



Ecumenical formation

The Program in Ecumenical Studies and Formation continued in its third session this summer in Saskatoon, offering opportunities for laity and clergy to come together to learn, worship, and be in community. — page 3

Pedalling pilgrimage

Anglican Bishop Robert Hardwicke traversed the Qu'Appelle diocese by bicycle over the summer, covering 762 kilometres from the Alberta to the Manitoba border. "They wanted me to concentrate on prayer and being with the people and not worry about raising money," he said, though he did manage to raise some money for the Bishop's Discretionary Fund along the way. — page 6

Journey of a feather

Among many Aboriginal people the eagle feather communicates respect, humility, courage and wisdom, writes Peter Oliver. He tells of the journey of an eagle feather he was given, and how he eventually met the feather's owner, in prison. — page 7



Ben-Hur remake

Seeing the remake of the new Ben-Hur film gives Gerald Schmitz renewed appreciation of the 1959 classic. — page 9

Fear of hell, and of God

In two articles, Ron Rolheiser, OMI, discusses our misconceptions of hell and resulting fear, and also how we can move beyond our fear of God. — pages 10, 11

The ugliness of racism

Colten Boushie's shooting death Aug. 9 has unleashed a torrent of public emotion and comment, writes Dennis Gruending. — page 13

Sisters bid farewell to Rivier Academy

By Therese Jelinski

PRINCE ALBERT — It's not easy to give up a school when you belong to a teaching congregation, Prince Albert's bishop told the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary at an event marking the transfer of Rivier Academy to the Prince Albert Roman Catholic School Division after a 65-year educational legacy in the city.

The sisters had not anticipated that hundreds of supporters and well-wishers would take up their invitation to share the occasion with them. "I expected maybe 20 people to come," said a visibly moved Sister Suzanne Papan. "It's so good for the heart!"

"The sisters are passing the torch," said Bishop Albert Thévenot at the eucharist celebrated with Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB, of Muenster and seven diocesan priests on Aug. 23. "It will be different, but we walk in faith."

Thévenot praised the dedication, patience and love with which the sisters served at the school, dating back to 1951 when they acquired the academy previously run by the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion. "Today we celebrate what they have given to the Catholic school system, to your children, to your grandchildren."



Therese Jelinski

RIVIER ACADEMY — Sisters of the Presentation of Mary gathered in Prince Albert Aug. 23 to mark the transfer of Rivier Academy to the Prince Albert Roman Catholic School Division.

Among those at the event were former staff and students, Catholic school division staff, Rivier Academy Inc., board members, friends of the sisters, and members of the broader community.

"We celebrate our hope," said Sister Lise Paquette, provincial superior, "that by God's grace this school will serve many more years of dynamic and engaging education."

At a 90-minute program emceed by former vice-principal Claude Jalbert, various speakers outlined the sisters' history in education in western Canada since 1903. Their immense contributions to education and culture in Prince Albert alone were highlighted in presentations about the impact of Rivier Academy (formerly Academy Presentation of Mary), the Marion Aquatics pool operated by the sisters since 1977, the Music Studio they ran from 1951 to 2011, and their past work as teachers in the city's Catholic schools from 1925 until the 1980s.



Reginald Bibby

Prince Albert Mayor Greg Dionne said the sisters "have made Prince Albert a better place" through their service at Rivier Academy and Marion Aquatics. As a new city councillor 14 years ago, he began to stop in for tea with the sisters and became an admirer. "I learned how humble the sisters are. They're givers, not receivers."

Dennis Ogradnick, who attended Academy Presentation of Mary in the mid-1970s and now teaches at St. Mary High School in Prince Albert, credited several sisters for influencing his life and being powerful witnesses of faith and social justice. He shared fond memories of Sister Jean Leier's practice of inviting students to mass during Lent and afterward serving them hot cups of cocoa with the quip, "Our hearts were warmed by God during mass and now by a cup of cocoa!" Having continued the practice with his own students, he ended his presentation by raising a thermos of cocoa in her memory.

Former student Elizabeth Rybinski, who served on the Rivier board and is the mother of

— ONE SISTER, page 5

— IMMIGRANTS, page 5

— 'ICON OF MERCY', page 15

Blessed Teresa found freedom to love the poor

By Cindy Wooden

ROME (CNS) — Blessed Teresa of Kolkata was a woman who truly felt wed to Jesus, and the freedom she experienced in loving him led her to radical poverty, a courageous outreach and an immense love for the poor, said the superior general of the order Mother Teresa founded.

"She was very happy to be a woman and to be a mother to so many souls," Missionaries of Charity Sister Mary Prema Pierick told Catholic News Service.

"Her freedom of loving opened the doors of hearts and avenues of service, which maybe were not so common, especially in sharing the radical poverty of the poor," said the blue-eyed, German-born sis-

ter, who was elected superior general in 2009.

Mother Teresa, who will be canonized Sept. 4, began her order in the 1940s, walking into the slums of Kolkata, "having no convent walls to protect her," Pierick said. "But it was love for Jesus and love and compassion for the suffering of the poor that brought her to do what she did."

At the main Missionaries of Charity house in Rome — a white-washed oasis above the roar of traffic around the Circus Maximus and near the crush of tourists at the Colosseum — Pierick spoke of how natural it was that Mother Teresa would be declared a saint during the Year of Mercy.

Pope leads pilgrims praying rosary for quake victims

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Hearing the mayor of Amatrice in central Italy say his town no longer exists and knowing there were children who died Aug. 24 in the earthquakes that struck the region, Pope Francis turned his weekly general audience into a prayer service.

Beginning the audience in St. Peter’s Square, Pope Francis said he had prepared a normal audience talk on how the merciful Jesus is close to people, but given the devastation in central Italy, he decided to lead the recitation of the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary.

Later in the day, the Vatican press office said that as a concrete sign of Pope Francis’ concern for the earthquake victims, six Vatican firefighters had been sent to Amatrice. They will work under the direction of the Italian government emergency services in searching for victims and offering them assistance.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the magnitude-6.2 quake had an epicentre close to Norcia, the birthplace of St. Benedict.

Smaller quakes — at least two

of which registered more than 5.0 — continued for several hours after the main quake. By early evening, the death toll had reached 120 but was expected to rise; more than 350 were reported injured.

As emergency workers began digging people out from under the rubble of collapsed buildings and the number of verified deaths climbed, Pope Francis arrived in St. Peter’s Square for his general audience.

“Hearing the news of the earthquake that has struck central Italy and devastated entire areas, leaving many dead and wounded, I cannot fail to express my heartfelt sorrow and my closeness” to everyone in the earthquake zone, especially those who lost loved ones and “those who are still shaken by fear and terror,” the pope said.

“Having heard the mayor of Amatrice say, ‘The town no longer exists,’ and knowing that there are children among the dead, I am deeply saddened,” Pope Francis said.

The pope thanked all the volunteers and emergency workers who were trying to rescue victims trapped under the rubble.



CNS/Massimo Percossi, EPA

EARTHQUAKE IN ITALY — Residents sit on the rubble of collapsed buildings in Amatrice, Italy, following an earthquake Aug. 24.

Assuring the people in the region of the prayers and “the embrace of the whole church,” the pope asked the estimated 11,000 pilgrims and tourists in St.

Peter’s Square to join him in praying that “the Lord Jesus, who is always moved by human suffering, would console the brokenhearted and give them peace.”

At the Benedictine monastery in Norcia, a community growing in fame because of its prayer life and brewery, the 15 monks and five guests were already awake when the first quake hit, Benedictine Father Benedict Nivakoff told Catholic News Service. Aug. 24 is the feast of St. Bartholomew and “on feast days we get up earlier” to pray, he said.

“All of the monks and the monks’ guests are safe,” he said. But the Basilica of St. Benedict suffered “considerable structural damage,” and the monastery will need repairs as well.

Within a half hour of the first

quake, Nivakoff said, the square outside the monastery was filled with people “because it is the safest place in town — around the statue of St. Benedict.”

While no buildings collapsed, it is obvious that many homes are no longer habitable, he said. The monks have set up a reception desk to help meet their neighbours’ needs.

Assisi is just 73 kilometres from Norcia and, according to Franciscan Father Enzo Fortunato, the quake was felt strongly at the convent and basilica that suffered major damage from an earthquake in 1997.

Fortunato told the Italian news agency ANSA that the quake woke all the friars, many of whom ran to the Basilica of St. Francis. No damage was visible, he said.

Catholic communities to battle racism

By Rhina Guidos

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Around the U.S., Catholic organizations, parishes, clergy and laity are taking action and bolstering efforts to build peace and battle racism, following a summer of violence.

In New Orleans, St. Peter Claver Catholic Church is involved in community mediation with law enforcement and is working on a variety of other issues related to racial justice, including seeking just wages for all. In Baltimore, Auxiliary Bishop Denis J. Madden leads regular prayer walks in neighbourhoods plagued by violence. He also participates in a group of interfaith leaders in the city to work toward racial justice.

In Dallas, the city that witnessed the height of summer’s boiling point when a gunman opened fire on police — killing five and wounding seven officers and two civilians — during a protest, Holy Trinity Catholic Church is participating in gatherings with Dallas Area Interfaith, a group that brings various communities together to try to understand the problem of racism, as well as the recent shootings that took place.

Holy Trinity parishioner William deHass, who has attended some of the gatherings, says that based on what has been discussed at the interfaith group, “some churches ignore or avoid speaking about racism.” But the aftermath of the violence has provided an opportunity for people of different races and faiths to listen and support one another, he said.

“It’s, really, the laypeople who believe that change and transformation can happen and so there are a lot of positive things that are going on in neighbourhoods and communities because people believe in the social Gospel teachings of the church,” said Sister Patricia

Chappell, executive director of *Pax Christi USA*, and a member of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. “People are grasping that and are almost compelled to be engaged and be involved.”

Chappell said organizations such as *Pax Christi* and Network, a Catholic social justice lobby, have published guides showing where the two most prominent presidential candidates stand on a variety of issues, including issues of race.

“We’re not telling people how to vote,” she said, but the documents focus on issues that are impacting the poor and marginalized communities. “We have pointed out clearly based on the values of the social Catholic social teachings, and what Pope Francis is saying, that we must be on the side of those who are vulnerable and poor and we have

laid out issues for people to look at where the candidates stand.”

Chappell also will be participating during talks that will take place as part of a task force to deal with issues of race, formed by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. It will be chaired by Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Atlanta, who, in an Aug. 4 letter in *The Georgia Bulletin* newspaper, said that for gestures of mourning to be meaningful, they also must be followed with action.

The task force will meet as part of Day of Prayer for Peace in Our Communities declared in July by the bishops, “in light of recent incidents of violence and racial tension in communities across the United States.” The day of prayer for peace will be celebrated Sept. 9, the feast of St. Peter Claver, patron saint of slaves.



CNS/Jim Lo Scalzo, EPA

RACE PROTEST AT WHITE HOUSE — People demonstrate outside the White House in Washington July 8 against the nationwide police shootings of African-Americans. Around the country, Catholic organizations, parishes, clergy and laity are taking action and bolstering efforts to build peace and battle racism, following a summer of violence.

Federal U.S. judge blocks directive on transgender law

FORT WORTH, Texas (CNS) — A U.S. District Court judge in Texas has temporarily blocked a directive by the Obama administration on transgender access to bathrooms in public schools, and the injunction applies nationwide.

The directive, or guidance, was issued in May by the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education. The agencies said that denying transgender students access to the facilities and activities of their choice was illegal under the administration’s interpretation of the federal Title IX statute prohibiting sex discrimination in educational programs and activities, like sports.

The order by Judge Reed O’Connor in the Fort Worth division of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas prevents the federal agencies from using the directive to threaten to revoke federal financial assistance from schools who do not agree that Title IX protects transgender students.

O’Connor said the language in Title IX is “not ambiguous.” The law “specifically permits educational institutions to provide sepa-

rate toilets, locker rooms and showers based on sex, provided that the separate facilities are comparable,” he said.

He issued the injunction the evening of late Aug. 18, the Sunday before the school year began in many jurisdictions. The case was heard in Texas, but 13 states were plaintiffs.

The Justice and Education departments issued the directive May 13, saying it applied to all public schools and colleges and universities that received federal funding and the agencies added that they would “evaluate a school’s compliance with these obligations.”

When it was issued, the chairs of two U.S. Catholic bishops’ committees said that treating “a student’s gender identity as the student’s sex,” as the directive calls for, “is deeply disturbing.”

USA Today reported Aug. 22 that the American Civil Liberties Union and four other civil rights organizations issued a statement calling O’Connor’s ruling “misguided” and said they would continue to file lawsuits on behalf of transgender students.

Ecumenical formation program continues

By Kate O’Gorman

SASKATOON — The Program in Ecumenical Studies and Formation (PESF) continued in its third session this summer. Running the last week of June, as it has in previous years, this Prairie Centre for Ecumenism (PCE) summer institute is an opportunity for laity and clergy alike to come together to learn, worship, and be in community. Participants come from a variety of Christian traditions, all with a

common interest: to explore what it means to be united and yet distinct. The PESF prepares participants for ecumenical engagement by providing a foundation of theology, history and ecumenical practice within churches. During the first year of the program, participants are offered an introduction to the principles and biblical foundations of ecumenical thought and practice. The second and third-year participants delve more deeply into specific instances of

ecumenical dialogues and the ecumenical implications of issues such as ministry and authority. Where the first year provides a foundation and a solid understanding of the ecumenical movement, the advance years offer opportunity for more practical experiences of ecumenical dialogue. What distinguishes PESF is the participation of scholars who are experts in their field and have dedicated their careers to the advancement of the ecumenical movement.

“We are particularly proud of the many notable visiting scholars we have been able to attract to this program,” noted PCE Executive Director Dr. Darren Dahl. The calibre of scholarship that participants were exposed to can be seen in the breadth of work accomplished by this year’s guest lecturers. Rev. Michael Kinnamon, now retired, was most recently the Spehar-Halligan Visiting Professor of Ecumenical Collaboration in Inter-Religious Dialogue at Seattle University’s School of Theology and Ministry. He served on the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S. and the Consultation on Church Union and the World Council of Churches’ Commission on Faith and Order, from which he shared many stories with PESF participants. Rev. Alyson Barnett-Cowan was most recently the president of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) and formerly

served the Anglican Church of Canada as the director for Unity, Faith and Order at the Anglican Communion Office. Her ecumenical work led to her involvement with the Lambeth Commission on Communion that produced the 2004 Windsor Report, and she also served as a member of the Plenary Commission, Faith and Order at the World Council of Churches. Throughout the week-long program, both Kinnamon and Barnett-Cowan shared stories from the field and worked closely with participants as they considered ecumenical issues of Christian ministry and authority. As a three-year program, the PESF saw its first class of graduates this year. Six students representing Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Lutheran and Anglican traditions received their certificates, awarded from both the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism and St. Andrew’s College.



Tim Yaworski

WELCOME MASS — Bishop Donald Bolen presided July 24 at a mass of welcome for new priests who will be serving in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon. Among those in attendance at the Cathedral of the Holy Family were (from left): Rev. Peter Olisa; Rev. Graham Hill, CSsR; Rev. Binu Rathappillil, VC; Rev. Emmanuel Olusola; Bolen; Rev. Joseph Thazhathemuriyil, VC; Rev. Joseph Salihu; Rev. Peter Ebidero; and Rev. Deyre Azcuna. Most new pastoral appointments went into effect Aug. 1 across the diocese.

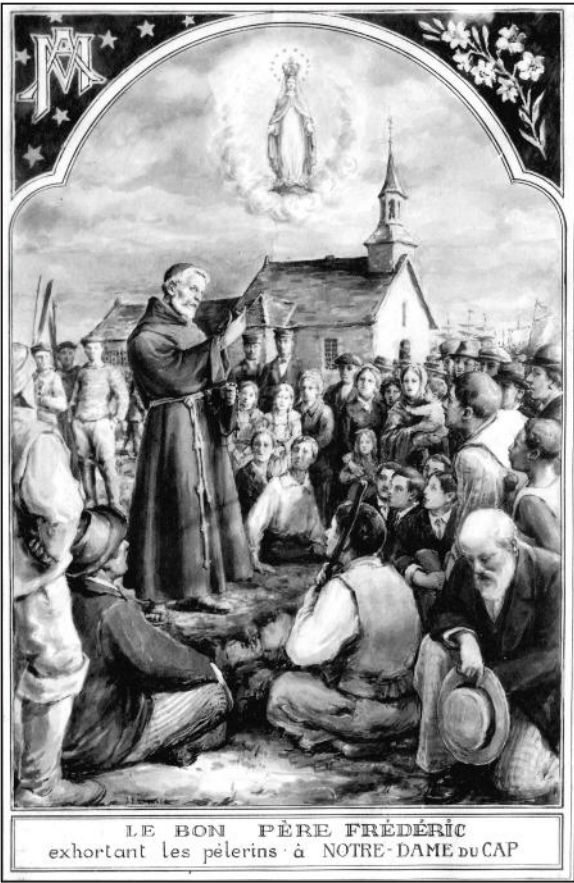
Blessed Frederic may be Canada’s next saint

By Philippe Vaillancourt

QUEBEC CITY (CNS) — Canada owes him the return of the Franciscans, the founding of the country’s largest Marian sanctuary, and the development of strong and lasting ties between the French Canadians and the Holy Land. Yet, 100 years after his death and though he might become Canada’s next saint, Blessed Frederic Janssoone still remains largely unknown to many people in Quebec. Franciscan Father Roland Bonenfant awaited 2016 restlessly, knowing it would coincide with the 100th anniversary of the death of Pere Frederic, as he is known. As vice postulator of his sainthood cause, Bonenfant plans to celebrate all year long the life and deeds of a fellow Franciscan he already considers to be a saint. Bonenfant said Pere Frederic’s “first and foremost heritage is the way he developed strong bonds between the Catholics of Canada and the spiritual roots of their religion — namely the Middle East places where Jesus, the apostles and the first witnesses of Christ have lived,” he said, before even mentioning Our Lady of the Cape Shrine. Born in 1838 in northern France, Frederic Janssoone joined the Franciscans in 1864 and was ordained in 1870. From 1876 to 1888, he was the custodial vicar of the Holy Land, assisting the custos with care of holy places. These 12 years left a strong imprint on him; he developed a deep attachment to

the Holy Land as he got more and more involved in its development and renewal. He re-established the Way of the Cross processions on Jerusalem’s Via Dolorosa — a first in almost 250 years. He also built

Holy Land and the aura of the Re-collects, who were deeply loved, back then,” said Bonenfant. As time went by, Pere Frederic became more and more involved in the spiritual life of the Canadian church. He contributed to the foundation and the development of a Marian shrine in Trois-Rivières.



CNS artwork/Presence

BLESSED FREDERIC — Blessed Frederic Janssoone is depicted addressing a crowd outside Our Lady of the Cape Shrine in Trois-Rivières, Quebec, in undated artwork by J. Lacoste.

ecumenical ties with representatives of other Christian churches. In 1888, his superiors sent him to Canada to resurrect the Franciscans and establish the Commissariat of the Holy Land. “When he arrived here, he was surrounded by the aura of the

“It gave him the chance to build ties with families and to become a popular figure in the region. This has had a tremendous impact,” said Beaudoin, who teaches history at Trois-Rivières’ Lafleche College.

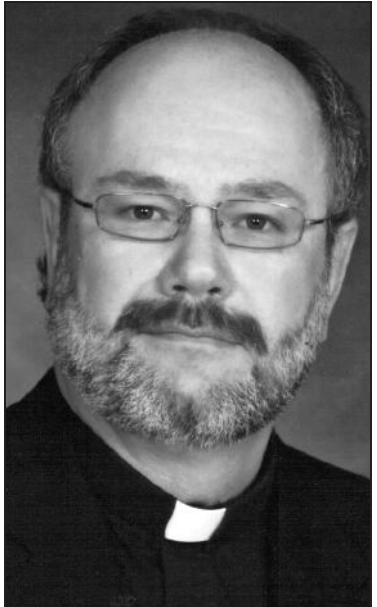
— FREDERIC, page 9

New president named for Catholic Missions In Canada

TORONTO — Rev. David Reilander, a priest from Hamilton diocese and recently from Whitehorse diocese, has been appointed president of Catholic Missions In Canada (CMIC), an organization serving the Canadian home missions, effective Sept. 1, 2016. Reilander succeeds Rev. Philip Kennedy, who has visited many of the missions in Canada during his decade-long presidency, and served previously in parishes throughout the Archdiocese of Toronto and in ministries of the Diocese of Thunder Bay. After a year’s sabbatical, Kennedy will serve as pastor at a parish in the Archdiocese of Toronto.

Reilander joins the organization after spending the past few years as rector at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Whitehorse, Yukon, as well as serving in several missions in the Diocese of Whitehorse — the same ones supported by Catholic Missions In Canada. Born in Hamilton, Ontario, Reilander completed his bachelor’s degree (*summa cum laude*) from McMaster University before pursuing formation studies at St. Augustine’s Seminary in 1982, where he graduated with a master’s degree in divinity. As well as completing a postgraduate degree in theology from Saint Paul University, Reilander also holds a master’s degree in theology (*magna cum laude*) from Regis College. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1986. Since then, Reilander has been pastor in parishes in and around Owen Sound and the Hamilton area, including St. Mary of the Assumption (Brantford, Ont.), and St. Mary and the Missions (Owen Sound, Ont.). At St. Mary and the Missions, he ministered to seven mission churches covering the Bruce Peninsula as well as trained future pastors. As a priest in the Diocese of Hamilton, Reilander served as founding board member of the Residential Hospice of Grey Bruce in Owen Sound and as the Bishop’s Representative to the St. Joseph’s

Hospital Reproductive Issues Committee and various ethics committees in the Hamilton health care system. He has also served as vicar-general and chancellor in the Diocese of Whitehorse.



CMIC

Rev. David Reilander

Using his experience and firsthand knowledge of the circumstances in the missions, Reilander hopes to extend the work Kennedy and the Catholic Missions staff had started. He writes: “I’ve enjoyed my time in the subarctic and the people who make the missions so special and welcoming. However, I’ve come to realize how missions depend on the work of the CMIC staff. Without the financial and spiritual support, many congregations and their church buildings would not exist and the Catholic banner would not fly. It’s all about the proclamation of the Gospel to the person in an isolated and, usually, poor place.” To learn more about Catholic Missions In Canada and Reilander, please pick up the Fall 2016 issue of Catholic Missions In Canada, found online through their website (www.cmic.info), or by calling their office for a copy or subscription at 1-866-937-2642.

Vaillancourt is editor-in-chief of Presence info based in Montreal.

Assumption pilgrimage showers Mary's blessings

By Glen Argan
Western Catholic Reporter

Ominous-looking clouds gathered in the direction of the Skaro Pilgrimage site as my wife Nora and I headed out from Edmonton for the annual Marian pilgrimage late in the afternoon of Aug. 14.

A couple of showers rained down as we approached the site. However, at Skaro itself, all was dry . . . and stayed dry throughout the evening of prayer and liturgy as the usual crowd of several thousand came to celebrate the vigil of the feast of Mary's Assumption.

Over the past 35 years, it's been at least 10 times that I've been privileged to attend the pilgrimage at Skaro, the frequent passage of transport trucks disturbing, but not breaking, the prayerful calm close to the grotto. The trucks are a reminder of the world to which we will return after these few hours; the pilgrimage site a touch of heaven itself.

In my pilgrimages to Skaro, it has never rained, although more frequent attenders say there have been some fearsome storms in years past. A couple of others recalled one year when the rain clouds headed straight for Skaro from the west, and suddenly split — one going north and the other to the south — with the storm completely missing the pilgrimage site.

Mary, the Mother of God, seems to keep a watchful eye to ensure the pilgrimage will be a time of confession, eucharist and

prayer. The Blessed Mother gets plenty of help on the ground from the large number of volunteers who do their bit to make the pilgrimage a success.

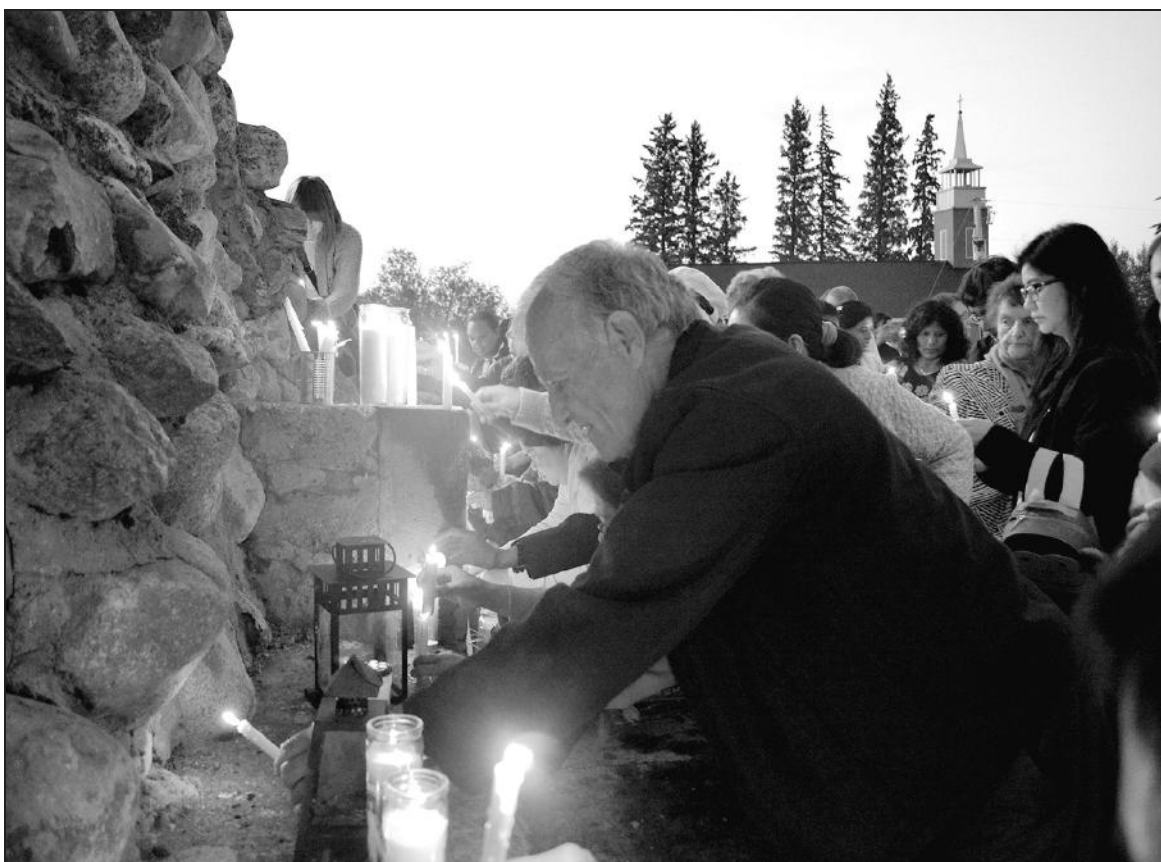
Skaro clings closely to its origins in 1919 among the Polish settlers of the area, although as the years go by, the crowd and the volunteers are multicultural. It was the Polish settlers who built the miniature replica of the grotto at Lourdes, France. Today, their grandchildren and great-grandchildren remain faithful to the cause.

On pilgrimage day, the grotto site is spotless as are the cemetery on one side and the small church on the other. The event is run with military precision. At exactly 6:30 p.m., a couple of dozen priests go to their posts, and confessional lines form immediately. At 7 p.m., the rosary begins; at 7:30, it is Vespers sung in Polish.

And at 8:02 p.m., the long procession for mass begins. Msgr. John Hamilton, this year's celebrant, began his homily saying, "Life is full of surprises," and noted that he had prepared his homily on the readings for the feast day mass on Aug. 15, not those for the vigil mass of the 14th. Unperturbed, Hamilton delivered his homily as planned.

Following mass came the candlelit eucharistic procession which wound around behind the grotto and then back up to the top.

This year, pilgrims were asked to stay in the procession and, if they wanted to deposit their can-



WCR/Glen Argan

MARIAN PILGRIMAGE — Pilgrims place their candles signifying their prayer intentions at the top of the Skaro grotto near Lamont, Alta.

dles on the grotto, to come back afterward. It was a futile request as one knew it would be. Pilgrims scrambled to get the choice spots for their candles while the procession backed up on the grassy path to the top of the grotto.

One couple ordered me out of the way so they could place their candles as close as possible to the crucifix at the top of the grotto. I

never knew that the success of one's prayers depended on getting one's candle placed exactly in the right spot.

The candlelight procession is Skaro's trademark, a beautiful carrying of the candles in the dark to cover the grotto. It's not as large as the procession at Lourdes, but, in my view, more beautiful as the candles continue to flicker

against the darkness of an Alberta summer night.

As Nora and I head home, earlier than expected at 9:30 p.m., it is still not dark, and the majority of pilgrims hoping to place their candles on the grotto, entrusting their prayer intentions to Mary, remain patiently in line, the storm clouds now nothing more than a memory.

Our Lady of Victory kids' camp helps bring faith to life

By Lasha Morningstar
Western Catholic Reporter

EDMONTON (CCN) — Our Lady of Victory Camp offers campers and counsellors alike a weeklong infusion of faith.

The program at the camp on the west side of Gull Lake is based on youth catechism with daily mass, reconciliation, eucharistic adoration and the rosary.

That's a full load of Catholicism, especially compared with secular summer camps that emphasize horseback riding, sports and swimming.

But the children and youth who attend OLVC say their favourite activities are adoration and other times spent in the chapel.

"I can express myself, and that brings me closer to God," said Christina Marcinek. At 16, she is now a counsellor, having spent several years as a camper.

Adoration is a precious time for her as it "gives me time for self-reflection," Marcinek said.

The camp was an anchor for her when she was 15 and in need of "a spiritual boost."

Her time as an OLVC counsellor satisfies Marcinek's other hungers — "I love kids, and I love volunteering."

A farmer gave the 80-acre camp that today contains 13 buildings to the church in 1946. The cost to attend the weeklong camp is \$295.

The Aug. 7 to 12 week hosted 90 campers aged 12 and 13, and the theme was Spy Week. Fabio the Fantastic (one of the counsellors) played pranks and tried to

sabotage the program. The goal for the campers was to discover who that rascally Fabio was.

One of his tricks happened one afternoon when the campers gathered for their lasagna meal only to discover that Fabio had stolen all their forks so they had to eat their slippery dinner with a spoon.

Lisa MacQuarrie, co-ordinator of youth evangelization for the Edmonton archdiocese, said by using their skills and talents,

campers learn how to work as a team and discover how they can use their God-given gifts to live out their faith.

Another game, a scavenger hunt, enables the campers to learn how to work co-operatively.

One of the main focuses of the program is to get the kids outside to see nature, said MacQuarrie.

So archery, Frisbee, swimming and waterfront fun are woven into the daily schedule. Thunder, light-

ning and weather warnings shut down planned outdoor activities when the WCR and staff from the archdiocesan pastoral and administration Offices visited OLVC.

Character building also happens on talent night. Campers are given a chance to step out in front of the crowd and perform.

Sometimes it is the shy child who knocks the socks off their fellow campers, and campers are left saying "Who knew?"

said MacQuarrie.

Others might not be so great, but the campers "are kind," said MacQuarrie, and still applaud and cheer.

In this supportive atmosphere, the kids are free to be open and compassionate.

While there are fun and games and time for God, campers are expected to help with chores such as washing dishes and peeling potatoes for the evening meal.

The faith-based program for the 12-year-olds focused on social justice and living simply. For the 13-year-olds, the topic was chastity and respecting yourself and others.

This was the first time at camp for Rowan Strachuk, 12, and he was fulsome in his praise.

"This is awesome, really, really fine. I'm definitely coming next year. People here are nice, respectful and everyone can be different in their own way," Rowan said.

This is the third year at OLVC for 12-year-old Claire Offenberger.

"I love the atmosphere. I feel I am amongst friends and it encourages me in my faith," she said.

During adoration, Claire feels closer to God — "that he is right there with us."

She is "happy and blessed" to be among others who feel the same way.

Noah Brodeur, 16, has been coming to camp for 16 years. He can make that claim because his parents were OLVC volunteers when he was a pre-schooler.

Now a counsellor, Brodeur said, "I love it here. People are so in love with God."



WCR/Lasha Morningstar

BRINGING FAITH TO LIFE — Helping with chores, such as peeling potatoes, is expected of every camper at Our Lady of Victory Camp.

Saint accepted Our Lady’s call to purity, martyrdom

By Jean Ko Din
The Catholic Register

“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jn 16:13).

This is the Gospel that St. Maximilian Kolbe preached with his life and death. On the 75th anniversary of his death (Aug. 14), the church celebrated his heroic sacrifice in 1941 when he volunteered his life in place of a fellow Auschwitz inmate.

“There was no worse hell on Earth than on Auschwitz and the other concentration camps and yet because of his union with Our Lord through Our Lady, he rose above that,” said Rev. John Grigus, rector of the National Shrine of St. Maximilian Kolbe in Illinois.

Grigus said the 75th anniversary marks a significant milestone not only for the national shrine and the Conventual Franciscans order, but for the whole world. He cited Pope John Paul II, who called Kolbe “the patron saint of our difficult century.”

“It’s not just about Auschwitz. It’s also for the trials we go through in our lives,” said Grigus. “It’s what’s happening in our city streets. It’s what’s happening in the world with ISIS. We still need to gather around Our Lady and each other so that our truths of our faith be sustained.”

To mark this anniversary, the National Shrine celebrated a weeklong novena to commemorate the sacrifice Kolbe made not just in Auschwitz in 1941, but throughout his whole life.

Grigus said Kolbe’s sacrifice began at the age of 12 when he kneeled in front of an image of

the Blessed Mother and she appeared to him in a vision. Kolbe later describes the experience in his writings:

“That night I asked the Mother of God what was to become of me. Then she came to me holding two crowns, one white, the other red. She asked me if I was willing to accept either of these crowns. The white one meant that I should persevere purity, and the red that I should become a martyr. I said I would accept them both.”

A year after this vision, Kolbe and his elder brother, Francis, joined the Conventual Franciscans, a branch of the Franciscan order.

Brother Gabriel Mary Mesina, a Canadian member of the Conventual Franciscans, went on pilgrimage earlier in August to follow Kolbe’s footsteps in Poland.

Mesina said that being able to visit Pabianice, Kolbe’s hometown, was one of the most special moments of the pilgrimage because it called to mind his own call to their vocation.

“We got to pray in front of that image and have mass at that altar that Our Lady offered the crowns to St. Maximilian at,” he said. “I really also tried to imagine Our Lady with those two crowns because I really think that all Christians are called to walk the path of the two crowns.”

Kolbe carried the vision of the two crowns in his heart as he entered in formation and study with the Conventual Franciscans.

As rumblings of the First World War began to rise in Poland, Kolbe felt compelled to leave the order and join the military forces of Poland.

“He was very military-mind-

ed,” said Mesina. “But he realized that God wanted him to found a spiritual army to combat very intentionally and directly the forces of Satan. And he knew no better way than under the banner and the generalship of Our Lady.”

On Oct. 15, 1917, Kolbe obtained permission from his superiors at the Conventual Franciscan Collegio-Serafico in Rome to start a new movement which he named the *Militia Immaculata* or MI.

He, along with six fellow friars, consecrated themselves to the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary and worked for the conversion of sinners and enemies of the Catholic Church, especially the Free Masons of that time.

Kolbe believed in using modern technology and innovation as tools for evangelization. As a priest and

superior in Niepokalanow (City of the Immaculate), he and his fellow friars operated a printing press to make religious posters. In 1922, Kolbe also founded a monthly periodical called *Rycerz Niepokalanej*, or Knight of the Immaculate.

“I think he prepared Poland for difficult times to come,” said Grigus. “He sent over a million periodicals and they were for all ages, even for young kids. They were trading them like they were baseball cards or football cards.”

Between 1930 and 1936, Kolbe left Poland for a series of missions to East Asia. In 1931, he moved to Japan where he founded a monastery in Nagasaki and started a Japanese edition of his periodicals, *Seibo no Kishi*. The monastery he founded remains a prominent site for the Catholic Church in Japan.

In 1936, Kolbe returned to Poland because tuberculosis had caused his health to falter. But his heart for evangelization never weakened. In 1938, he started a radio station, Radio Niepokalanow, as another means to spread the Gospel.

“He’s really a modern saint,” said Grigus. “The millennials are high into technology and Maximilian’s idea was to use the latest technology that the world has available to propagate the Gospel.”

When the Second World

War broke out, Kolbe was one of the few brothers who remained in the Niepokalanow monastery. He continued to publish religious works and used the publishing house to issue a number of anti-Nazi German publications.

On Feb. 17, 1941, Kolbe finished writing his final and most comprehensive essay on the Virgin Mary’s identity as perfectly united to the Holy Spirit. Hours later, the monastery was shut down and Kolbe was arrested.

As he was taken away by the Gestapo, he is famously known to have said, “Courage, my sons. Don’t you see that we are leaving on a mission? They pay our fare in the bargain. What a piece of good luck! The thing to do now is to pray well in order to win as many souls as possible.”

On May 28, Kolbe was transferred to Auschwitz as prisoner #16670.

In reflecting on his visit to Auschwitz during World Youth Day, Mesina felt an incredible connection to his patron saint.

“He turned that death bunker, the most hellish place, into a chapel,” said Mesina. “People would hear the rosary being prayed and hymns to Our Lady being sung. . . . The prisoners would be so wrapped up in prayer that sometimes they wouldn’t even notice when the SS guards would come in for their daily check.”

In July 1941, a prisoner from Kolbe’s barracks escaped. In order to set an example, the commander of the barracks choose 10 men for the starvation bunker. One of the men selected, Franciszek Gajowniczek, cried out, “My wife! My children!” Seeing the man’s distress, Kolbe volunteered to take his place.

Kolbe suffered two weeks of starvation before he was killed by lethal injection to make room for more prisoners.

“It’s ironic that for most of his life, he has suffered most of his life, losing a lung to tuberculosis, yet in the starvation bunker, he was the last one alive,” said Grigus. “It was because he needed to instruct the others.”

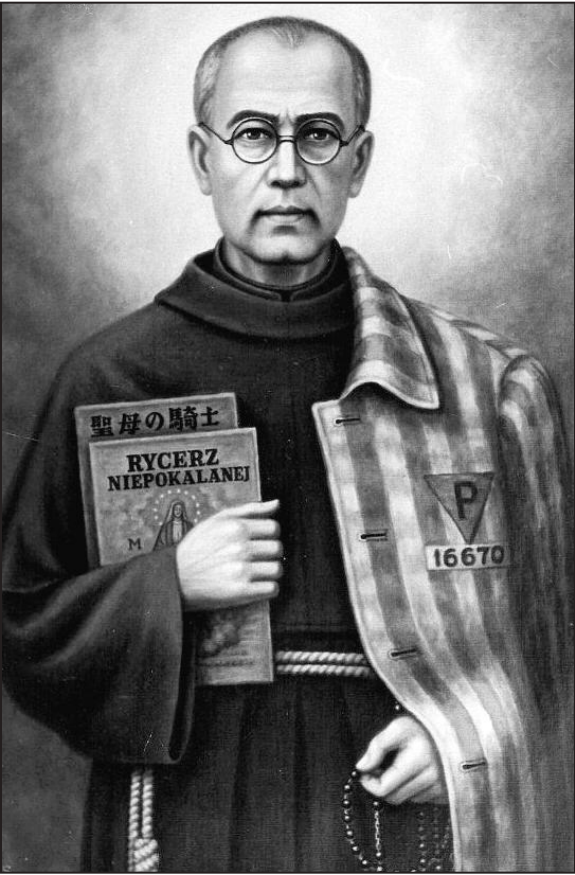


Illustration courtesy of Militia Immaculata

SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY — St. Maximilian Kolbe, seen in a portrait, sacrificed his life for another at Auschwitz in 1941. But sacrifice is what Kolbe did his entire life. On the 75th anniversary of his death (Aug. 14), the church celebrated his heroic sacrifice in 1941 when he volunteered his life in place of a fellow Auschwitz inmate.

Immigrants have impact

Continued from page 1

it. Some 80 per cent attend mass “at least once in a while,” in addition to funerals and weddings. Yet many don’t feel the need to be active members.

“Contrary to the gloom and doom that often characterizes the way people interpret religion generally in Canada we say that we’ve got surprising findings on vitality and hope,” Bibby said.

“There is a lot of life evident in the Catholic Church in Canada among average Catholics. That’s not just outside Quebec but in Quebec as well; it’s right across the country.”

Bibby holds the board of governors’ research chair in sociology at the University of Lethbridge. Over the past four decades, he has monitored social trends in Canada through national surveys of adults and teenagers. He has a number of books dealing with religion in the country.

Bibby wanted to do something comprehensive on Catholics and the opportunity came when Angus Reid mentioned he was planning to carry out a national survey on religion in 2015.

“This was really a conscious effort to generate data on enough Catholics so that we could offer a good reading as to where Catholics are at this point in time,” Bibby explained. “This is not a book on

the Catholic Church but is really a book on where the average Catholic is and their thinking and their behaviour at this point in time.”

The general sense was that religion was winding down in Canada, that involvement was decreasing and that there was considerable growth among people with no religion.

It wasn’t a positive story as the 20th century was wrapping up.

“What we are seeing now is just almost the opposite, almost the antithesis of that,” Bibby explained.

“When you look at immigration growth, drawing on Stats Canada data between 2000 and 2011, for example, the number of Catholics who arrived in Canada from other countries is utterly outstanding: 478,000 new Catholics.”

According to Bibby, people coming to Canada are having a tremendous impact on Catholic life here. “So anyone who is looking on and saying ‘It’s just about over; Catholics are just not attending, the churches are full of old people,’ I’m saying those people simply are out to lunch.

“They didn’t understand what was going on globally and what the implications would be for denominations like Catholicism when these people would come to Canada.”

Immigration provides a tremendous potential for Catholicism in Canada, Bibby maintains.

Only one sister left on staff at Rivier

Continued from page 1

two girls who attended Rivier and a daughter who taught there, said she first arrived at the school as a shy girl but “was encouraged to be all that I could be” and gained the confidence to take on leadership roles. “Rivier’s legacy will live on in the hearts and minds of numerous staff and students,” she said.

Joanne Sander, who taught at Rivier Academy for the past 18 years, often accompanied the school’s travel group to France, home of the congregation’s foundress. Recalling memorable moments from those pilgrimages, she said, “Marie Rivier would be proud of the life lessons passed on to students and staff here.”

For most of its history since 1951, the academy was run as a private girls’ school, except from 1970 - 1976 when it became co-ed under the Catholic school division. Renamed Rivier Academy

in 1976, it was established as an associate school of Prince Albert Catholic Schools in 2001 and became co-ed again in 2011.

Earlier this year, the sisters and the school division agreed to terminate the associate school memorandum of agreement, effective June 30. Although staffed entirely by sisters in the early years, the school by the time of the transfer only had one sister left on staff: Sister Mary Woodward, who began teaching there in 1968 and was principal for the past 20 years; she is now retired. The school had 11 graduates in June.

At the recent celebration, greetings were brought by Sister Jacque Lambert from the congregation’s United States Province and by Sisters Monique Parent and Gisele Patenaude on behalf of the members in Quebec. A message was also read from Mother Angele Dion, the congregation’s Superior General in France.

In the closing ritual, the provincial superior passed a burning candle to Lorel Trumier, director, and George Bolduc, board chair, of Prince Albert Catholic Schools. “I bequeath to you the charism of Marie Rivier to continue what Marie Rivier and the sisters have begun,” Paquette told them. “We will continue with you in prayer and in encouraging presence.”

Paquette recalled with gratitude all the sisters past and present who contributed to the congregation’s educational legacy in western Canada, and asked the sisters in the auditorium to stand or raise their hands. The gesture prompted a standing ovation from the hundreds of lay people gathered to celebrate and grieve with them.

The former Rivier Academy is now known as Blessed Marie Rivier Catholic School and will continue to serve students in Grades 7 - 12. Robert Tessier is the new principal.

Two congregations share Holy Eucharist building

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

FOAM LAKE, Sask. — A celebration by the Roman and Ukrainian Catholic communities

was held June 26 as two congregations celebrated their joint ownership of the Ukrainian Catholic Church building in Foam Lake, a town in East

Central Saskatchewan.

Bishop Bryan Bayda of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon and Bishop Donald Bolen of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon presided over the celebration, held in the building now shared by Christ the King Roman Catholic and Holy Eucharist Ukrainian Catholic parishes.

Bayda welcomed Bolen with bread, salt, and a symbolic key. Bolen blessed stained glass that was brought from the former Christ the King building, before concelebrating Divine Liturgy with Bayda, along with Holy Eucharist pastor Rev. Jeffrey Stephaniuk.

Since January, both parishes have been using the shared facility. The arrangement developed after several years of discussion and discernment, when it became clear that the Roman Catholic church building would require major renovations. With input from the bishops of the diocese and the eparchy, the ownership agreement was entered into after much discussion about how to make the arrangement a workable reality.

A committee of parishioners meets frequently to manage con-

cerns and parish business, while each parish operates as a separate entity within the building.

Before the celebration at Holy Eucharist, Bolen presided over two ceremonies to return Roman Catholic church buildings in the area to non-sacred status: first Sacred Heart Church in nearby Sheho, Sask. (closed some 12 years ago), as well as the former Christ the King building in Foam Lake. It was a bittersweet experience for parishioners and family members. Bolen commended the commitment, courage and wisdom behind the decision to leave behind buildings that can no longer adequately serve the community, while acknowledging the sadness experienced when leaving much-loved buildings.

“Leaving a church that you love and has been meaningful for you is never easy. The fact that you have gone through this process, building bridges, easing tensions, and doing so in a way that was life-giving for the community, is edifying and encouraging,” Bolen said.

Bolen removed the altar stones from the Sheho and Foam Lake churches. Representatives of the Roman Catholic parishes then carried the stones in procession to

the joint celebration at the newly shared facility. Plans to insert the altar stones into the altar at Holy Eucharist were delayed, however, as they didn’t quite fit.

The adjusting and smoothing needed for the wood of the altar to accommodate the stones is an apt image for the kind of adjustments that the two congregations are making to fit smoothly together, noted Bayda.

“The unity which binds us together as Catholics, is always a unity characterized by diversity,” said Bolen. “Every parish, every diocese, every eparchy has its differences; it has its blessings and its gifts. In the Catholic Church we are blessed to have many rites. What a rich and a magnificent tradition the Byzantine rite is. How blessed our universal church is to have this diversity of rites.”

Bolen pointed to St. John Paul II’s description of the eastern and western traditions of the church as “breathing with both lungs,” adding: “But not many places in the world are lucky enough to breathe with those two lungs in one building. What you are entering into is not intended to be a sacrifice, but an experience of grace.”



Kiply Yaworski

NEW RELATIONSHIP — Bishop Bryan Bayda passes a symbolic key to Bishop Donald Bolen during a celebration June 26 in Foam Lake, Sask., marking the new relationship between Holy Eucharist Ukrainian Catholic and Christ the King Roman Catholic parishes. Since January, the two have been sharing ownership of the Holy Eucharist church building.

World Youth Day pilgrims return to Regina

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — Michelle Braden said it is difficult to describe a single highlight of World Youth Day (WYD) held July 25 - 31 in Krakow, Poland. “I think it was the growth of the group. You could watch it day to day: growth spiritually, emotionally and in the growing of the community.”

She led a group of 29 from the Regina archdiocese that included three priests: Revs. Mieczyslaw Burdzy of St. Henry Parish, Melville; Rene Mangahas of St. Joseph Parish, Whitewood; and

Paul Mau Nguyen from Holy Rosary Cathedral, Regina. It was a three-week trip that took in WYD as well as a mountain retreat and a visit to the notorious death camp, Auschwitz.

“The most impressive thing for me and a lot of the group was seeing all those different countries coming together for one purpose. Just to see that demonstration of peace and joy was powerful for a majority of our group,” said Mary Polk, a 20-year-old University of Regina student.

— CHALLENGES, page 8

Anglican bishop traverses diocese

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — “Don’t let anyone tell you there are no hills in Saskatchewan,” said Qu’Appelle diocesan Bishop Robert Hardwicke in an interview with the PM. “I’ve climbed 119 of them so far. When I came to Canada (he is originally from England) they told me Saskatchewan was flat. Don’t you believe it.”

The bishop, along with nine other bikers, had just rolled into the parking lot of All Saints Anglican Church in south Regina, completing more than three-quarters of his Pedalling Pilgrimage of Prayer bicycle tour of the southern portion of his southern Saskatchewan diocese.

He set out from the Alberta border July 23 and reached Regina July 30 after stops at parishes and Camp Harding in the Cypress Hills. He finished the ride August 1 at the Manitoba border, having covered 762 kilometres in 40 hours of riding.

“It’s sharing with people the importance of prayer and getting us to really knuckle down and be a prayerful church,” said Hardwicke. It’s also been a time in which he learned a new technique of praying while cycling, and he talked about praying for people and areas of the world that are struggling as he struggled up the 119 hills.

He expected, too, the ride would help him get fit. He reached his weight goal and intends to maintain it. But mainly it was a time to draw closer to his parishes. Each stop was a time for prayer and sharing of stories with parishioners.

His adult son accompanied him, and his wife initially drove a support vehicle. An All Saints parishioner later took over the support vehicle. They stopped about every



Frank Flegel

CYCLING THE DIOCESE — “They wanted me to concentrate on prayer and being with the people and not worry about raising money,” said Anglican Bishop Robert Hardwicke of the Diocese of Qu’Appelle. Hardwicke (front) finished his ride across the diocese Aug. 1 at the Manitoba border, having covered 762 kilometres in 40 hours. He did manage to raise money for the Bishop’s Discretionary Fund along the way, but mainly it was a time to draw closer to his parishes. Each stop was a time for prayer and the sharing of stories.

15 kilometres along the Trans-Canada Highway for a break to stretch and have some refreshments. Safety was not a concern — “No. Not at all. God is good” — nor were there any problems with equipment or flat tires. “We’ve had wonderful weather, equipment has worked well and Dutch Cycle has been tremendous in their support, as well as Western Cycle for some of their gear.” He also received advice from them about hydration and what and when to eat. “That’s been invaluable on such a hot week as this one.”

The bishop also raised funds for the Bishop’s Discretionary

Fund, Living the Mission Fund, with five per cent each going to the National Indigenous Ministry and construction of a hospital in Burundi. A donation of \$10,000 ensured the goal was reached before the trip began.

“They wanted me to concentrate on prayer and being with the people and not worry about raising money. It was a wonderful gesture from a generous family.”

He intends to do the same thing for the northern part of his diocese next year. The Qu’Appelle Diocese has about 30 parishes with a population of more than 4,000.



HOLY DOORS — Prince Albert Bishop Albert Thévenot blesses and opens the third set of Holy Doors of Mercy at the National Shrine of the Little Flower at St. Theresa Parish in Wakaw, Sask.

Restorative justice and the journey of a feather

By Peter Oliver

Among many Aboriginal people the eagle feather communicates respect, humility, courage and wisdom. Several years ago I received an eagle feather as a sign of appreciation for my ministry at the prison in Saskatoon. I was honoured but troubled because the feather did not feel like it belonged to me. I brought my concerns to Harry Lafond (Muskeg Lake Cree Nation and executive director at the Office of the Treaty Commissioner). Harry received me graciously and heard my story. He then explained, “You are the carrier of the feather. One day you will meet the feather’s owner and you will give it to him.”

I would like to tell you about my meeting with the person to whom the feather belongs, but first revisit with me the events of June 26, 2002. On that day two men broke into Jo Oliver’s home and brutally assaulted her. One of them attacked her with an axe, cutting off her ear. As she lay bleeding on the floor, they stepped over her as they carried the contents of her home out the door. The younger man kicked her as they passed.

The incident left in its wake a tremendous amount of fear and pain. Arrests and convictions followed. About two years later the older of the two men was designated a dangerous offender. This is the most extreme designation any person can receive in the Canadian justice system. Once designated a dangerous offender, the person is rarely released from prison.

Jo Oliver is my mother, and I work for an organization called Micah. We promote restorative justice by reaching out to ex-prisoners, but we have never tackled the realities experienced by victims of crime. The adage “lead by example” speaks to me, so I contacted Alan Edwards from Restorative Opportunities, a program sponsored by Corrections Services Canada. I asked him to set up a mediated encounter with Mervin, one of my mother’s assailants. He was the man who was designated a dangerous offender. Numerous meetings, calls and emails followed as Alan worked with my family and Mervin.

Gradually we discovered the steps involved in the process. Alan explained that there were many ways a mediated encounter could happen. We could communicate through letter, video or we could meet with Mervin in person. We learned that we could involve as many people as we like (I come from a large family) and we could take as much time as we needed. We were invited to be as creative as we liked and the

Oliver works in chaplaincy and development for The Micah Mission in Saskatoon.



The Micah Mission

JOURNEY — Among many Aboriginal people the eagle feather communicates respect, humility, courage and wisdom. Peter Oliver shares a personal story of the journey of an eagle feather.

mediators supported us by attending to the many human and practical issues involved in setting up a meeting of this kind.

As the process unfolded we were encouraged to find that the mediators would take time to get to know Mervin. They assured us a meeting would not be set up with Mervin until they were confident he was ready for such a meeting.

One of the first steps we took was to ask Mervin to write his autobiography. We wanted to know more about him. What kind of life led to such destructive behaviour? He willingly shared his story: 14 foster care homes before he was 12; no father; years in prison; Aboriginal and German heritage. He enjoys reading! The young offender who accompanied Mervin on the night of the break-in had taken his life a few years later. Bits and pieces of his story began to form a coherent narrative.

We were also surprised to find that in the 12 years Alan had worked with Restorative Opportunities they had never been asked to organize an encounter at the Prince Albert Penitentiary. Imagine: there are 700 men incarcerated at the penitentiary and no one had ever gone to the penitentiary to meet with any of them to talk about the offences that led to their incarceration.

As my family came to know more about the process and who Mervin was as person, we decided a meeting with him in the penitentiary was exactly what we wanted. Alan explained that they always engage two mediators in the kind of encounter we were planning, so we were introduced to his colleague, Jennifer Haslett.

A great deal of discussion followed as we decided who and how many family members would participate. In the end, my brother

Diccon, my wife Madeline, my mother and I made the trip to the Prince Albert Penitentiary. Brad

Taylor, one of the penitentiary chaplains, joined us. Coincidentally, Brad and his family had also been staying with us when we received news that Mum had been assaulted.

At our request, the meeting format was a sharing circle. The non-confrontational nature of the circle allowed us to tell our stories, hear Mervin’s story, speak our truths and weep. Mervin listened, did his best to answer some questions and apologized.

During a short intermission in our sharing, my family was given some private time to talk about our experience. We all agreed that Mervin had received us into his life and we felt the sincerity of his apology. I proposed giving my eagle feather to Mervin as a sign that we recognized the genuineness of his apology. I suggested that Mum should be the one to give him the feather.

When we returned to the circle, I shared the story of the feather and the guidance given by Harry Lafond. I told Mervin that I believed the feather belonged to him. Handing the feather to my mother, I invited her to give it to him. Then, in an act of reconciliation, Mum crossed the room, offered Mervin the feather and

gave him a hug. A few weeks later, Mum received a letter from Mervin. He expressed his gratitude for the meeting with my family and spoke of an inexplicable joy that had come over him following our encounter. Mum was very pleased to receive the letter and plans to write to him. My wife and I have shared the story many times of our encounter with Mervin now and we have been touched by the warmth and goodwill it inspires. The people with whom we share the story say we have acted courageously. That may be true, but I am more impressed by the fortitude of the man who owned up to his part in assaulting my mother. When he joined the circle he was utterly alone — a man condemned, disregarded and forgotten. He had no idea what we would say or how we would treat him. He came simply and vulnerably. He spoke sincerely and took responsibility for his behaviour. He apologized without making excuses or bemoaning the punishment of prison and, in doing so, he demonstrated more humility, courage and respect than I have seen in a long time. I believe the feather has found its home.

Encounter with saint has lifelong impact



Tony Magliano

Making A Difference

Allow me to share with you one of the highpoints of my life — a short, yet deeply enriching encounter with a saint.

Nearly 30 years ago I worked at Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington’s emergency food warehouse. Missionaries of Charity Sisters caring for HIV/AIDS patients at their Gift of Peace House in Washington, D.C., used to regularly stop by for food assistance.

Since I helped with food distribution, I got to know the sisters. One day while picking up food, one of the sisters said to me, “Mother is coming.” I said, “Do you mean Mother Teresa?” She said, “Yes.” I excitedly replied, “May I come?” And she said, “yes.”

A few days later, standing in front of the Gift of Peace House with about 20 other guests, I saw Mother Teresa get out of a car and walk toward the house. Immediately the sisters affectionately ran to greet her.

Then, as we stood in a circle, Mother Teresa began to walk to each guest silently placing a miraculous medal of the Blessed Mother in each of our hands.

I remember she seemed to keep her head humbly bowed as she approached each of us. But

when she reached me, I said to her “*Namaste*” — which is the normal greeting in Hindi.

Lifting up her head, and looking at me somewhat surprised, she greeted me back saying “*Namaste*.”

Then I said to her in Hindi, “*Kaise hain?*” Inquiring, how are you? And she replied, “*Theek*” which means OK.

Having exhausted my Hindi vocabulary, my brief encounter with Mother Teresa of Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) had ended. But the personal experience of conversing with a living saint continues to spiritually enrich my life to this day.

In a few days, on Sept 4, Pope Francis will canonize Mother Teresa — officially designating her as one of the saints of the Catholic Church.

Imperfect like all of us, yet holier than the vast majority of us, Mother Teresa truly exemplified what it means to pick up one’s cross and follow Jesus.

And what a heavy cross she carried. Leaving the comfort of her convent, she ventured out into the slums of Kolkata with practically nothing, to care for the poorest of the poor — the unloved, the starving, the homeless, the stigmatized victims of leprosy, the abandoned and forgotten, the dying and the unborn.

In her 1979 Nobel Peace Prize lecture, Mother Teresa said, “I feel the greatest destroyer of

peace today is abortion, because it is a direct war, a direct killing . . . if a mother can kill her own child, what is left for me to kill you and you kill me — there is nothing between.”

She went on to speak about a man she and her sisters picked up from the gutter. With worms eating away at him, they brought him back to their home and cared for him. He said, “I have lived like an animal in the street, but I am going to die like an angel, loved and cared for.”



CNS/Michael Hoyt

Blessed Teresa of Kolkata is pictured in 1990.

There is an excellent new DVD titled *The Letters: The Untold Story of Mother Teresa* (see: <http://bit.ly/2bv2mpM>). This movie will inspire you and me to step out of our comfort zones for the sake of those who suffer, and for the health of our own souls.

Consider the power of this reflection from St. Mother Teresa: “I used to believe that prayer changes things, but now I know that prayer changes us and we change things.”

Examining the moral worth of a book friendship

By Edna Froese

Two friendships converged in a berry patch, and I was sent out to examine the moral worth of a book friendship. My friend and I were swapping stories of our childhood reading habits. As saskatoon berries fell into our pails and our mouths, we both confessed that we had been distraught on winter Sunday afternoons if we ran out of books, and that we had reread favourite books until the covers fell off. We also discovered that although we had both loved *Mara, Daughter of the Nile*, by Eloise Jarvis McGraw, neither of us had ever heard anyone else speak of it. After wondering why two teens, one a Catholic and one a Mennonite, would be so taken by a story set in ancient Egypt, we talked of other books.

Yet Mara, the pretty slave girl of Egypt, did not leave me so easily. To use the language of Wayne Booth in *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction*, I once spent a great deal of time in her company. Friendships, including book friendships, Booth suggests, offer us three kinds of gifts: pleasure, profit, and the “kind of company that is not only pleasant or profitable, but also good for me” (173). So what gift had McGraw given me through the fictional Mara?

After all, she was nothing like me, nor did her circumstances resemble mine. An untameable slave, she was impudently self-confident and utterly unscrupulous, bent on looking after herself. Thanks to her cleverness and brazen charm, Mara became a double agent spy, purchased to seek out treason against the reigning Pharaoh Hatshepsut while choosing to carry messages for precisely those treasonous agents of Hatshepsut’s half-brother Thutmose, kept in virtual palace arrest. The novel is plot-driven, suspenseful. Exotic location, jewels beyond description, romance, adventure: all the necessary ingredients of escape reading. Perhaps this book-friend’s gift was merely

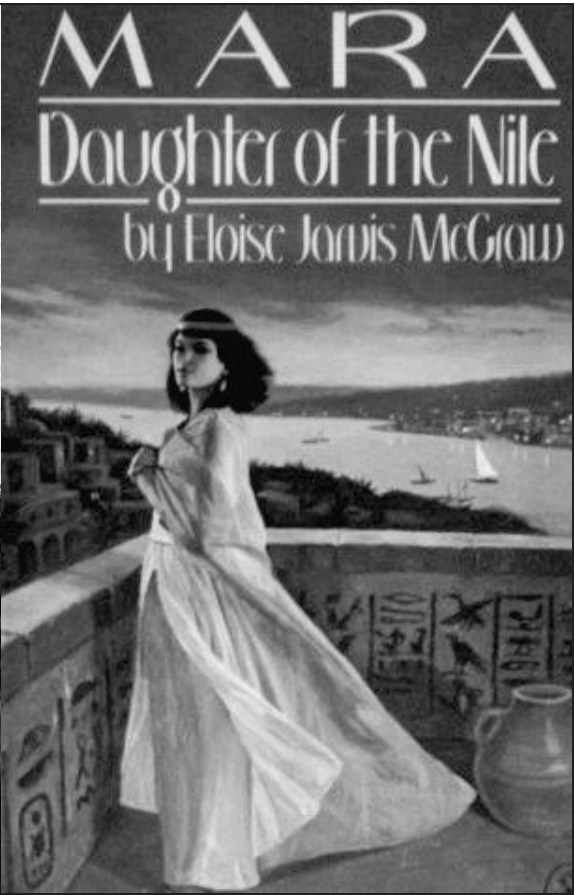
Froese taught English literature at St. Thomas More College in Saskatoon for many years until her retirement. She currently works part time as academic editor while relishing the freedom to read and write for pleasure.

the pleasure of leaving, for a time, my own drab, narrow world.

That berry-picking conversation provoked a hasty and successful book hunt. My curiosity had been piqued: would *Mara* still hold my interest, now that I was grown up and educated enough to teach sophisticated literature in university English classes? Well . . . evidently the sophistication hadn’t taken. Once again I slid effortlessly down the rabbit hole of Mara’s ancient Egyptian world, and I cared as much about her eventual happiness and security as I had when I was 14. In fact, I still delighted in watching Mara secretly read forbidden books, engage in daring repartee, and invent creative lies for both her masters. After rereading it yet again, I couldn’t help pondering the emotional processes at work here. Wherein lay the charm? It was true that I had once also secretly read forbidden books and told lies to cover certain activities, so that Mara’s utter lack of guilt might have been reassuring for me. But beyond that, what could this friendship have offered to me? It was time to abandon the reader’s initial naiveté and ask harder questions.

To begin with, I could at least look again at the novel’s underlying assumptions about gender roles. And then it was obvious that Hatshepsut, as a woman, was less worthy of the throne than her brother, and that the handsome Lord Sheftu would retain all the real power while Mara would become his lady of leisure, suitably preoccupied with jewelry and costly linens. In my teens, though, living among Mennonites typically suspicious of luxury, self-indulgence, and beauty, I had seen only hope in such a conclusion. Part of the novel’s allure lay in Mara’s ability, by willpower and love, to achieve about as much success as was possible in a man’s world that, at its core, was not that different from my world after all, if one ignored the trappings of royalty and military aggression.

Even the religious devotion to and fear of the gods of Egypt, although I had understood little about such pagan beliefs and would have dismissed them as ridiculous, had I paused to think about them, were not that different from my own fearful attitudes. Desires and contingencies and impulsive actions played out



E. Froese

BERRY-PICKING CONVERSATIONS — As Edna Froese and her friend picked saskatoons, they swapped stories of childhood reading habits and discovered that although they had both loved *Mara, Daughter of the Nile*, by Eloise Jarvis McGraw, neither had ever heard anyone else speak of it.

against an unquestioned spiritual backdrop in my world and in Mara’s. She, however, recognized that life was about love here and now, and was prepared to take risks I could not have imagined. She could act decisively as I could not; what’s more, she was learning to put aside self-preservation for a greater good. Mara had become my friend because I felt I was a better person in her company, one of the qualities by which Booth suggests we should evaluate our book friends.

In any case, whether or not the plot was believable — I didn’t care if it was or wasn’t — whether or not the novel supported patriarchy, I saw Mara as the lovely fearless young woman I wished I could be, clever enough to make a crucial difference in how the world unfolded, and beloved by the man she loved. Who wouldn’t want an ending like that? Besides, without really noticing the novel’s moral underpinnings, I had been deeply gratified to see the former slave, now an aristocrat, negotiate for the freedom of another slave, and for the return home of a lonely alien woman, caught in palace intrigue. Mara understood more

now than just the value of freedom and personal integrity; she, the former waif and guttersnipe, had also grasped what home meant and how important it was to

belong and to foster belonging. That was what my book friend, my other self, was trying to teach me all those long years ago when all I had looked for was escape.

There were challenges

Continued from page 6

She said there were challenges at times. “Being in a group for three weeks was challenging in itself, and getting along with everyone and the crowds and getting around, but it was worth it just to see everyone engage in their faith and growing in their faith.”

Polk said it renewed a sense of motivation in her faith. “And seeing all the other young people around me gave me a renewed sense of community on a global scale.”

The group also walked through the Auschwitz death camp. It was closed to the general public to allow WYD pilgrims a chance to visit the site; they walked a route through the camp and could not visit any of the buildings.

“It’s hard to talk about it. We decided just to walk it as a prayer experience. It’s pretty overwhelm-

ing — surreal is the word I would use. Hard to believe because it’s quite beautiful in the summer; I’m sure it looks different in the winter but in summer it is a park; beautiful weeping willow trees. It’s hard to believe the atrocities that went on there,” said Braden.

Polk said it was a good learning experience. “A lot of my group felt heavy when we were walking through. You can just sense the death there — emotionally, kind of a heavy wearing on your soul.”

Following WYD the group attended a three-day retreat in a mountain resort, Zakopane. “It reminded me of Banff, a touristy place,” said Braden. “It is where John Paul II used to go hiking.”

It’s estimated that about 1.5-million attended World Youth Day, but the final mass attracted about 2.5 million.

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Why the new Ben-Hur makes one appreciate the old

Screenings & Meanings

Gerald Schmitz



I'll admit coming with already low expectations to this new 3D version of the story based on the 1880 novel *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* by Lew Wallace, a former Union general in the Civil War whose other claim to fame was as the New Mexico governor who signed Billy the Kid's death warrant. As a kid I'd thrilled to watching the nearly four-hour 1959 classic in Saskatoon's historic Capitol Theatre, sadly demolished in 1979. I savoured the viewing experience again a few months back thanks to the Turner Classic Movies TV channel. The fastest and highest grossing film of 1959 was directed by German-born immigrant William Wyler who'd been an uncredited assistant director on the original 1925 silent feature. His masterwork merited superlatives. Its 11 Oscar wins has been equalled twice since but never surpassed. It had the biggest budget to that time earning a box office second only to *Gone With the Wind*. Its extraordinary musical score remains the longest ever. The awesome chariot race sequence is among the most famous in movie history.

So what to make of this new *Ben-Hur* (<http://www.benhur-movie.com/>) directed by the

Russian-Kazakh immigrant to Hollywood Timur Bekmambetov? In the title role of the Jewish prince Judah Ben-Hur, can Jack Huston (a grandson of the great filmmaker John Huston) match the presence of 1959's Charlton Heston? The short answers are not much and no.

Bekmambetov makes substantial changes to the narrative and adds inventions, none for the better. Judah grows up with the Roman orphan Messala Severus (Toby Kebbell) as an adopted brother instead of childhood friend. They love racing horses against each other. Messala is also sweet on the beautiful sister Naomi. (Controversy followed the 1959 movie with suggestions that Gore Vidal, as one of its multiple scriptwriters, had slyly inserted a homoerotic undercurrent into the bromance, falling out, and vengeful rivalry between Judah and Messala. No chance of that here.)

Carrying a burden of ancestral guilt, Messala leaves to become a Roman centurion fighting alongside Pontius Pilate (Pilou Asbæk, wasted). Returning in AD 28 from the empire's savage wars, Pilate becomes prefect of Judea with Messala as his garrison commander. Given his ties to the Ben-

Hur family, Messala plays the role of relative dove not wanting to antagonize the Jewish population while the hawks want Zealot rebels put down without mercy. But when a hotheaded Zealot named Dismas takes a shot at Pilate from within the Ben-Hur residence, Messala is forced into being the heavy. Judah is sentenced to be a galley slave. Five years later, following a ferocious naval battle that destroys the Roman fleet, he's the sole survivor.

Washed ashore, Judah is found by Ilderim (Morgan Freeman under a mop of dreadlocks), an African desert sheik of some sort with a splendid foursome of white chariot-racing horses. Freeman also doubles as a voice-of-God narrator bookending the movie's AD 25-33 span.

When Judah cures an ailing horse and proves he can master the reins, Ilderim takes Judah to Jerusalem in AD 33 where he uses his wealth and wiles to goad

Pilate into a race in the new Circus Maximus pitting Judah against Messala, now Caesar's champion, commanding four black steeds. It's the ultimate fraternal grudge match for all the marbles. The whites will win of course. Shooting these climactic computer-enhanced scenes (who needs 50,000 extras these days) supposedly took three months. As in 1959, Rome's famed Cinecittà studios were used. Comparisons end there. Bekmambetov's chariot race is a wild mash-up, not a highlight reel. As the revenant Judah, Huston, with the long straggly locks of servitude shorn off, looks more fashion model than manly challenger.

Before we get to that, Messala learns the fate of his mother and sister. They weren't executed as he thought but are locked away as lepers in a cave. Meanwhile Esther (Nazanin Boniadi), the servant he took as a wife, roams freely as a follower of the Nazarene messiah Jesus. The

women are mostly ciphers, though. Jesus (Brazilian Rodrigo Santoro) makes several appearances uttering gospel bromides until, in suffering death by crucifixion, he promises paradise to Dismas on the cross. There's a prior Garden of Gethsemane arrest, but no Pilate or subsequent resurrection, although a miraculous healing rain falls. The 1959 movie is both more restrained in never showing the face of Jesus and biblically more impressive.

Wonders continue as Judah embraces the injured defeated Messala in reconciliation and everyone lives happily ever after as the credits roll to the pop sounds of Andra Day singing "The Only Way Out." Ugh.

For all its costly digital trickery, Bekmambetov's *Ben-Hur* is more glorified soap opera than widescreen epic. I couldn't wait to exit this thoroughly misbegotten and totally unnecessary remake.



CNS/Paramount Pictures and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures Inc

GLORIFIED SOAP OPERA — Jack Huston stars in the movie *Ben-Hur*. “For all its costly digital trickery, Bekmambetov’s *Ben-Hur* is more glorified soap opera than widescreen epic,” writes Gerald Schmitz.

Books

Author writes less as professor and more as pilgrim

THE SIN OF CERTAINTY: Why God desires our trust more than our “correct” beliefs by Peter Enns. Harper One, 2016. Hardcover, 228 pages, \$31.99 (Cdn). Reviewed by Edwin Buettner.

Peter Enns, professor of biblical studies at Eastern University, has written a rather provocatively titled book laced with a good deal of self-deprecating humour. Lest any potential reader suspect sinister motives on the part of the author, his words should provide some reassurance: “This book is about faith, doubt, and the wisdom of not needing to know and learning that trusting God is the beginning, middle, and end of the Christian path.”

While competently drawing on his background in Scripture and theology, it is the author’s own faith journey that provides the substance for his writing and enhances its credibility. The reader becomes privy to a series of crisis points that culminate in a radical shift in Enns’ personal faith perspective. One might say that in this book he writes less as a professor and more as a pilgrim.

The following quotation serves well as a summary of the book: “. . . *belief* and *faith* in the Bible are just different ways of saying *trust*” (italics added). By no means is Enns dismissing the need for theology and creed; he affirms that humans were created with a capacity to think and a desire for understanding. What he is saying is that the fullness of the mystery of God can never be captured by our thoughts and speculations, important as those are. It is when we substitute *thoughts* about God for an authentic *relationship* that we enter a zone of spiritual peril: “The

need for certainty is sin because it works off of fear and limits God to our mental images.”

A tone of bold (and at times brutal) honesty runs through Enns’ writing. He is not afraid to shed light on those places in the Bible that have often been ignored or even purposefully hidden by liturgists, teachers, and theologians. He cites numerous examples from the Psalms, including Psalm 88, which he summarizes as “. . . You (God) keep on hiding. I’m in absolute pain and the only friend I have is darkness.” As well, some might characterize a few chapter titles as at least a little irreverent. For example, the chapter on Book of Job is called “Don’t even try to understand what God is up to.”

However, Enns is not going out of his way to simply be outrageous; rather, he is emphasizing that, as is the case with human relationships, honesty is essential to building trust. Insincere and pious platitudes that mask painful realities will not do. On the other hand, the hard-to-hear parts of the Bible “have a lot to say about trusting God precisely *because* they go to the dark places of faith.”

For this author, faith (i.e. trust) means that one must be careful about seeking the answer(s) to the “whys” of life’s challenges. While study and reflection do provide needed context, ultimately thoughts alone will be inadequate. What does satisfy is “letting go of the need to know . . . because God is God.”

There is hope for a 2017 canonization for Frederic

Continued from page 3

Over the years, however, the church has been faced with a challenge: How is the faith of Pere Frederic still relevant, today? The Franciscan and his austere piety were grounded in the church of his time, but might seem outdated in today’s reality.

“We’re constantly facing the need to update and renew (Pere Frederic’s) religious heritage,” said Oblate Father Pierre-Olivier Tremblay, rector of Our Lady of the Cape Shrine. “I don’t have the slightest doubt that this man is a saint and an inspiring figure of our church. I sincerely believe that he’s still meaningful to us today.”

He said Pere Frederic is still in the hearts and minds of many Canadians, even a century after his death.

“We now live in a thoroughly secular world and in a society that has a tormented relationship with its own history and religious heritage. We’re not trying to adulterate the spiritual journey of an individual such as Pere Frederic. Yet, we try to put forward the aspects (of his spirituality) that are the most universal,” said Tremblay.

Brigitte Caulier, who teaches Canadian religious history at Laval University in Quebec City, said there is a tendency to water

down and rebrand some key elements of the spiritual life of some church figures. She said this should not happen with Pere Frederic.

“I don’t think it would be a good idea to adapt and rebrand his story (so to align it with our current religious sensibilities). By doing so, we adulterate him and his spirituality. The piety he promoted was indeed austere and demanding. Yet, that’s precisely how things were back then,” Caulier said.

She said the potential saint’s heritage mainly rests on the fact that he was a charismatic, popular figure, first and foremost because of his reputation as a miracle-worker. It’s mainly because of him, and the miracles associated with him, that the crowds flocked to the Our Lady of the Cape Shrine, thus allowing it to blossom and thrive.

Bonenfant said he hopes his fellow Franciscan will be canonized sometime in 2017.

“I’m only sure of one thing: his canonization will happen in due time. (Pere Frederic) isn’t like the other Canadian saints or blessed: He’s somehow special and has an extraordinary stature, as his own personal story is interwoven with the land of Jesus of Nazareth,” the postulator said. “And he’s injected that in the bloodstream of the Canadian people.”

We forget how to trust the deep humanity within



Questioning Faith

Mary Marrocco

Do you remember the joy of the letter Q? My mother was recalling the childhood “aha” moment of realizing the difference between printing capital G and Q: lay G on its back, close the circle, make a line in the right direction, and you’ve discovered the beauty of Q.

There’s an element of discovery, of recognition, about learning to live in the world. Something in us recognizes, or connects with, something outside ourselves, as though we’d seen it before and were calling it to mind. What’s within us is linked with what’s without. We see the connections among things in ways we never did before. This dynamic is the mystery of education, of human development, even of community.

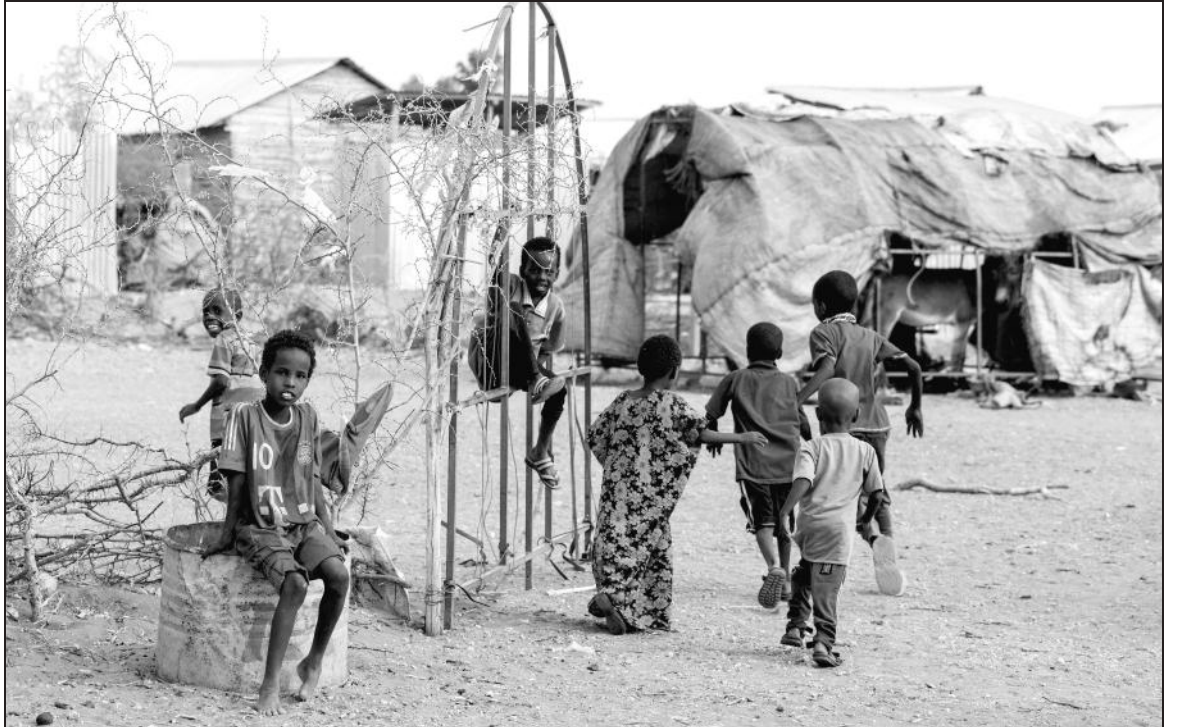
Yet somehow it’s hard for us to trust what’s within, even though it’s the key to everything we do. We prefer to arrange and control things, relying on the plodding structures we build rather than risk the inner dynamism that’s built-in. We have a deep need for security; it’s related to our equally deep need of love.

A group I’ve joined decided to sponsor a refugee family, from a natural desire to welcome the

stranger. It’s a little dispiriting to see that desire pinned, like a caught butterfly, to protocols, forms and procedures, as though trying to codify every act of human existence. Possibly the protocols were created by people with the same natural desire to welcome the stranger in need. If we need forms and directives to tell us how to say hello at the airport, and how to help our family shop for food, are we really up for the task? Are protocols the hope for restoring some small measure of humanity in face of appalling inhumanity?

Perhaps it’s hard for us to trust that humans know how to be human with each other. When the simple fundamentals of community get so lost, how can we find our way back to our common humanity? A forest of measurable, evidence-based protocols might seem like the road to salvation. We design structures to protect us from what Albert Camus calls the “hell of the other,” even in performing acts of service. In a *Peanuts* cartoon, Linus shouts to his sister Lucy: “I love mankind . . . It’s people I can’t stand!!”

We’re not so much forbidden from the Garden of Eden as incapable of being in it, for we forget how to trust what’s deep inside us: our own humanity, and what St Augustine calls our “capacity for God” (*capax dei*). It’s hard for adults to remember what children know — that somewhere inside us, we’re ready for the beauty of the letter Q; that there’s a harmo-



Catholic Register/Michael Swan

RESTORING HUMANITY — Children play in one of the five refugee camps around Dollo Ado near the Somali-Ethiopian border in this 2015 photo. Mary Marrocco writes, “A group I’ve joined decided to sponsor a refugee family, from a natural desire to welcome the stranger. It’s a little dispiriting to see that desire pinned, like a caught butterfly, to protocols, forms and procedures, as though trying to codify every act of human existence. . . . Are protocols the hope for restoring some small measure of humanity in face of appalling inhumanity?”

ny inside all things, even inside of us humans. Especially inside of us humans.

Protocols aren’t our saviour, useful though they can be. There’s an order that isn’t ours to invent, nor to be masters of, but ours to discover, work with and delight in.

We forget how to trust what’s inside us, but we do know it. Mary Jo Leddy, founder of Romero House for refugees, told sponsoring groups not to worry and plan so much when feeling weighed down by red tape, because they have what it takes to care for refugees: “When people feel welcome, they flourish,” she said (CBC News, Nov. 28, 2015).

Augustine reminds us that if we know everything except “we belong to God,” then we know

nothing at all. Salvation isn’t in creating and following the best protocols, but in discovering this relationship at the heart of us, and of all that is: the divine life of the Trinity, inviting us into the dance.

Recently a NASA representative announced, with joy in his voice, a movie the spacecraft Juno took: “and for the first time, all of us together will actually see the true harmony in nature. This is what it’s about, this is what Jupiter and its moons look like, this is what our solar system looks like if you were to move out, it’s what the galaxy looks like, it’s what the atoms look like. It’s harmony at every scale.” If the space agency can help us see the harmony in all things, as my mother glimpsed in the letter Q, then its protocols and

procedures are put to good use.

This harmony can be hard to see, particularly when humanity’s inhumanity clouds and covers it over. Could we dare take the simple approach of a monk? Charged with running the monastery’s mill, he had a reputation for having the best-run, most efficient mill with the happiest workers. How did he do it? Every morning, he went to his cell to pray for each worker, remembering his story and holding him personally before God.

Perhaps our monk had protocols and procedures too; if he did, he knew they weren’t God, but existed to serve God in his beloved creatures, created in his own image. Us.

The feast of St. Augustine was Aug. 28.

Our fear of hell . . .

In Exile

Ron Rolheiser, OMI



Hell is never a nasty surprise waiting for a basically happy person. Hell can only be the full flowering of a pride and selfishness that have, through a long time, twisted a heart so thoroughly that it considers happiness as unhappiness and has an arrogant disdain for happy people. If you are essentially warm of heart this side of eternity, you need not fear that a nasty surprise awaits you on the other side because somewhere along the line, unknowingly, you missed the boat and your life went terribly wrong.

Unfortunately for many of us, the preaching and catechesis of our youth sometimes schooled us in the idea that you could tragically miss the boat without knowing it and that there was no return. You could live your life sincerely,

in essential honesty, relate fairly to others, try your best given your weaknesses, have some bounce and happiness in life, and then die and find that some sin you’ve committed or mistake you’d made, perhaps even unknowingly, could doom you to hell and there was no further chance for repentance. The second of your death was your last chance to change things, no second chances after death, no matter how badly you might like then to repent. As a tree falls so shall it lie! We were schooled to fear dying and the afterlife.

But, whatever the practical effectiveness of such a concept, because it really could make one hesitate in the face of temptation because of the fear of hell, it is essentially wrong and should not be taught in the name of

Christianity. Why? Because it belies the God and the deep truths Jesus revealed. Jesus did teach that there was a hell and that it was a possibility for everyone. But the hell that Jesus spoke of is not a place or a state where someone is begging for one last chance, just one more minute of life to make an act of contrition, and God is refusing. The God whom Jesus both incarnates and reveals is a God who is forever open to repentance, forever open to contrition, and forever waiting our return from our prodigal wanderings.

With God we never exhaust our chances. Can you imagine God looking at a repentant man or woman and saying: “Sorry! For you, it’s too late! You had your chance! Don’t come asking for another chance now!” That could not be the father of Jesus.

And yet the Gospels can give us that impression. We have, for example, the famous parable of the rich man who ignores the poor man at his doorstep, dies, and ends up in hell, while the poor man, Lazarus, whom he had ignored, is now in heaven, comforted in the bosom of

Abraham. From his torment in hell, the rich man asks Abraham to send Lazarus to him with some water, but Abraham replies that *there is an unbridgeable gap between heaven and hell* and no one can cross from one side to the other. That text, along with Jesus’ warnings about that the doors of the wedding banquet will at a point be irrevocably closed, has led to the common misconception that there is a point of no return, that once in hell, it is too late to repent.

But that’s not what this text, nor Jesus’ warning on the urgency of repentance, teaches. The “unbridgeable gap” here refers, among other things, to a gap that remains forever unbridged here in this world between the rich and the poor. And it remains unbridged because of our intransigence, our failure to change heart, our lack of contrition, not because God runs out of patience and says: “Enough! No more chances!” It remains unbridged because, habitually, we become so set in our ways that we are incapable of change and genuine repentance.

Jesus’ story of the rich man

and Lazarus actually draws upon a more ancient Jewish story that illustrates this intransigence. In the parallel Jewish parable, God does hear the rich man’s plea from hell for a second chance and grants it to him. The rich man, now full of new resolutions, returns to life, goes immediately to the market, loads his cart with food and, as he is driving home, meets Lazarus on the road. Lazarus asks for a loaf of bread. The rich man jumps off his cart to give it to him, but, as he pulls a huge loaf of bread from his cart, his old self starts to reassert itself. He begins to think: “This man doesn’t need a whole loaf! Why not just give him a part! And why should he have a fresh loaf, I’ll give him some of the stale bread!” Immediately he finds himself back in hell! He still cannot bridge the gap.

Kathleen Dowling Singh submits that in making a series of mental contractions we create our own fear of death. That’s true too for the afterlife: by making a series of unfortunate theological contractions, we create our own fear of hell.

Finding ourselves in the story of the Prodigal Son



Two summer experiences come to bear on my reflections for this week’s readings. The first is a study in contrasts. I was blessed to travel to Charlottetown, P.E.I. Here was a small East Coast city teeming with tourists and beautiful old buildings. Here was the birthplace of Confederation, and these Islanders show off our Canadian heritage and history with great pride. It struck me that the miracle of this “union” between provinces could only have been the work of the Holy Spirit, since so few leaders began their trek there with any stated purpose of creating a country! Just the magic of the island could have swayed them! Beautiful harbours, unusual red sandy beaches and a certain “Anne of Green Gables” optimism that must have made everyone more agreeable!

But I was also there to see my son perform in a musical entitled “Spoon River.” The story takes place around 1915, in the cemetery of a small town in Illinois. Each of the characters comes up from their grave to share their perspective on life and sometimes the lives of those around them. Their honesty and forthright portrayals of life in a small town, complete with its cruel judgments and hostile relationships, is deep, disturbing, and invites one to search their own soul for the truth of their existence. The concluding tableaux is a group number that has a haunting question for the living: “Is your soul alive? Then let it feed!” I left the theatre asking this question: Is my soul alive? What is the “condition” of my soul? Is it fed by “soul” food? Is it

Williston is a retired parish life director for the Diocese of Saskatoon and a former missionary with the Redemptorists. He is also a song writer and recording artist.

dead in areas where I have not let the Spirit bring life? This is all taking place, remember, in the midst of the disarming enchantment of a Charlottetown summer music festival.

This kind of “soul-searching” would have been a worthwhile question to ask the Israelites in today’s first reading, as they fashioned a golden calf and decided to worship it as the power that rescued them from slavery. The allure of a concrete object like a golden calf offered them more clarity than Moses’ God in the clouds and on a mountain. Sometimes we make choices for “golden calves” in our life, choosing “clarity” and “control” over “mystery” and the “otherness of God.”

But our God is patient and waits for us to see the dead-end paths we sometimes choose. God waits as the father waits in the Prodigal Son story of today’s Gospel, going out to look down the road, praying for a wayward child to come home. This story now holds deeper meaning for me since I attended a convention in Mississauga, held by the Henri Nouwen Society, celebrating his legacy on the 20th anniversary of his death. In Nouwen’s book *The Return of the Prodigal Son* he reflects on each of the characters in Rembrandt’s painting with the same title.

Nouwen invites the reader to enter fully into the skin of each of the people in the painting. He begins with the younger son, then goes to the older brother, then to the father himself. It struck me as I read the book that the soul searching taking place within each character is similar to the reflections of the characters in “Spoon River.” The same question could be asked of the two brothers. To the younger: “After you had spent everything and you were in desperate need, was your soul alive?” To the older son the question could be posed differently: “Since you fulfilled the defined roles of a dutiful son, but had done so while building up great resentments and self-pity, was your soul alive?”

According to Nouwen, entering more deeply into these brothers and their search for fulfilment prepares us to enter

into the heart of the father. It seems that as we honestly identify with both brothers, we can progress on the road of self-discovery. Each of us has elements of both brothers in our spiritual path. We can find times of recklessness and self-indulgence, like the young brother. Times when we’ve bowed to the “golden calf.” But there can be a grace-filled point where we realize how little these ways feed our souls. This bids us return to a place called “home.” This is where a new beginning can be born out of the ashes of a chaotic life. The father not only welcomes the son back, but runs out to meet him along the road, with love in his heart for a son so sorely missed! “Quick, take the finest robe and put it on him . . . for my son was dead and has come back to life!”

The second son is not so easily recognized in us. The reason is that we can hide behind our good behaviour. We can be trapped by our own egos and self-righteously justify our judgment of others by showing how we have sacrificed to answer the call of duty. We can mount trophies of good rule-following, all the while piling up stone walls of resentment in our hearts for all the ways God has showered “cheap grace” on the undeserving. As Nouwen puts it: “Here I am faced with my own true poverty. I am totally unable to root out my resentments. They are so deeply anchored in the soil of my inner self that pulling them out seems like self-destruction” (*The Return of the Prodigal Son*).

A conversion of the second son begins, once again, with a father who comes out to meet him. His father reminds him of their closeness. “My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it was only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found.” The door of compassion is open to the older brother, but Jesus never tells us if the older brother walks through that door!

Nouwen’s unique insight is that to identify with the two sons is precisely so we can develop a wider, more merciful and understanding heart ourselves. This is the birth of real compassion. In other words, the journey takes us to the point where we can become the father — loving others through their struggles and shortcomings, constantly being the one to go out to meet them. We can then embrace them with the merciful love of Jesus, as they discover a place where their soul is truly alive!

. . . and our fear of God



Unless you are already a full saint or a mystic, you will always live in some fear of death and the afterlife. That’s simply part of being human. But we can, and must, move beyond our fear of God.

As a child, I lived with a lot of fear. I had a very active imagination and too frequently imagined murderers under my bed, poisonous snakes slithering up my leg, deadly germs in my food, playground bullies looking for a victim, a hundred ways in which I could meet an accidental death, and threats of every kind lurking in the dark. As a child I was often afraid: afraid of the dark, afraid of death, afraid of the afterlife, and afraid of God.

As I matured, so too did my imagination; it no longer pictured snakes hiding everywhere or mur-

derers under my bed. I began to feel strong, in control, imagining the unknown, with its dark corners, more as opportunity for growth than as threat to life. But it was one thing to block out fear of snakes, murderers, and the dark. Not so easily did I overcome my fear of death, fear of the afterlife, and fear of God. These fears are the last demons to be exorcised, and that exorcism is never final, never completely done with. Jesus himself trembled in fear before death, before the unknown that faces us in death. But he didn’t tremble in fear before God; the opposite, in fact. As he faced death and the unknown, he was able give himself over to God, in childlike trust, like a child clinging to a loving parent, and that gave him the strength and courage to undergo an anonymous, lonely, and misunderstood death with dignity, grace, and forgiveness.

We need never be afraid of God. God can be trusted. But trust in God does include a healthy fear of God because one particular fear is part of the anatomy of love itself. Scripture says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. But that fear, healthy fear, must be understood as a reverence, a loving awe, a love that fears disappointing. Healthy fear is love’s fear, a fear of betraying, of not being faithful to what love asks of us in return for its gratuity. We aren’t afraid of someone we

trust, fearing that he or she will suddenly turn arbitrary, unfair, cruel, incomprehensible, vicious, unloving. Rather we are afraid about our own being worthy of the trust that’s given us, not least from God.

But we must trust that God understands our humanity: God doesn’t demand that we give God our conscious attention all of the time. God accepts the natural wanderings of our hearts. God accepts our tiredness and fatigue. God accepts our need for distraction and escape. God accepts that we usually find it easier to immerse ourselves in entertainment than to pray. And God even accepts our resistances to him and our need to assert, with pride, our own independence. Like a loving mother embracing a child that’s kicking and screaming but needs to be picked up and held, God can handle our anger, self-pity, and resistance. God understands our humanity, but we struggle to understand what it means to be human before God.

For many years I feared I was too immersed in the things of this world to consider myself a spiritual person, always fearing that God wanted more from me. I felt I should be spending more time in prayer, but, too often, I’d end up too tired to pray, more interested in watching a sports event on television or more interested in sitting around with family, colleagues, or friends, talking about

everything except spiritual things.

For years I feared God wanted me to be more explicitly spiritual. God probably did! But, as I’ve aged, I’ve come to realize that being with God in prayer and being with God in heart is like being with a trusted friend. In an easeful friendship, friends don’t spend most of their time talking about their mutual friendship. Rather, they talk about everything: local gossip, the weather, their work, their children, their headaches, their heartaches, their tiredness, what they saw on television the night before, their favourite sports teams, what’s happening in politics, and the jokes they’ve heard recently — though they occasionally lament that they should ideally be talking more about deeper things. Should they?

John of the Cross teaches that, in any longer-term friendship, eventually the important things begin to happen under the surface, and surface conversation becomes secondary. Togetherness, ease with each other, comfort, and the sense of being at home, is what we give each other then.

That’s also true for our relationship with God. God made us to be human and God wants us, with all of our wandering weaknesses, to be in his presence, with ease, with comfort, and with the feeling that we are at home. Our fear of God can be reverence or timidity; the former is healthy, the latter is neurotic.

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Love is free; we need to stop being surprised by that

Barefoot and Preaching

Leah Perrault



Have you ever been shaken from distraction by the beauty of the sky? Love poured out on the atmosphere, whether we notice or

not. This summer, the skies above Saskatchewan have been breathtaking — from sunsets to storms. I am surprised by the beauty every time and feel unworthy of the generosity of it.

I am beginning to have a way of recognizing that unworthy feeling, but for years I felt it and did not know what it was. It was an ache in the pit of my stomach, a discomfort in my own skin. It was strangely motivating, driving

me to prove it wrong, to expel it so I could just have some peace.

I first realized it was a feeling a few years ago, sitting on a balcony singing to myself and the trees. For all my years of living, I had not been allowing myself to receive love. I was trying desperately to earn it. And love, it turns out, is free.

I have laughed at this realization in less abstract circumstances. When I have tried to pay friends for babysitting when they just wanted to spend time with our kids. When I have given the money for a ride on the train to a dad who forgot his wallet. When a family member has knocked on my door to give me help I said I did not need.

I have been a relentless scorekeeper and a fierce competitor. As long as I owe you fewer favours than you owe me, I could feel OK for awhile. If I made a mistake, hurt someone, behaved badly, it tipped the balance permanently against me. It did not matter if someone told me it wasn't a big deal, in words or with gracious action, I still felt indebted, sick to my stomach.

This false economy of trying to earn love did some serious damage in my heart. Not only did it stop me from believing that others could love the me

beneath the shiny exterior, it made me hesitant to offer love freely to others. I performed loving actions without letting love touch me. Free, unconditional, generous love scared me. What would I do with all the score cards?

Sitting there on the balcony in July heat the walls started to fall down and I was overwhelmed by the relief of love that had been freely offered my whole life, by family and friends, by stranger and sinners, by nature and by God. Love is free. I just have to be willing to receive it.

I'm learning and still scarred. I am trying to teach my kids the value of hard work and guard against entitlement, but sometimes, I hear myself passing on my wounds with the lessons: "Why are you jumping on my furniture? Sure you can have a cuddle — *when* you have brushed your teeth and put on your pyjamas like I asked you to 10 minutes ago." Now I know that God understands these wounds, and when I realize I have messed up, I know I get to choose again. We are loved no less when we do it wrong than when we do it right.

Yesterday two strangers told me how nice I looked when they passed me on the sidewalk. A woman asked for spare change and after searching my purse and feeling awful because I did not have any, she thanked me for looking and smiled. This morning my littlest reached up both arms, whining for me to pick her up. I had to set down my hair straightener and my watch to receive her tightest squeeze. I have the most beautiful life.

That littlest one loves big because she hasn't yet learned how not to. And still, she has her own way of expressing it. She is learning new words every day, and because we love to hear her talk we try to get her to say things all the time. And she will not even try to say her name. It's tricky, and besides, she'd rather have the puppy's name. It makes us laugh. And when we try to get her to say "Love you," she says, "No." And still she loves and is loved. Because love is free, even if she can't say the words.

The thing about something free is that it cannot be bought, only received. It can be given, but not sold. My effort was the wrong currency, like trying to move clouds with my will. Just like the sky, my life is canvas filled with opportunities to be overwhelmed by love. Maybe one of these days I will stop being so surprised.

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



M. Weber

GENEROUS BEAUTY — "This summer, the skies above Saskatchewan have been breathtaking — from sunsets to storms," writes Leah Perrault. "I am surprised by the beauty every time and feel unworthy of the generosity of it."

The good, the bad and the ugly of the Olympics



Everyday Theology

Louise McEwan

I was tired of Rio 2016 even before the opening ceremonies.

There was way too much coverage of everything that was wrong and little of what was right. The only good news story that I can recall prior to the opening ceremonies was the creation of Team Refugee, and once the Olympics began, Team Refugee virtually disappeared from view. The "trending stories" about Rio 2016 focused on controversy, scandal, or bad news.

John Steinbeck hit the nail on the head when he said, "We value virtue but do not discuss it. The honest bookkeeper, the faithful wife, the earnest scholar get little of our attention compared to the embezzler, the tramp and the

cheat." This fits the media coverage and our taste when it came to Olympic news.

Here are a few examples of bad news associated with the Rio 2016 Games.

Brazil spent vast amounts of money to host the games when a majority of its citizens live in poverty. Bribery played a huge role in the awarding of contracts to construct Olympic venues. Politicians and public servants lined their pockets. The rich got richer.

The polluted waters of Guanabara Bay raised concerns. There were fears that athletes and visitors would contract waterborne diseases from the raw human sewage spilling into the waters. There was less concern about the citizens who live with this reality daily.

Days before the games were set to begin, the Australians refused to stay in sub-standard, unfinished dormitories. Accepting bribes apparently did not ensure that a good product would be delivered on time.

The state-sponsored Russian doping scandal broke. The International Olympic Committee made a controversial decision regarding the participation of Russian athletes and passed the buck to the various sports federations. Russian officials denied and scorned the McLaren report. Fans booed some of the Russian athletes who did get to compete.

Part-way through the two-week games, Brazilian police arrested Patrick Hickey of the International Olympic Committee on allegations of illegal ticket selling.

American swimmer Ryan Lochte, who has won 12 Olympic medals, embellished an incident, saying he was robbed at gunpoint to the head. The fallout from his dissembling lasted for days. Lochte may have apologized, but the affair demonstrated the arrogance of privilege.

The Brazilian women's synchronized dive team made headlines for a so-called "sex scandal." The night before their competition, one of the divers banished her teammate from their room to clear the way for a tryst.

It is all so human. In every instance we see the imperfection of our common human nature. But, for some reason, we expect better from those involved with running, hosting and competing in the Olympics Games. We naively expect that the athletic excellence on display at an

Olympics will automatically translate into virtuous and exemplary behaviour from everyone involved. We are disappointed and disillusioned when the flaws of humanity overshadow the lofty ideals of the Olympic movement.

I had to look hard to find good news stories that were not focused solely on athletic performance. One story in particular caught my eye because it showed the more admirable side of human nature. New Zealand runner Nikki Hamblin and American runner Abby D'Agostino exemplified the Olympic spirit of selflessness and sportsmanship during a 5,000-metre race. Hamblin fell, causing D'Agostino to fall and sustain an injury. The women helped each other up. Both completed the race. They received the International Fair Play Award, a prestigious honour that has only been awarded 17 times in Olympic history.

One of the goals of the Olympic movement is to put sport at the service of society. Sometimes, the goal gets twisted. Instead of sport at the service of society, we see examples of sport at the service of self.

We should not be surprised that the best and worst of human behaviour made an appearance at the Rio 2016 Games. At the end of day, the Olympic Games are a microcosm of human nature with its mixture of the good, the bad and the ugly.

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

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In Saskatchewan, the foolhardy have their day



Colten Boushie, a 22-year-old First Nations man, was shot to death on Aug. 9. He was in a farmyard near Biggar, Sask., about 100 km west of Saskatoon. Gerald Stanley, a 54-year-old farmer, has now been charged with second-degree murder. According to Boushie’s family, he and four friends were returning from swimming at a river when they sought help for a flat tire at a farm. Stanley’s family, meanwhile, issued a statement through their lawyer saying that what occurred on that day is not as simple as what has been portrayed. One assumes that the relevant details will emerge during the trial.

Either way, Boushie’s death has unleashed a torrent of public emotion and comment. On Aug. 18, roughly 200 people gathered peacefully in support of the Boushie family at the North Battleford, Sask., courthouse, where Stanley was arraigned. Elsewhere, a Facebook page called Saskatchewan Farmers Group included racially toxic comments following Boushie’s shooting. One commenter, who wrote that “his (Stanley’s) only mistake was leaving three witnesses,” is the elected reeve of a rural municipality in southern Saskatchewan. The page has since been taken down and the once-outspoken reeve is now unavailable for comment.

Of course, the self-described Farmers Group cannot claim to represent all farmers. The Saskatoon-based National Farmers

Union, a modestly sized but well-established organization, issued a news release of their own, condemning racist comments, including those on the Farmers Group page.

The torrent of racist comment on social media was such that Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall pleaded for it all to stop. “Racism has no place in Saskatchewan,” Wall wrote on his Facebook page. His post received more than 500 comments — most of them supportive — but there were others who were unrepentant: “Wanna stop racism? Revamp those obsolete treaties and make every adult in Saskatchewan pay taxes.” Another said: “The very sad truth is that (by) being ‘white,’ we can be discriminated upon more than any other race and no one faces any repercussions.”

These latter two comments capture a sentiment that fuels the antagonism toward First Nations people in our country. The original inhabitants occupied and used the land for tens of thousands of years but were forced by the British Crown — and a succession of Canadian governments — to give most of it up. In the Prairie provinces, they surrendered that land in seven treaties negotiated in the 1870s. As a result, the First Nations were shunted onto small reserves to make way for European settlement. It’s simply ignorant and malicious for the descendants of settlers who benefit from those land surrenders to now say that the treaties should be torn up.

The second comment — that it’s really white people who are discriminated against more than anyone else — is simply not true. How is it that the descendants of settlers whose governments forced First Nations from their land and into poverty can some-



Peter Garden

DEMONSTRATION OF SUPPORT — Supporters of the family of Colten Boushie, who was shot to death near Biggar, Sask., on Aug. 9, gather at the North Battleford, Sask., courthouse on Aug. 18.

how see settlers as the victims? Indeed, the bigots and the fool-

hardy have had their day. But surely we won’t allow them to

prevail in the near and distant future.

Merton’s classic spiritual struggle

Outlooks from the Inner Life

Cedric Speyer



“They try to say what you are, spiritual or sexual? / They wonder about Solomon and all his wives. / In the body of the world, they say, there is a soul and you are that. / But we have ways within each other that will never be said by anyone.”

— Jelaluddin Rumi (13th C. Persian poet)

“Watching Merton . . . in love, showed how the greats are human too.”

— Joan Baez

For the ancient Greeks, it was Helen. For every Dante, there is a Beatrice. Dr. Zhivago needed Lara. Romeo is the archetypal lover we know, thanks to Juliette. Even the macho stance of Ernest Hemingway was brought to its knees by Adrianna.

Carl Jung called it the *anima*, and it’s the very essence of the interior life of a man, the eternal feminine or dream girl of most every pop song. It’s *la femme inspiratrice*, who moves a man from Adam to Jesus, from self-love to selfless love. Dare I say that Jesus himself had Mary Magdalene?

And that brings us to Margie,

Speyer is a Benedictine Oblate as well as clinical supervisor of e-counselling for a major employee & family assistance program, and creative director, InnerView Guidance International (IGI). He also directs a documentary series titled *GuideLives for the Journey: Ordinary Persons, Extraordinary Pathfinders*. <http://www.guide-lives.ca/> Connect with Cedric on <https://www.facebook.com/cms94> or via cms94@hotmail.com

the “girlfriend” of the famous monk of modern times, Thomas Merton. Thanks to the journals published 25 years after his death (as he willed it), we can witness Merton experiencing romantic love as “a personal revolution” while not allowing it to overthrow his monastic vows. (The love story can also be read as the mid-life crisis of a man with developmental delays forced to reintegrate or regress, but I’m not here to reduce it to a case study.)

In danger of *fuga cum muliere* (flight with a woman) we see Merton in the classic spiritual struggle between spirit and matter, or God’s love and human desire, as if one contradicts the other. In a world gone wrong, or split down the middle by sin, they do. It’s all too apparent that greed, lust, and violence widens the gap between heaven and earth. To be “monkey in the middle” is the excruciating aspect of the human condition. Like Graham Greene’s *The End of the Affair*, this dilemma played out in the heart of a man torn between solitary dedication to God and devotion to a young woman

awakening him to divine eros.

Let’s be clear, as evident in Merton’s journals, that we’re not talking about typical sexual temptation, although there was that. It’s only when sex is separated from eros, the very juice of life, that it becomes lustful, and contracts rather than expands us. Thanks to Margie, Merton went beyond intellectualisms on love to riding the roller-coaster of emotions she aroused . . . to somehow realigning on a path with heart.

Just as Jesus is an intermediary between heaven and earth, closing the gap in our psyche with his equally dual nature, so can an *anima* figure be the intermediary between a man’s persona in the world and the depths of his being. When we get beneath the surface of a monk’s “illicit affair” and even Merton’s own torment about his “double life,” there is healing of the great divide between sacred and profane love. It comes back to the capacity for double awareness . . . of the heavenly woman and mortal mate co-existing in our psyches, without burdening one’s earthly companion; rather “owning” the responsibility for *anima* integration, freeing her to be human in her own right.

The Baule tribe of West Africa differentiates a dream mate in the ideal Other World whom they “marry” in spirit, from an actual spouse, so expectations of a flesh-and-blood woman are not contaminated by the projection of archetypal feminine elements. This is what Merton had to sort out in order not to actually elope with Margie, which would have been as unwise as it gets. Instead, “the archetypal (Margie) and the reality merge together” in a sacred romance . . . still on his path.

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The growth in ‘nones’

A PEW survey released at the end of August explored the phenomenon of the growing number of adults who do not identify with a religious group — usually self-identified as “nones.” They are a diverse group, including militant atheists, freelance spiritualists, one-time Catholics, non-observant Jews, secular Muslims and others. This trend has attracted the attention of both religious leaders and social scientists.

In the U.S., the nones grew from 8.2 per cent in 1990 to 15 per cent in 2008. In Canadian surveys, the number of nones grew from 10 per cent in 1985 to around 25 per cent of adults (and 32 per cent of teens) today.

The PEW survey was part of a broader Religious Landscape Study in America. The vast majority of these religious nones (78 per cent) say they were raised as a member of a particular religion but they have shed their religious identity in adulthood.

Many reasons are given by the nones for why they no longer identify with a religious group.

Among the varied responses, a few common themes emerged.

About half of the nones who were raised in a religion said a lack of belief led them to move away from religion. Some explanations were: Too many Christians doing un-Christian things, rational thought makes religion go out the window, learning about evolution when I went away to college, and “I’m a scientist now, and I don’t believe in miracles.”

One in five nones are opposed to organized religion in general. This group includes people who do not like the hierarchical structure of religious groups, people who think religion is too much like a business and others who mention clergy sexual abuse scandals. Another response was: “I think that more harm has been done in the name of religion than any other area.”

Another one in five say they are religiously unsure. This includes people who say they are “spiritual” if not religious, who believe in God but in their own way and who say they are “seeking enlightenment” or are “open-minded.” For some, religion is

personal, e.g., “I believe in a higher power, but I don’t need a church to do that.”

One in ten religious nones are now “inactive” religiously. They do not take part in religious practices and some say they are too busy for religion.

While participation in religion has been on the decline across the West since the 1970s, this is not necessarily a sign of cultural collapse. “Evidence is beginning to build outside of Canada that the unaffiliated are not as unreligious as many often assume,” Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, a Canadian studying at Oxford University, told a 2014 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont. “This is an important development not only for the study of religion, but also for other social phenomena which religiosity is known to impact, such as physical and mental health, choice of educational track, volunteering, family formation and vote choice.”

But for pastors planning pastoral programs at any time of the year, it is important to know why people are at the peripheries rather than in the pews. These surveys can help guide their approach. — PWN

Christians in Saudi Arabia not part of ‘save the Christians’ appeal

Soul Mending

Yvonne A. Zarowny



“Please stop! I ask you with all my heart, it’s time to stop. I am thinking above all of children, who are deprived of the hope of a worthwhile life, of a future. . . . Dead children, injured children, mutilated children, children whose toys are things left over from war; children who can’t smile anymore.”

— Pope Francis, July 27, 2014, St. Peter’s Square

This heart-felt appeal was made by Pope Francis after Israel strip bombed Gaza, killing 1,600 Palestinians and maiming many more. It could apply to any war . . . including those in Syria, Yemen and Myanmar.

My month of May was split between a pilgrimage in Ireland with my niece and family time in England.

Just before I left, I watched the disturbing 50-minute documentary Saudi Arabia Uncovered (Youtube) made by a team of British investigative journalists and released in March 2016 on iTV.

It includes a clip of U.K. PM David Cameron defending the long-standing Anglo-Saudi alliance.

It also has shots — snuck out of the country because taking such pictures is illegal — of the Riyadh square specially built for public beheadings, the removal of other body parts, people hanging and being beaten.

If you watch the documentary — which I encourage you to do — I suggest you do not do it alone.

There is neither freedom of the press nor religion in Saudi Arabia (SA).

A Roman Catholic priest can be killed for wearing a roman collar!

Why do we not know this?

“Christians” in SA are not considered in Roman Catholic appeals to “save Christians in the Middle East” as they are not “indigenous.” They are “only” foreign workers — about two million of them.

The current Saudi regime sanctions public crucifixions, hangings and floggings while

educating its young to hate Christians, Jews, Muslims and others who do not adhere to their form of Islam.

I return to that in future columns.

Here it is important for us to remember this Saudi regime is an ally and trading partner of Canada, the U.K. and the U.S. We all sell billions of dollars of weapons and services to them.

When the similarities between the Saudi regime and those we are told we must “liberate” or “kill otherwise they will kill us” is pointed out to foreign-policy decision makers, we are told: “there is no such thing as “perfect allies” and “these sales provide jobs at home.”

If you do not want what you see and hear in this documentary to continue, I encourage you to write your MP as well as talk with your priest and bishop.

Why is this not in the Catholic press? Why is this not part of “pro-life/culture of life” campaigns?

McDonald’s Happy Meals help fund Olympics

By Sylvain Charlebois, Halifax Troy Media

Despite the wonderful athletic performances at the Olympics — including Canada’s many medals — the big winner in Rio was certainly the International Olympic Committee (IOC), through its mega sponsorship deals.

Over the years, well-known companies such as Coke and Kellogg’s have poured millions into the IOC.

But the biggest name in food at the Olympics, year after year, is arguably McDonald’s Restaurants. The fast-food giant’s relationship with the Olympic movement goes back more than 40 years, beginning with the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal. Its current deal ends after the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics. The deal is apparently worth more than \$50 million per Olympics — and that’s just for the right to use the famous Olympic symbol on its products.

The McDonald’s-IOC association has been lucrative for both

Charlebois is dean of the Faculty of Management and a professor in the Faculty of Agriculture at Dalhousie University. www.troymedia.com

parties.

McDonald’s is the world’s largest toy distributor, through the millions of Happy Meals it sells every year. Since 1979 in Canada, stencils, 3D glasses, Frisbees, balls, posters, mini gardening tools and video games have been given away with Happy Meals. Most toys are associated with a movie or TV show, and are part of a collection. That draws parents and children back to collect the entire set.

Over the years, the toys have become more sophisticated.

This year, in the spirit of the games, McDonald’s wanted to encourage kids to be active. So it arranged to give away Step-iT, a step counter made for children. The watch-like device was meant to allow kids to monitor their daily activities. However, children developed skin abrasions from wearing the counters and the chain had to issue a recall.

The interesting idea to encourage children to get into shape completely backfired for McDonald’s.

The situation highlights the questionable morality of giving away toys to sell Happy Meals. It’s not really advertising directly to children, which is a forbidden in many places, including Quebec. But McDonald’s focus on distributing toys, along with mar-

Doing nothing gives your tacit support to hate, intolerance and an economy built on the death of others . . . including children.

While in England I witnessed the slick, well-funded campaign of lies, racism, and emotional manipulation of the “Leave” side of the Brexit referendum which led to the murder of one young U.K. MP and a 57 per cent rise (and rising) in hate-crime complaints.

I also experienced my own family being uncomfortable discussing Brexit with friends (often members of their parish) because the emotional campaign of intolerance and lies had so polarized people.

Having been in numerous war zones, to me, it was like watching the ground work for violence being laid — that could easily lead to civil war.

Upon my return home, the insert for the Catholic Near East Welfare Association Canada (CNEWA) fell out of an issue of the Prairie Messenger.

A version of the above quote was on it under the heading “Pope Francis’ Plea to Save Children in the Middle East.”

I looked through it and their website. There was no mention of Saudi Arabia.

I fired off a list of questions to them.

To his credit, that resulted in a long, deep and far-ranging conversation with Carl Héту, their national director.

My conclusion from that conversation is we don’t know enough about our own histories as Christians, as a country, as a

— PEOPLE NEED, page 15



CNS/Marcos Brindicci, Reuters

OLYMPICS CLOSING CEREMONY — The Olympic flag is lowered during the closing ceremony in Rio de Janeiro Aug. 21. The 2020 Summer Olympics will be held in Tokyo. That is when McDonald’s Restaurants contribution of more than \$50 million per Olympics ends, says Sylvain Charlebois.

keting food of questionable nutritional value, has made many uncomfortable for years.

Happy Meals represent about 20 per cent of McDonald’s sales — more than 1.5 billion Happy Meals are sold worldwide every year. So continuing to give away toys is important to the company’s bottom line. A few years ago, the City of San Francisco tried to ban toy giveaways.

McDonald’s outsmarted city council by selling the toys for a dime each.

But a look to social licensing suggests those days are numbered.

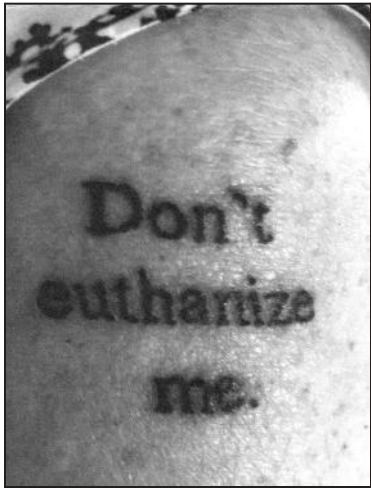
Social licensing is an organization’s ability to operate with the confidence of stakeholders that its activities are morally and socially

— DANGER, page 15

Elderly citizen finds a way to prevent euthanasia

The Editor: For years, I warned my children to steer clear of tattoo parlors, and now at 81 years old, I have had to resort to one myself. Bill C-14 makes it legal for us to play God and to make decisions over life and death ourselves. Assisted suicide is promoted as the most dignified way to treat an aging population-humanely, painlessly and without the need for suffering. Financially, it will become the salvation to our overburdened health care systems.

Our Government and Supreme Court do not of course mention anything about money, but they do warn us that within a few years, seniors will outnumber the



rest of the population and will need an army of caregivers to cope with them. That will be cost-

ly. Inevitably, euthanasia will become a more “socially acceptable” way to solve this problem, than for example Hitler’s “final solution.”

Obviously, none of this is acceptable to us Christians. We look to Christ on the cross, stripped of his garments, writhing in agony, and covered in blood — hardly a dignified image of God’s son. Yet the meaning of this is central to our faith. Suffering is vital to life and to our growth. What occurs at the end of my life is between God and me. Let no one else dare to interfere. So to understand this message clearly, read my shoulder! — **Christine Nagel, Calgary**



Paproski

Gleaning

Winnowing fear,
restless, feral winds
surge in my mind,
shifting directions,
gathering force.
I mistake it all
for chaff —
husks of failure
and deprecation.
But this wind resounds
from the ancient world
and release has always
been gleaned
from grains of doubt.

By Nancy Compton Williams

Mother Teresa considered ‘icon of mercy’

Continued from page 1

Mother Teresa is “an icon of mercy,” she said. “Even people who would have no faith would see the compassion and the mercy which Mother spread around her. She would not leave a suffering person without giving attention to them. On the contrary, she would go out to search for them and try to bring them to the realization that they are loved and they are appreciated.”

A growing number of Missionaries of Charity continue Mother Teresa’s work around the world. According to Pierick, the number of sisters has increased from 3,914 at the time of Mother Teresa’s death to 5,161 as of Aug. 5. The number of Missionary of Charity brothers has grown by 53 to 416. When Mother Teresa was alive, her order was working in 120 countries; today they are present in 139 nations.

Like millions of people around the world, Pierick believed Mother Teresa was “a living saint.” She was beatified in 2003

— six years after she died. The time it took for her sainthood cause to make its way through the exacting Vatican process “have



CNS/Robert Duncan

Mother Teresa Prema Pierick

been years of going deeper into understanding who she is,” her successor said.

As it turned out, the years were especially important in coming to understand Mother Teresa’s spiritual thirst and what she described as “the darkness” of feeling unloved by God. Pierick, who first met Mother Teresa in 1980, said the founder’s spiritual pain was something she kept well-hidden from all except her spiritual directors.

“In all things, Mother did not draw attention to herself but gave herself completely to others, forgetting about her own pain,” Pierick said.

Her continuing prayer and work, even with the experience of God being so far away, “speaks about her faith, her faithfulness to the commitment she had taken and to the person to whom she was wed: Jesus.”

The “darkness” became part of Mother Teresa’s ministry, the grace that gave it power.

McDonald’s toys in danger

Continued from page 14

legitimate. Supply chain transparency, operational gender equality and environmental stewardship all fit in a description of social licensing.

It’s surprising, then, that Happy Meals haven’t garnered much more attention in recent years. Somehow, McDonald’s has maintained a social licence to distribute the toys.

That may soon change.

Chile, attempting to address childhood obesity, has forbidden McDonald’s from giving away toys with Happy Meals. In some countries, McDonald’s gives books with Happy Meals rather than toys. Digital books are also available.

Striking a balance between pleasing responsible parents and entertaining children is difficult, but not impossible. And let’s face it, most McDonald’s toys capture a child’s imagination for only a few hours, if that. Some don’t even make it to the car (the waste is another issue, then).

The moral contract between consumers and the food industry is constantly revisited. What was acceptable just a few years ago may not be anymore. It’s easy to bet that the days of associating toys with fast food are numbered.

As a responsible company, McDonald’s has made some interesting adjustments in recent years, but problems remain. Giveaways on the surface aren’t a bad idea. Who doesn’t like gifts?

McDonald’s obviously used its latest Happy Meals giveaway as an attempt to improve society through childhood fitness, piggybacking on its Olympic relationship.

It’s failure is a sign that society’s standards are on the rise. Now McDonald’s must match that social evolution.

People need to ask questions

Continued from page 14

piece of empires of which we have been/are part — to even ask good questions much less the right questions!

Without the capacity to ask at least good questions, we have no hope of saving children . . . or stopping the social and climatic chaos resulting in the death, maiming or homelessness of millions of them.

Most Catholic press and organizations do nothing to enlighten us.

At best, they draw our attention momentarily to a few superficial symptoms of a seriously malfunctioning mode of development. If we donate money, they can alleviate a few of these symptoms for a few impacted. This the CNEWA flier did well.

This is important.

It is not enough, if our goal is to save children and help all in the Middle East have life with dignity.

What more is needed will be the focus of the next set of columns.

Meantime, please use your power to ask questions.

You have the power to change the tone of conversations promoting hatred, intolerance and worship at the altar of the Bronze Bull by respectfully raising questions.

Become informed. Start by reading some of the “back-grounders” on the Development and Peace website. It has information different than you get through the dominant or most Catholic media.

If we each own and constructively use our power, we can save the children.

And we are never alone on this sacred journey. Jesus promised.

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Labour Day text links family instability to lack of jobs

By Mark Pattison

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Today's "economic and political forces have led to increasingly lowered economic prospects for Americans without access to higher education, which is having a direct impact on family health and stability," said Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami.

He made the comments as the author of this year's Labour Day statement from the U.S. bishops.

Linking the decline in good jobs to family woes, Wenski said, "Over half of parents between the ages of 26 and 31 now have children outside of a marriage, and research shows a major factor is the lack of middle-skill jobs — careers by which someone can sustain a family above the poverty line without a college degree — in regions with high income inequality."

The statement, dated Sept. 5, Labour Day, was released Aug. 22. Wenski is chair of the U.S.

bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development.

"Divorce rates and the rate of single-parent households break down along similar educational and economic lines," he continued. "Financial concerns and breakdowns in family life can lead to a sense of hopelessness and despair. The Rust Belt region now appears to have the highest concentration in the nation of drug-related deaths, including from overdoses of heroin and prescription drugs."

Wenski quoted from Pope Francis' address to Congress during the pope's U.S. visit last September: "I would like to call attention to those family members who are the most vulnerable, the young. For many of them, a future filled with countless possibilities beckons, yet so many others seem disoriented and aimless, trapped in a hopeless maze of violence, abuse and despair. Their problems are our problems. We cannot avoid them."

The pope added, "We live in a culture which pressures young people not to start a family, because they lack possibilities for the future. Yet this same culture presents others with so many options that they too are dissuaded from starting a family."

Wenski said, "When our leaders ought to be calling us toward a vision of the common good that lifts the human spirit and seeks to soothe our tendencies toward fear, we find our insecurities exploited as a means to further partisan agendas. Our leaders must never use anxiety as a means to manipulate persons in desperate situations, or to pit one group of persons against another for political gain."

In touting the "sanctity of work," Wenski said, "Dignified work is at the heart of our efforts because we draw insight into who we are as human beings from it." St. John Paul II, in his encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (On Human Work), "reminded us that human labour is an essential key to understanding our social relationships, vital to family formation and the building up of community according to our God-given dignity," the archbishop added.

"As we engage with our neighbours and our communities, we quickly find ways to deepen solidarity in a broader way, and to act on the structures and policies that impact meaningful work and family stability," Wenski said.

"Simply put, we must advocate for jobs and wages that truly

provide a dignified life for individuals and their families, and for working conditions that are safe and allow for a full flourishing of life outside of the workplace," he added. "Unions and worker associations, while imperfect, remain an essential part of the effort, and people of faith and goodwill can be powerful leaven to ensure that these groups, so important in society, continue to keep human dignity at the heart of their efforts."

And "if you are an employer,

you are called to respect the dignity of your workers through a just wage and working conditions that allow for a secure family life," Wenski said.

"With time, we will begin to restore a sense of hope and lasting change that places our economic and political systems at the service of the human person once more."

The full text of the U.S. bishops' Labour Day statement is available in English at <http://tinyurl.com/hm9dcoa>



CNS/Gregory A. Shemitz

CHURCH USES SHEEP TO EAT CEMETERY GRASS — Msgr. Donald Sakano greets sheep in the cemetery at the Basilica of St. Patrick's Old Cathedral in New York City. The parish used the three grazing sheep to cut the graveyard's grass this summer.

Ghana's church leaders raise awareness of land-grabbing

ACCRA, Ghana (CNS) — Ghana's church leaders have committed to continue raising public awareness about land-grabbing, in hopes of protecting and restoring the livelihoods of rural people, protecting the environment and saving communities from unnecessary strife.

Samuel Zan Akologo, executive secretary of *Caritas Ghana*, said a new report, based on six months of research, would begin a conversation that "would help deepen our understanding on the issues involved to enable the bishops take actions based on informed position."

The report, *Unmasking Land Grabbing in Ghana: Restoring Livelihoods, Paving the Way for Sustainable Development Goals*, was released Aug. 23. It was prepared by *Caritas Ghana* in collaboration with the country's Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development and the Washington-based Africa Faith and Justice Network, with financial support from local and

international partners, including Ghana's bishops. It is a followup to a Pan-African church meeting on land-grabbing last November.

"We have the outreach potential to reach every nook and cranny of this country to ensure that no one is left behind," Akologo said. "This is the aspiration for the implementation of the new (UN) Sustainable Development Goals, which the church is very much committed to promoting."

Critics say land-grabbing — large-scale land acquisition that displaces the original owners — is increasing in Africa, impoverishing local people. It has been identified as a major cause of forced evictions, displacements and migration of people.

The report refers often to Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, on Care for Our Common Home. It also suggests the encyclical be used "as a framework for collective and collaborative response of church, state, society and corporate bodies to build consensus in addressing the problem."

Pope asks Jesuits to teach discernment

By Cindy Wooden

ROME (CNS) — When it comes to the Christian life, too many seminaries teach students a rigid list of rules that make it difficult or impossible for them as priests to respond to the real-life situation of those who come to them seeking guidance, Pope Francis said.

"Some priestly formation programs run the risk of educating in the light of overly clear and distinct ideas, and therefore to act within limits and criteria that are rigidly defined *a priori*, and that set aside concrete situations," the pope said during a meeting with 28 Polish Jesuits in Krakow during World Youth Day.

The Vatican did not publish details of the pope's meeting July 30 with the Jesuits, but — with Pope Francis' explicit approval — a transcript of his remarks to the group was published in late August by *Civiltà Cattolica*, a Jesuit journal reviewed at the Vatican prior to publication.

According to the transcript, the pope asked the Jesuits to begin an outreach to diocesan seminaries and diocesan priests, sharing with them the prayerful and careful art of discernment as taught by St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits.

"The church today needs to grow in the ability of spiritual discernment," the pope told the Polish Jesuits.

In his spiritual exercises, St. Ignatius provided steps for help-

ing people recognize — or discern — where God is working in their lives and what draws them closer to God or pushes them further from God. For St. Ignatius, knowing what is moral and immoral is essential, but knowing what is going on in people's lives helps identify practical ways forward.

Without "the wisdom of discernment," the pope said in Krakow, "the seminarians, when they become priests, find themselves in difficulty in accompanying the life of so many young people and adults."

"And many people leave the confessional disappointed. Not because the priest is bad, but because the priest doesn't have the ability to discern situations, to accompany them in authentic discernment," the pope said. "They don't have the needed formation."

While some laypeople also are called to provide spiritual direction, priests are more often "entrusted with the confidences of the conscience of the faithful," so seminarians and priests particularly need to learn discernment.

"I repeat, you must teach this above all to priests, helping them in the light of the exercises in the dynamic of pastoral discernment, which respects the law but knows

how to go beyond," the pope said.

"We need to truly understand this: in life not all is black on white or white on black," he said. "The shades of grey prevail in life. We must then teach to discern in this grey area."

Pope Francis did not mention his apostolic exhortation on the family, *Amoris Laetitia*, (The Joy of Love), in his talk with the Jesuits in Krakow, but the document repeatedly referred to the importance of discernment for families and for their spiritual guides.

Rev. Salvador Pie-Ninot, a Spanish professor of ecclesiology, wrote in the Vatican newspaper Aug. 24 that the pope referred to the need for discernment 35 times in the exhortation.

Especially when dealing with individual Catholics who have been divorced and civilly remarried, Pope Francis wrote, discernment recognizes that, "since the degree of responsibility is not equal in all cases, the consequences or effects of a rule need not necessarily always be the same. Priests have the duty to accompany (the divorced and remarried) in helping them to understand their situation according to the teaching of the church and the guidelines of the bishop."



CNS/School Sisters of St. Francis and Sisters of Charity of Nazareth

RELIGIOUS MURDERED IN MISSISSIPPI — Police are investigating the stabbing deaths of two women religious who spent years caring for poor people as nurse practitioners in central Mississippi. Sister Margaret Held, 68, left, a member of the School Sisters of St. Francis in Milwaukee, and Sister Paula Merrill, 68, a member of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth in Kentucky, were found stabbed to death Aug. 25 in their Durant, Mississippi, home, police said. The sisters had worked at the Lexington Medical Clinic in Lexington, about 15 kilometres from the house they shared.

We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.

— Maya Angelou