



Parish renewal

A lively exchange of ideas and questions resulted when a packed hall of parishioners viewed the presentation of Mary, the Mother of the Church's new mission statement and parish renewal initiative.

— page 3

Correctional Centre

Easter joy rang through the chapel at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre as prisoners joined Bishop Donald Bolen to celebrate mass on the afternoon of Easter Sunday.

— page 6

Knights of Columbus

The annual state council meeting of the Knights of Columbus of Saskatchewan was a call to return to the basics of the Columbian order, a call for knights to hold fast to the Catholic principles around which the order was founded 134 years ago.

— page 6

Compelling TV series

Through many small stories of births, the BBC series *Call the Midwife* (in Canada on PBS) tells a larger story about religion and health.

— page 10



Amoris Laetitia

This week's Prairie



Messenger takes a more detailed look at Pope Francis' lengthy declaration on family

life, *Amoris Laetitia*.

— pages 12-14

Reconciliation

The road to reconciliation with indigenous peoples is like a marathon, writes Joe Gunn, and many faith groups released statements on the TRC Calls to Action. But the "four groups convened by the bishops to sign the Catholic statement have yet to give an indication of their intention to complete the marathon."

— page 17

Pope visits refugees, brings 12 home

By Cindy Wooden

MYTILENE, Greece (CNS) — Pope Francis' five-hour visit to Greece ended with him offering safe passage to Italy to 12 Syrian Muslims, half under the age of 18.

The Vatican had kept secret the pope's plan to invite the members of three Syrian families to fly back to Rome with him April 16. Rumours began swirling in the Greek media a couple hours before the flight took off, but it was confirmed by the Vatican only as the 12 were boarding the papal plane.

The Vatican secretariat of state made formal arrangements with the Italian and Greek governments to obtain the legal permits needed for the refugees to live in Italy, a Vatican statement said. The Vatican will assume financial responsibility for the families, who will be assisted by the Rome-based Community of Sant'Egidio.

All 12 in the group, the Vatican added, had arrived in Greece prior to March 20, the date a European Union agreement with Turkey went into effect for returning most asylum seekers to Turkey. The children are between the ages of 2 and 17.

After spending the morning



CNS/Paul Haring

POPE WELCOMES REFUGEES FROM LESBOS — Pope Francis greets Syrian refugees he brought to Rome from the Greek island of Lesbos, at Ciampino airport in Rome April 16. The pope concluded his one-day visit to Greece by bringing 12 Syrian refugees to Italy aboard his flight.

with desperate refugees interned in a camp in Greece, Pope Francis and Orthodox leaders turned their

attention and prayers to the sea, the final burial place of hundreds who died trying to get to Europe.

Just since January, the Interna-

— GRAVES, page 23

Government introduces bill to legalize euthanasia

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — The federal government introduced legislation April 14 to legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide for competent adults with grievous medical conditions.

Bill C-14 does not allow "medically assisted dying" for minors or for those with mental illness. It

does not allow advanced directives for those diagnosed with dementia. Instead, the federal government has committed those matters to further study. Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould said this study does not presuppose any decision on these matters one way or the other. The bill also includes a mandatory review after five years.

Those eligible for either volun-

tary euthanasia or assisted suicide must be 18 years old or over; have a "grievous and irremediable medical condition" that makes "natural death reasonably foreseeable"; must make a voluntary request with informed consent and be eligible for publicly funded health care services in Canada.

"This is an historic day for our country," said Health Minister Jane Philpott.

"Medical aid in dying" will be considered health care so it will be subject to the rules of the Canada health act to ensure universality and accessibility, so Canadians can have "autonomy" in their end-of-

life decisions, she said.

Health care workers who follow the criteria for a medically assisted death "no longer need to fear criminal prosecution," she said.

The bill will restore the sections of the Criminal Code prohibiting assisted suicide and counselling and abetting suicide, but carves out exemptions for physicians, nurse-practitioners, pharmacists and others who help carry out a medically assisted death according to specified rules. For example, that means a family member could help put a lethal

— DEBATE, page 5

Canada on road of irreversible change

By James Buchok

WINNIPEG — With the introduction of a new law defining how Canadians may seek medical help to end their lives, the country continues on a road of irreversible change.

"We've gone from a country that has said 'no' under any circumstances, to 'yes' under some circumstances," clinical ethicist Pat Murphy told a gathering at St. Charles Church in Winnipeg April 14, the eve of the tabling of the proposed legislation.

Murphy, part of the Health Care Ethics Service at St. Boniface General Hospital in Winnipeg, said mixed in with the challenges of changing law is confusion around the meaning of euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide and the role of palliative care.

To begin with, she said, there are dozens of terms used for physician-assisted death, from euthanasia to mercy killing to hastening of death. "There's all kinds of terminology but they are not all equivalent, and that may be our greatest challenge," Murphy said. She said such misconceptions "are evident in the general public, the Roman Catholic community and the community of health care professionals.

"Palliative care as a discipline is not to cure illness," Murphy said. "The focus is on addressing the management of symptoms. The palliative care intention is to give someone a good life while they are dying." But she has been told by family members of the terminally ill, "Don't try to smother us with the palliative

— PEOPLE, page 6



CCN/D. Gyapong

ASSISTED SUICIDE LEGISLATION — Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould and Health Minister Jane Philpott attend a news conference April 14 after the tabling of Bill C-14 legalizing euthanasia and assisted suicide.

‘Polite persecution’
disguised as culture

New U.S. nuncio appointed

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Christians must beware of a “polite” persecution that is cloaked in a disguise of “culture, modernity and progress,” Pope Francis said.

Those who suffer this kind of persecution are not persecuted “for confessing Christ’s name, but for wanting to have and manifesting the values of the son of God,” he said April 12 during the mass in the chapel of the *Domus Sanctae Marthae*.

“We see every day that the powerful make laws that force them to go on this path, and a nation that does not follow these modern, cultured laws, or at least does not have them in their legislation, are accused (and) are politely persecuted,” he said.

The day’s reading from the Acts of the Apostles (7:51 - 8:1) recalled the martyrdom of St. Stephen, who was stoned to death after firmly rebuking the scribes and elders who “always oppose the Holy Spirit.”

The pope said that persecution is “the church’s daily bread” and that today, there are “everyday

men and women” who are martyred for the faith.

“Only three weeks ago, those Christians celebrating Easter in Pakistan were martyred precisely because they were celebrating the risen Christ. And like so, the history of the church goes forward with its martyrs,” the pope said.

However, he added, there is also a “polite” persecution that “takes away from man and woman their freedom, as well as their right to conscientious objection.”

“Jesus has named the head of this ‘polite’ persecution: the prince of this world. And when the powerful want to impose behaviours, laws against the dignity of the son of God, they persecute them and go against God the Creator. It is the great apostasy,” the pope said.

Pope Francis said that although Christians are besieged by persecution, Jesus will always remain close.

“The Lord has promised that he will not be far from us: ‘Beware, beware! Do not fall for the spirit of the world. Beware! But go forward, I will be with you,’” he said.

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Pope Francis has appointed Archbishop Christophe Pierre, papal nuncio to Mexico since 2007, to be the new apostolic nuncio to the United States.


He succeeds Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, who has held the post since 2011. Vigano turned 75 in January, the age at which canon law requires bishops to turn in their resignation to the pope.

Pierre represented the Vatican in Mexico for nearly a decade, a time defined by a drug war, a delicate period of domestic politics and the election of a pope whose pastoral approach and church vision appears at odds with many in the Mexican Catholic hierarchy.

Pierre won an important reform for the church on religious liberty, which moved Mexico further away from its anti-clerical past. He became known for working behind the scenes and acting discreetly in a country where church and state were estranged until 1992.

“He had to navigate a very difficult political environment,” said Pablo Mijangos Gonzalez, a historian at the Center for Research and Teaching in Economics in Mexico City. “He was a very diplomatic nuncio, who did not

create unnecessary antagonisms for the Catholic Church and avoided distractions and media scandals.”



CNS/Mario Armas, Reuters

Archbishop Christophe Pierre

Gonzalez added that Pierre “was one of the various ecclesiastical actors involved in the (religious freedom) reform” and will likely assume a similar role in the United States.

Pierre, 70, brings a low-key approach to the United States, where issues such as a religious

freedom are priorities for Catholics. He must work with bishops believed to be not entirely on-board with the pope’s plans for the church — something he struggled with in Mexico.

Earlier this year, the country’s most senior Catholic leader, Mexico City Cardinal Norberto Rivera, allowed an editorial in an archdiocesan publication to pose the question, “Who gave the pope bad advice?” It alluded to the February papal tour, in which Pope Francis told Mexican bishops to “stop resting on their laurels” and start speaking out on social issues and vices such as drug violence, which has claimed more than 100,000 lives since late 2006.

Pope Francis also called for increased closeness between Mexican and U.S. bishops’ conferences — an issue Pierre is in a position to address, though some observers see him as one of the bishops being admonished by the pope in the speech.

Soriano Nunez, a Catholic sociologist, said the nuncio acted somewhat slowly in cases of sexual abuse by priests and removing bishops who responded improperly to such allegations. He also did not arrange meetings with victims during visits by Popes Benedict XVI and Francis.



CNS/Roland Schlager, EPA

CORRUPTION IN KENYA CAUSES POVERTY — A Kenyan family stands in front of their home May 6, 2014, in a Kisumu shantytown. Kenyan bishops said in a statement issued at the end of a two-day meeting at St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary that ordinary men and women are bearing the burden of corruption.

Syrian families begin to return home

By Gaby Maniscalco

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Hundreds of Christian families are returning to Sadad, Syria, more than two years after their city was overrun by terrorists, a local official said.

Suleiman al Khalil, the mayor of Sadad, told Russian media April 6 of the influx of Christians returning to the city after Russian forces defeated the al Nusra Front, reported Fides, the news agency of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

“Christians who had left Syria for Europe are beginning to return to Sadad and also to other cities,” he said, according to Fides.

The news agency reported that terrorists of al Nursa Front, also known as al-Qaida in Syria, took hold of the city in October 2013, and “massacres were carried out against the civilian population, confirmed by the discovery of a mass grave with at least 30 dead bodies.”

Sadad was also attacked by Islamic State militants November 2015 in an attempt to conquer the city.

Khalil said the return of Christian families to Sadad can be attributed to successful operations conducted by the Russian military followed by a ceasefire agreement, reported Fides.

The partial ceasefire agreement, signed in Munich Feb. 12, allowed for humanitarian aid to be delivered across the country.

The mayor of Sadad added that at least 100 Christians have returned to the city and another 200 are expected to follow, Fides reported in early April.

Don’t demonize all Muslims
Pakistan officials warn

KARACHI, Pakistan (CNS) — Church officials in Pakistan have backed a government plea to the international community not to demonize all Muslims because of acts of terrorism committed by a few extremists, reported ucanews.com

A negative publicity campaign against Muslims by the western media is helping extremists fuel hatred against Muslims worldwide, they said.

Targeting the whole Muslim community because of acts of terrorism helps the aims of terrorists, Rev. Aftab James Paul, former director of the Faisalabad Diocesan Commission for Inter-religious Dialogue, said April 13.

“This is exactly what they want. The recent bombing of innocent people in a park of Lahore has proven that they do not care for either Christian or Muslims. So blaming Muslims for terrorism will further alienate innocent people from rest of the world,” he said.

Ucanews.com reported that the priest spoke a day after Sartaj Aziz, adviser to the prime minister on foreign affairs, addressed an Organization of Islamic Co-operation meeting in Istanbul.

“We are deeply concerned at a sharp rise in hate speech, discriminatory acts and social hostility against Muslims in western countries,” he told the meeting.

“We are also witnessing (an) increase in the instances of physical and psychological violence against Muslim minorities and their businesses and places of worship. They are being alienated and marginalized. Many of them live in fear.”

Aziz said the western media

were to blame for the situation and that terrorists were exploiting this for political gain.

“Western media’s ignorant portrayals of Muslims provide fuel to this campaign of hate and bigotry. We see the unfortunate rise of political opportunism by spreading fear and xenophobia,” Aziz said.

Reports from Spain, for example, said that attacks against Muslims and Islamic institutions surged more than 11-fold last year and warned that Islamophobia was on the rise in the country.

Mounir Benjelloun, president of the Spanish Federation of Islamic Religious Entities, told the gathering that 534 attacks targeting the Muslim community, including online abuse, were registered in the country last year. Only 48 incidents were recorded in 2014, he said.

“If left unchecked, such instances and political shortsightedness will grow rapidly in the years to come. It is our collective responsibility to reverse these trends,” Aziz told the Organization of Islamic Co-operation.

Ucanews.com reported he called on the organization to take a lead role in fostering interfaith dialogue. He said terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group.

Paul agreed, saying, “We should discuss this issue as a species, community and a world united against hatred and killing.”

Rev. James Channan, director of the Dominican Peace Centre in Lahore, said all Muslims, wherever they are, face a backlash due to actions of a few extremist groups.

CPJ analyst calls for national plan to tackle poverty

By Ramon Gonzalez
Western Catholic Reporter

EDMONTON (CCN) — Despite its wealth, Canada still has almost five million people struggling to make ends meet. These are people who struggle to pay their rent, feed their families and address basic needs.

To solve this problem, Canada needs a national plan on poverty reduction, says Darlene O’Leary, socio-economic policy analyst for Citizens for Public Justice.

CPJ is an Ottawa-based national organization inspired by faith to act for justice in Canadian

public policy.

O’Leary was in Edmonton in early April to attend the Cities Reducing Poverty conference hosted by Mayor Don Iveson. The conference focused on municipal poverty reduction and was attended by mayors from cities across Canada.

“It has been important to us to know what strategies have been developed and there’s been a lot of leadership at the municipal level when it comes to poverty reduction and poverty eradication,” O’Leary said.

“We think all levels of government need to be part of the solu-

tion to end poverty in Canada. CPJ’s focus is on the federal government, but we know that provincial, territorial, municipal and First Nations and Aboriginals need to also be part of the discussion.”

At the national level, O’Leary is promoting CPJ’s recently announced national anti-poverty plan, a proposal she would like the federal government to adopt in developing its own anti-poverty plan.

It presents the key planks of a federal anti-poverty plan that, if implemented, would make a meaningful improvement in the lives of low-income Canadians,

O’Leary said in an interview.

The plan asserts that poverty must be addressed in Canada through focusing on six different realms: income security, housing and homelessness, health, food security, early childhood education and care, and jobs and employment.

“We had summits on each of the six areas because we feel poverty is not just one thing. All these areas intersect; they affect each other.

“So if you don’t have housing it’s hard for you to have good health. If you don’t have good food, it is hard for you to have good health.”



WCR/R. Gonzalez

Darlene O’Leary

is 19 per cent, but can run as high as 40 or 50 per cent in some parts of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, she said. Rates are generally higher among newcomers and single parents.

“Indigenous peoples in some communities have the highest rates in Canada.”

Asked about the causes of poverty, O’Leary pointed to both individual circumstances and systemic causes.

“Some of it is lack of access to basic needs, such as lack of access to education, lack of access to child care, lack of access to jobs, lack of access to a basic income that would allow you to just have your basic needs addressed and then a lack of access to good health care,” she said.



CCN/Gyapong

FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT — International Development Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau announced \$100 million in government funding for the Syria Emergency Relief Fund even though only \$31.8 million was eligible for matching funds. She was joined by representatives of a dozen NGOs, including Development and Peace executive director David Leduc, at Bibeau’s right.

D&P receives additional funding for Syria

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — The Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace has received \$5.95 million in additional funding from the federal government’s Syria Emergency Relief Fund.

International Development Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau held a news conference April 13, flanked by representatives from a dozen Canadian NGOs, including Development and Peace executive director David Leduc, to announce Canadians had donated \$31.8 million to various charities during the fund’s five-month-long campaign. Donations had doubled during the two-month extension she granted earlier this year, she said.

The fund committed the Canadian government to match funds up to \$100 million, but Bibeau said the government would still add \$100 million to the monies.

The government’s matching fund for the \$31.8 million raised by private charities will go to the United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and the additional \$68.2 million has been disbursed for various humanitarian and development projects in Syria and the region to help the millions of displaced people, especially women and children.

Leduc said Development and

Peace had raised \$2,376,938 eligible for matching funds. Bibeau said monies granted to various NGOs did not match what they raised.

Though government officials were not willing to give the fundraising figures ranking the various NGOs, Leduc said he was told Development and Peace was in the top 10.

The heftiest donation to UNICEF will provide educational opportunities, child protection services and immunization programs in Syria and Jordan.

Bibeau said 2.8 million children inside Syria have not been able to go to school for more than two years. Their schools have either been bombed or are being used for displaced persons, she said.

The government is providing \$100 million because of the “profound suffering of millions of people in Syria and neighbouring countries,” the minister said.

The priorities for Global Affairs will be on women and children, she said. The children need to be educated to save them from future poverty, to prevent young boys from being recruited into extremists groups and protect young girls from early forced marriages.

“We cannot afford to leave the potential of an entire generation to the conflict,” she said.

Other monies, distributed among a range of NGOs, will

provide food, shelter, child protection, water, sanitation and hygiene, and counselling for victims of sexual violence, she said.

Development and Peace will receive up to \$3.7 million to help vulnerable, internally displaced families in Iraq with shelter, water and sanitation and provide educational opportunities and learning materials for children. In Syria, the Canadian bishops’ overseas development agency will receive up to \$1.25 million to provide emergency assistance and help families rebuild their livelihoods. This will affect 60,000 people inside Syria, Leduc said. Development and Peace has also been granted up to \$1 million to help small farmers in the northern part of the country rebuild their livelihoods with sustainable gardening practices.

Leduc said the additional funding demonstrates the government “has shown openness to partners working in the region” who have asked “to maintain the development assistance governments around the world have been offering.”

Though there has been a decrease in the hostilities in Syria, the situation “remains fragile,” said Leduc. Over 13.5 million Syrians are in need of immediate humanitarian assistance, showing the magnitude of the conflict.

Parish seeks renewal and growth in St. Boniface

By Jeannette Timmerman

ST. BONIFACE — A lively exchange of ideas, questions, concerns and comments from a packed hall of parishioners followed the presentation of Mary, Mother of the Church’s new mission statement and parish renewal and growth initiative at the annual general assembly held April 14.

Shawnda Muir, chair of the parish pastoral council, introduced the topic and led participants in reciting the Parish Renewal and Growth Prayer which was provided to each person as they entered the hall. Next she had them form small groups to introduce themselves and discuss the question, “What does being a disciple of Jesus look like to you?”

The discussion was followed by feedback from various groups.

Rev. Kevin Bettens, pastor, spoke about the “mission vision” and how the parish council over the past few years had decided to “rethink how we do church.” The decision was to change from a “maintenance parish to a missionary parish.”

To reach this point, various churches in Winnipeg, Catholic and non-Catholic, were visited, websites looked at, books read, information compiled and discussions held.

“Love God. Love Others. Reach Out. Build Disciples” is the new mission statement for the parish.

Bettens, with the aid of a

PowerPoint presentation, discussed the aspects that came under each of the four points of the mission statement. Under Love God comes prayer, liturgy and worship. Under Love Others comes fellowship, community, charity, healing, social justice, and welcoming. Reach Out includes evangelization, dialogue, witnessing, inviting, and gathering to discover Christ. Build Disciples focuses on faith formation, spiritual renewal, equipping parishioners to do ministry and serve, leadership formation and small groups.

Pierre-Alain Giffard, a member of the parish who is also director of Pastoral Services for the archdiocese, continued the presentation with the explanation of a structure to put the initiative in place. He said without a structure the initiative would remain “just a dream.”

He said the two major thrusts were prayer and evangelization. Prayers for the renewal and growth of the parish are needed in order to “go out and reach others” through evangelization.

With prayer and evangelization as a basis, he set out other structural components: hospitality, Sunday experience, building disciples, discernment of gifts, ministries, and leadership formation.

He gave some examples of what could occur in each section. Giffard stressed this would be “a learning process” for everyone.

— FOCUS, page 16

Groups dismayed by euthanasia, assisted suicide bill

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — The federal government's Bill C-14 legalizing "medical assistance in dying" has come under fire from anti-euthanasia groups who call the bill "dangerous."

Though Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould said the government tried to balance the rights of those seeking a medically assisted death with the protection of vulnerable persons through "robust" safeguards, Euthanasia Prevention Coalition executive director Alex Schadenberg said they are not effective.

"The bill requires approval for euthanasia or assisted suicide be done by two independent physicians or nurse practitioners, without requiring before the death oversight from an independent third party," he said. "The bill permits the doctor or nurse practitioner who approve the act to also be the person who does the act and reports the act. Once the person is dead, it is too late to find out that the person was incompetent or coerced."

He noted the bill provides

legal immunity for anyone who might help someone administer a lethal substance that has been prescribed under the provisions of the law. "This bill provides perfect cover for murder."

Campaign Life Coalition is urging members of Parliament to vote "no" on the bill, risking a legal vacuum similar to that regarding abortion if the bill fails to pass before June 6, the deadline when the Supreme Court of Canada's Carter decision, that struck down sections of the Criminal Code regarding assisted suicide, comes into effect. Instead, Campaign Life Coalition is calling on the government to invoke the notwithstanding clause of the Constitution to override the Supreme Court's decision for five years.

"Campaign Life Coalition opposes any law that allows for a person to kill another person," said Jim Hughes, president of Campaign Life Coalition. "This bill is deceitful and dangerous and will put at risk the lives of many vulnerable Canadians regardless of the safeguards put forward."

"By legalizing assisted suicide, the message that Parliament

will send out to Canadians, especially young Canadians, is that suicide can be a lawful solution to your suffering," said Mary Ellen Douglas, national organizer for CLC. "In every other jurisdiction such as Belgium and the Netherlands where assisted suicide was made legal, the law has been abused and this too will happen in Canada."

"This bill is seriously deficient," explains Dr. Will Johnston, president of Canadian Physicians for Life. "The federal government is at risk of botching its last chance at harm reduction in the problems of assisted suicide and euthanasia. There is no necessary waiting period. You don't have to be dying, your death just has to be 'foreseeable' — a term which is not defined in the bill. Further, an heir to your will can make a written request on your behalf."

"This bill does nothing to preserve a safe space for those patients who want to remain untouched by assisted suicide and euthanasia," states Johnston.

The Euthanasia Prevention Coalition and Canadian Physicians for Life also noted the lack



CCN

Alex Schadenberg

of express protection for conscience rights of physicians, nurse practitioners and pharmacists in the bill.

"The bill provides no protection for conscientious objectors.

In fact it compels them to be part of the chain of events leading up to a person's death," said Albertos Polizogopoulos, a constitutional lawyer who represents Canadian Physicians for Life. "Absent explicit protections for health practitioners' conscience rights, the bill violates their Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms right to freedom of conscience."

Though the preamble of the bill mentions conscience rights, Health Minister Jane Philpott said the provinces and territories as well as the governing bodies for health professionals such as the physicians' colleges will determine whether they will be forced to refer or otherwise participate in the assisted death regime.

The provinces and territories will also determine whether publicly funded religiously based health care institutions will be forced to administer assisted death on their premises.

Euthanasia advocates may be robbed of choice at end of life

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Euthanasia and assisted suicide advocates may find themselves robbed of choice when it comes to end-of-life decisions, warns Dr. Will Johnston, chair of Canadian Physicians for Life.

"Suicide advocates suffer from a combination of naiveté and boundless confidence when they get to the situation when they are at end of life or have a significant disability that all of the choices going to be one of their choices, not one of their caregiver's choices," said Johnston, who also heads the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition B.C.

In a conference call April 13 on the eve of the tabling of assisted-death legislation in Ottawa, Johnston shared the story of a court case involving a patient he called "Uncle Matt."

His niece phoned Dr. Johnston saying she "couldn't understand why the hospital was starving and dehydrating her uncle to death."

"Uncle Matt" had been a "vigorous 80 year-old," who suffered a stroke while on a hunting trip. He was put on a feeding tube to help him during the recovery stage when swallowing was difficult. The feeding tube fell out and "Uncle Matt's" daughter did not approve it being put back in, said Johnston.

The uncle croaked that he was thirsty, but the hospital told the niece and her husband to go away. The niece and her husband then abducted "Uncle Matt" and brought him to another hospital, which was reluctant to keep him. An emergency court hearing was called to obtain an injunction to rehydrate "Uncle Matt," but "at the very time of the judge hearing evidence from Matt's family, Matt died," Johnston said.

This case is an illustration of how the hospital system is "simply not equipped to figure out what is going on at home, when there are relatives who would rather you be dead," he said. In

Matt's case there were "millions of dollars they would rather have in their control."

Any physician with a busy practice can become overworked and regulatory requirements end up taking a back seat, he warned. "It takes an administrative rigour to ensure something as specific as the Supreme Court of Canada's injunctions in the Carter case actually get carried out in the trenches."

Johnston said the expansion of euthanasia and assisted suicide is inevitable, based on what is going on in Europe. Recently a couple, François, 80, and Anne, 86, who had no specific illnesses and were not terminally ill, decided to be euthanized together. None of their three adult children said they would be willing to look after the survivor if one died first. "These kinds of couple suicides, when they start to be contemplated, call out for intelligent social intervention, not an arranged death."

On the same conference call, constitutional lawyer and litigation expert Albertos Polizogopoulos, who represented the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, Catholic physicians and a group of health care organizations intervening in the Carter case, explained the Supreme Court did not create a positive right to assisted suicide as many claim.

"The Carter decision was decided on the facts of the case," he said, noting that all the Supreme Court did in the case of Ms. Carter was to say that because of her circumstances, a degenerative disease that would progress to the point where she could not commit suicide herself, the law posed a risk to her right to life by forcing her to consider committing suicide earlier while she was still able.

"That is not a finding of a positive right," Polizogopoulos said.

There has been a "broad mischaracterization" of the Carter decision, he said, noting that both the joint Parliamentary Committee and the Provincial Territorial panel "sought to widen and expand what Carter contemplated."

Edmonton holds series on assisted death

By Thandiwe Konguavi
Western Catholic Reporter

EDMONTON (CCN) — The spectre of assisted suicide is leading aging people to "fear an institution that should be the last thing they should ever fear — a hospital," says Archbishop Richard Smith.

"But the strong feeling is, 'If I can't speak for myself, if I'm alone with no family members, are they going to kill me?'" he said during the second of the Every Life Matters series April 5 at Edmonton's Corpus Christi Church.

It is a question that "flows naturally" from the Supreme Court decision, the archbishop said.

"This decision turns inside out the relationship between patient and doctor, patient and hospital; it undermines the trust that must be there."

The five-part series held across the Edmonton archdiocese has

drawn large crowds and raised poignant questions on euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide.

"I was almost overwhelmed with the interest and questions," said Alicja Chandra, a volunteer at the Edmonton Pregnancy Crisis Centre.

The archbishop said the other "elephant in the room" is what does that have to say about family life?

In a session with a group of seniors at St. Joseph's Basilica held prior to the Every Life Matters series, Smith heard how the elderly are feeling pressure to not be a burden on their children and on society.

"That's where the so-called right to die slips into a duty to die," he said.

In jurisdictions where physician-assisted suicide has been legal for some time, those asked why they would ask for it put avoidance of pain and suffering near the bottom of the list of rea-

sons, while not wanting to be a burden was at the top, said Smith.

"How does that even creep into people's heads?"

Chandra is also concerned about young people: how families can be torn apart by the pressure the legislation puts on people to "not be a burden" on their children, or the temptation of young people envisioning coming into an early inheritance.

"It may come to this — 'I don't need my parent anymore. If he or she goes, then I'll inherit.'"

As she nears the last stage of her own life, Chandra has been proactive in preparing her will and making sure her family will defend, not only her views, but her pro-life values.

"They're clear on those issues," she said, although she does not wish her life to be prolonged unnecessarily.

— VULNERABLE, page 8



WCR/T. Konguavi

PANEL DISCUSSION — Archbishop Richard Smith makes a point while panelists Lisa Daniels and Dr. Anna Voeuk listen during the April 5 Every Life Matters session at Edmonton's Corpus Christi Church.

Canada needs ecological conversion: KAIROS head

By Ramon Gonzalez
Western Catholic Reporter

EDMONTON (CCN) — Canada needs to be converted on both ecological issues and indigenous rights if it is to meet its commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, says the head of KAIROS, the national inter-church justice group.



WCR/R. Gonzalez
Jennifer Henry

Jennifer Henry says Canada needs to consider how best to do that so that it both addresses indigenous rights and contributes to reducing climate change. “Our climate solutions are actually indigenous right solutions as well. And that mostly has to do with resource projects,” Henry told the Social Justice Institute at The King’s College in Edmonton April 9. “The new (federal) government has had good words in regards to indigenous people since its installation,” Henry said. “But the proof is going to be in the pudding. And the real test comes

down to things like pipelines.” Henry, director of the Ottawa-based KAIROS, was the keynote speaker at the institute, an ecumenical working group that includes Newman Theological College and the King’s University. Several workshops were offered at the April 8 - 9 event. For years, KAIROS has been campaigning for the implementation of the UN Declaration on Indigenous Rights. The group wants indigenous people to have the right of free, prior and informed consent when developing activity or extraction activity occurs on their traditional territories. “Indigenous leaders have been clear that the current assessment process under the National Energy Board violates their rights under the UN declaration,” she said. “They also speak to what they view as a NEB bias toward pipelines that will contribute to climate change because of expanded production.” The government has announced interim measures to protect indigenous rights, but has not made an explicit commitment to guaranteeing their “free, prior and informed consent” to resource projects, Henry said. Henry said the government needs to be willing to accept that indigenous groups will reject resource development proposals, and it’s not clear yet whether that’s the case. For example, the Wolostog Grand Council, which holds unceded title to the Saint John River watershed, opposes the Energy East Pipeline. Henry said there is ample evidence that the Canadian negotiators at the UN Climate Change conference in Paris in December made genuine efforts toward what

Pope Francis referred to as an integral ecology. They strove, but failed, to get commitments to human rights, indigenous rights, gender equality and a just transition for workers into the binding part of the Paris text, she said. “The Paris agreement doesn’t speak about the need to keep most of the known reserves of oil and natural gas and coal in the ground nor is there a reference about a new energy paradigm.” Henry said the intergovernmental panel on climate change says only one-quarter to one-seventh of the world’s known fossil fuel reserves can be burned if the target of keeping the increase in global temperatures to less than two degrees is to be met. Many of the developed countries attended the Paris convention on climate change to look after their own interests, she noted. The result was an agreement with 29 legally binding articles, but with no enforcement mechanism. Henry gave credit to Environment Minister Catherine McKenna for advocating to keep temperature increases to 1.5 degrees. “That was somewhat successful in that the agreement includes a commitment to keep the rise in global temperatures well below two degrees.” The problem is that after Paris we still have an international trade system that trumps climate policies, the KAIROS leader said. “Foreign investors can sue governments if their policies are deemed to be unfair or unreasonable. We don’t have a change. We didn’t overthrow the trading system in Paris.” Henry also agreed with Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’* in

pointing out the concept of ecological debt. “This is the notion that countries in the North actually owe people in the South for the overuse of world resources. “The pope says a true ecological debt exists particularly between the Global North and the South, connected to commercial imbalances with effects on the environment.” As well, some countries have used a disproportionate amount of the world’s resources over a long period of time, she said. Henry said KAIROS and its partners’ advocacy was always

“for us to stop what we are doing, to cut back on our overuse of the world’s resources.” The pope says something similar: “Developed countries ought to help pay this debt by significantly limiting their consumption on non-renewable energy.” Now the question in this post-Paris context is what are the challenges for Canada? “We are in the unique situation of having a new government in place that’s trying to address these challenges. “It’s kind of difficult in some ways to assess because what we have from them is very initial.”



Art Babych

SUPREME COURT RULING — The Supreme Court of Canada has unanimously ruled that Métis and non-status Aboriginals are “Indians” under the Constitution. Métis National Council President Clement Chartier told reporters, “As a people, as a nation, we have all the elements necessary now to move forward and engage meaningfully with the Government of Canada.” The court’s decision April 14 hands the federal government the responsibility of negotiating rights and treaties with thousands of Métis and Aboriginals living off-reserve.

Debate reveals patchy access to palliative care

Continued from page 1

drug cocktail to the lips of a person who has had the drug prescribed by a physician without risking being charged. The safeguards include a requirement of two independent medical opinions from a physician or a nurse practitioner indicating the person meets the eligibility criteria; a request in writing or by a proxy if the person cannot write; the right to withdraw the request at any time; a 15-day waiting period “unless death or loss of capacity is imminent”; and a confirmation of informed consent immediately before the assisted death is provided. Though the bill mentions conscience rights of health care professionals in its preamble, it does not protect them. Philpott said the provinces and territories as well as health professionals’ regulatory bodies would determine whether health care professionals will be required to refer patients if they refuse to participate. She also said the provinces and territories will determine whether publicly funded religiously based health care facilities will be forced to provide medically assisted death on their premises. Philpott also highlighted the government’s commitment to palliative care, so not only can people have a “good death” through medically assisted dying, but through

palliative care can be ensured “a good life to the very end.” Philpott said debate on medically assisted death “forced us to confront the reality palliative care is very patchy across Canada.” She noted the government has committed \$3 billion over the next five years for home care, that includes palliative care. Government House Leader Dominic LeBlanc said Liberal MPs will be able to debate and vote freely on the bill, though cabinet will, as is usual, vote the government line. Conservative MPs Michael Cooper and Gerard Deltell, who were members of the joint Parliamentary Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying and who dissented from its recommendations, said they were glad the government did not follow the committee’s recommendations to include minors, the mentally ill and advanced directives. Cooper questioned including nurse practitioners in assessing whether patients are eligible for a medically assisted death. Cooper said the government “could have included a provision that would have expressly protected the conscience rights of health care professionals” and it did not. But Cooper said it is essential to pass legislation or the resulting legal vacuum will leave “no certainty for patients or doctors and that is an unacceptable situation.”

Redemptorist Eumir Bautista, C.S.s.R.
Religious vows, August 2015, Winnipeg, Manitoba

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PLUG IN TO CHRIST

Easter celebrated at Saskatoon Correctional Centre

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — Easter joy rang through the chapel at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre as prisoners joined Bishop Donald Bolen to celebrate mass on the afternoon of Easter Sunday.

Bolen’s message comparing the vastness of God’s love and mercy to the vastness of the ocean profoundly touched the men who heard it, said Dianne Anderson, co-ordinator of Restorative Ministry for the Diocese of Saskatoon, who again organized the Catholic liturgies and Easter outreach with the help of a number of volunteers. “You could see it in the faces of the men who heard his message. It was meaningful for them. They were intent.”

Anderson added that this year, for the first time, volunteers were

available to provide music ministry. “We had singing this year for Easter Sunday, and even for Good Friday; it was just so uplifting.” The final Easter hymn and the greetings shared afterward reflected a true resurrection joy, she said.

“When we started with the music ministry at the Provincial Correctional Centre, we weren’t sure what to expect,” said volunteer Dianne Woloschuk, who along with her husband Gerard are now regularly providing music ministry as part of their volunteer outreach at the Correctional Centre.

“We have come to realize that this ministry has brought us into relationship with the men there, and that relationship is special and blessed. Through music and the simple act of presence to one another, we are encountering God

in a new way, one that is energizing, joyful, and filled with peace. We are very grateful,” she said.

Another first this year involved celebration of an Easter morning mass for men in the Urban Camp Program, who do not have access to the prison chapel. Retired Oblate priest Rev. Louis Hoffart, OMI, celebrated the Easter eucharist at Urban Camp, which is located in another section of the prison, outside the perimeter of the main centre. “They were just so happy to have mass,” said Anderson.

Other moments of the Triduum were also marked with men at the Correctional Centre, including mass with the washing of the feet on Holy Thursday, and the Good Friday liturgy, both led by Rev. Mark Blom, OMI. On Good Friday, Blom read the Passion with volunteers Dorothy and

Michel Fortier of St. Anne Parish, and the men came forward to venerate the cross.

“The volunteers at all the cele-

brations were moved by the experience, along with the men,”

— NO FEAR, page 7

Knights urged to be merciful

SASKATOON — The 94th annual state council meeting of the Knights of Columbus of Saskatchewan, held in Saskatoon April 8 - 10, was a call to return to the basics of the Columbian order, a call for knights to hold fast to the Catholic principles around which the order was founded 134 years ago. Under the theme, Be Merciful as our Father is Merciful, state deputy Denis Carignan, the state executive, and delegates and their families from around the province celebrated the past year’s successes and deliberated on how to better serve the church and the community.

The business meetings focused on informing all present about the important issues facing the church, the community and the order, with guest speakers instructing the delegates on the information they should be taking back to their home councils. The delegates passed the following resolutions in support of the sanctity of life:

“That the State Board and through it the Supreme Council be urged to adopt a program by means of and through the subordinate councils that knights will stand ready to be at the side of all who are dying to provide comfort, reassurance, and solace, so that as an order, we assure that no one dies alone.

“That the Saskatchewan State Council encourages its over 10,000 brother knights within the state, their councils and families to consider prayerfully making a commitment to an annual \$25 membership to the Saskatchewan Pro-Life Association which can be acquired online at <https://www.saskprolife.com/organization/membership>

“That the Saskatchewan State Council encourages its over 10,000 brother knights within the state, their councils and families to consider prayerfully making annual charitable donations to a Saskatchewan pro-life educational trust account to be administered by our Saskatchewan Knights of Columbus Charitable Foundation, the annual income from which would be used to provide base-level support for education initiatives against euthanasia and abortion in Saskatchewan.

“That Saskatchewan State Council on behalf of the Saskatchewan Knights of Columbus develop and submit a joint declaration against euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, to be submitted to the Government of Canada and Supreme Court of Canada.”

The state council elected the following executive effective July 1: state deputy — Brian Schatz of Regina; past state deputy — Denis

Carignan of Battleford; state secretary — Chris Bencharski of Meadow Lake; state treasurer — Joe Riffel of Saskatoon; state advocate — Larry Packet of Davidson; state warden — René Gaudet of St. Louis. Bishop Bryan Bayda of the Eparchy of Saskatoon was named state chaplain.

From the opening mass celebrated by Bayda to the memorial mass celebrated by Abbot Peter Novocosky, OSB, the convention was a great success, holding firm to the principles of the order: charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism. The delegates left Saskatoon better informed and inspired to go back to their communities and join together to “be merciful as our Father is merciful.”

People reassured that final decision is theirs

Continued from page 1

care pillow; we know what’s really going on.”

Murphy said palliative care allows death to occur by not attempting to prevent the advance of a fatal illness. “It is to distinguish between natural causes — what nature does to us — and human causes — what we do to each other.”

Murphy spoke of the difference between physician-assisted suicide, when a patient is given a lethal prescription to take themselves, and euthanasia, where a physician or other person administers the fatal dose.

She said the good news is that in jurisdictions allowing physician-assisted suicide, more people request it than go through with it. The patient is reassured just having the ability and knowing that the final decision is theirs.

The U.S. states of Oregon, Washington and Vermont have legalized physician-assisted suicide, while Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg allow euthanasia or assisted suicide with the aid of another person, not necessarily a physician.

Murphy said in a famous and disturbing case in Belgium, where there is no requirement for a person to disclose their plans to anyone, a family was told after the fact that a

loved one had ended their life, and the same could happen in Canada. “We do honour people’s privacy and their autonomy, but the human cost is profound,” Murphy said.

As to the difficulty surrounding such situations, the Health Care Ethics Services at St. Boniface Hospital are available 24 hours daily for patients, family members and health care providers. The service began in 1993 as a resource to all health care facilities and programs owned and operated by the Grey Nuns of Manitoba.

Murphy said there will be other legal aspects around what the federal government is now calling Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID). “How should their death be recorded?” she asked. Some jurisdictions list the cause of death as the illness that led to their decision to terminate their life. Others plainly state cause of death as euthanasia or assisted suicide. Whether life insurance remains valid is another question.

Murphy said Power of Attorney will have no effect because the person choosing MAID must be competent and clearly consenting when the decision is made. She said health care directives in Canada do not allow for MAID but some jurisdictions have introduced it.

Murphy said that even proponents in countries where euthanasia or assisted suicide have been

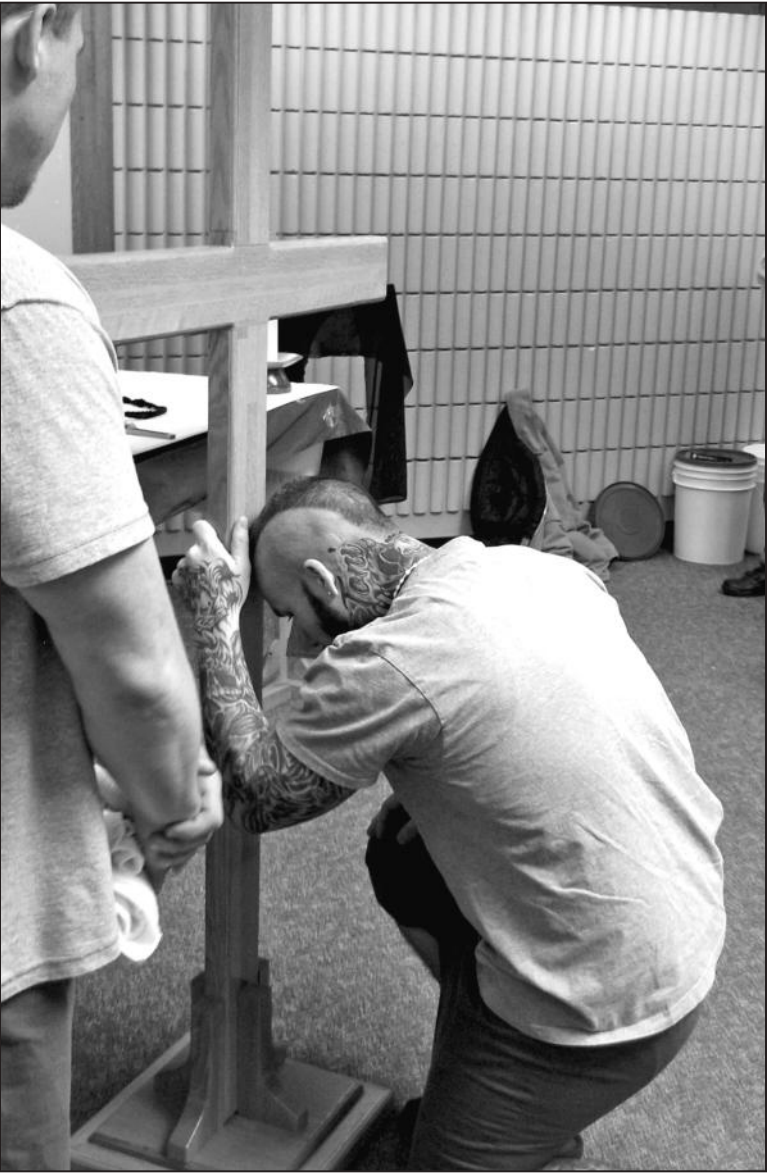
allowed for years say it has “gone off the tracks” by being accessible to those who are simply lonely or isolated.

“It behooves us to ask, do we want to live in a country where people in loneliness or isolation are having their lives ended?”

Murphy’s presentation was the first of a three-part series on Euthanasia and Physician Assisted Suicide and the Effect on the Family at St. Charles Church. On April 20, Msgr. Maurice Comeault spoke on Redemptive Suffering, and on April 27 Dr. Mike Harlos will speak on Palliative Care and psychiatrist Dr. Stewart Wakeman will speak on the Vulnerability of the Mentally Ill.



FEATURED SPEAKER — Grayden Nicholas (left), former Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick and the first Aboriginal person to receive a law degree in Atlantic Canada, was the featured speaker at the Knights of Columbus 94th annual state council meeting, held in Saskatoon April 8 - 10. He is seen here receiving a parting gift from State Deputy Denis and Connie Carignan.



GOOD FRIDAY IN PRISON — Men at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre venerated the cross at the Good Friday liturgy organized by the diocesan office of Restorative Ministry and provided with the help of local volunteers and presiders.



Pat Murphy

Parish retreat first event in new church building

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

MARTENSVILLE, Sask. — Encounter, Empower, Evangelize: that is the new mission statement being lived out at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Martensville, Sask., just north of Saskatoon.

Presently in the process of completing a major renovation and expansion of its building, the community recently held its first event in the new space: a one-day Revive retreat focused on getting to know God in a deeper, more personal way.

Rev. Patrick Ampani beamed with joy as he welcomed participants into the newly constructed sanctuary March 12.

"This is still a work in progress," Ampani said of Phase 1 of the parish building and expansion project, pointing to some of the features still to come, such as the stations of the cross and a new altar. Ground was broken for the \$1.3-million expansion in May 2015, with an official dedication of the new worship space to be held later in the year.

"We are still working here, and Jesus is at work," Ampani said, opening the retreat day with prayer.

The one-day event is the latest undertaking in a parish revitalization that includes a range of initiatives and new directives sparked after Ampani and several parishioners attended an Amazing Parish conference in Denver, Colo., in the summer of 2015.

On their return from the conference, they felt strongly that they should put all their efforts into making the parish an evangelistic hub, a place where people would feel drawn to come to know Christ in a deeper way, explained parishioner Christy Dupuis. "We drafted a mission statement: Encounter, Empower, Evangelize. Our hope is that all who attend our parish would encounter Jesus, be empowered to be disciples of Jesus, and go forth to evangelize everyone they meet."

There is no fear in here

Continued from page 6

Anderson described. "There is no fear in here," she says of the chapel.

Some 11 volunteers also helped with an outdoor Way of the Cross on Good Friday, with prayers at 14 stations along the prison fence, Anderson said.

Donations from parishes in the diocese again permitted Anderson to purchase chocolate Easter bunnies for every man in the prison, regardless of his faith background, as well as Easter treats for the guards and nurses. This tradition brings a moment of joy to everyone, showing each man that he is not forgotten, said Anderson.

Delivery of the Easter bunnies takes several hours, with a group of about eight volunteers assisting Anderson, this year delivered without wearing her customary bunny ears, which were packed away during a recent move. "The guards missed the ears!" she said with a laugh.



CHILDREN WELCOME — Families attending a Revive retreat March 12 at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Martensville, Sask., expressed appreciation for the children's program offered at a nearby school in conjunction with the adult sessions held in the parish's new church building.

Revive retreat organizers strived to make the day as accessible as possible, with child care provided and a children's retreat running in conjunction with the adult event.

"The response was amazing," reported Dupuis. A men's breakfast opened the day, with some 45 men attending. "Our retreat, which started at 1 p.m. and went until 8:30 p.m., had 165 adult participants, 75 children between kindergarten and Grade 6, 20 children three years and under in child care, and about 15 teenage volunteers."

The parish's recently hired youth minister, Amanda Gaudet, facilitated the children's retreat

with the help of four youth ministry colleagues and the senior youth volunteers in a program that garnered high praise in online evaluations.

The Revive retreat itself included several inspirational reflections by guest speaker Brett Powell, a longtime Catholic Christian Outreach (CCO) missionary born and raised in Saskatchewan, who presently serves as director of development for the Archdiocese of Vancouver.

Exploring Scripture and sharing personal experience, Powell brought insights into the profound love of God, and the urgent need to really get to know God, and what he wants for us.

Chrism Mass celebrated in Prince Albert diocese

By Paula Fournier

PRINCE ALBERT — Parishioners involved with the social justice program and those visiting the sick and shut-in were the focus of the March 19 Chrism Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Prince Albert.

During his homily, Bishop Albert Thévenot, M. Afr., spoke of how oil is part of our daily lives. He said it is important to us, even in our journeys of faith — like the oil of the sick.

"We know people in our society who are ill, suffering from cancer and perhaps at the end of their journey. Do we think of anointing our sick? Those who are dying?"

Many years ago, it was thought that if a person was anointed too early, they would die soon after. Thévenot assured the congregation that oil does not end anyone's life, at which the congregation laughed.

He made reference to current end-of-life issues. "We as Christians have to stand up for the healing hand of Christ in our world today. We cannot determine our death; we have to wait for its call. Let God decide our destiny."

He spoke of those in each parish who were preparing for baptism. "We will anoint them at their baptism, saying, 'You are special; we choose and anoint you. We want you to be a person of God.'"

He explained the making of the holy oil used in the sacraments. A person is anointed at baptism so that they might be prepared on their journey of faith.

"We anoint him with this chrism, the oil that has perfume. His face is going to shine. He will smell so good! You have given your child back to God."

At the ordination of a priest or bishop, he explained, their hands are anointed with chrism. "Their hands are consecrated to serve, to embrace the sufferings of their people, to serve the people of their parishes, to bring the Body of Christ to the sick and shut-in. Their hands are meant to be the hands of Christ, which come to your hands so you can you bring peace and love."

"These three oils will be consecrated and blessed so that we can continue the mission of Christ given to us, to you, to me and to all our pastors. Together, we are forming the Body of Christ. That's why the Chrism Mass is so important — because you take the oils back to all the parts of the diocese to take the mission of the diocese and the church to your people."

He asked participants to bring the message back to their people, to let others know what they heard and saw at the Chrism Mass when they visited with friends and people in the community.

Two traditional drummers

"There is a big difference between knowing about something, and experiencing something," Powell pointed out. "So it is with our faith. There is a difference between knowing about God and having a profound personal encounter with the living Lord."

God is "not playing hide and seek," Powell stressed. "He is the one seeking us. He is looking for us. We have a seeking father, a seeking Saviour."

If we have difficulty responding to God's search, it may be that our image of God is mistaken, he said. "If the ideas we have of God are wrong and deficient, our relationship will lack much of the depth and the intimacy that we so desperately need, and that God wants."

Powell walked through Scripture stories and parables, shining new light on who God really is — a welcoming, merciful and loving father, and not a wrathful, angry judge.

"Jesus is the Word of God, he is the fullness of the revelation of the Father . . . he is God in the Flesh and he wants a relationship, he wants to come in," Powell added.

He also stressed that "we are not designed to live on borrowed faith," and encouraged his listeners to follow the apostle Thomas in asking Christ to reveal himself. "I think that's a prayer that Jesus loves to answer."

Powell pointed to Jesus' parable of the prodigal son, which reveals the merciful father: an image of God's faithful, searching, endless love that we can trust is also there for us.

"It is precisely my sin which attracts his merciful heart," said Powell. "God is holding nothing back and we know this because Jesus went to the cross — he gave everything — to convince us that God's heart is good."

Five priests were on hand to offer the sacrament of reconciliation during the day. "In total they heard confessions for four hours with constant lineups," said Dupuis, describing the positive response.

In addition, prayer teams offered to pray individually with anyone desiring prayer for any personal request. "It seemed as though all who took part in the prayer ministry came away with a positive experience," noted Dupuis.

Written testimonies collected from retreat participants reveal the day's impact. "Today touched me deeply," wrote one participant. "I felt the real presence of God, so much so it made me weak in the knees."

Another wrote: "I was reminded that I need to invite Jesus in to restore me when I feel inadequate or the pressure is too high. I learned from Brett's stories that God didn't come to take away my suffering but to fill it and be present in it."

Dupuis concluded: "We were thrilled to be able to offer an event that seemed to appeal to so many people who had never been to a retreat before. Our hope at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish is to continue to offer programming, events, formation, and community experiences that seek to help people encounter God in ever new and deeper ways."

from Beardsy's and Okemasis First Nation processed in with the bread and wine.

A group of youth and young adults named the Fire Mission from Deanery One, Prince Albert and area, were commissioned after communion. The group consists of volunteers from the community who go door to door to invite people to church and the Easter Triduum services. They offer to take prayer intentions.

Parish representatives, church administrators involved in First Nations ministry, priests and all those in attendance were invited to stand and renew their commitment to their parishes and the needs of others.

Thévenot mixed the chrism perfume into the oil and blessed it. Each parish representative and their pastor met the bishop at the altar to receive the three blessed oil containers to take back to their parish.



CHRISM MASS — Prince Albert Bishop Albert Thévenot, M. Afr., blesses the oils at Regina's Chrism Mass March 15. Thévenot celebrated the mass because Regina does not yet have a new archbishop following the January death of Archbishop Daniel Bohan.

Christians unite under ‘fires of persecution’

By Evan Boudreau
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — The “fires of persecution” are bringing Christians worldwide closer together, a number of faith leaders in Toronto believe.

A global trend of persecuting Christians is bringing greater unity among the different traditions which follow Christ, the faith leaders said April 10 at A Service of Prayer for the Persecuted Church held at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church in midtown Toronto.

“The common experience of persecution of Christians has brought Christians together despite their differences,” said Cardinal Thomas Collins. “There has never been a time when Christians have been so persecuted. So it is good for us to come together to celebrate our common faith in Jesus Christ and to pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are being persecuted around the world.”

According to the Institute for the Global Study of Christianity, about 100,000 Christians are dying annually due to their faith with countless others being forced from their homelands. A driving force behind this devastation is the rise of terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State, who have been gaining momentum, particularly in the Middle East, since 2009.

Since then the number of Christians in Iraq has been reduced from about 1.5 million to fewer than 200,000. In neighbouring Syria, more than half of the Christian population has been killed or forced to flee. Similar stories are playing out in more than 60 countries worldwide, including Yemen, Afghanistan and Somalia.

“The darkness of persecution that so many of our brothers and sisters are experiencing in this world is because of their faith,” said Collins. “That draws us together. Christian unity and ecumenism have been forged in the fires of persecution.”

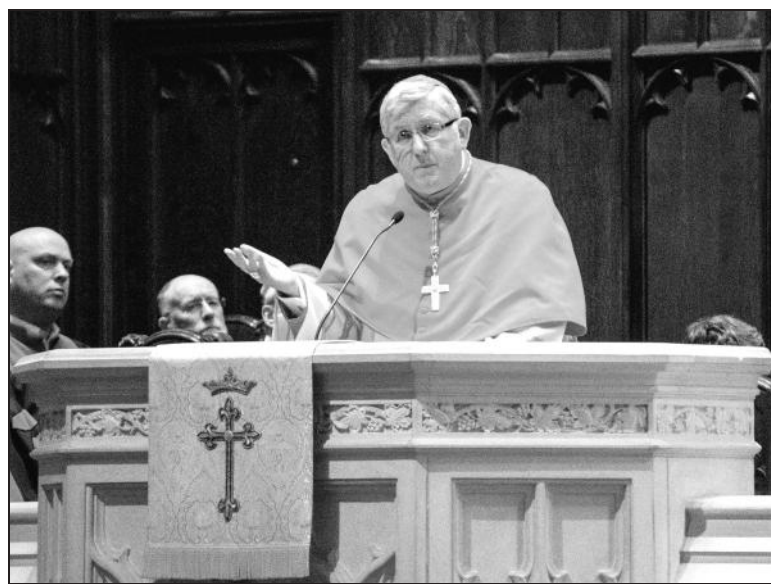
Those words echoed within

the church, where about 140 gathered in the pews to hear Collins joined by a number of other religious leaders, including Rev. Terry Smith, executive minister of the Canadian Baptist Ministries, Rev. Damian MacPherson, director of the Office of Ecumenical & Interfaith Affairs for the Archdiocese of Toronto, and Rev. Israel Obieje, who fled Nigeria after extremists burned his church to the ground.

Obieje said his church is one of about 400 in the northeastern region of Nigeria reduced to charred remains since 2009.

“All of those churches have been destroyed and burned and most of the pastors have been killed and several of the parishioners have been killed,” said the refugee priest. “They are after Christianity. If you call yourself a Christian then you are a target.”

Now in Canada, Obieje and his wife, Christiana, have been praying to see the violence against Christians end in their native land.



Catholic Register/E. Boudreau

CHRISTIANS UNITE — “The common experience of persecution of Christians has brought Christians together despite their differences,” said Cardinal Thomas Collins.

“The violence carries on and there is no end in sight,” he said. “We pray for them to stop it.”

It isn’t just overseas where Christians and their faith are under threat, said Collins.

“There is a second threat, more subtle but also dangerous, that we here in Canada face,” he said. “It is the danger not of persecution but the danger of seduction. This challenge is growing ever stronger in our home and native land.”

“We are being seduced by commercialism, by materialism, every day of our lives,” said Randall Speller, a member of Yorkminster Park Baptist congregation. “You can’t walk onto the subway, you can’t turn on the radio, you can’t turn on your cellphone without being appealed to for some kind of consumer good, some product that you have to buy. It is endless, it is constant and we aren’t meant to be endlessly distracted from real issues in our lives.”

While Collins did not deny that the journey away from persecution and seduction will be lengthy, he did say there is strength to be found for Christians in the modern-day martyrs.

“We need to be inspired by the examples of those who not only live for Christ but have died for Christ,” he said. “(They’re) making God’s presence known in this world, this world which is as dark as we hear in the beginning of the Gospel of John when the light came into the darkness and darkness did not overcome. We must ensure that the memory of those who are martyred are not lost.”

Cardinal Tagle challenges participants at Montreal mass

By François Gloutnay

MONTREAL (CNS) — Church authorities in Montreal said they were expecting 1,000 people at St. Joseph’s Oratory for a special mass with Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle. When mass started at 6 p.m. April 6, the crowd was twice as big.

Tagle, 58, archbishop of Manila, is among the most influential church personalities in Asia. He took advantage of his stay in Montreal as president of *Caritas Internationalis* to meet the Filipino community there. Many young families attended the event. All evening long, phones and tablets were held up high, trying to get a picture of him. At moments, security agents had a hard time escorting him through the enthusiastic crowd.

In his homily, Tagle reflected on the anxiety and concern that lead many to hold onto unnecessary material goods.

“It’s Wednesday, what should I wear? Green, blue, red, purple? Those questions are not bad in themselves. But according to the Gospel, we can search for those things with anxiety. Some people search for those things, because they worry. I will die if I don’t have a burger! Some people worry: I already wore this. What will people, my friends, think? That I’m poor? But we are too focused on ourselves. That generates fear. So we grab, we possess. We do not want to run out of food or clothing, or the things we consider important for life,” said Tagle, stressing matters of social justice.

“God created us not to own, but to take care of creation. Stewards, not owners. And this vision: God gave everything to human beings for their food. Not just to some human beings,



CNS/François Gloutnay, Presence

MONTREAL MASS — Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila, second from right, celebrates mass April 6 at St. Joseph’s Oratory of Mount Royal in Montreal. An estimated 2,000 people attended the mass.

but to all. Because of anxiety, the fear that makes me hoard, some people have so much, and other go hungry. Some people have so many clothes, that they do not need or cannot wear anymore. As we accumulate that clothing, other people go around naked, or terribly clad, feeling cold.”

He called people to seek the kingdom of God, throw away anxiety and embrace trust.

“Trust in the one who gave us life. Focus on the justice of God, the justice that makes us as caring as God,” he said.

Tagle concluded his homily with a story that brought tears to some in the crowd.

“I had a meeting with a principal of a school. She called the parents of two students. Only the mother came. ‘Your children have exceeded the allowed number of absences. The school year is only two months old and they have already consumed the allowed number of absences. I have no choice but to exclude your children from school.’ The

mother said: ‘I know.’ That angered the principal: ‘You know but why did you allow it to happen? You are an irresponsible mother.’

“The mother said: ‘You know, they have only one pair of shoes which they share. When one child wears a pair of shoes to go to school, the other must stay home.’”

Tagle said he asked the principal what she did. She said she was reduced to silence.

He said she had a whole closet of shoes, and that morning had wondered: Which shoes will I wear today?

“Her problem was which colour, which style will match my dress today,” he said.

The cardinal said the principal let the children remain in school, and she “launched a campaign to get shoes to poor children. And they discovered, in their school, that many children have no shoes, many come to school without having breakfast. That changed her outlook and the policies of the school.”

The cardinal looked at the assembly and added: “What do we seek?”

Vulnerable must be protected

Continued from page 4

Chandra said the Conversations with the Archbishop series, which included expert panelists and a period for questions, helped shed light on the many concerns, as the legalization of assisted suicide approaches.

Smith was joined by panelists Dr. Anna Voeuk, a palliative care physician who spoke about the need for improved access to palliative care for all Canadians, and Lisa Daniels, a young mother who shared her personal story of hope and love, despite suffering from chronic pain.

Daniels’ video testimony is also featured on the Every Life Matters website, <http://www.comitlife.com>

Citing key messages of the Canadian Society of Palliative

Care Physicians, Voeuk said every Canadian has a right to high quality palliative care, which does not include assisted suicide.

Voeuk ended her talk sharing her favourite quote from Dame Cicely Saunders, a pioneer in the field of palliative care, who said: “You matter because you are you, and you matter to the end of your life. We will do all we can not only to help you die peacefully, but to live until you die.”

Addressing a question about the economic case for ending a person’s life in order to reduce health care spending, Voeuk said the vulnerable must be protected. “Nobody wants to talk about it,” she said.

All sessions in Every Life Matters will be rebroadcast on Salt+Light TV.

Gloutnay is on the staff of the Montreal-based Presence info.

At-risk youth discovers the healing power of art

By Thandiwe Konguavi
Western Catholic Reporter

EDMONTON (CCN) — It is not surprising Brooke sometimes speaks in treatment terms like “shame messages” when she tries to tell her story. They are negative things about herself that her brain tells her.

She has been through a lot.

At just 19, Brooke has lived on the street and been to four treatment centres, after spiralling into mental illness and addiction at the tender age of 12.

It was also at age 12 that she discovered what would be her saving grace: art and writing.

Brooke displayed her art to the public for the first time at the Spring Art Walk at the University of Alberta’s Telus Atrium on April 8.

The event showcases the art of young people from Catholic Social Services’ ministries who have lived on the street and faced different forms of exploitation.

Art has helped Brooke cope.

“I didn’t know where to turn



WCR/T. Konguavi

HEALING POWER OF ART — Renee Sullivan, a Safe House team leader, and Brooke, a teenage artist, gaze at a work Brooke created for the Spring Art Walk.

for a really long time so I kind of absorbed everything to do with

art and writing. That was how I started to express myself and tell my story to the world in a way that wasn’t so upfront,” she said.

Her work often includes messages of hope she wishes someone had spoken to her when she was struggling. They are messages like “Life gets better,” “Peoples’ minds change and we need to be alive to see that happen.”

“These things saved my life,” she says of the words embellished across a number of canvasses she created. “I make them to tell people that are reading it or looking at it little messages of hope.”

The words are more powerful than any card I have ever read at Hallmark, one person remarked.

Born in Edmonton to a teenage mom, Brooke lived a hard life

until her struggling single mother met her stepdad who moved them to St. Albert.

“For a long time we were on welfare, so I went from that kind of culture to very rich suburbia. It was a bit of a culture shock,” she said.

She started using drugs and alcohol.

“I used it to cope with a lot of the traumas that have happened in my life. Different forms of abuse.”

In Grade 7 she had to take an art class. From the first project she did, she fell in love with art completely.

“I could just let myself go every time I was in front of a canvas or had a pencil in my hand.”

She did a piece with a little girl screaming, but out of her mouth a monster flowed out. On the bottom she wrote: “It’s a part of the times when you’re sick in the mind.”

“That was a perfect representation of what I was going through at the time. I felt so isolated, and I felt like I was crazy. But I didn’t have anyone in my life to really reflect that having mental illnesses doesn’t make you crazy.”

By 16, she had made her way to Edmonton’s inner city, living on the street, off and on. She was in the downtown Edmonton drug detox when she hit rock bottom.

— ART, page 17

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Chesterton a ‘prophet of our times’

By Evan Boudreau
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — Although much of his work relies on long outdated references, there is still an inherent value to reading G.K. Chesterton’s essays, novels and short stories for Canadians today.

“In a world in which the fundamental realities of family, of gender, of social responsibility are challenged, we need the restorative sanity of G.K. Chesterton,” said Toronto’s Cardinal Thomas Collins.

“We can all benefit from his marvellous writings and most edifying life.”

That benefit extends beyond the simple pleasure derived from the timeless humour throughout the late British writer’s work, said Collins. For while the comical nature of Chesterton classics such as the Father Brown stories, The Emperor’s New Clothes and Tremendous Trifles attracts many readers, it is the embedded insight and wisdom regarding matters of daily life which serve as the true benefit.

“We need to look to him for insight and for example,” said Collins. “In a world that I think in some ways has gone mad, he is a source of sanity, he is grounded and we all need to be that.”

Collins went on to note characteristics of Chesterton, and subsequently his writing, such as a sense of everlasting wonder, clarity in thought and communication as well as an ability to “not have his vision dulled by repetition” as qualities today’s Christians would do well to embody.

Collins spoke alongside Rev. Ian Boyd, founder and editor of The Chesterton Review, former media baron Conrad Black and Dermot Quinn, a professor at Seton Hall University and adviser to the G.K. Chesterton Institute for Faith & Culture, at the recent Chesterton Institute lecture. Held on April 2 at the University of St. Michael College, the event was a joint effort between the Archdiocese of Toronto, Seton Hall and the Chesterton Institute.

Born in 1874, Chesterton penned about 80 books, hundreds of poems, about 200 short stories, another 4,000 essays and a number of plays. Before his heart failed in 1936, Pope Pius XI dubbed Chesterton, a Catholic convert, a knight commander of the Papal Order of St. Gregory the Great.

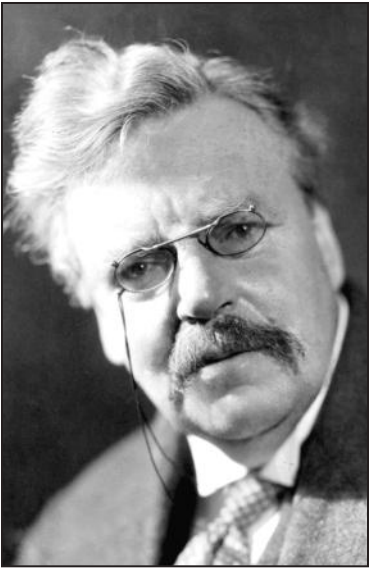
Quinn, who spoke last before the group of four fielded questions, also called Chesterton a man worth admiring.

“Chesterton was eccentric, titillating, vigorous and wise; a man worthy of admiration,” he said. “Chesterton continues to be received in this way.”

Rebekah Lamb, an assistant professor of literature at Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Academy in Barry’s Bay, Ont., said her students are fascinated with Chesterton and his writing. Lamb taught a course last semester on his relationship with peers he considered friends, some of whom did not subscribe to Christian views.

“His friendship with George Bernard Shaw was a friendship of opposites; Shaw didn’t believe in God,” she said. “Chesterton, of course, has the opposite view yet he was able to treat Shaw

with such dignity. So the goal of my course was to try to impart the way you can dialogue and disagree with other people in charity.



CHESTERTON — “Love means loving the unlovable — or it is no virtue at all.” — G.K. Chesterton

“He has a lot to teach us.”

An avid reader of Chesterton since he was a teenager, Collins is proof of that lesson.

“The study and reading of Chesterton over these 50 years has been fruitful in my own life and a source of refreshment and a source of great assistance. Over the years I’ve learned both from his wisdom and from his examples. In my current role as the archbishop of Toronto, the challenges that we find as Christians in an increasingly secular society, I have become ever more convinced that Chesterton is a prophet of our times.

Religion boosts public health in *Call the Midwife*

By Ellen Idler
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I was thrilled to hear that PBS' *Call the Midwife* has started a new season in the U.S. and Canada, especially since a British friend had sworn to me that no more episodes were being produced. Back we can go to those breath-holding glimpses of transcendence, for the next eight Sunday nights. In the first new episode, the familiar voice of Vanessa Redgrave tells us that it is now 1961, when "science was all-powerful and all medicine was good."

Through many small stories of births, this series tells a larger story about religion and health. The first two seasons were based on the memoirs of Jennifer Worth, one of the original nurse-midwives sent by the brand-new, publicly funded National Health Service to "Nonnatus House," the fictional name for a real Anglican order of sisters who were also skilled midwives.

The most notable change from previous seasons seems to be that births are taking place in the clinic, not at home. Given the extreme poverty of the women in the neighbourhood of Poplar, in the East End of London, "home" was often a crowded, dilapidated place, squeezed in-between mountains of bombed-out rubble still left from the war.

Worth (the real "Jenny"), who sadly died just before the first season aired, portrays a Poplar that is much more intractably tragic than the nevertheless serious stories the show offers.

What the program shows us is how the NHS, the most socialized of western medical systems — planned during the war and created just afterward — partnered with a religious organization to deliver high-quality care to those most in need. The sisters of Nonnatus House had been delivering babies in the dockworkers' homes since the 19th century and already knew the neighbourhood, the pubs, the police, the criminals, the language and the culture.

When in the first season we saw the fictional Jenny often recoiling from the living condi-

tions, the accompanying sister would urge her, not unkindly, to "get on with it." The sisters, having taken a vow of poverty themselves, served this community, as insiders, throughout their long lives. They had a calling.

It is the reigning paradigm in public health today that social factors — income and wealth inequality, racism, injustice and unequal access to education and housing — are the primary determinants of the health of populations, not simply their medical care. The World Health Organization's 2007 Commission on the Social Determinants of Health defined the social determinants as "the circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, work, and age, and the systems put in place to deal with illness. These circumstances are in turn shaped by a wider set of forces: economics, social policies, and politics."

There was a strong ethical impetus to the commission members' work; one can sense the outrage on the first page when they write: "Our children have dramatically different life chances depending on where they were born." In Japan or Sweden they can expect to live more than 80 years; in several African countries, life expectancy can be under 50 years. "It is not right that it should be like this," the report says.

Yet, despite their emphasis, religion — as a set of beliefs and practices, as a prominent institution in communities, as a provider of medical care in countries around the world — does not appear anywhere in the report.

This is the stunning oversight that a group of faculty members at Emory University sought to address in our book, *Religion as a Social Determinant of Public Health*. From the perspectives of public health, theology, religious studies, sociology, anthropology, ethics, law, nursing and medicine, we argued that religion is also a



Red Productions Ltd 2015, via PBS

CALL THE MIDWIFE — Patsy (Emerald Fennell), Trixie (Helen George) and Barbara (Charlotte Ritchie) are part of the cast of *Call the Midwife* on PBS. What the program shows us is how Britain's National Health Service, the most socialized of western medical systems — planned during the war and created just afterward — partnered with a religious organization to deliver high-quality care to those most in need.

social circumstance that determines health — for both good and sometimes, undoubtedly, for ill — and it cannot be treated as if it were invisible.

Religion's relationship to health is clearly complicated. It is easy to think of religiously moti-

vated conflict and strife around the world that has a devastating effect on health, perhaps especially the health of vulnerable mothers and children. At the same time, there is a considerable amount of research showing that higher levels of religious partici-

pation in western countries are associated with lower rates of mortality. People who attend religious services tend to have lower rates of risky behaviour such as smoking and excessive drug and alcohol use, and higher rates of protective factors like marriage.

Health researchers would call these mechanisms social support and social control. But there is a third link, exemplified by *Call the Midwife* — the social capital a religious institution holds in its community. The Anglican sisters of Nonnatus House offer us a real example of a religion-public health partnership that extended expert, compassionate and low-cost care (remember, half of the midwives were working without pay) to some of the neediest, most socially determined women in London.

As an American mother of two children delivered by a certified nurse midwife, I certainly applaud the education and positive image the show offers us about nurse-midwifery. In the United States, just eight per cent of infants are delivered by midwives; women without health insurance and those on Medicaid — our own neediest mothers — are much more likely than women with private health insurance to be receiving prenatal care from CNMs.

But even more, I applaud the dual "calling" depicted in *Call the Midwife* — of the common purpose and co-operative partnership of the nascent National Health Service with the sisters of Nonnatus House. In today's very secular Great Britain, the NHS is said to be "the closest thing we have to a religion." Ironically, for one corner of London, that is how it got its start.

Idler is Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Sociology at Emory University and editor of *Religion as a Social Determinant of Public Health*.

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Two documentaries offer love and hope this Earth Day

Screenings & Meanings

Gerald Schmitz



The scale of global environmental problems is such that one can become depressed by the alarming forecasts. At the same time, environmental consciousness has never been greater, manifested in the many movements worldwide aiming to mobilize concerned citizens. Earth Day is an opportunity to encourage such collective awareness and action.

Opening theatrically today in the U.S. is Josh Fox’s **How To Let Go of the World and Love All the Things Climate Can’t Change** (<http://www.howtoletgomovie.com/>). It will shortly have its Canadian premiere at Toronto’s HotDocs festival and be televised in June on HBO.

My introduction to this rousing documentary was at its Sundance world premiere where I joined others dancing onstage following its last public screen-

ing. Yes, it’s that kind of film — hard-hitting in its probing of ecological ills yet also driven by an infectious positive energy for change.

is only a global average, so the temperature rise in some places will be much worse. Lester Brown observes that greenhouse gas emissions will have to be cut 80 per cent by 2020 to keep the immense Greenland icecap from melting. “A major overhaul of every human system” may be needed to avoid runaway climate change.

It all seems so daunting, especially with major American corporate and political interests still denying the science and standing in the way of stronger action. Even if it becomes too late to avert some negative consequences, the temptation Fox feels to throw up one’s hands, “to let it go,” leads him instead to go in search of “the things climate can’t destroy.” So he embarks on a personal journey to 12 countries on six continents, asking the question: “What is so deep within us

How To Let Go of the World and Love All the Things Climate Can’t Change

(U.S. 2016)

Love Thy Nature

(U.S. 2015)

that no calamity can take it away?” Who are the people who are carrying on the fight and finding “the revolution inside”?

In the Amazonian region of Ecuador and Peru Fox meets with indigenous groups who are monitoring oil pipeline spills and trying to protect their world against the false promises of an exploitative model of “development” that results in the ruination of nature’s treasures. Destruction of the rainforest depletes a major carbon sink that also serves as the lungs of the planet. Resistance, in which women are playing a prominent role, means protracted legal battles and sometimes going

up against military and security forces. (The award-winning Sundance documentary “When Two Worlds Collide” explores the high stakes in the Peruvian Amazon.) But for the indigenous people on this frontline, the struggle to preserve the richness of the nature on which they depend is both essential and deeply spiritual.

In Utah Fox profiles Tim DeChristopher who has led the fight to block the sale of environmentally sensitive lands, exposing himself to arrest and jail time in the process. When individuals put themselves on the line like this it’s a question of the human future not just scientific observation. As he says: “You can’t divorce energy from the rest of the corporate consumer-driven model. . . . We need more than a shift in energy. We need a shift in our societal model. . . . The crisis could provoke an opportunity for transformation.”

In Australia, Fox investigates the export of coal to Asian markets and the efforts of the Pacific Climate Warriors, indigenous activists from small Pacific island nations threatened by sea-level rise, to block these shipments. As their hand-carved vessels go up against the massive tankers, harbour police on jet skis try to swamp them. But they are undeterred: “We are not drowning! We are fighting!”

In China Fox visits the heavily polluted megacities afflicted by dense smog. It’s estimated that 1.6 million deaths annually are due to dirty air. China’s rise to become the “factory of the world” has been fed by our own consumption addiction, so its burgeoning emissions are not just a Chinese problem. And while China continues to burn huge amounts of coal, it also manufactures 60 per cent of the world’s solar panels. Fox interviews Huang Ming of Climate Mart and community solar activist Ella Chou on initiatives underway to convert to renewable energy sources.

Travelling to Inner Mongolia to look at wind farms, Fox is

watched by Chinese police and briefly detained. Fortunately inside his banjo the hard drives containing his footage are secure. He has friendlier encounters elsewhere. In Vanuatu he observes the resilience of its indigenous culture in the wake of the worst-ever Pacific cyclone, and suggests “we are the ones who are underdeveloped in democracy, generosity . . . in the things that matter.” In Zambia he finds an impoverished region that finally has electricity thanks to solar power. Back closer to home, in coastal areas hit hard by Sandy, he takes heart from the community efforts to overcome the storm’s ravages and move forward.

Everywhere, what drives Fox is how the challenge of climate change can be used to harness the power of popular action, and how “moral imagination” can spur thinking outside the dominant socio-economic paradigm; how innovation and human ingenuity can support more ethical energy choices.

Since Sundance, the film’s rollout has been linked to a 100-city Let Go and Love tour pairing screenings with resource materials and networking activities designed to promote community-based renewable energy solutions.

Love Thy Nature (<http://www.lovetbynature.com/>) is a passionate labour of love by Brazilian-born writer-director/producer Sylvie Rokab who also shares in the cinematography and editing credits. Its spirit flows from the opening aphorism by the Persian Sufi mystic Rumi: “Let the beauty of what you love be what you do. There are a thousand ways to kneel and kiss the earth.”

Narrated by actor Liam Neeson as the collective voice of our 200,000-year-old species *Homo sapiens*, how is it that our pride in being earth’s most intelligent beings, our hubris in wanting to control and exert “dominion” over nature for our benefit, has led us to the brink of ecological crisis? Indeed the price of our progress in seeking independence from the natural world has been a

disconnection from nature so disturbing that it may now threaten our very existence. Somehow we need to recover an interdependent respectful and responsible relationship with other living beings and nature as a whole.

Rokab’s film, with its lyrical passages and striking images, suggests our understanding of nature, including our own, must go beyond purely mechanistic, scientific explanations of the nature of things toward an organic holistic comprehension of earth’s evolving systems and complex web of life forms. That means going beyond descriptions of processes as devoid of any meaning or purpose toward an appreciation of the natural world that is, dare I say, spiritual in some measure, not merely technical or utilitarian.

The movie is not a critique of technological advance so much as an appeal for human innovation that looks to nature for inspiration rather than being destructive of nature’s gifts. Rokab interviews experts in “biomimicry” — “the conscious imitation of nature’s genius” — and “integrative medicine” to find solutions grounded in understanding human well-being as integrally bound up with the health of natural systems. How plants and trees pull carbon from the atmosphere might be applied to climate change. Natural systems are essential for clean air and water.

In 76 minutes Rokab sometimes strains to cover too much too quickly, ranging lightly over assorted ills from urbanization and stressful sedentary lifestyles to reliance on processed fast foods. But she makes a convincing case for reconnecting with nature and recognizing its healing properties. The benefits of such “biophilia,” the love of life, are more than physical, extending to “mindfulness” and ultimately a sense of meaning and fulfilment.

This is a love story leading up to a positive message about the millions of people around the globe who are organizing and mobilizing to take action for environmental and social justice.

Every day will have to be an earth day for that story to succeed.



LoveThyNature.com

LOVE THY NATURE — An award winning film narrated by Liam Neeson, *Love Thy Nature* shows how deeply we’ve lost touch with nature and takes viewers on a cinematic journey through the beauty and intimacy of our relationship with the natural world.

up against military and security forces. (The award-winning Sundance documentary “When Two Worlds Collide” explores the high stakes in the Peruvian Amazon.) But for the indigenous people on this frontline, the struggle to preserve the richness of the nature on which they depend is both essential and deeply spiritual.

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G. Schmitz

FILM DIRECTOR — Director Josh Fox is pictured in this Jan. 30, 2016, photo from the Sundance Film Festival.

Amoris Laetitia: leaving behind

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

Sex is not something the church fears or is trying to control. Sex is not the opposite of prayer and spirituality, it's not something we grudgingly concede to the young. Sex is not merely the mechanism of reproduction, although there's no such thing as a full and true understanding of sex that can't live with our human capacity to make babies.

Sex is good. Sex done right is love. Love done right is often, though not always, sex.

Pope Francis has put the whole church on notice. We are to leave behind our adolescent, greedy, impulse-driven hold on sex. At the same time we must reject that fear-driven need to wrap sex up in pat formulas, rules and prohibitions — to keep it hidden at a safe distance from the church.

On April 8 the first impulse of secular media was to scour *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love), Pope Francis' new document on love in the family, for legal tweaks. Was the pope going to open the door a crack for gay couples? Would Francis map a new path to the communion rail for divorced and remarried Catholics? What would the pope say about the vast majority who are not virgins on their wedding night and have in fact lived through a series of de facto unions before deciding on marriage?

While he doesn't flinch from such questions and there may be a little news there, it's not the big story. The big story is Francis'



Anne Wicks

BEAUTY OF SEX — In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis says “We are to leave behind our adolescent, greedy, impulse-driven hold on sex. At the same time we must reject that fear-driven need to wrap sex up in pat formulas, rules and prohibitions — to keep it hidden at a safe distance from the church.”

assault on our Catholic assumption that sex is nothing but the giant sand trap of moral life. Isn't sex always the last thing we bring up in the confessional — the biggie? Isn't sex the reason so many of our children, siblings, cousins give for not going to church anymore?

Francis is not having it. He wants us to grow up and look honestly at our sexual selves.

“A love lacking in either pleasure or passion is insufficient to symbolize the union of the human heart with God,” he writes.

“God himself created sexuality, which is a marvellous gift to his creatures. . . . Sexual desire is not something to be looked down upon and there can be no attempt

whatsoever to call into question its necessity,” he writes. “A healthy sexual desire, albeit closely joined to a pursuit of pleasure, always involves a sense of wonder, and for that very reason can humanize the impulses. In no way, then, can we consider the erotic dimension of love simply as a permissible evil or a burden to be tolerated for the good of the family.”

If that doesn't sound like the Baltimore Catechism, it's a good thing it doesn't.

Mere regulations, the reduction of Catholic tradition to formulas, is nobody's idea of a religion fully responsive to real life.

“We cannot encourage a path of fidelity and mutual self-giving

without encouraging growth, strengthening and deepening of conjugal and family love,” writes the pope.

Francis is not satisfied with the canon law definition of marriage as mere consent. For Francis, it's about love.

Though the word “integral” only occurs four times in the 261 pages of *Amoris Laetitia*, and “integrated” just twice, a thorough, thoughtful, prayerful reading of the apostolic exhortation is so much easier for those who have read Francis' environmental encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. For this pope, sex is part of the ecology of the family and of a truly human life. It needs the protection of

marriage and the faithful accompaniment of the church.

Not only is Pope Francis far more interested in the joy and praise we discover in our sexual lives, his goal is to see sex integrated into the life of Christ and animated by the Holy Spirit. He never lets us forget the Trinity is our home. In the Trinity we find the salvation offered by God to God's people.

“The triune God is a communion of love, and the family is its living reflection,” is Pope Francis' starting point. We are made in the image of a trinitarian God and sex is how that image expresses itself in love and hope and faith.

“It gives me a ton of hope,” was Saskatchewan theologian Leah Perrault's reaction as she neared the end of her first reading of *Amoris Laetitia*. Perrault is an expert on St. John Paul II's theology of the body who works for the Saskatchewan bishops on health care and blogs at leahperrault.com/barefoot-preaching.

The essential, traditional Catholic insight about sex isn't that it's kryptonite to any hope of becoming holy, she said.

“All human spirituality is mediated in and through the body — which is good,” Perrault told The Catholic Register. “That means our biology needs to be part of the way we understand ourselves.”

In speaking positively about sex, the pope isn't inventing a new doctrine or pushing the church in some obscure direction. But his language, the story he tells about the church and sex, is realistic, scriptural and earthy in ways that the more philosophically minded St. John Paul II never quite managed.

“I feel like he landed in a place where sex is real,” said Perrault.

On the day it was published, Jesuit Father Gilles Mongeau already had plans to deploy chapters four and five of *Amoris Laetitia* in a marriage preparation retreat he will soon give for an engaged pair of his theology students at Regis College in the University of Toronto.

“This is the new manual for marriage prep,” declared Mongeau.

Chapter four, the longest in the document, takes the form of an extended meditation on one of the most frequently employed readings at Catholic weddings, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: “Love is patient, love is kind; love is not jealous or boastful. . . .”

Francis' analysis of the hymn to love gets right down to the detail of the Greek words and how they can be translated. But, typically for Francis, he never strays far from practical advice and stern correction. When St. Paul tells us “love is not boastful” the pope expands the thought by saying, “It is important for Christians to show their love by the way they treat family members who are less knowledgeable about the faith, weak or less sure in their convictions. At times the

Canada's bishops welcome Pope Francis' document

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Canada's Catholic bishops welcomed Pope Francis' post-synodal exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love) April 8, noting in its teachings its rejection of euthanasia.

As the Canadian government is in the process of crafting a law that would permit doctor-assisted death, the statement from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops notes: “*Amoris Laetitia* reiterates the necessity of protect-

ing human life from beginning to its natural end.”

The pope also stressed the duty of conscientious objection in health care facilities and the “urgency to assert the right to a natural death without aggressive treatment and euthanasia,” the CCCB statement said.

“In the section entitled *The Transmission of Life and the Rearing of Children*,” the Holy Father points out that “if the family is the sanctuary of life, the place where life is conceived and cared for, it is a horrendous contradiction when it becomes a place where life is rejected and destroyed,” the CCCB statement said.

The bishops urged a “prayerful reception” of the document by the faithful and recommended its study by married couples and families.

“The bishops of Canada are deeply

thankful to Pope Francis for focusing the attention of the universal church on the importance of marriage and family, for reminding all the faithful of the urgent priority of accompanying families in hope and mercy, and for inviting Christian families to ‘value the gifts of marriage and the family,’” the statement said.

At a news conference in Ottawa April 8, Gatineau Archbishop Paul-André Durocher, who attended both the 2014 extraordinary synod and the 2015 ordinary synod that led to the exhortation, said the final document represents a more than three-year process of consultation that even included a survey of the faithful around the world.

“I think the pope is inviting us to be a church of dialogue and mutual listening,” Durocher said.

Some of the text reads like Wisdom literature, he said.

“The text is an invitation to rediscover the beauty of marriage and the family and to protect it and cherish it,” he said.

The document does not represent a compromise, but the pope is advising people not to fall into one extreme or another, Durocher said. On justice and mercy, it is not a question of one or the other, but “how we hold the two together.”

Ottawa Archbishop Terrence

Prendergast said the big challenge will be answering the pope's call to accompany families and couples both before and after marriage, considering the shortage of priests and of pastoral workers.

The archbishop noted divorce, combined families, and the fact many are not marrying at all for fear of commitment is touching everyone in a way these things did not in previous decades. Clearly, “the family is in need of support.”

The exhortation “gives us a guide book for the future,” he said.

Amy Lau, who with her husband represented the Ottawa archdiocese at last year's World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, said the pope is calling for a “more intimate and fruitful connection between the head and the heart.”

She noted the pope's image of the church as a field hospital for the wounded. “Pope Francis is calling on us as families to open our homes and our churches to the wounded of today's world and to accompany them.”

Tim Lau said the document is timely for the Jubilee Year of Mercy. “God remakes the world through families because it is through the family new generations come,” he said.



CCN/D. Gyapong

NEWS CONFERENCE — Gatineau Archbishop Paul-André Durocher at an April 8 news conference in Ottawa speaking on the pope's synodal exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*.

— CONTINUED, page 13

mind adolescent notions of sex

Continued from page 12

opposite occurs: the supposedly mature believers within the family become unbearably arrogant.”

“There’s a realism in this chapter that is really, really interesting,” said Mongeau.

The Catholic misapprehension about sex has often been that sex is first, foremost and last about making babies. In the language of moral theologians, it is “unitive and generative,” but unitive (bringing the couple into a single, shared reality) is at best a concession left unspoken. Pope Francis corrects that cultural misapprehension in his long meditation on St. Paul.

“Unitive is finally given it’s due here in a way that’s accessible, that’s scriptural,” said Mongeau.

For any faithful Catholic couple already embarked on a life that understands both the unitive and generative aspects of sex and marriage, the apostolic exhortation is “welcome, helpful and encouraging,” said Anna Boyagoda, who with her husband Ray shared her initial impressions alongside Cardinal Thomas Collins at an April 8 news conference at the Archdiocese of Toronto’s Pastoral Centre.

“It will help me guide my (four) children as they figure out what it means to witness to their faith in a world that they want — and I want them — to remain very much a part of,” she said. “Pope Francis urges us to think about, to speak about, Catholic marriage and family life as something that is very attractive, that leads to true freedom, to happiness, to a good life. That it needs to be understood as freeing, ennobling and joyful.”

Ray Boyagoda remarked on how the couple worked through the document together while their

youngest had a crying fit and two others constantly wanted to show their mother something.

“That’s the reality of a young and thriving family life,” he said. “The pope speaks to you in the reality of your family life — that it is exhausting and that there is still something that is beautiful and joyful about it to pursue.”

Theologian Moira McQueen, a member of the Vatican’s International Theological Commission and a delegate to the 2015 synod on the family, saw how the pope’s insistence on open, frank discussion at the synod combined with careful listening, translated into the final document.

“The pope had sat there for three weeks and really was listening to everybody speaking, apart from absorbing all the material that had been sent in from across the world,” McQueen said. “It seems to me that this document pretty faithfully has taken that into account.”

Changes to Catholic doctrine were never the point of the exercise and weren’t expected, she said. But that doesn’t mean that the document is just an overlong sermon from the chair of Peter.

“It’s truly wonderful that the tone has changed,” said McQueen. “He’s managed to put the doctrine in continuity. We can have our children look at and read it and it still makes sense. Pope Francis has the power to make us see the doctrine not as a list of rules, not just as pretexts, but as something really applicable for our good and for our benefit in everyday life. That’s what moral theology is all about. It’s what Catholic teaching is all about. It’s about how we are to flourish as people and how we’re to live in this diverse world of ours.”

Doctrine outlines our ideals. It

defines the perfect life, perfect prayer, perfect communion, complete truth, perfect harmony in every aspect of life. We need those ideals but we’re not perfect, said Collins, archbishop of Toronto.

“We’re all imperfect Catholics. We’re all struggling,” he said.

If Catholics were perfect, they wouldn’t need the church.

“The church needs to be there — and the church is there — for people: to welcome, to encourage, to support. That’s what we’re doing,” Collins said. “What (Pope Francis) is describing is not a new wrinkle or something. What he’s describing is the actual working out of the way the church operates in terms of caring for people, but holding up, as he says very clearly, the message of the Gospel.”

However imperfect our lives may be, sexually or otherwise, the church and its clergy are there first and foremost to listen.

“Couples need our help. I’m so happy that he’s addressed that need,” said St. Augustine’s Seminary theologian Josephine Lombardi. “There are couples in parishes willing to journey with couples and help them. You know, there’s going to be days when someone’s going to lose a job, someone is going to have a big fight, someone is going to be diagnosed with cancer. So, how are we assisting these couples?”

Pope Francis does not hesitate to criticize his own church and especially the clergy for wielding doctrine and canon law like a weapon.

“A pastor cannot feel that it is enough simply to apply moral laws to those living in ‘irregular’ situations, as if they were stones to throw at people’s lives,” he writes.

But the pope’s disappointment with a few pastors shouldn’t be

taken as the general state of affairs, said Lombardi. We don’t live in a coldly bureaucratic church of no, she said.

“We need to dispel some of the myths around annulments in the church,” she said. “It’s a very user-friendly process, very caring and compassionate.”

To restate doctrine or change church law in the hope of a remedy to all the troubles we see in our parishes and families would be to prescribe based on the wrong diagnosis, said Atlantic School of Theology professor David Deane. It’s not our doctrine, our ideals, that’s twisted. Our laws are ever reformable, but

for the most part they are faithful to Catholic ideals. The problems we have with sex, marriage and family life begin at the grassroots. It’s a problem of culture.

“The goal of the exhortation, and this is Francis’ goal right across the board, is how does he change, how does he reform, the culture of the church,” said Deane. “He wants a culture which is merciful, a culture which is journeying with people, a culture which doesn’t discriminate against people based upon the fact that they haven’t attained the platonic ideal of relationships but instead may embrace them as being on their way to that.”



Design Pics

REALISTIC LANGUAGE — In speaking positively about sex, the pope isn’t inventing a new doctrine or pushing the church in some obscure direction. But his language, the story he tells about the church and sex, is realistic, scriptural and earthy in ways that the more philosophically minded St. John Paul II never quite managed.

Long papal exhortation on love in the family moves Vatican II forward

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

Pope Francis’ long meditation on love in the family does more

than sum up two meetings of the world’s bishops in Rome in 2014 and 2015. Francis is bringing a new spark to an old fire.

The apostolic exhortation



Design Pics

FAMILY LOVE — “The joy of love experienced by families is also the joy of the church,” writes Pope Francis.

Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love) begins with a sentence that recalls the most famous sentence in 20th-century Catholicism.

“The joy of love experienced by families is also the joy of the church,” writes Francis.

With that sentence Pope Francis consciously, deliberately calls to mind the pastoral constitution of the church, *Gaudium et Spes*. The primary pastoral document of the Second Vatican Council begins: “The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish, of the followers of Christ as well.”

If there are some in the church who would minimize Vatican II, they do it by pointing out that it was not a doctrinal council. But such an argument misses the point. Pope John XXIII was convinced the church needed a revolution if it was to respond to a new and changing world — a pastoral revolution.

Pope Francis’ first sentence calling to mind the pastoral constitution of the church is “rather

important, to be honest,” said Jesuit Father Gilles Mongeau, a theologian at Toronto’s Regis College.

“There’s a signal there that with this apostolic exhortation he wants to move the work of the council forward,” Mongeau said.

It doesn’t end at the first sentence. There are 29 footnoted references to *Gaudium et Spes* in *Amoris Laetitia*. Whenever Francis wants to make a point about what the church really teaches about marriage and sex, he reaches for *Gaudium et Spes*.

“This is because ‘marriage was not instituted solely for the procreation of children’ but also that mutual love ‘might be properly expressed, that it should grow and mature,’ ” he writes. The two quotes contained within that sentence come from paragraph 50 of *Gaudium et Spes*.

“The real achievement here is finding a way of articulating at the same time the truth of the church’s teaching on marriage while recovering the really rich and complex history of the church’s reflection on pastoral care,” said Mongeau. “That’s something we haven’t

heard recently.”

A pastoral revolution begins with the people who are being pastored. The pastors, indeed the whole community, needs to see each individual as a real person and not merely the sum of their problems or their accomplishments.

“There’s a constant thread through the whole thing, and through Francis’ thought in general, which is against the commodification of persons, the commodification of sexual relationships,” said Atlantic School of Theology professor David Deane. “So there’s a seamless coherence between his critiques of capitalism and his approach to sex and sexuality.”

“We treat affective relationships the way we treat material objects and the environment: everything is disposable; everyone uses and throws away, takes and breaks, exploits and squeezes to the last drop. Then, goodbye,” Pope Francis writes. “Narcissism makes people incapable of looking beyond themselves, beyond their own desires and needs.”

Will this papal document settle the controversies?

By David Gibson

VATICAN CITY (RNS) — The wide-ranging papal document on the Catholic Church and modern-day families that the Vatican released on April 8 was expected to be the culmination of a two-year gantlet of unusually frank discussions — a chance for Pope Francis to finally settle the fierce debates, and even dark warnings of schism, that his effort to open dialogue on contentious topics had unleashed.

With so much at stake, various camps were eager to parse every phrase to see if they had won, or lost, on a particular point and, as expected, the verdict on the document, a 263-page papal exhortation, titled *Amoris Laetitia*, or The Joy of Love, was mixed.

The hopes of some in the liberal camp that the pontiff might soften Catholic doctrine on marriage and divorce, or somehow signal an approval of same-sex unions, were always unrealistic; indeed, many progressives expressed disappointment in the exhortation even as Francis' stress on pastoral flexibility over theological rigidity signalled a fundamental reorientation of Catholicism away from a rule-based focus.

That reaffirmation of long-standing doctrine on marriage was at least some consolation to the vocal number of conservatives who long feared the kind of unambiguous changes that the progressives hoped for, though many winced at several other elements, such as the openings Francis left for the divorced and remarried to take communion.

But the larger reality conveyed by the document — and one that could unsettle Catholic traditionalists more than anything — is that the pope clearly wants the debates over church teachings and pastoral practices to continue and, perhaps, to continue to evolve.

Francis signalled as much

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early on in The Joy of Love, a landmark document that is essentially the pope's extended spin on a series of high-level meetings of leading cardinals and bishops that he launched in February 2014 and that concluded with an intense, three-week synod of bishops in Rome last October.

"The complexity of the issues that arose revealed the need for continued open discussion of a number of doctrinal, moral, spiritual, and pastoral questions," Francis wrote.

He said that "honest, realistic and creative" thinking by pastors and theologians "will help us to achieve greater clarity," and he rejected both "an immoderate desire for total change without sufficient reflection or grounding" and a hardline "attitude that would solve everything by applying general rules or deriving undue conclusions from particular theological considerations."

Francis also endorsed a kind of "local option" on ministry, stressing that pastors in each country or region "can seek solutions better suited to its culture and sensitive to its traditions and local needs."

"I would make it clear," he wrote, "that not all discussions of doctrinal, moral or pastoral issues need to be settled by interventions of the magisterium. Unity of teaching and practice is certainly necessary in the church, but this does not preclude various ways of interpreting some aspects of that teaching or drawing certain consequences from it."

In other words, don't look to Rome for the solution to every challenge, and don't stop looking for ways to welcome anyone and everyone who feels alienated from the faith because their personal lives do not conform to the Catholic ideal.

No family is perfect, Francis says, and the church itself has much to learn from those families as it accompanies them through their difficulties.

Just as important, Francis in this exhortation repeatedly

emphasizes the primacy of individual conscience and the ability of sincere believers to discern — with the help of a pastor and through their own experience — whether they are able, for example, to take communion if they are divorced and remarried.

Conscience is for many a wild card in Catholic theology, a concept that critics say allows for a perilously high chance of moral freelancing.

But Francis says the concept is vital, and has been ignored by too many for too long.

Church leaders, he wrote, "find it hard to make room for the consciences of the faithful, who very often respond as best they can to the Gospel amid their limitations, and are capable of carrying out their own discernment in complex situations."

"We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them."

That is certainly not the clarification call that the Catholic right wanted to hear.

"(I)t is precisely the pope's studied ambiguity that many find stimulating, and others exasperating," Thomas Williams, a conservative theologian and former priest who left the clergy to marry, wrote in a prebutter to the exhortation.

"People inside and outside the church have always admired the clarity of her teachings," Williams wrote on the Catholic news site Crux. "Agree or disagree, at least you knew where she stood, yet this hasn't always been the case with Francis."

Yet others would in fact see Francis' nuanced approach as precisely in keeping with the church's tradition of developing doctrine over time in the light of changing historical realities, and the gradual movement — guided by the Holy Spirit — "toward the entire truth," as Francis put it.

Cardinal Walter Kasper, a retired German theologian who has provided some of the intellectual framework for Francis' focus

on mercy over condemnation, likes to say that Francis "does not want to get short-term results."

"He does not want to occupy positions," the 83-year-old Kasper has written, "but wants to put processes into motion and create a dynamic that will bear fruit at the right time."

That is a formula some will welcome, and others will reject. But it certainly points to greater ferment in the church, not less.

To be sure, exactly where doctrine and pastoral practice might be headed under Francis — and beyond him — isn't clear, and it's not at all obvious that any eventual changes will please liberals who are feeling disappointed today.

But the engagement with faith is essential to Francis' vision for the church. "We make the path by walking," the pope likes to say.

If that journey is part of the pilgrimage of faith, it is far from over. In fact, it may never be over.



CNS/Paul Haring

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION — Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, general secretary of the Synod of Bishops, holds his copy of Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation on the family, *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love), during a news conference for the release of the document at the Vatican April 8.

New document leaves some Catholic families needing more

By Michele Weldon
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I was sitting in one of the front wooden pews of St. Vincent Ferrer Church, armed with a bag of children's books and Power Ranger toys. The effort was ambitious — taking three sons under age seven to an hour-long Sunday mass — but it was important to me as a single mother in the mid-1990s to indoctrinate them as Catholics in the habit of weekly mass.

I wanted for them the joy of community and to have fond memories of church for as far back as they could remember. Sunday mass was where I sat beside my

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own mother, who often promised to take us all to Baker's Square for pancakes afterward. I wanted to create traditions like that — if the boys could last until the priest's declaration, "Mass is ended. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord."

Midway through 9 a.m. mass, Father from the pulpit was delivering a homily. He was a fire and brimstone brand of priest. I was hoping the explosion sounds my oldest son was making to accompany his action figure tableau would not disturb the concentration of other parishioners in our row.

"Divorce is selfish," the elderly priest declared, his face contorted in disdain. "It is a sin to create broken families."

I could feel the heat rise on the back of my neck and my face flush. I wanted to scream. There was nothing selfish about my divorcing an abusive husband, the father to my sons. It was a brave act. And we were not broken. We

were healing.

That Sunday was two decades ago and my sons are grown adults, now 27, 25 and 22. But the stigma splashed on divorced parents and families by the Catholic Church for the past several generations is a legacy of shame and finger pointing, repeated frequently in the rhetoric of broken homes, failure, selfish single parents and sin. And it still stings.

Pope Francis made a leap toward healing that stigma in his much-awaited 256-page paper, *Amoris Laetitia*, or The Joy of Love, with a softened approach to divorce and remarriage. "Let us remember that a small step in the midst of great human limitations can be more pleasing to God than a life which appears outwardly in order but moves through the day without confronting great difficulties," Francis wrote.

It is comforting language, but hardly revolutionary.

His efforts to address the

nuances of human relationships fail to acknowledge the complexities of marriages that end and why, or marriages that never begin. It is a blatant failure, as well, to hold to the church's hardline opposition to same sex marriages. Francis' recent pronouncement does not erase the embedded hurt that has been caused by decades of punitive references to families that do not fit the happy family mould of one father, one mother.

In 2014, according to U.S. Census Bureau data, 1.6 million children were born to unmarried women, or 40 per cent of all births. More than a third of children under 18 in this country live in households with a single parent.

These families are not broken. Just as the Catholic Church failed to stem or even acknowledge the horror of abuses caused by priests over the last century until recently, the failure to create new avenues for families of all kinds will continue to fracture the

beliefs of Catholics in this country in their papal leadership.

I was divorced in 1996, and received an annulment that same year. I went through the process because my mother and the parish priest told me I needed to. I remember it involved a hefty payment, hours of meetings with an assigned counsellor and a dissertation-worthy set of paperwork outlining the reasons for the annulment. It was granted, but not without a formal protest from my former husband. Ironically, he remarried shortly after our divorce.

Years later, I have no plans to remarry, and I am not sure if I ever will. What I do wish for is an annulment of the pain caused by clergy who in the name of Jesus have declared for years that because I chose to raise my sons alone following a doomed marriage, that we are all broken. That I have sinned.

Bless me, Father, but that is a legacy I find hard to forgive.

Be loving presence of Jesus for those we encounter



Liturgy and Life

Sylvain Lavoie, OMI

In the 2010 movie *Of Gods and Men*, a community of Trappist monks in Algeria are caught between the army and the rebels because they offer medical assistance to both sides without discrimination. As their situation becomes more precarious, they are torn between leaving for a safer location or staying in solidarity with the local people who are suffering from the raging civil war.

In a serious meeting after their provincial superior arrives, they one by one make the decision to stay and not desert the people. That night, aware of the mounting tension around them, and with the premonition that this could be their last night together, they gather for a meal that evokes the scene of the Last Supper. The soft lighting, quiet music, fine wine and intimate conversation in the filming of that scene makes it especially poignant.

What stands out the most, however, is the love that flows between each member of the community. That love is palpable, visible, emanating from the screen to the viewer. One almost wishes one could have been there. As it turns out, that night they are rounded up and taken away

Sylvain Lavoie, OMI, Archbishop Emeritus of the Archdiocese of Keewatin-The Pas, is chaplain at the Star of the North Retreat House in St. Albert, Alta. He continues to live out his motto, *Regnum Dei Intra Vos* (the kingdom of God is among you), which is his overriding focus and passion.

in trucks, only to be marched into oblivion in a snow-storm, by either the army or the rebels (which one is not clear). As sobering as that last scene is, one is left with the more powerful image of that last loving meal.

Today’s Gospel evokes much the same emotions as the meal in that film, and leaves us with the message that the Father wants to be in an intimate loving relationship with all who believe in his Son Jesus.

This passage is part of the farewell discourse of Jesus as he shares a last meal with his disciples. One can picture the soft lighting, perhaps even some quiet music, certainly the attentive disciples hanging on every word Jesus speaks, quietly, intimately, perhaps in a halting voice. There is so much that Jesus wants to communicate with his disciples as his ministry among them ends. The love between Jesus and his disciples is most certainly palpable.

He shares that those who love him keep his Word, and that because he is one with the Father his Word is also the Word

Sixth Sunday of Easter May 1, 2016	Acts 15:1-2, 22-29 Psalms 67 Revelations 21:10-14, 22-23 John 14:23-29
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of the Father. The Father and he will dwell in the hearts of those who believe in him, love him and keep his Word. He allows them to see into the heart of God who is Trinity, family, relationship, intimacy — Father, Son and the Spirit that is the bond of love between the Father and the Son.

Jesus promises his disciples the gift of peace and serenity. This peace is so much more than fleeting emotions — it is a gift of the Spirit that no one else can give them, and that no one can take away from them. With that promise he encourages them to let go of any fear. Perfect love casts out all fear. Jesus and the Father have loved them perfectly. In the end, he promises he will return to be reunited with them, leaving them also with the profound gift of hope.

Father Bob was visiting a friend when his 15-year-old daughter came back from a soccer tournament. She

burst into the house, dropped her equipment bag on the floor, flopped on her dad’s lap, put her arm around his neck, and nestled her head against his for at least a minute, soaking up his love. Her father carried on with the conversation as if this was totally normal and expected. The other kids did not even notice, and his wife kept on preparing supper. This *was* normal in this household!

Father Bob caught his breath and observed with awe this intimate father-daughter relationship. As he drove away, he thought to himself that this might be as close to a picture of heaven as he will see on this earth, and felt grateful for what he had witnessed — a living out of today’s gospel.

What Jesus shared with his disciples that night, and lived out for them the next day on the cross, he wants to share with us in the liturgy and at all times. We are asked to love him, to keep his Word, to be open to the gift of the Spirit, and to surrender our will and lives over to him who has loved us totally, and to the end. We are to be his friends and followers. He wants to be bonded with us through an intimate, close relationship of tender love and trusting prayer.

In the end, we are being called to realize, to the extent that we can, the new heavenly Jerusalem of the second reading, in our lives here and now. This is called “realized eschatology,” the making present now what we will be experiencing when Jesus comes again.

The following possibly true short story captures the spirit of this ideal. Three men running to catch a subway train knock over the fruit stand of street vendor. Two of the men brush themselves off and keep on going. The other stops to help put up the stand. It turns out the vendor is a blind boy, who asks the man who stopped, “Are you Jesus?”

The eucharist is our heavenly food, an encounter with God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, an agape or love meal, that empowers us to go out and spread the Good News that God truly does dwell in our land, and wants to be in an intimate loving relationship with all who believe in his Son Jesus.

It’s difficult to sort out what is real love and what is projection



In Exile

Ron Rolheiser, OMI

The famed Jungian writer Robert Johnson makes this observation about falling in love: “To fall in love is to project the most noble and infinitely valuable part of one’s being onto another human being. . . . We have to say that the divinity we see in others is truly there, but we don’t have a right to see it until we have taken away our own projections. . . . Making this fine distinction is the most delicate and difficult task in life.”

And indeed it is. Sorting through what is genuine in love and what is projection is indeed one of the more delicate and difficult tasks of life. We can, and do,

“And continues the process of the synod.”

Pope Francis, also a Jesuit, uses the word “discernment” 32 times. It’s a word plucked out of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, a word every Jesuit wears on his heart and on his sleeve. It means a constant process of understanding which is embedded in prayer, love and respect. It is no mere sorting of facts, but a way of deepening every glimpse of truth and spirit in every human encounter. Discernment doesn’t just sort things into their proper categories. At the same time, it makes connections.

“It is an Ignatian document. It really is. And discernment is at the centre of it,” said Mongeau.

“I just think it’s a beautiful, beautiful document,” said Regis College theologian Rev. Gordon Rixon, SJ. “He retrieves the tradition and locates it in an organic development that gives life and isn’t either the confused, scattered approach that we might find taking root in broader society or a rigid, rule-bound approach that’s present in other elements of society. It really is deepening the centre.”

Amoris Laetitia isn’t aimed at laying down the law and shutting everybody up. It’s not the final word, even if it is weighty, comprehensive, wise and true.

“This is really engaging and inviting dialogue,” said Rixon.

for instance, sometimes fall in love with persons who are utterly wrong for us and know from experience that once our initial infatuation is over our passion can quickly turn into indifference or even hatred. For this reason we might ask: Whom or what are we really loving in those magical moments of infatuation when we see so much goodness and divinity inside of another person? Are we really in love with that person or, as Johnson suggests, are we simply projecting some of our own noble qualities onto that other so that, in effect, this is more self-love than real love?

The answer to that, as Johnson highlights, is complex. The goodness and nobility we see in the other person are in fact there, normally at least. However, until a certain projection, an idealization within which we envelope the other, is stripped away we are not yet really loving and valuing that other.

As an example, imagine a man falling in love with a woman. At that early stage of love, his feelings for her are very strong, obsessive even, and his eyes are open mostly only to her good qualities and blind to her faults.

Indeed, at this stage, her faults can even appear attractive rather than problematic. Of course, as bitter experience teaches us, that won’t be the case once the infatuation wears off.

And so we are left with an important question: Are those wonderful qualities we so naturally see in another person in the early stages of love really there? Yes. Absolutely. They are there, but they may not be what we are actually seeing. As Johnson highlights, and as spiritual writers everywhere attest to, at this stage of love, there is the ever-present possibility that the beautiful qualities we are seeing in someone are more of a projection of our own selves than actual gifts we see inside him or her. Though the other person actually possesses those gifts, what we are really seeing is a projection of ourselves, an idealization with which we have enveloped the other, so that in effect, at this stage, we are not so much in love with the other as we are in love with certain good qualities that are inside of ourselves. That’s why we can fall in love with people of very different temperaments and virtue and, at an early stage of our love, still always have the same feelings.

That’s also why falling in love is such an ambiguous thing and needs the discernment offered by time and the counsel of wise friends and family. We can fall in love with many different kinds of people, including some who are very wrong for us. The heart, as Pascal asserts, has its reasons, some of which are not always favourable to our long-range health.

What’s the lesson here? Simply this: In all of our intimate relations we should be aware of our natural propensity to project our own more noble qualities onto the other person and to be aware too that we do not truly love and appreciate that other person until we have withdrawn that projection so that we are actually seeing the other person’s goodness, not our own. The same holds true as regards hatred of someone else. Just as we tend to idealize others, we also tend to demonize them, projecting our own dark side onto them and enrobing them with our own worst qualities. Thus, by Robert Johnson’s logic, we don’t have a right to hate anyone, until we have withdrawn our own dark projection. We over-demonize just as we over-idealize.

In his classic novel *Stoner*, John Williams describes for us how his main character understands love: “In his extreme youth Stoner had thought of love as an absolute state of being to which, if one were lucky, one might find access; in his maturity he had decided it was the heaven of a false religion, toward which one ought to gaze with an amused disbelief, a gently familiar contempt, and an embarrassed nostalgia. Now in his middle age he began to know that it was neither a state of grace nor an illusion; he saw it as a human act of becoming, a condition that was invented and modified moment by moment and day by day, by the will and the intelligence and the heart.”

God’s mercy extends to all aspects of our lives

Both Lungs

Brent Kostyniuk



We give you thanks, O invisible King, for by your infinite power you created all things and, in your great mercy, brought all things from nothingness into being. — Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

Mercy is central to our faith. So central, in fact, that Pope Francis made it the theme of an Extraordinary Holy Year, which began on Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2015, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. This is the first Holy Year to celebrate, not an anniversary of some kind, but the attribute of God the Father which is most exalted in both the Old and the New Testaments.

The pontiff initiated the Holy Year with these words. “I have decided to announce an Extraordinary Jubilee which has at its centre the mercy of God. It will be a Holy Year of Mercy. We want to live in the light of the word of the Lord. ‘Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.’”

Pope Francis also spoke of how God’s mercy overcomes sin. “When faced with the gravity of sin, God responds with the fullness of mercy. Mercy will always be greater than any sin, and no one can place limits on the love of God who is ever ready to forgive . . . God who consoles, par-

Kostyniuk, who lives in Edmonton, has a bachelor of theology from Newman and is a freelance writer. He and his wife Bev have been married for 37 years and have eight grandchildren.

dons, and instills hope.”

For Ukrainian Catholics, calling on God’s mercy is a recurring event. Indeed, throughout the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, the faithful respond to the *ektenias* (Greek — diligence) with “Lord have mercy.” (Note: In the West, the word *litany* — Greek, an entreating — is used in the same context as *ektenia*). These words are repeated over 40 times throughout the liturgy as a heartfelt plea for God’s indulgence on the many petitions the priest makes on our behalf.

“Lord have mercy” as used in the liturgy is a translation of the Ukrainian *Hospody pomylui*. Their original meaning conveys a richer, deeper sentiment than the very commonly heard English words. In his book *Life in Abundance*, Rev. Bernard Dribnenky, OSBM, explains the significance of the original. “Lord, have mercy, or better still, *Hospody pomylui*. The latter expression says much more than the former one. *Hospod*’ is a Church Slavonic (an ancient liturgical language now used only occasionally) for Lord, a title which belongs originally to the risen Christ. “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in

heaven and on earth . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father’ ” (Phil 2:6-11).

“*Pomylui* is derived from the Church Slavonic — *Mylouvaty* — which means to love. Like Amen, *pomylui* is impossible to translate literally into English. It thus requires an entire sentence: Lord, forgive me, because you love me. In other words, God forgives us not because we repent — we repent because God loves us.”

In the Prayer before Communion, sometimes referred to as the Byzantine Act of Contrition, we echo the publican’s words as we prepare to partake of the holy eucharist. “God be merciful to me a sinner. God cleanse me of my sins and have mercy on me. I have sinned without number, forgive me O Lord.” Only then do we approach to receive the Body and Blood of Christ “. . . for the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting.”

Calling on God’s mercy is also central to the Jesus Prayer. One of the hallmarks of Eastern spirituality is meditation, a discipline brought to near perfection by the Desert Fathers and Mothers. The Jesus Prayer is a short repetitive prayer that is profound and deeply mystical. It expresses much of our Christian belief, including the need to be humble before God. Although there are minor variations, a common form of the prayer is “Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me a sinner.” The words stem from a number of biblical passages. It was Peter who first acknowledged Jesus. “Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’ ” (Mt 16:16). In the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee it is the publican’s prayer which is



V. Kostyniuk

GOD’S MERCY — God’s boundless mercy even extends to refreshing our spirits with unexpected mountain vistas.

pleasing to God. “Lord have mercy on me, a (in some translations *the*) sinner” (Lk 18: 13). Also in Luke, Jesus encounters 10 lepers who call out to him from a distance. “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us” (Lk 17:13).

Finally, as the liturgy comes to its conclusion, the faithful are left with yet one more reminder that

our faith is based on divine compassion. “Christ our true God, risen from the dead, through the prayers of his immaculate Mother, of our father among the saints John Chrysostom, archbishop of Constantinople, and all the saints, will have mercy and save us, for he is good and loves mankind.”

Focus on building church

Continued from page 3

Muir pointed out that, although as a parish “we have done great things,” we now will focus on building an “awesome church.”

After a break, Muir discussed the next steps in this renewal and growth initiative. She said there was a lot to do to get ready for what she called the fall “hard launch” to the entire parish. The parish website needed to be refreshed and communications put in place.

Muir said the starting emphasis would be on four steps of the program. First, a prayer group would be started as soon as possible to pray for the success of this initiative. Second, education of the parish on evangelization would be undertaken in order for people to be “comfortable with” and understand this aspect. Both she and Bettens stressed it would not be a “knocking on doors” process.

Hospitality and Sunday experience would be the next two steps addressed. After that, the other steps would follow.

Muir said it was hoped that as the parish renewal and growth initiative progressed over the next few years, each parishioner, besides attending weekly mass, would

become involved in one additional parish activity.

She also urged people to fill in the feedback sheet, which contained a section of “potential areas you’d be interested in helping.”

Bettens closed the assembly by leading everyone again in prayer.

There is no doubt that the assembly will lead to a lot of conversation over the coming months as parishioners put forth various viewpoints, concerns, and suggestions.

As was pointed out several times, change does not come easily, but there was a general air of optimism throughout the assembly.

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How will churches journey toward reconciliation?

Journey to Justice

Joe Gunn



Where do the churches find themselves in the journey toward reconciliation with indigenous peoples?

In an Ottawa sanctuary at the end of March, Susan Johnson, National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, described our current status in the most vivid terms. She asked us

to imagine ourselves at the starting line of the Boston Marathon. At the front, elite runners are anxious to be off. But behind these are tens of thousands of others who are so far back that they won't even hear the starter's pistol. We will run the same route, while at different speeds, and with different experiences, but with the same goal of completing the course.

This long road to reconciliation took a crucial step forward, in keeping with Call to Action #48 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC asked all religious denominations and faith groups to issue a statement no later than March 31, outlining how we would implement

the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). At Citizens for Public Justice, we initiated a study of all program areas, with a view to discerning how our work might more fully resonate with the recommendations of the TRC, in the framework of the UNDRIP.

Many faith communities released statements. The Catholic bishops (in tandem with the Canadian Religious Conference, Development and Peace and the Catholic Aboriginal Council) drafted and issued two important documents, on adopting and implementing the UNDRIP, and on responding to "the errors and falsehoods perpetuated, often by Christians" concerning "The Doctrine of Discovery" and *Terra Nullius* (see PM, April 6). These statements include eight future commitments worthy of our study and action.

It was encouraging to see Bishop Don Bolen of Saskatoon, Archbishops Murray Chatlain of Keewatin-Le Pas and Gerry Pettipas of Grouard-McLennan (among others) deepen the Catholic conversation at the highest leadership level.

Yet several immediate challenges need to be faced on this marathon enterprise.

Statements, of course, ring true when the reflection is grounded in community members' work together. They seem less authentic if there is little echo among the community, or if injunctions toward change are not translated into new institutional action.

So the first challenge is to operationalize the commitments made. The four groups convened by the

bishops to sign the Catholic statement have yet to give an indication of their intention to complete the marathon. While some in church leadership are beyond the starting line, can anyone doubt that many Canadian faith communities lag far behind? Will programs for parish education and action toward reconciliation be prepared and used? Will homilists be trained and new theological language and prayers adopted?

The second challenge for faith communities is to embrace structural change. Respecting the UNDRIP shifts the framework from the majority providing charity, to indigenous peoples exercising their rights. This heralds a new relationship, requiring a shift of power and resources. Will indigenous members of our faith communities play new roles to ensure that the eight stated commitments come to fruition? Where will church structures be reformed to provide real space for indigenous leadership?

Allowing Lutherans to live into reconciliation, Bishop Johnson expressed gratitude for (and even dependency on) partnerships. While their most important partnership is with indigenous people, she also highlighted partnerships with other churches and faith-based groups. Starting with Project North in 1975, the Aboriginal Rights Coalition in 1989 (which I once chaired as an employee of the CCCB) and now KAIROS, Canadian Christians have

a 40-year history of faith-based action in solidarity with indigenous people. (I am proud to say that my life partner, Suzanne Doerge, originally helped KAIROS conceive their "Blanket Exercise" educational tool. It has been used thousands of times since the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples released its report in 1996.)

How sad it was then, that no Catholic bishop was present in that Ottawa church at the end of March



Art Babyeh

RECONCILIATION — In this Dec. 15, 2015, photo, Justice Murray Sinclair, chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), pauses for a moment as he places his hands on the final report of the TRC in Ottawa. "Where do the churches find themselves in the journey toward reconciliation with indigenous peoples?" asks Joe Gunn.

where the most senior Protestant faith leaders in Canada spoke about their church's commitments to reconciliation. Not only the press, but several indigenous people, asked why their Catholic Church was absent. The CCCB is hosting a teleconference in April with leaders of Development and Peace and religious congregations active in KAIROS. One hopes the bishops embrace the grace-filled opportunity to run the social justice marathon well, alongside our ecumenical partners.

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Art helps with 'sense of mastery'

Continued from page 9

"I got to a point where I didn't want to live but I didn't wanna die either. So I knew I needed to change, and I needed help to do that."

She stumbled upon Safe House, a temporary residential shelter for at-risk youth. They accepted her into the program.

A few weeks later, Renee Sullivan, a team leader at Safe House, mentioned the Art Walk and asked Brooke if she wanted to do any art for it.

"Obviously I said yes," said Brooke. "I had put art down for a while, drifted away from it."

"Now that I'm in recovery, I absolutely love it. It's the only way that I really stay sane."

A partnership with St. Joseph's College, the idea for Art Walk started in 2014, when Sullivan was looking for ways to engage at-risk youth and Brittney White,

director of campus ministry, was looking for volunteer placements for students at St. Joseph's.

They started unstructured creativity workshops which see youth in six CSS ministries gather with volunteers at the college's Newman Centre every second Friday. The workshops include food and art supplies for the young people to make art to take home or to be displayed at the annual Spring Art Walk showcase.

Seeing their art displayed has helped the teens see a higher sense of mastery, said Sullivan.

"When people come to view their art they get really excited that people take the time to come see something that they've made."

"If everybody feels a sense of mastery and they feel like they're really good at something, then they're whole in that area," she said, explaining one of the aims of the project.

The fundraising event also fos-

ters a sense of generosity in the young people.

"If everyone has the ability to give back without wanting to receive something, that's a sense of generosity," said Sullivan.

The inaugural Art Walk in 2015 raised \$4,000. Half of the proceeds go to the artists and half goes to the Sign of Hope campaign. Pieces sold in the range of \$10 to \$100 each.

People have been praying for the Art Walk and the volunteers from St. Joseph's College have been "instrumental" in making the program happen, he said. "That's a tremendous generosity of heart."

Costs for the creativity workshops have also been supported by donors who have said they specifically want the money to go to the program.

"So this is something that really resonates with our community."

How Georgetown fosters a civil debate on abortion

By Jacob Lupfer
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The news that Planned Parenthood CEO Cecile Richards will speak at Georgetown University reignited a perennial debate about freedom and identity in religious universities, particularly Catholic institutions.

Such was the case when President Barack Obama addressed Notre Dame’s graduating class in 2009. A similar furor erupted at Georgetown when then-Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius spoke at its 2012 commencement. Sebelius, a Roman Catholic, is an ardent defender of abortion rights and of the Obama administration’s rule that insurers must cover artificial contraception, which the Catholic Church opposes.

Cardinal Donald Wuerl, the archbishop of Washington, called the Sebelius invitation “shocking.” Yet in very tangible and important ways, the archdiocese has a good working relationship with the nation’s oldest Catholic university.

While controversial speakers and protests generate headlines, Georgetown continually cultivates diverse and robust discussions of complex ethical issues.

On April 12, on its northwest Washington campus, Georgetown’s Initiative on Catholic Social Thought in Public Life held a panel discussion with two lay Catholics and a woman religious. All three are deeply engaged as scholars and activists in opposing abortion.

In opening remarks, John DeGioia, Georgetown’s president, affirmed that as “beneficiaries of a profound moral and spiritual tradition,” a Jesuit university might have preferences about how an academic inquiry will turn out. Even so, he added, “We can never let our interests impede the open exchange

Lupfer is a contributing editor at RNS and a doctoral candidate in political science at Georgetown University.

of ideas and perspectives.”

In the two hours that followed, the panelists spoke forcefully and unapologetically about the urgency of protecting life at its most vulnerable and of their quibbles with the presuppositions and consequences of support for abortion rights.

The event had been conceived before a student-run group invited Richards to speak, but organizers saw it as an opportunity to offer a clear and affirmative discussion on protecting human life and dignity using Pope Francis’ metaphor of the “throwaway culture” as a starting point.

On the same day of Richards’ speech (April 20), Abby Johnson, a former Planned Parenthood staffer turned abortion opponent, is also expected to speak.

In addition, Georgetown students who oppose abortion are holding an event called Life-Affirming Alternatives to Planned

Parenthood, featuring U.S. Rep. Marsha Blackburn and a panel of women’s health experts.

I have been plodding through a PhD program at Georgetown for longer than I care to admit. When I arrived, I was an ardent secularist who disdained Catholic teaching on human sexuality and life issues. I only hoped Georgetown’s religious identity would not unduly interfere with my intellectual pursuits.

Today, I find myself surprisingly sympathetic to views I once considered abhorrent. Where I still disagree, I at least acknowledge my respect for church teaching and for the men and women who faithfully promote it. By fostering an environment of freedom, openness and honest inquiry, Georgetown created the conditions for me to see the moral weight and internal consistency of Catholic social teaching.

I find the conservative critique

that “Georgetown is not Catholic enough” to be weak and misinformed.

At a recent mass on the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord (which celebrates the angel’s announcement that Mary was pregnant with the incarnate Son of God), a Jesuit priest led worshippers in prayers for all unborn children and for a culture that protects human life, especially at its most vulnerable.

Against a backdrop of daily masses, active Catholic student groups and visible institutional support for conferences, events and activities where abortion opponents engage in persuasion and activism, the idea that Georgetown is hopelessly liberal or insufficiently Catholic is simply indefensible.

But I would not have opened my mind to the Catholic moral tradition in an environment where abortion rights supporters are for-

bidden from even speaking. I needed to hear abortion opponents’ most rigorous and compelling arguments to see any intellectual feebleness in the fashionable elite opinion that legal abortion is the definitive guarantor of women’s liberation and equality.

I had been immersed in religion since childhood. I came to Georgetown, which I supposed to be mostly secular, to escape primitive superstitions and move on with my professional life. Instead, I re-engaged religious questions in the most stimulating environment imaginable for such pursuits.

Georgetown and its leaders deserve our thanks and respect for so effectively and faithfully modeling vigorous and civil debate on the great ethical questions of our time. Surely this is vital for a moral citizen’s education. It has certainly been foundational to mine.

The right book always falls off the shelf when we need it

By Edna Froess

One definite proof of the benevolence of the universe, my friend regularly insists, is that just when you need it most — especially if you haven’t even known that you needed it — the right book falls off the shelf into your hands.

I was in the midst of an overdue dusting and tidying in my bedroom. The small bookcase at the head of the bed was, as usual, stacked precariously with too many books. There were books I wanted to read, books others had shoved into my hands with a well-meaning “you should read this,” and books I was actually reading, each with a bookmark holding my place. As I began

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

sorting the last category, the heaviest volume (hardcover no less) slid to the floor, just missing my foot. Its bookmark fell out as I picked it up — *In Search of Stones* by M. Scott Peck.

It had disappointed me months ago when I began reading, and I had almost decided to consign it to a giveaway box. Since Peck’s earlier books had once taken their turn as helpful companions on my journey, I had expected too much from this one. Some hope apparently remained, hence its place on the shelf. Randomly leafing through to see where the bookmark should go, I began reading:

“But what I am most grateful to (our children) for is the learning they have wittingly or unwittingly provided me. And are still providing.”

“The learning these days is all about separation.

“I was not prepared for it.”

Not bothering to find a chair, I stood in the middle of the room, transfixed, absorbing Peck’s description of his struggle to let his children “individuate” — to separate. His rueful admission that the “professional literature doesn’t talk about how much it can hurt for all concerned” was precisely what I needed to read — exactly then.

That it had been a book by M. Scott Peck that had just fallen off the shelf into my hands seemed especially serendipitous. It was Peck who had defined grace as “a powerful force originating outside of human consciousness which nurtures the spiritual growth of human beings” (*The Road Less Travelled*). Something there is in the universe that wishes us well, whether we name it grace or God or name it not at all. Something that drops the right book into our hands at the right time.

Such grace-full falling off the



E. Froess

FALLING OFF THE SHELF — One definite proof of the benevolence of the universe, my friend regularly insists, is that just when you need it most — especially if you haven’t even known that you needed it — the right book falls off the shelf into your hands, writes Edna Froess.

shelf, I have discovered, can happen in two or three instalments, even widely separated in time. I think now of the poem I “happened” to read in a journal I never subscribed to but had picked up one day because a colleague insisted that I should submit a paper to it. I decided against the submission, but did copy that one poem for my files, where it languished, forgotten after that first charmed reading. About 15 years later, while searching for poems to use in a discussion group on poetry and theology, this poem, *The Road to Emmaus* by Christopher Mann, “came to hand.” How else shall I describe its unlooked-for appearance? I had just read T.S. Eliot’s *The Journey of the Magi* and now heard, with astonishment, the similar cadences and knew at once that the poems wanted to be read and discussed together.

Now that I think about it, I’m convinced that it’s possible for the “right” book to fall off my shelf into someone else’s hands, even in some other province, if need be.

Recently, while seeking distraction from a letter that refused to be written, I let CBC’s website tempt me into watching an excellent

interview with Brie Larson, who plays a central role in the acclaimed movie *Room* based on a book of the same title by Emma Donoghue. Larson’s articulateness and passion for her work had two consequences: one was that I sent the link for the interview to my sister, a retired child psychologist living in Edmonton; the other was that *Room* now fell off an obscure shelf where I’d shoved it over a year ago. I’d bought it because of a persuasive friend, but knowing something of its plot line, I had been too cowardly to read it. Now I did. So did my sister. She also read another novel by Emma Donoghue, and then two other non-fiction books on childhood trauma that were clearly necessary for her. In a grateful email, she blessed me for having begun the “whole sequence.” How could I possibly take credit for having participated, unwittingly, in that mysterious loving grace that topples books off shelves into our hands?

The opening stanza of *The Road to Emmaus* begins, “It’s not the friendliest of villages, Emmaus, / . . . hardly the place to expect revelation, / if revelation’s the word — I leave that to you.”



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Comfort foods rarely include fruits and vegetables

Around the Kitchen Table

Maureen Weber



There's too much going on these days, but then again not enough. The fun stuff is all in the future and I'm having a tough time living in the present moment, which today is snowy, but it was summer on Saturday. That's what you get for early April. The waiting for everything — spring, Gerard's wedding — makes me restless.

And this: you might remember I wrote recently that Russ and I are expecting our first grandchild this fall. I won't bore you with the emotional roller-coaster, every food craving or every incremental size the child has reached at any given moment. OK, when I began writing this she was the size of an apple, but by the time you read this (if you haven't already stopped) she will be a sweet potato, or if your mail delivery is really poor, a mango. Then again, by the time you read this, the gender-determining ultrasound may have already taken place and *she* might actually be a *he*.

There's an entire Internet industry devoted to comparing the size of an unborn child to fruits and vegetables. Leigh said when the baby was as big as a strawberry she fretted about size: a mammoth California strawberry or a petite Quebec

strawberry?

Mostly, though, these food comparisons haven't affected Leigh at all. She's still eating normally. Just the other day she walked to Dairy Queen to get a hot fudge sundae with whipped cream. I don't know what size she ordered, or if she realized that the whipped cream would be a dizzying white spiral that rivalled the tower of Babel, but when she walked by a little boy holding a mini ice cream cone, he gasped and said, "Mommy, look at that!" His mother, practically shielding the child's eyes, said something like "yes, dear, now eat your ice cream cone." When it comes to ice cream, the term *mini* will not be in Leigh's child's lexicon.

It would seem more helpful for Leigh if babies were compared to the size of, say, Nerds, Skittles, gummies, chocolate Easter eggs, *macarons*, cupcakes, lemon meringue tarts, croissants, Danish Oven long johns and eventually a carrot cake loaf.

When Leigh was little, her love of sweets was legendary. She once spent her entire allowance on penny candy, eating it all in one sitting (which was when she found out there is such a thing as too much candy). Her most memorable childhood birthday party,



M. Weber

CANDY GIRL — This is Leigh, showing off her candy necklace at her favourite birthday party ever. Leigh is expecting her own little one this fall.

she says, had Candyland as its theme, and guests strung necklaces of sugared sweets to take home with them.

I've always been thankful Leigh married a dentist, but so far she hasn't given Nohé any cause for concern, even though the salesperson at the Nordstrom candy counter remembers her name without asking.

I had two cravings while pregnant: Coke slushes and hotdogs with relish, but my dad figured I should have a craving for Brussels sprouts since, as he said, I was having "Russel's sprouts."

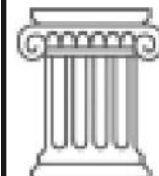
But fruits and vegetables are associated with health, not comfort, and it is comfort food that's intimately tied with our memo-

ries of love and home. The most special times I can remember as a child were those spent at my grandmother's house, with her cinnamon buns or chocolate chip cookies cooling on the counter, but especially her layered prune cake, as we called it, more commonly known as *vinarterta* (Icelandic cake). I wonder how an Irish grandmother had a traditional Icelandic cake as her specialty.

When I ask my own children of their special memories, they all talk of going to Grandma and Grandpa's for lunch on school days, and for after-school treats, usually involving cookies. Their most special memory of home was of their dad taking them to

the Danish Oven bakery every Saturday morning — a ritual that went on for years. The rituals may have been centred on food, but the real gift was that of unconditional, loving presence. It's a gift that lasts a lifetime.

Whereas my children grew up only blocks away from their grandparents — their second home — my first grandchild will grow up several thousand kilometres away. There will not be recollections of cookies after school, or Saturday morning trips to the bakery, but I hope this little one will grow up remembering the Nana who walked with her to get ice cream every time she came to the big city. I can hardly wait!



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"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour"
(Lk. 1:47).




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Healthy family life

In his recent apostolic exhortation on family life, *The Joy of Love*, Pope Francis hit a sympathetic chord when he emphasized the importance of simple words and deeds in everyday life. Simple gestures, such as a kind look or a morning kiss and family prayer can strengthen couples in living out their vocation to marriage, he says. These lead to a happier family.

Some of his advice seems to coincide with the findings of a recent survey by the Pew Research Centre released April 12. The study, titled U.S. Religious Landscape Study, compared highly religious American adults with those less religious.

Highly religious adults are defined in the study as the 30 per cent of U.S. adults who say they pray daily and attend religious services at least once a week. The less religious are the remaining 70 per cent of the population.

On the happiness scale, Americans who say they attend religious services weekly and pray daily also report being happier than those who are less religiously committed. Four-in-10 highly religious adults say they are generally “very happy,” compared with 29 per cent of those who are less religious.

Highly religious Americans also visit their extended families more often. Nearly half (47 per cent) say they do this at least once or twice a

month, while only 30 per cent of less religious adults get together with extended family as often. Americans who are not highly religious are twice as likely as those who are highly religious to say they seldom or never attend gatherings with extended family.

A third area of comparison involves volunteering and giving to the poor. Volunteerism and donations to the poor are especially common practices for those who are highly religious, the study found. Among people who pray daily and attend services weekly, 45 per cent say they had volunteered in the past week. This compares with 28 per cent of Americans who are not highly religious. The gap is even bigger when it comes to helping the poor: 65 per cent of the highly religious say they donated money, time or goods to help the poor in the past week, compared with 41 per cent of all other U.S. adults.

The Pew study also pointed out ways in which highly religious and less religious adults are *not* different.

Being religious does not make it any more likely that people will keep their cool in stressful situations. There is also little difference in the connection between religiosity and health. The report shows that the two study groups are not very different in overall satisfaction with the state of their health or in their frequency of exercising and overeating.

Another area that shows no difference is care for the environment. The study found no differ-

ences between the highly religious and others when it comes to recycling habits. Nearly half in each group say they recycle “whenever possible,” while four per cent in both groups say they “never” recycle.

Catholic News Service did an analysis of Catholic responses in the survey compared to all other Christian responses. The Pew survey gave the respondents 16 particular behaviours to choose from to describe what they considered essential to their Christian identity.

In descending order of importance, here is what Catholic respondents declared to be essential: believing in God; being grateful for what you have; being honest at all times; forgiving those who have wronged you; praying regularly; committing to spend time with your family; working to help the poor and needy; attending religious services; not losing your temper; reading the Bible or other religious materials; and — with a tie between them — helping in the congregation and dressing modestly.

Bringing up the rear were working to protect the environment; buying from companies that pay a fair wage; living a simple lifestyle; and resting on the Sabbath. There were not great differences between Catholics and other Christians on the order of the list from top to bottom.

Families may do well to look at both the papal text and the Pew study to evaluate how to enrich their own family life. — PWN

We are Easter people joined with the Spirit, not Easter individuals

Soul Mending

Yvonne A. Zarowny



In response to my questioning our selective use of the adjective “evil,” a friend reminded me that “evil” written backward spells “live.” I love the insight.

To me, that “flipping” captures what it means for us to go joyful-

ly forward, in our historical moment, as an Easter people. We are a people of faith. We believe in the resurrection.

This is not only of Jesus. It is also of our capacity, when joined with Spirit, to constructively engage our global monoculture of death to transform it into a variety of authentic cultures of life. The social structures of these cultures enable “justice” or “right relationship” with the Divine, each other and creation to flow.

This is beautifully brought

home in the 2016 Development and Peace Solidarity Way of the Cross.

If you have not had the good fortune to have this PowerPoint part of the Share Lent campaign in your parish, please do yourself a favour and look at it on the Development and Peace website.

In addition to the scriptural quotes and prayers, it has relevant quotes from both *Misericordiae*

Vultus and *Laudato Si’*. With icons and pictures, this presentation effectively draws parallels between the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus and that of the poor, refugees and Earth.

As previously mentioned, I have been attending a set of sessions on St. Francis and Pope Francis.

The last session included a YouTube presentation by young

American evangelical speaker Shane Claiborne. He explored the nature of “evil” and “demonic” in U.S. culture and faith. He basically stated anything “too big to fail” or “too absolute or ‘right’ to question” is demonic.

In this session, he and Rev. Richard Rohr stressed how the Protestants got it wrong empha-

— BIBLICAL, page 23

Parishes focus on how to become ‘green’

By Christina Gray

SAN FRANCISCO (CNS) — In the final chapter of his 2015 encyclical letter, *Laudato Si’*, on Care for Our Common Home, Pope Francis said “individual conversion” and “community networks” will ultimately motivate Christians to develop the new con-

victions, choices and habits necessary to authentically care for God’s creation.

On April 23, the Archdiocese of San Francisco launches an initiative designed to help bring those lofty ideals down to earth with a workshop for members of parish and school communities who may want to respond to the pope’s call but may not know how or where to start.

“Parishes shouldn’t have to figure this out on their own,” said Stephen Miller, a member of St. Teresa of Avila Parish in San Francisco, who is on the planning committee for *Laudato Si’*: A Parish Response.

The workshop is designed to engage members of parish and school communities around the messages of the encyclical and give them the inspiration and tools to evaluate the environmental sustainability of parish activities and practices through the lens of Catholic values.

“Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience,” wrote Pope Francis in paragraph 217 of his 184-page encyclical.

Auxiliary Bishop William J. Justice, with Msgr. Michael Harriman, pastor of St. Cecilia Parish in San Francisco, is driving the initiative organized under the archdiocese’s Office of Public Policy and Social Concerns.

The bishop told Catholic San Francisco, the archdiocesan newspaper, that the workshop will “help people see the ground they can walk on” because the document is so big.

In a March 2 letter to priests, deacons, and men and women religious of the archdiocese, Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone announced the workshop and urged each to promote the event where he will lead the invocation.

Rev. Kenneth M. Weare, pastor of St. Rita Parish in Fairfax, will deliver the keynote address followed by case studies from local parishes with existing teams that have made strides toward sustainability. They include St. Teresa of Avila and St. Francis of Assisi parishes in the San Francisco Archdiocese, and St. Thomas Aquinas in Palo Alto in the San Jose Diocese.

The second half of the workshop offers a combination of practical, educational and inspirational tools. Participants may choose one of three concurrent workshops: reduction of energy use, cost and emissions; educating and inspiring parishioners; and engaging the wider community on the importance of environmental justice.

The ultimate aim of the workshop is to help mobilize volunteers for “care for creation teams” at each parish, said Miller, chair of the St. Teresa of Avila Parish team

— EARTH-FRIENDLY, page 23



CNS/Paul Haring

REFUGEES PLEAD WITH POPE — Refugees hold signs before a meeting with Pope Francis at the Moria refugee camp on the island of Lesbos, Greece, April 16. A man told the pope that he had a brother and sister in Canada and was trying to join them. Another man pleaded with Pope Francis, “Please, father, bless me. Father, please, bless me.”

Canada’s sale of weapons of war to Saudi Arabia questioned

The Editor: Canadians may or may not be aware that we are involved in Saudi Arabia’s war in Yemen. Saudi Arabia is a country that has one of the worst human rights record on the planet. They are now also involved in the civil war between the Sunni and the Shi’a tribes in Yemen.

In March 2015, the Saudis launched ruinous bombing attacks on Yemen, inflicting devastating effects on its citizens. According to the UN, 5,700 were killed and 1.5 million Yemenis were displaced. Hospitals and schools were destroyed. About one-third of its citizens are short of food.

There is no apparent reason why

Canada should be selling weapons of war to Saudi Arabia. In 2013 - 14 the Harper government signed a contract to sell \$15.5 billion of armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia. But we Canadians were not alone in this death-dealing folly. The British government authorized \$8.3 billion of weapons for the Saudis for fighter jets, machine guns, bomb components, etc., and another \$234 million for precision-guided 500-pound bombs. The U.S. approved of about \$12.5 billion for four Lockheed Martin warships, equipped with weapons — and training in the use of laser-guided bombs.

There can be no doubt that the

only interests that profit from the sale of weapons of war are the manufacturers of those weapons. The sale and possible profits of weapons to a rogue nation like Saudi Arabia is the responsibility of the politically elected officials in Canada, Britain and the U.S.

Amnesty International has called for the suspension of these sales of weapons, as it violates international law.

Selling weapons to Saudi Arabia is most deplorable and worrisome for those Canadians who would like to believe that Canada is a nation of peacemakers and peacekeepers. — **Leo Kurtenbach, Saskatoon**

Many graves at sea bear no name: pope

Continued from page 1

tional Organization for Migration said, more than 150,000 migrants and refugees arrived in Greece and 366 people died attempting to cross the Aegean Sea to the country.

“Though many of their graves bear no name, to you each one is known, loved and cherished,” Pope Francis prayed to God April 16 in Mytilene, a city on Lesbos, the island on which more than half the refugees have landed.

“Wake us from the slumber of indifference,” the pope prayed, “open our eyes to their suffering and free us from the insensitivity born of world comfort and self-centredness.”

In his prayer, Pope Francis insisted “we are all migrants, journeying in hope” toward God in heaven.

Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and Archbishop Ieronymos II of Athens and all Greece stood alongside Pope Francis on the waterfront at the Mytilene harbour on the bright spring day. They, too, offered prayers for those who have died making the crossing and joined the pope in blessing laurel wreaths that were tossed into the sea.

Recognizing the generosity and sacrifice of the Greek government and Greek people, who had tried to assist hundreds of thousands of refugees despite an ongoing economic crisis, the pope told them, “You are guardians of humanity for you care with tenderness for the Body of Christ, who suffers in the least of his brothers and sisters, the hungry and the stranger, whom you have welcomed.”

With hundreds of thousands of people fleeing violence in Syria and Iraq and fleeing extreme poverty and persecution elsewhere, Pope Francis acknowledged that Europeans and their governments naturally could feel overwhelmed. The fact that the newcomers speak different languages and have different religions and cultures adds to the challenge.

But the migrants “are living in trying conditions, in an atmosphere of anxiety and fear, at times even of despair, due to material hardship and uncertainty for the future,” the pope said.

While the concerns of governments are “understandable and legitimate,” he said, one must never forget that “migrants, rather than simply being a statistic, are first of all persons who have faces, names and individual stories.”

Biblical covenant is with ‘the people’

Continued from page 22

sizing only “individual” salvation. They both noted all covenants mentioned in the Bible are with “the people,” “the social set,” *not* an individual.

That was new to me.

This does not mean the individual is irrelevant. Of course, each and every one of us matters to and is deeply loved by the Divine. Each is called to be an active participant in the covenant.

However, the covenants are with communities, societies, the cultures we co-create.

If we are not engaging to transform our social structures to ones from which right relationship with the Divine, each other and all God’s creation flows, we are not living out our part of the covenant.

Think on that the next time you gaze upon a rainbow.

To the degree our church leadership, including our bishops and cardinals, identify “pro-life”

with only fighting anti-choice legislation, they are complicit in perpetuating our monoculture of death.

They are part of the “theo-con” alliance inhibiting the transformation of what Oxfam calls “an economy for the one per cent.”

According to Oxfam, at the beginning of 2016, 62 people owned the same amount as the poorest half of humanity. In 2014, it was 85. Not long ago it was 500.

This rapidly increasing inequality costs millions their lives through lack of adequate health care, social instability leading to terrorism/war, accelerating individual and sovereign debt, and accelerating rates of environmental degradation — one symptom of which is climate chaos.

How is this not a pro-life issue?

In the March 9 issue of the National Catholic Reporter, there is an interview with the Irish ecologist Rev. Sean McDonagh. He states there is a need for a

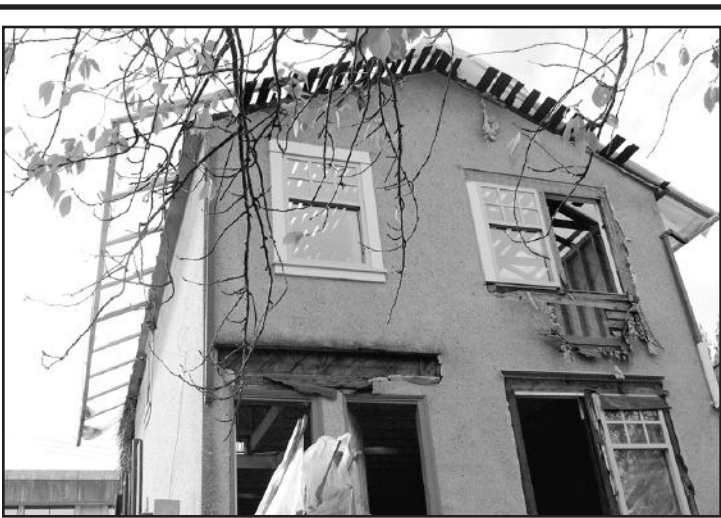
three year synodal process to take the teaching of the “new spirituality” offered by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si’* to find ways of putting it into the practice of our faith. Why?

According to McDonagh, most people going into seminaries and schools of theology are not familiar with the issues threatening us and therefore cannot provide us with adequate leadership.

The St. Francis and Pope Francis sessions reveal the need for such leadership.

One gentleman asked how such inequality can be addressed without “class warfare.”

The Oxfam report quotes multibillionaire Warren Buffet (fourth richest person in world) as stating we are in a class war. It has been going on for at least 20 years. And his class is winning. Aspects of this covert war are low/no taxes for the very wealthy while public health care, education, science, and broadcasting are defunded.



Janice Weber

This Old House

Glance through your attic windows
to distant steps three stories below.

Realize your residence
is a furnace of passion and pain —
condemned to sagging eaves,
arthritic joists, buckling loins
and clogging pipes

no matter how much you shingle
or scrape and paint the facade.

The attic will drift with dust
and vents will cease their breath.
The bulldozer’s blade
will push your rubble into a pit.

Again, gaze to the steps below:
you are only a tenant
leasing this old house of squeaking
soles and shrivelling ducts

and then, your dwelling
with its leaky roof and drafty jams
will never matter like it once did.

Open the gable window,
crouch on the sill.

At wind puff, dive and bob
on currents of light.

By Peter C. Venable

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Earth-friendly initiatives already in place in parishes

Continued from page 22

that has implemented changes to reduce the parish’s output of greenhouse gas emissions.

“We saw that many parishes in the archdiocese already had various earth-friendly initiatives in place,” Miller said. “Pope Francis has called us all to get more intentional about sharing our stories.”

There is no one-size-fits-all plan, Miller said. “The idea is to encourage parishes to engage their own parishioners around this theme of caring for creation in whatever makes sense for that parish and how the parish connects to the surrounding community,” he said.

St. Teresa of Avila has benefited from the expertise of Miller, who works as deputy director of a Marin County non-profit that helps shape “green” communities, and of parishioner Gail Kendall, a climate scientist educated at the Massachusetts of Technology. But Miller and Kendall stressed that no special expertise is required to participate in the workshop or on a parish “green team.”

Parish engagement is another objective of the workshop.

“We saw the potential of motivating groups of parishioners like young adults, that might not feel as connected as they’d like to their parish community,” Kendall said.



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Pope, Orthodox leaders listen to cries of refugees

By Cindy Wooden

MYTILENE, Greece (CNS) — Although their speeches were punctuated with policy appeals, Pope Francis and Orthodox leaders focused their visit to the island of Lesbos on the faces, stories and drawings of refugees.

Pope Francis, Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and Archbishop Ieronymos II of Athens

and all Greece spent more time April 16 greeting the refugees individually than they did giving speeches.

The children received a pat on the head and the men a handshake. In respect for the Muslim faith of most of the women, the leaders put their hands over their hearts and bowed in greeting them. The gratitude of those men, women and children was clear in their smiles, tears and sobbing

pleas for help.

An Iraqi woman asked for the assistance of the pope and patriarch in finding medical care for her daughter with bone cancer. Another woman kept saying, in English, “We are very tired here.” A man told the pope that he had a brother and sister in Canada and was trying to join them. Another man pleaded with Pope Francis, “Please, father, bless me. Father, please, bless me.”

Pope Francis went to Lesbos expecting those stories. On the flight from Rome, he told reporters, “This is a trip marked by sadness and that’s important. It’s a sad trip. We are going to meet so many people who suffer, who don’t know where to go, who were forced to flee, and we are also going to a cemetery — the sea, where so many have drowned.”

“We are going to encounter the greatest human catastrophe since World War II,” he said.

The pope asked reporters to make a special effort to share with their readers and listeners “what is in my heart.”

After briefly greeting each other at Lesbos’ Mytilene airport, the pope and Orthodox leaders rode together in a minibus to the Moria refugee camp, a facility that a year ago was an open centre when migrants and refugees could file requests for asylum.

Today it is a locked facility surrounded by walls topped with razor wire where some 2,500 newcomers wait out the slow process of discovering whether their asylum requests will be accepted or they will be put on a ferry and taken back to Turkey. Most of the refugees are from Syria, Iraq and

Afghanistan and set sail for Greece in inflatable boats from the nearby Turkish coast.

Ieronymos, speaking at the refugee camp, said he hoped to never again “see children washing up on the shores of the Aegean.”

The Orthodox archbishop spoke with pride of the Greek people who have opened their hearts and even their homes to the refugees, despite years of serious economic trouble and a government almost crippled by austerity measures.

But Ieronymos was not so appreciative of the European Union and the international community, which continue to pledge help in dealing with the massive influx of refugees, but also have closed more and more of their borders.

“Only those who see the eyes of those small children that we met at the refugee camps will be able to immediately recognize in its entirety the ‘bankruptcy’ of humanity and solidarity that Europe has shown these last few years,” he said.

For Bartholomew, the visit to the camp was summarized as solidarity in tears.

“We have wept as we watched the Mediterranean Sea becoming a burial ground for your loved ones,” he told the refugees. “We have wept as we witnessed the sympathy and sensitivity of the people of Lesbos and other islands. But we have also wept as we saw the hard-heartedness of our fellow brothers and sisters — your fellow brothers and sisters — close borders and turn away.”

“The world will be judged by the way it has treated you,” said the patriarch, the spiritual leader of the world’s Orthodox Christians.

Pope Francis told those interned at the camp that he wanted to join the patriarch and archbishop on Lesbos first of all “simply to be with you and to hear your stories.”

However, he also said they wanted to call the world’s attention to the refugee crisis in the hopes “that the world will heed these scenes of tragic and indeed desperate need, and respond in a way worthy of our common humanity.”

God created all people to be brothers and sisters, the pope said. But it is so easy for many people “to ignore other people’s suffering and even to exploit their vulnerability.”

The pope urged the refugees, “Do not lose hope!”

“The greatest gift we can offer one another is love,” Pope Francis told the refugees. He asked them, even in the camp, to express that love with “a merciful look, a readiness to listen and understand, a word of encouragement, a prayer.”

He told the refugees, most of whom are Muslim, “We Christians love to tell the story of the Good Samaritan, a foreigner who saw a man in need and immediately stopped to help. For us, it is a story about God’s mercy, which is meant for everyone, for God is the all-merciful,” he said, using a familiar Muslim description of God.

Pope Francis, Patriarch Bartholomew and Archbishop Ieronymos signed a joint declaration at the refugee camp insisting the world “cannot ignore the colossal humanitarian crisis created by the spread of violence and armed conflict, the persecution and displacement of religious and ethnic minorities and the uprooting of families from their homes.



CNS/Paul Haring

ECUMENICAL ENCOUNTER AT LESBOS — Pope Francis walks with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, left, and Orthodox Archbishop Ieronymos II of Athens and all of Greece as they meet refugees at the Moria refugee camp on the island of Lesbos, Greece, April 16.

Nigerian bishops urge government to hasten effort to free abductees

LAGOS, Nigeria (CNS) — Two Nigerian bishops called on the government to hasten its efforts to free 219 school girls who were abducted by insurgents two years ago.

Bishops Matthew Audu of Lafia and George Dodo of Zaria urged officials to boost intelligence gathering efforts and muster the political will to find the girls, who were taken from their dormitories by Boko Haram forces during a middle-of-the-night raid at a school in Chibok in northeastern Nigeria April 14, 2014.

The bishops told Catholic News Service it is unlikely that all of the girls will be found because media have reported that some had been killed or sold off to be married by the insurgents. They urged the country to pray for the abductors so that they have a change of heart and consider releasing the students.

New video images recently obtained by CNN and apparently filmed on Christmas Day showed some of the girls dressed in black robes pleading with the Nigerian government to co-operate with

the militants on their release. They said they were being treated well but wanted to be with their families.

Family members and friends identified some of the young people as students from the school.

The Catholic News Agency for Africa reported that relatives of the girls marched in the capital, Abuja, on the anniversary, calling for government action.

“Only God knows what their abductors might have done to them, where they would be by now. It might be true that some might have been killed, some molested and some married out by their abductors,” Audu said. “That we can still recover all those abducted on . . . is not certain,” Audu said.

“That they are still within the custody of their abductors after two years does no credibility to the corporate image of Nigeria as a nation,” he added.

Audu, whose diocese is in central Nigeria, called for a concerted effort from by world leaders, starting from Nigeria’s neighbours in West Africa, to fight terrorism by contributing forces and



CNS/EPA

NIGERIANS PROTEST FOR ABDUCTED STUDENTS — Nigerians attend a Bring Back Our Girls protest April 14 outside the presidential villa in Abuja. Two Nigerian bishops are calling on the government to hasten efforts to free more than 200 school girls abducted by insurgents in 2014.

weapons to a multinational joint task force assembled to root out the insurgents.

“World leaders must find ways to block the sources of funding of the insurgents and those supplying them those arms and ammunition which they use to attack legitimate governments and innocent people,” he said.

Dodo, whose diocese is in northern Nigeria, said that he was praying that missing girls would be discovered. “I am not sure that we will be able to rescue all of them after two years of their abduction. . . . If it we are fortunate, we may get some of them back but not 100 per cent,” he said.

He also expressed concern for

thousands of other internally displaced persons living in various refugee camps who cannot return to their homes.

“The federal government must also look into the plights of other Nigerian workers being owed several months of unpaid salaries by their state governments,” he said.

Stress is an ignorant state. It believes that everything is an emergency.

—Natalie Goldberg