victory recalls the chess victory of IBM supercomputer Deep Blue over Russian Grand Master Garry Kasparov in 1997. However, AI is making inroads into tasks such as automated weapons systems, driverless cars, human-like robots and smartphone assistants like Apple's Siri.

However, not everything looks rosey with the latest revolution. Serious moral and ethical questions have been raised about what future AI developments might lead to.

World-famous theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking, for one, has cautioned that rapid advances in AI without some thought into what they mean for humanity could threaten human survival.

"The biggest challenge that our development in AI and robotics presents to us is a challenge to our human exceptionalism," said David J. Gunkel, professor of communication at Northern Illinois University and the author of *The Machine Question: Critical Perspectives on AI, Robots and Ethics*.

"We have always thought of ourselves, in the medieval way of thinking, as the top of the chain of being. We're now on the verge of creating machines that push against or at least challenge the position we've given ourselves."

Don Howard, professor of philosophy at the University of Notre Dame, said humanity must address the near-term challenge that smart robots are replacing human labour at an accelerating rate. It's not just factory work where robots are beginning to replace humans, but even in service industries, including bars and restaurants, he said.

Significant progress has also been made in developing machines to provide basic care to the elderly. While low-wage earners will be most affected by this revolution, other more skilled jobs being taken over by smart machines include television and film animation, drafting and design work, and journalism.

Many developments in AI may go unnoticed by the average person today, but its implications are being increasingly addressed by concerned citizens. It is wise to be forewarned so that we can be forearmed to deal with the consequences. — PWN

Canadians go to diocese of Chiapas for a 10-day solidarity visit

By Archbishop-emeritus
Sylvain Lavoie, OMI

In January 2016, 12 Canadians and one American went to the diocese of Chiapas for a 10-day solidarity visit. I participated as a member of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs of the western bishops, and also as chair of our local Oblate Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) committee. Reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples is one of the priorities for our national JPIC committee.

We witnessed the work and fruits of a very vital diocesan process put in place by Bishop Samuel Ruiz and the people of his diocese. The process is, essentially, the Indigenization of the church in the diocese of Chiapas. He sought above all to implement the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. In 1974, the diocese hosted a first Indigenous Congress on the 500th anniversary of the birth

dialogue, a diocesan plan, hard work and intense commitment during more than 40 years of collaborative work between himself and the indigenous and Mexican people, the Indigenous face of Christ in the church of Chiapas is very visible today.

A major initiative was the formation of indigenous deacons, who would minister with their wives. The deacons were involved in organizing and community development, with a strong emphasis on prayer, fasting, defending their rights and promoting their culture in a non-violent way.

Their newfound dignity, moral strength and courage, however, ruffled the feathers of the powers-that-be, including mining companies, mostly Canadian. This trip was beginning to strike close to home.

The ministry of Ruiz was in the spirit of Bartolomé de Las Casas, who fought for the rights



Sylvain Lavoie

MEAL PREPARATION — Ti'Akil women cook tortillas on community ovens.

bishop emeritus back in Spain lobbying against the ravages of colonization among his flock.

With that historical background to ponder, our schedule was packed with events, field trips and input from resource people. We celebrated the eucharist at Acteal, the site of a massacre of 45 indigenous people on Dec 22, 1997. This was the 23rd annual commemoration of the massacre.

We spent two days in Museo Itatik Samuel, built by the people in honour of and dedicated to sharing the legacy of Ruiz. There we learned about his life and ministry, indigenous theology and participated in a Mayan prayer service. The Mayans consider themselves people of the corn.

We participated in a march and eucharist with thousands of mostly indigenous campesinos celebrating the fifth anniversary of Ruiz' death. Especially touching was the incensing and placing of crosses representing all the martyrs of Acteal, around the Mayan altar.

Current Coadjutor Bishop Enrique Díaz Díaz delivered a

tinue to receive death threats for their struggles.

We also met with retiring Bishop Felipe Arizmendi Esquivel, who highlighted the new challenges that Ruiz did not have to face, and filled us in on the five congresses on indigenous theology that have been held.

We travelled to other communities and listened to speakers about women's rights, the struggle for indigenous rights, and the work of translation into the *tseltal*, *ch'ol* and *tsoil* languages.

Chiapas is also the stronghold of the Zapatista movement (Zapatista Army of National Liberation), established in 1983 to demand respect for the rights of indigenous populations and the recognition of their culture and to claim control of local resources, especially land. The Zapatistas set aside their weapons after an uprising in 1994 and moved to the political sphere through a strategy of civil resistance and the use of communications media.

We then trekked up a mountain through the jungle and cornfields to Ti'Akil, an isolated Mayan Catholic community for a Mayan ceremony, visit and communal meal. Even there, we heard how they organize to defend their rights and protect their spirituality and culture.

Sunday was a day of reflection and debriefing the impact this journey had on us. What stayed

— CANADA, page 23



Sylvain Lavoie

STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE — Bishop Raúl Vera López and Rev. Marcello Perez. Perez and his parish council received an award for their struggle for justice.

of Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, the first bishop of the diocese begun in 1539.

That gathering of about 2,000 representatives of indigenous communities allowed them to hear each other's stories of oppression and suffering for the first time. That single event was a major catalyst for empowerment of the people and it led the local church to rethink its pastoral approach and process.

Through a diocesan synod,

of the indigenous people against the devastating impact of the first Papal Bulls that divided the New World in two and gave the monarchs of Portugal and Spain the moral right to exploit and subjugate the indigenous populations they "discovered."

Las Casas' efforts to obtain justice for the indigenous people upset the political and ecclesial powers and he was pulled out of the diocese after only 10 months. He spent the rest of his life as a



Sylvain Lavoie

DISAPPEARED PEOPLE — Faceless crosses represent the disappeared.

Foreign tax havens shelter rich from paying due taxes

The Editor: At the recent World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland, Oxfam's report on the "economy for the one per cent" noted that 62 of the world's richest people hold as much wealth as half the planet. It has also been noted that the inequality between the wealthiest and the poorest is still growing in favour of the world's top one per cent.

In the industrialized countries of the world, the U.S. has the greatest disparity between the rich and the poor. It also has sustained

the greatest losses from tax evasion, in some cases with the help of their banks, in order to move profits into foreign tax havens.

James Henry, senior adviser to the Tax Justice System, has stated that "the world's super rich have taken advantage of lax tax rules to siphon off at least US\$21 trillion, and possibly \$32 trillion, from their home countries and hide it abroad. Data from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service suggests that, globally, U.S. non-financial companies hold about US\$5 trillion in cash. Canadian companies are reported

to be holding \$685 billion, equal to one-third of the Canadian economy.

Tax evasion is a crime. It is even a greater crime when one thinks about what that wealth could have done to create programs to enable the world's poor and oppressed families to have a better standard of living.

That will change only if we — the millions of voters, particularly in the industrialized countries — elect politicians who are prepared to regulate the greed and abuses of capitalism. — **Leo Kurtenbach, Saskatoon**

Auschwitz to open for World Youth Day

By Nancy Wiechec

OSWIECIM, Poland (CNS) — The Auschwitz memorial and museum is setting aside days exclusively for World Youth Day pilgrims who want to tour the former Nazi death camp.

The museum has set aside July 20 - 28 and Aug. 1 - 3 for participants in World Youth Day, which runs July 26 - 31 in Krakow, about one-and-a-half hours away.

World Youth Day officials set aside 300,000 spots and asked participants to register for the dates. In early March, they said about 57,000 spots remained. Participants who wish to visit the muse-

um on the designated days must register at <http://mlodzi.duszpasterstwa.bielsko.pl/auschwitz>.

A record 1.72 million people visited the Auschwitz memorial and museum in 2015. It was the largest group ever to tour the former Nazi death camp in any given year.

The largest number of visitors came from Poland, 425,000; the United Kingdom, 220,000; and the United States, 141,000. Young people made up the majority of visitors, according to the museum's annual report.

Between 1940 and 1945, more than one million Jews and tens of thousands of Poles, Roma, Soviet POWs and others were murdered by the SS at Auschwitz. The SS, which originated as the elite guard of the Nazi party, later became units of fanatical soldiers and concentration camp guards.

Auschwitz was the largest camp complex established by the Nazis. The

main camp, known as Auschwitz I, was expanded to include Auschwitz II (Auschwitz-Birkenau) in 1941 and Auschwitz III (Auschwitz-Monowitz) in 1942.

Among those killed were St. Maximilian Kolbe, a Polish Conventual Franciscan friar, and St. Edith Stein, a Jewish philosopher who converted to Catholicism and became a Carmelite nun.

The starvation cell, where St. Maximilian and others spent the last days of their lives, can be viewed in the basement of Block 11. It is known as "the death block" because it was used by the SS to inflict torture.

Auschwitz has stood as testament to the Holocaust for 70 years. Education, preservation and research is a large part of the museum's ongoing mission.

Among the exhibits are heaps of eyeglasses, shoes, suitcases, Jewish prayer shawls, clothing, kitchenware, baskets and other personal items belonging to victims. A mound of worn hair and shaving brushes is on display in one room. Along a wall in another, clumps of human hair, shaven from those imprisoned and killed in the camp, are piled behind glass.

Polish Catholic leaders have expressed hope that Pope Francis might visit Auschwitz in July when he comes to Poland for World Youth Day. St. John Paul II visited in 1979 and Pope Benedict XVI in 2006.



Anne Wicks

Easter

The frigid compress of winter came in layers of ice chilling one's soul. And now, in the longed-for warmth of Spring, sitting in the garden surrounded by fallen limbs, surveying a hillside of brush with spines forever crushed, a cardinal fills the air with the song of Easter and a robin dances amidst an astonishment of crocus pushing up prodigiously through the chaotic cover of twigs and leaves — sheaves of green piercing the thawing earth and opening delicate petals of blue rebirth as once again the message bursts forth from the tomb of death: Life reigns!

By Tom Ryan, CSP



Jerzy Janicki, nr obozowy 562
24 lata, oficer Wojska Polskiego, rozstrzelany 16 lutego 1943 r.
Camp no. 562
24 y/o. An officer of the Polish Army. Executed on Feb. 16, 1943.

CNS/Nancy Wiechec

WYD AUSCHWITZ MEMORIAL — Nazi photos of Auschwitz prisoner Jerzy Janicki, a Polish army officer, are seen in a display outside the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and State Museum in Oswiecim, Poland. The Auschwitz memorial and museum is setting aside days exclusively for World Youth Day pilgrims who want to tour the former Nazi death camp.

Canada stuck in old model

Continued from page 22

with us was the dignity and strength of the people in Acteal; a sense of the church still operating out of a colonial model in some of our communities in Canada; the simplicity and power of the rituals, the strength of the isolated Ti'Akil community around liturgy and the meal with a fullness of life and joy; the energy, passion and deep commitment of all the speakers we heard; the conversion of bishops, priests and religious; the transformation of the church from the power of politics to the power of faith; and evangelization through the culture.

We flew to Mexico City where we enjoyed the hospitality of the Oblates. Huge roadside billboards announced the upcoming visit of Pope Francis. Even the on-board magazine featured him on the cover as a pilgrim of peace and mercy, as well as a three-page article within. The feeling we had was that his visit could only add to the resurgence of hope that we had witnessed for ourselves.

The people told us that they did not want us to go there to help them. Rather, they need us to come, stay with them, learn about their struggles, and return to share their story with the world.

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Due to limited space we ask you to keep your letters short — 300 to 350 words maximum. The Prairie Messenger reserves the right to edit letters to conform to space requirements and newspaper style.



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He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies;
and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die."**

John 11:25-26

Through the intercession of the Mother of Perpetual Help, may all come to experience true Joy in the suffering, death and Resurrection of our Redeemer - Christ Our Pascha!

Bishop Bryan Bayda, CSsR,
Bishop Emeritus Michael Wiwchar, CSsR,
Clergy, Religious Members and all the faithful
of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon



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Women leaders share their stories at Vatican event

By **Cindy Wooden**

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — In the heart of Vatican City, dozens of women from around the world gathered to share their stories of faith and activism. A few men were in attendance, but Pope Francis and top members of the Roman Curia were out of town on their lenten retreat.

For the third time the Voices of Faith celebration of International Women’s Day, March 8, brought Catholic women to the Casina Pio IV, a villa nestled in the Vatican gardens.

Members of the Voices of Faith international advisory board — mainly women leaders in organizations serving the poor or in foundations that fund Catholic activities — arrived in Rome days before the main event to network with the chosen “story-tellers” and speakers and to meet with Vatican officials.

While raising the profile of women in the Catholic Church and encouraging the inclusion of women in church decision-making was on the agenda, the approach was not about confrontation, but about highlighting what women already are doing and how the church could benefit from encouraging more women to be involved and giving them greater responsibility.

Chantal Gotz, managing director of the event, told reporters, “We are trying to change the mindset of bishops and Curia people. We do it in a kind of emotional way, through storytelling,” bringing them into contact with Catholic women leaders and “showing them what we are capable of doing, that they should use our expertise and talents.”

The idea, she said, is to promote inclusion based “on capacity and not because you are a man or a woman.”

Among others, the speakers included: Katarina Kruhonja, a Croatian who works for reconciliation and non-violence in the Balkans; U.S. Dominican Sister Mary Doris, who runs a home for homeless mothers in the Bronx; Cecilia Flores-Oebanda, a former political prisoner in the Philippines who runs a program to rescue girls from human traffickers; Sabriye Tenberken, a German who went fully blind at the age of 12 and now runs a school for the blind in Tibet; and Caroline Kimeu and Judy Onyango, both young Kenyans who struggled to stay in school and to avoid child marriages.

Although Pope Francis has not attended any Voices of Faith event and has not met participants, the speeches March 8 were peppered with praise for his lead-



CNS/Josip Petric, EPA

Katarina Kruhonja

ership, his denunciation of human trafficking, his call for the institutional church to give greater space to women and, particularly, for his recognition of the service of women religious to the church and to the world.

Only in private conversations was the general enthusiasm for Pope Francis’ leadership tempered with concern for how little has been done to promote Catholic women leaders in the three years since he has become pope. Under Pope Benedict XVI women served as undersecretaries at both the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life and at the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. Those remain the only curial offices with women at that level.

The reform of the Curia is ongoing, as is the drafting of rules for who is eligible to hold the top positions. The establishment of the Secretariat for Com-

munications is one change that already has been made and, in early February, the Vatican announced that the director of the secretariat’s theological-pastoral department would be Natasa Govekar, a theologian who specializes in the communication of faith through images.

Nicole Perone, a Voices of Faith speaker who is completing her master of divinity degree at Yale University, expressed hope that in the coming months women would be appointed to top positions at least at the Vatican offices responsible for family and for laity.

Geralyn Sheehan, country director for the U.S. Peace Corps in Colombia, told the Voices of Faith gathering, “Institutions never change because they should, but because it is in their self-interest,” which is why it is important to highlight for the entire church the examples and stories of women leaders who serve the church.

Carolyn Y. Woo, president and CEO of Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. bishops’ overseas relief and development agency, told the conference that “whether it is out of necessity or it is out of invitation, about 80 per cent of the work of the church is done by women.” Faith formation and sacramental preparation, evangelization, education, health care, emergency services and social outreach done in the name of the church are all areas where women lead, she said.

Her position, like those of women presidents of Catholic universities and women chancellors of dioceses, she said, shows “the practice of empowering women and the ability to share power with women is there.”

The next step would be to

move from seeing women in such leadership positions as being exceptional to it being normal, Woo said.

Catholics at all levels of the church also need to learn to listen to women’s “voices of faith” as input that is not “threatening,” but enriching, she said. “Whenever women plea or speak or recommend or propose there’s this skepticism and suspicion, ‘Is this conversation leading to women’s ordination?’ ‘Is this a slippery slope?’ as if everything women want eventually is (leading) to the priesthood.”



CNS/Paul Haring

Carolyn Woo

St. John Paul II said that the ordination of women was not up for discussion because Jesus chose only men to be his disciples.

Such suspicion about the motives of Catholic women active in church leadership “is unfortunate,” Woo said, “because along the way we fail to hear the voices.”



CNS/Jose Cabezas, Reuters


INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY — A woman sets crosses in front of a courthouse with the names of slain women during a march to mark International Women’s Day in San Salvador, El Salvador, March 8.



Anne Wicks

May you
be filled
with the
wonder of
the promise
of the
Resurrection.

Easter blessings from the editors and staff of the
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Luke 24:5



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