



International consultation

Saskatoon was recently host to 12 members of the International Consultation between the World Evangelical Alliance and the Catholic Church. The meeting was the occasion to discuss commonalities and differences between these Christian traditions, as well as to consider opportunities for collaboration through joint mission and prayer.

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Dumping waste

Filipino activists gathered at the International Peoples' Mining Conference are not just talking about mining abuses by Canadian mining companies, they also want Canadians to know that Canada is illegally dumping its waste in their country, writes Tracy Glynn.

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Colbert's faith

Stephen Colbert's "well-intentioned, poorly informed, high-status idiot" character has been discarded for his new persona as late-night talk show host.

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Butala's new book

Gerald Schmitz reviews Sharon Butala's new novel, *Wild Rose*, which tells the story of a young woman who comes from Quebec in 1884 with her husband to make a new life on the plains of southern Saskatchewan.

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Formula for discipleship

The readings for the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time shake us out of our comfort zones, but Gertrude Rompré has a "mathematical" formula to help us move toward healthy discipleship.

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Pope reforms marriage annulment rules

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis' reformed rules for marriage annulment cases, making the process simpler, quicker and less expensive, respond to calls that bishops from around the world have been making since before the 1980 Synod of Bishops on the family convoked by St. John Paul II.

Catholic marriage tribunals do not dissolve marriages, but assess whether or not a valid sacramental marriage was present from the beginning. Catholics whose first unions are declared "null" — meaning there never was a marriage — are free to marry in the church and receive the sacraments, including reconciliation and communion.

With the new rules released Sept. 8, Pope Francis made the

process quicker, but did not make it easier for couples to prove a union was not a marriage. He removed the requirement that all decrees of nullity must be confirmed by a second panel of judges; he urged dioceses around the world to make the process free or as close to free as possible; and he established a "brief process" by which diocesan bishops can recognize the nullity of a union when both parties agree and have overwhelming proof their union did not meet at least one of the Catholic Church's requirements for a sacramental marriage.

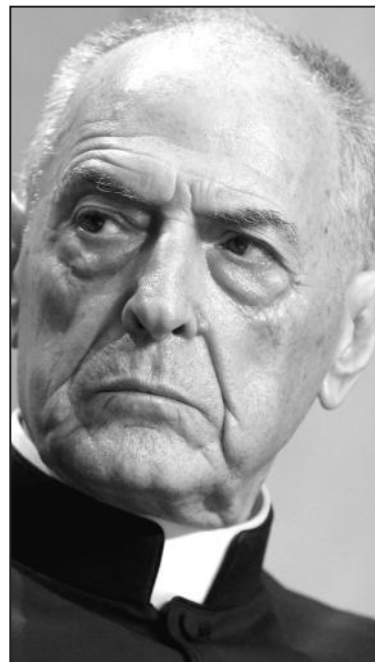
According to the website of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: "A valid Catholic marriage results from five elements: (1) the spouses are free to marry; (2) they freely exchange their consent; (3) in consenting to marry, they

have the intention to marry for life, to be faithful to one another and be open to children; (4) they intend the good of each other; and (5) their consent is given in the presence of two witnesses and before a properly authorized church minister."

The need to reform the annulment process and cut the costs was supported by an overwhelming majority of bishops — about 90 per cent — at last year's extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the family.

Pope Francis' new rules respond to that request. He said that except for what is needed for an appropriate salary for tribunal workers, the annulment process should be free "so that, in a matter so closely tied to the salvation of souls, the church — by demonstrating to the faithful that she is a

— PENITENTIAL, page 19



CNS/Paul Haring

Msgr. Pio Vito Pinto

Social justice document raises many issues

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — A new resource from the bishops of Canada highlights a number of serious justice and peace concerns facing this country, using the lens of Pope Francis' teachings.

A Church Seeking Justice: The Challenge of Pope Francis to the Church in Canada was released Sept. 3 by the Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB).

Although not intended as an election resource, the document encourages Canadian Catholics to ponder a range of issues that have dominated headlines.

"It's the kind of document that is well read before, during, and

after an election campaign, because it addresses issues that are abiding," says Saskatoon Bishop Donald Bolen, chair of the CCCB commission for justice and peace.

Text boxes throughout the 20-page resource reflect upon missing and murdered indigenous women, assisted suicide, refugee sponsorship, temporary foreign workers, income and salary disparities, youth and indigenous unemployment, arms sales, Canada's peace-keeping role, Canadian mining companies abroad, inequality and solidarity, poverty and the environment.

The main body of the document explores Catholic social teachings that Pope Francis has highlighted throughout his pontificate.

"From the very beginning of Pope Francis' pontificate, justice and peace have been at the forefront of his teaching," says Bolen. "Weekly, if not daily, Pope Francis has addressed issues where human

beings are experiencing suffering, situations of injustice and inequality, of conflict and violence and the erosion of human dignity."

— GOSPEL, page 7

Consecrated life honoured

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — Some 100 consecrated women and men from several religious orders were the guests of honour at a banquet Sept. 8 hosted by the Knights of Columbus Denis Mahoney Council at the Cathedral of the Holy Family in Saskatoon.

Held to mark the Year of Consecrated Life (which contin-

ues until the Feast of the Presentation, Feb. 2, 2016), the evening was MCed by Myron Rogal, coordinator of the diocesan Justice and Peace Office. Proceeds of the dinner went to support diocesan vocation efforts.

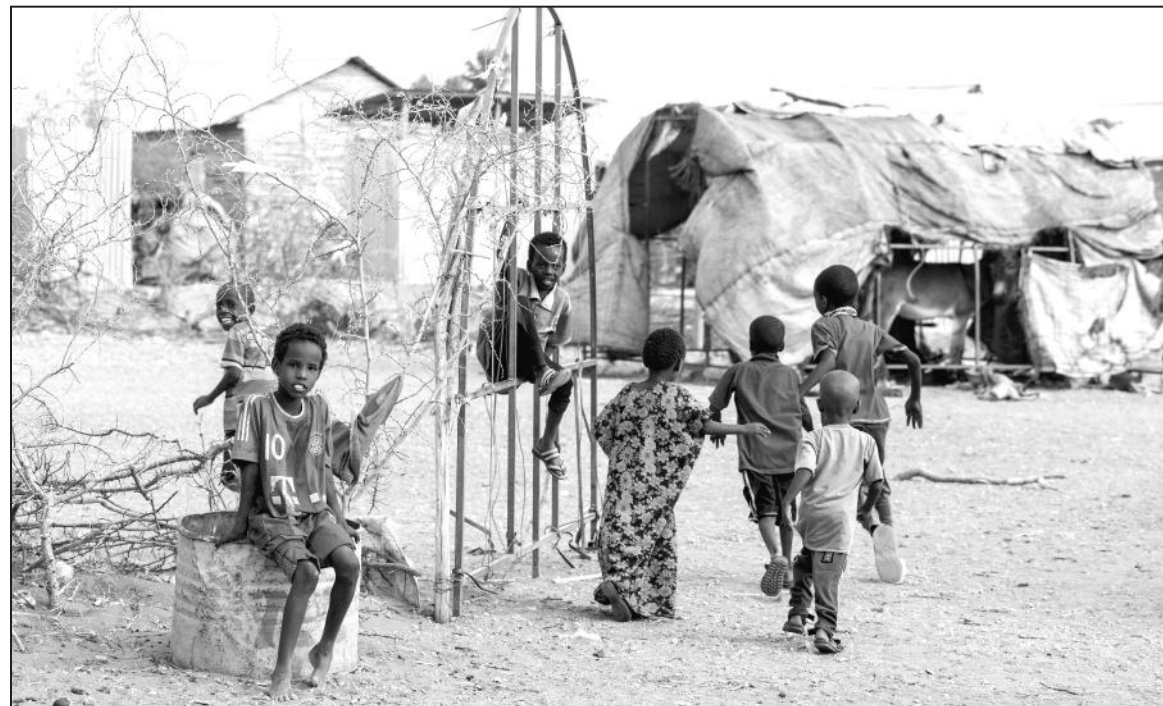
Knights of Columbus Grand Knight Gil Wist, members Andy Wilson, Reg Bilodeau, and a team of volunteers, as well as many guests from across the diocese, were on hand to thank consecrated religious women and men for their service and witness.

On display in the hall was a large cloth map of Saskatchewan showing all the places where religious women have served in the province since the first three Grey Nuns arrived at Île-à-la-Croix in 1860. The map was created by Sister Sylvia Obrigewitsch, NDS, for a 2005 homecoming organized by the Saskatoon Diocesan Sisters Association for women religious who served in Saskatchewan, explained Sister Teresita Kambeitz, OSU.

"As part of that celebration, we tried to get in touch with all the orders that had ever served in Saskatchewan, and got in touch with their archivists to send us the names of all the sisters," she described. "I was really startled to discover there were 61 orders, with over 5,500 sisters that served in Saskatchewan."

Consecrated religious orders in

— MONUMENT, page 4



Catholic Register/Michael Swan

PLIGHT OF REFUGEES — These children play in one of the five camps around Dollo Ado near the Somali-Ethiopian border. The camps have become artificial cities where nomadic Somalis are penned in, their lives on hold. Michael Swan of the Catholic Register has a special report from Africa (pages 9-11).

Pope extends guidelines for forgiving sin of abortion

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — In an extraordinary gesture for the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis has extended to priests worldwide the authority to absolve women for the sin of abortion and has decreed the full validity during the year of the sacrament of confession celebrated by priests of the traditionalist Society of St. Pius X.

“This jubilee Year of Mercy excludes no one,” the pope wrote in a letter to Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of New Evangelization, the office organizing events for the holy year, which opens Dec. 8.

Pope Francis said one of the most serious problems facing people today is a “widespread and insensitive mentality” toward the sacredness of human life.

“The tragedy of abortion is experienced by some with a super-

ficial awareness, as if not realizing the extreme harm that such an act entails,” while many other women believe that “they have no other option” but to have an abortion, the pope wrote in the letter, released Sept. 1 by the Vatican.

The pressures exerted on many women to abort lead to “an existential and moral ordeal,” Pope Francis said. “I have met so many women who bear in their heart the scar of this agonizing and painful decision.”

When such a woman has repented and seeks absolution in the sacrament of confession, he said, “the forgiveness of God cannot be denied.”

Although church law generally requires a priest to have special permission, called faculties, from his bishop to grant absolution to a person who has procured or helped another to procure an abortion, the pope said he decided “to

concede to all priests for the jubilee year the discretion to absolve of the sin of abortion those who have procured it and who, with contrite heart, seek forgiveness for it.”

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Pope Francis urged priests to welcome to the sacrament women who have had an abortion, explain “the gravity of the sin committed” and indicate to them “a path of authentic conversion by which to obtain the true and generous forgiveness of the Father who renews all with his presence.”

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesperson, told reporters the pope’s letter “highlights the wideness of God’s mercy” and is “not in any way minimizing the gravity of the sin” of abortion.

In his letter, Pope Francis also granted another exception to church rules out of concern for “those faithful who for various reasons choose to attend churches officiated by priests” belonging to the traditionalist Society of St. Pius X. Although the society is no longer considered to be in schism and the excommunication of its bishops was lifted in 2009, questions remain over whether the sacraments they celebrate are valid and licit.

The pope’s decision was “taken with the faithful in mind” and is limited to the holy year, which runs through Nov. 20, 2016, Lombardi said.

The spokesman also confirmed that the Vatican’s contacts with leaders of the Society of St. Pius X have continued. Pope Francis wrote in his letter that he hoped “in the near future solutions may be found to recover full communion with the priests and superiors of the fraternity.”

Pope Francis’ letter also explained expanded opportunities for obtaining the indulgences that are a normal part of the celebration of a holy year. An indulgence is the remission of the temporal punishment a person is due be-

cause of his or her sins. In a holy year, it is offered to pilgrims who cross the threshold of the Holy Door at the Vatican or in their local diocese, confess their sins, receive the eucharist and pray for the pope’s intentions.

The celebration of God’s mercy, he said, is “linked, first and foremost, to the sacrament of reconciliation and to the celebration of the holy eucharist with a reflection on mercy. It will be necessary to accompany these celebrations with the profession of faith and with prayer for me and for the intentions that I bear in my heart for the good of the church and of the entire

world.”

Those who are confined to their homes can obtain the indulgence by offering up their sickness and suffering, he said.

Pope Francis also included special consideration for people who are incarcerated, touching on the Old Testament tradition of a jubilee year as a time for granting prisoners amnesty.

Those who, “despite deserving punishment, have become conscious of the injustice they committed,” may receive the indulgence with prayers and the reception of the sacraments in their prison chapel, he wrote.

Pope calls on European parishes to take in refugees

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Given the ongoing crisis of people fleeing from war and poverty, Pope Francis asked every parish and religious community in Europe to take in a family of refugees as a concrete sign of hope and God’s mercy.

“The Gospel calls us, asks us to be near the least and the abandoned. To give them concrete hope, not just say ‘Hang in there, have patience!’ ” he said in an appeal after praying the Angelus with those gathered in St. Peter’s Square Sept. 6.

“Christian hope has a fighting spirit with the tenacity of someone who is heading toward a sure goal,” he said, while he encouraged all of his “brother bishops of Europe — true shepherds,” to support his appeal in their dioceses.

“In the face of the tragedy of tens of thousands of refugees, who are fleeing death because of war and hunger” and are seeking a new life, the pope called on “parishes, religious communities, monasteries and sanctuaries all across Europe to give concrete expression of the Gospel and receive a family of refugees.”

God’s mercy is expressed through the works of regular men and women, he said, reminding peo-

ple that Christ taught that “whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”

He said the gesture would also be a concrete way to prepare for the Holy Year of Mercy, which begins Dec. 8.

The Vatican newspaper, *L’Osservatore Romano*, said St. Peter’s Basilica and the Vatican’s St. Anne Church would sponsor their first refugee families soon as well as seek employment for each head of the household.

The pope asked that two apartments near the Vatican be made available for the two families, said Cardinal Angelo Comastri, archpriest of St. Peter’s Basilica.

“The pope wants the apartments to be near where he is, also to guarantee health care” and other services available in Vatican City State and not put a burden on the Italian government, the cardinal said.

Before the Angelus prayer, the pope said Christians must not be closed up inside themselves, as is often the case. “We create so many inaccessible and inhospitable islands,” he said.

The most basic relationships sometimes can become incapable of openness and mutual exchange, such as families, associations, parishes, even nations, demonstrating yet another example of human sin, he said.



CNS/Debbie Hill

ANCIENT OLIVE TREE IN WEST BANK — Palestinian Catholic Nakhleh Abu Aid, 76, stands by his ancient olive tree Sept. 3. Israel is uprooting the Palestinian Christian-owned olive trees to make the way for the controversial separation barrier in the Cremisan Valley in Beit Jalla, West Bank.

West Bank olive orchards destroyed

By Judith Sudilovsky

BEIT JALLA, West Bank (CNS) — Since hundreds of olive trees were uprooted to make room for a separation barrier through the Cremisan Valley adjacent to this largely Christian village, Rev. Aktham Hijazin, Annunciation parish priest, has been celebrating mass daily behind red-and-white police tape.

The tape — and the border police who patrol the area — prevent some 56 Palestinian landowners from reaching their land.

A dump truck rumbles by, kicking up dust, just a few feet away from where the priest has set up his makeshift altar: a small table covered by a white cloth with three olive tree saplings at its base.

On Sept. 6, as Hijazin celebrated mass for a handful of local landowners and a small Swedish group, the sound of the trucks occasionally drowned out their

voices. Later, coughing slightly, the priest held up the consecrated eucharist, first toward the worshippers, then facing the destroyed orchards.

In April, the residents celebrated the Israeli Supreme Court decision, which seemingly blocked a plan to build the separation barrier. But just three weeks later the ministry of defence sent a letter to the private landowners’ attorney and the Beit Jalla municipality, announcing its intention to build the wall.

Despite several legal appeals requesting to see the wall’s new route, the court declined to issue an injunction, and on Aug. 17 bulldozers and tractors began uprooting hundred-years-old olive trees and clearing dirt paths.

Attorney Raffoul Rofa, executive director of the Society of St. Yves of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, who represented the Salesian Sisters affected by the construction, said a gap is expect-

ed to be left open in the barrier around the monastery and convent — at least initially — until a solution is devised to allow the institutions to remain in contact with the Palestinian side.

“Everybody expected them to come up with an alternate route for the whole wall, not just for the convent and monastery, but our expectations were not accurate” said Rofa. “Basically we won (the nuns’) case, but those who lost are the landowners. The Latin Patriarchate believes the people here are very important and will not be left on their own, so we are still involved in the case.”

Meanwhile, Palestinians say, Israel is creating space for more settlements while legal appeals are still in the works.

A protest by residents during which they tore down a military gate closing off the land was met by tear gas and beatings Aug. 23. Since then, local Christian leaders have been holding the daily masses.



CNS/Esteban Biba, EPA

ELECTIONS IN GUATEMALA — Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchu shows her ink-stained finger after casting her vote at a polling station in the general elections in Guatemala City Sept. 6. Guatemalans have protested and prayed and achieved unprecedented political change in their country. Protests peacefully forced a president accused of corruption to resign in the days prior to the vote.

Heart of consultation is desire to grow together

By Kate O’Gorman

SASKATOON — Saskatoon was host to 12 members of the International Consultation between the World Evangelical Alliance and the Catholic Church Aug. 31 - Sept. 4. The meeting was the occasion to discuss commonalities and differences between these Christian traditions, as well as to consider opportunities for collaboration through joint mission and prayer. Events included a public panel discussion on the International Evangelical-Roman Catholic Consultation Sept. 2.

Co-moderated by two members of the local Evangelical-Catholic dialogue in Saskatoon, Nicholas Jesson (Ecumenical Officer for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon) and Jodi Kozan (an Evangelical member of the local dialogue and the founder of Women’s Journey of Faith), the panel discussion featured four members from the International Consultation.

Msgr. Juan Usma Gomez of Columbia, who works at the Vatican, and Rev. Rolf Hille, a Lutheran from Germany who is director for ecumenical affairs for the World Evangelical Alliance, began the session by commenting on the history of Evangelical and Roman Catholic relations and the nature of the current discussions.

Speaking to the Catholic perspective, Gomez noted that “Evangelicals and Catholics are two strong faith communities around the world. They both have a strong presence in the world but in the past they have not recognized each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. They have long lived in isolation from one another.

“Our communities have been separated by different histories and theologies as well as unhelpful stereotypes and mutual misunderstandings. We suffer from misapprehension, hostility and conflicts that continue to divide the work of Christ.”

Pointing to the goal and work of the consultation’s meetings, Gomez added, “We are trying to address these issues in the spirit of the Gospel. In this consultation, we are trying to give room to a new era of relationships.”

Among points of historical development in dialogue with Evangelical communities, Gomez highlighted the significance of the Second Vatican Council and its emphasis on Christian unity and the emergence of the first consultations between Evangelicals and Catholics spanning 1977 - 1984, which focused on mission. The document produced from this first phase of conversations was entitled, Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission. According to Gomez, “the 1970s was a time of pioneers.”

Evangelical-Catholic relations on the local level were tenuous. “The situation was not just a separation over theological matters,” he explained; rather, it was a more profound issue centring on the question of recognizing one another as being Christian without fear of persecution. These early international initiatives gave rise to greater local dialogue, understanding and collaboration.

“Evangelicals and Catholics realized that we can look together



Msgr. Gregory Fairbanks

INTERNATIONAL CONSULTATION — Saskatoon was host to the International Consultation between the World Evangelical Alliance and the Catholic Church Aug. 31 - Sept. 4. The weeklong meeting was the occasion to discuss commonalities and differences between these Christian traditions, as well as to consider opportunities for collaboration through joint mission and prayer.

for a new understanding of controversial issues and thus a second series of consultations began,” Gomez continued. The report stemming from the work of a second Consultation, held between 1993 - 2002, was entitled Church, Evangelization and the Bonds of Koinonia.

While recognizing the progress these earlier phases of consultation produced, Gomez also noted areas of continued misunderstanding

and stressed the need for additional dialogue.

Commenting on the nature of the dialogue and sharing his personal experiences as a World Evangelical Alliance member, Rev. Rolf Hille said that in these discussions “we have developed a new method of dialoguing.”

Noting the existence of differences between the churches, he explained that “we always start

with common ground to figure out what we can say together — which is a lot. Second, we encourage each other to go forward as disciples of Christ. Then we refer to all those questions that are in dispute. We ask the tough questions, giving the partners a chance to react and to find better answers than have been given in the past.”

Speaking to one of the main themes highlighted in the newest

document, Hille said that within the secular world “Christians are a minority and we should stand together in this situation of secularism and agnosticism. This is a world without God in many ways and this pushes us together to find answers and to be a witness to our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Hille continued: “Another aspect highlighted within the document is that of moral disorientation.” Issues of abortion, euthanasia and assisted suicide were discussed, as was the way in which each tradition addresses these realities. “These are issues on which we should stand together and be strong in our societies to witness to the truth of the Gospel.”

Hille expanded on the work of the Consultation: “In situations of pluralism and secularism we found a good deal of common ground, mainly in terms of our common faith. We believe in the holy Scriptures as inspired by God and we discovered through our discussion that we all have our roots in the early church.”

The Consultation group’s meeting in Saskatoon was the last of six meetings held in this third phase of international consultations beginning in 2009.

Rev. James Nkansah-Obrempong of Nairobi, Kenya, vice-chair of the World Evangelical Alliance Theological Commission, spoke about how Evangelicals view Catholics in the Global South, par-

— NOMINALISM, page 4

Catholic bioethicists differ on guidelines for ‘assisted death’

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Two Catholic bioethicists have given different responses to a request to sit on the provincial/territorial panel developing guidelines for “physician assisted death.”



CCN/Gyapong

Sister Nuala Kenny

Sister Nuala Kenny, a professor emeritus of bioethics at Dalhousie University and a retired pediatrician with an expertise on end of life issues, has agreed to sit on the panel.

“I decided to participate because I did not believe I had any other moral option,” said Kenny, who noted she is a Roman Catholic religious sister and a prominent Catholic, but one who has always worked in secular universities and medical schools.

“My position is, it’s clearly that of minimizing harm,” Kenny said. “The harm has been done. After the Feb. 6, 2015, Supreme Court decision, assisted death, both physician assisted suicide and physician-performed euthanasia are now legal.”

What we have now is a stay on the legalization to give some opportunities to develop oversight mechanisms, she said.

“We have lost the battle for those of us who believe assisted death is wrong,” she said. If nothing is done at all, on Feb. 6, 2016, “we would have in this country the most liberal assisted dying policies in the world.”

The Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute’s executive director Moira McQueen, however, refused a request to sit on the panel.

“The whole thing about mitigating harm and safeguards are for the birds,” she said. She pointed out how the safeguards for euthanasia in the Netherlands and other jurisdictions “evaporated very quickly.”

“When something is really seriously wrong in the first place — Catholic teaching would call it intrinsically wrong — how can you mitigate the harm?” she asked. “It’s so wrong, no matter what follows from it is also wrong. I would call it formal co-operation.”

“Any contribution I could make would simply be to put forward my moral objection to the whole enterprise, and that clearly does not fit with the mandate,” she told the AG’s office in an email. “Nor would I want to be part of

the panel in order to make it look as though different points of view had been heard and considered before matters proceed. Implementation means that a step has been done or omitted, and government has shown its hand.”

McQueen said she is concerned that most people will “sit back and say that’s acceptable” when the government draws up safeguards, with no knowledge of what has happened in jurisdictions that have tried them. “We are not informed enough and will not be listening to people who say safeguards are not working,” she said. “I’m concerned many ordinary lay people are being lulled into a false sense of security about mitigating harm.”

McQueen said she agreed with the approach of the Catholic Women’s League and other organizations that are calling for the use of the notwithstanding clause to override the Supreme Court of Canada’s Carter decision last February that struck down some of the Criminal Code provisions against assisted suicide. She also supports the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition’s campaign “Give us More Time” approach. She suggested Canada hold a referendum on the matter to ensure people are informed.

Euthanasia “affects every single family,” because “everyone dies,” in a way that abortion does not, she said, noting that when abortion was first decriminalized it was only supposed to be in very limited circumstances such as a health risk to the mother. Now, it’s abortion on demand, she said.

McQueen admitted, however, that even Canada’s bishops are conflicted on how to respond. “Everyone is trying to do the best they can,” she said. Though every Catholic organization is strongly opposed to assisted suicide and euthanasia, they disagree on strategy.

“To keep saying we are opposed, that’s not good enough for me,” Kenny said. The panel will be dealing with issues such as consent and how it is obtained, whether there can be advance consent and other matters. The panel will also have an impact on conscience rights for medical personnel and hospital directors, she said.



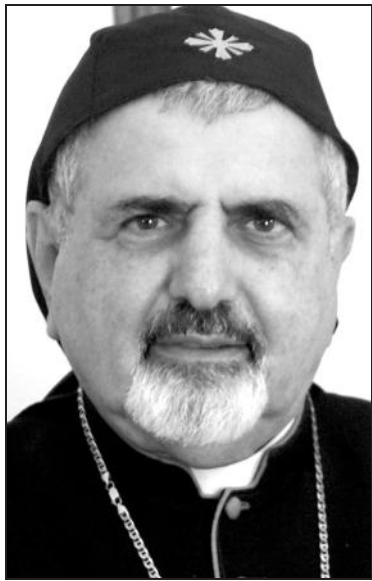
Moira McQueen

“Many of my colleagues would be very, very strong on wanting to protect conscience,” she said. “Yet if you are not inside on the groups making these decisions, you can’t help protect conscience.”

Western policy opened way for Islamic terrorism

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — The Catholic Patriarch of Antioch, the most senior Catholic bishop in Syria, says the West must share responsibility for the fate of three-year-old Alan Kurdi, the Syrian toddler pictured drowned on a Turkish beach on newspaper front pages worldwide.



Catholic Register

Archbishop Ignatius
Joseph III Younan

"I was heartbroken when I saw that little child lying on the beach," His Beatitude Mar

Ignatius Joseph III Younan told The Catholic Register in an interview in Toronto Sept. 4. "I did ask, 'Who is responsible?' When you have a kind of robbery or crime, you look for the (one) responsible. But (those) responsible here, very sadly, are not going to be known or discovered, because they are the big powers on the international scene."

The West and its policy of isolating the Assad regime in Damascus has allowed the crisis in Syria to drag on, creating an opening for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria resulting in 3.5 million Syrian refugees and seven million internally displaced Syrians, said Younan.

"In my humble opinion, I will tell you that the West is also an accomplice in that tragedy," said the patriarch. "Because the western politicians didn't have the courage to tell people of the Middle East — that means the Muslim politicians — that it is time to go deeper in the problem, in the issue, and to separate religion from politics, to let all components of the society feel that they are full citizens, full-rights citizens."

The situation now demands a stronger military response from western countries. The bombing campaign led by the United States with Canadian participation is "only a military show" that is "absolutely not" sufficient, said Younan.

"I just heard on the news this morning that there were at least 5,000 of what we call strikes, air strikes, against Da'ash (the Arabic name for the Islamic State) in Iraq and Syria," he said. "But what kind of results?"

The patriarch wants western boots on the ground and unequivocal support for Syria's national army under President Bashir Assad and Iraq's national army.

"If we want seriously to finish with the horrible phenomenon of Da'ash, we need arms. We need soldiers on the ground," he said.

The West should do more to stop the financial support the Islamic State has been able to get through oil sales and from other sources and close the borders to choke off the supply of foreign fighters flowing into both Iraq and Syria.

Supporting the national armies in Iraq and Syria is a pragmatic solution in Younan's eyes.

"Because they will be the only ones to be able to fight those terrorists," he said.

Younan dismisses western talk of peaceful solutions and a transition to democracy.

"It's a kind of utopianism to just say 'people of peace.' We are dealing with people who don't recognize the value of peace," he said. "They only recognize the power of weapons."

In the Qaryatian district of Syria

near Homs, the self-appointed caliph of the Islamic State, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, has issued a *dhimma* or contract granting Christians the right to live unharmed in the area if they pay a religious tax or *jizya* of 4.25 grams of gold (about \$200) for the rich, half that for the middle class, and half that for the poor, the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported on Sept. 3. Christians living in Islamic State territory must not establish churches, monasteries or hermitages, may not display Bibles or crosses, may not own weapons or say anything that disparages Islam.

Manifestations of political Islam can't be trusted and leave Christians

no choice but to flee, said Younan. One of Younan's priests, Rev. Jacques Murad, was kidnapped in the Qaryatian district three months ago and is still being held, Younan said. Younan fears for Murad's life.

The Syriac Catholic Church continues to preach hope and peace, but young Syrians need some concrete support from the West, said the patriarch.

"We have to keep the faith and the hope and evangelizing and serving our people with charity and solidarity," he said. "However, how can we convince our young generations that really the church is with them? The so-called countries based on Christian values, would they help them survive?"

Nominalism a problem

Continued from page 3

ticularly in Africa. Bishop Rodolfo Valenzuela Nuñez of Guatemala concluded the panel presentations by speaking about how Catholics view Evangelicals in Latin America.

"One hundred and fifty-eight million Catholics and 100 million Evangelicals live in Africa," explained Dr. Nkansah-Obrempong. "We are huge bodies, which is why it is important for us to work together so we can procure the task God has given us."

One of the issues at play in how Evangelicals view Catholics at the grassroots level, according to Nkansah-Obrempong, is that Evangelicals think the majority of Catholics do not have a personal relationship with Christ. "They see a lot of nominalism in the Catholic Church." Juxtaposed to this notion is amazement and appreciation at the level of devotion and commitment Catholics have to their faith as well as their commitment to social services, he said.

There are also issues of contention surrounding the perceived practices of idolatry propagated within the Catholic Church. "Seeing people buy images (of God) becomes problematic" for Evangelicals, Nkansah-Obrempong commented. "It is an issue we struggle with and it has come up in our discussions."

"There are serious questions we are trying to address," said Nkansah-Obrempong, "and I'm not sure if we will be able to resolve all of them but at least we are making an attempt to bring them to the fore."

He went on to say that "we should not let this destroy us. Even in our disagreement, we can still be together, live together and work together to fulfil the purpose God has called us for."

Echoing Nkansah-Obrempong, Valenzuela emphasized that "we have learned in this ecumenical dialogue and experience that we must recognize each other as people, as Christians and as sinners." However, as in Africa, Evangelical-Catholic relations are more tense at the local and grassroots level in Latin America.

According to Valenzuela, a major historical development changing the face of Guatemala is that approximately half of the population has converted from Catholicism to Evangelicalism within the past 50 years. The same is true, he said, of Brazil. This has had a historical, political and sociological effect on the continent.

As Nkansah-Obrempong pointed out earlier, one reason for this dramatic shift has been the preponderance of nominalism throughout Catholicism in that region.

"The religious splitting of our country is of great concern," said Valenzuela, "because it goes against everything that the Lord wants." Secondly, it is of great concern to the Latin American bishops because it has required the church to ask itself where it has failed in the encouragement of her people to have a personal relationship with Christ. As Valenzuela noted, "this split is happening because we have not supported or reinforced this personal encounter with Christ."

Those attending the panel discussion heard that at the heart of the consultation is a desire to grow more closely together for the sake of the Gospel message. "Our international consultation must not forget that we are here, not just to discuss our problems, but mostly as believers in Christ, recognizing that we are being called to make every effort to ensure the Gospel is being spread throughout the world," said Gomez.

Monument to be unveiled Oct. 1

Continued from page 1

Saskatchewan have owned and operated 23 hospitals and worked in another 20, and have owned and operated 45 boarding schools and taught in almost 300 schools, said Kambeitz, describing how these women built the foundations of health care, education and social welfare.

During this Year of Consecrated Life, the provincial Catholic Connections Committee has commissioned a monument recognizing the contributions of women religious to Saskatchewan, she added. The monument will be unveiled and blessed in Wascana Park, near the legislative building in Regina, at 1:30 p.m. Oct. 1, followed by mass at Holy Rosary Cathedral.

Bishop Donald Bolen noted that the Congregation for Religious Life has called for the Year of Consecrated Life to be celebrated by looking to the past with gratitude, living the present with passion and look-

ing to the future with hope.

As part of looking to the past with gratitude, Bolen listed the initials of all the religious orders who have enriched his own life over the years. "Going through this sort of exercise brings to light what an extraordinary contribution consecrated women and men make to the life of the church. This has been our Catholic experience and it has been a joy and an unfathomable gift," he said.

"Dear sisters, fathers and brothers, you have been for us close friends and mentors, spiritual supports and fonts of wisdom, sources of honesty and daily inspiration in your faithful witness. You have shown us God's tender mercies. With boundless gratitude for all that has been, from the bottom of our hearts, thank you."

As for living the present with passion, "religious life is a passionate matter because we follow a passionate Saviour, a passionate God, who wanted to come and dwell with us, who wanted to give

us everything, so that we might have life," Bolen said.

"Religious life is not for the unadventurous. Your ministry has enriched all of our lives."

In looking to the future, "we cannot give up on God and what God is doing in our midst," said Bolen. During his presentation he quoted a number of writers and poets, including Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ, who wrote: "Above all, trust in the slow work of God. . . . give Our Lord the benefit of believing that his hand is leading you, and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete."

The bishop concluded with a reflection on a line from E.E. Cummings: "always the beautiful answer who asks a more beautiful question," observing that the beautiful question from the Lord is, "Will you follow me?"

"And your beautiful answer? It is your life, it is your faithfulness, it's your joy — it is you. Thank you very, very much," said Bolen.



Tim Yaworski

CONSECRATED LIFE — Consecrated religious men and women were honoured Sept. 8 at a banquet hosted by the Knights of Columbus at the Cathedral of the Holy Family in Saskatoon.

The
Question
of Life

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Canadians wish to do more to help Syrian refugees



Pulpit & Politics

Dennis Gruending

Stephen Harper and the Conservatives' messaging in this election campaign has been derailed by the sight of hundreds of thousands of refugees streaming into Europe, and by the images of the lifeless body of three-year-old Alan Kurdi being carried from a beach in Turkey. There is a widespread call within Canada for action.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) says that there are more than four million Syrian refugees, driven out of their country by a brutal civil war. As of this summer, nearly half of Syria's 22.5 million people have been displaced, either within their country or outside of it. While attention recently has been riveted upon desperate people trying to get into Europe, there are far greater numbers of Syrian and Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries. There are 1.9 million Syrians in Turkey, 1.1 million in Lebanon (where they are now one of every five people), 630,000 in Jordan, and 130,000 in Egypt.

Gruending's blog can be found at <http://www.dennisgruending.ca>

During the years when the Syrian conflict was building, the Conservative government was busily revamping its immigration and refugee policies. Harper put Jason Kenney, one of his most trusted ministers, in charge of making massive changes which began to take place in 2012. The government continues to work at attracting immigrants to Canada, particularly those with skills and money, but it has attempted to discourage and denigrate asylum seekers — and it has worked. Canada took in 35,000 refugees in 2005, just before the Conservatives came to power. By 2014, the number was 23,000, a reduction of nearly one-third.

Kenney and other conservatives made no secret of their belief that many refugee claims were bogus and that many asylum seekers were opportunists.

The government also moved in 2012 to deny refugees access to health care by making drastic cuts to the Interim Federal Health Program, which had been in place since 1957.

A number of Conservative MPs used their householders, paid for and distributed on their House of

Commons budget, to stoke the fires of prejudice. The mailouts posed questions such as the following and asked constituents to respond by return mail: "Should refugees get gold-plated dental, vision and drug benefits?" and "What level of health care benefits do you believe the government should provide to failed and fraudulent refugee claimants?"

In truth, refugees had been receiving the same level of health care as people on social assistance. Most of the cuts were partially and temporarily restored in November 2014, after the Federal Court ruled that the policy changes constituted "cruel and unusual" treatment and were unconstitutional. The government has appealed that decision to the Supreme Court of Canada.

During the 2015 campaign, Harper has, so far, stubbornly insisted that he will stay the course — no added numbers of refugees beyond previous modest promises and no fundamental changes to practice policies that would expedite the process of getting people to safety in Canada.

Speaking at a campaign event on Sept. 3, Harper said: "Our country has the most generous immigration and refugee system in the world. We admit per capita more people than any other." Note that the prime minister speaks here of both immigrants and refugees. While Canada continues to court a certain demographic among immigrants, it has deliberately reduced the number of refugees it accepts.

Using UNHCR numbers the

National Post, normally considered friendly to the Conservatives, reports that when all classes of refugees are considered, Canada ranks 41st globally in terms of its intake per capita, lower than poor countries such as Turkey and Jordan. When gross domestic product and geographic size are ranked, Canada places 55th and 93rd, respectively. It's worth remembering that Canada, with a much smaller population than today, accepted 37,000 Hungarian refugees in 1956 and 110,000 Vietnamese boat people in the 1970s and 80s.

The prime minister says that his critics want Canada to accept as refugees people whose claims have not been processed and that this would allow terrorists from ISIS to pose as refugees and come to Canada to do harm. Similar worries were expressed privately within government about potential communist infiltration when Canada accepted Hungarians and Vietnamese, but those fears turned out to be baseless. In any event, no one is suggesting that refugees should not be processed, but rather that many more refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and elsewhere could be interviewed and processed if Canada were to put in place the resources to do it.

Finally, the prime minister also insists upon the importance of Canada's bombing missions, with allied countries, against the ISIS group in Iraq and Syria. That mission, he says, is necessary to protect Canadians against ISIS jihadists who would attack us. Canadians

can debate the wisdom of a bombing campaign but there is no need for the existence of that campaign to reduce the urgency of accepting more refugees now.

Harper is being chided by people from all quarters for his refusal to show more compassion and to take action. No one expects that Canada alone can solve the refugee crisis in Syria or elsewhere, but people from archbishops and imams to premiers to Rick Hillier, the former chief of defence staff, are calling for Canada to do more than it has. Many Canadians have experience in welcoming and resettling refugees and they want the government to allow them to make that contribution.

Here are a few things we can do immediately to help:

— Donate to a reputable development organization working on this issue. Ask if they are one of the organizations eligible for a grant from the government to match your donation.

— Become a sponsor. Privately sponsored refugees have to be sponsored by an organization or group consisting of at least five citizens or permanent residents. There are many such groups already in existence. You may choose to work through one of them or to organize a new group.

— Get political. Tell candidates for election that you want action and not obfuscation or fear mongering on this question. Tell candidates that for you this is a vote-determining issue. They will understand exactly what you mean.

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OCT. 1
2015

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3:00 pm - Mass at Holy Rosary Cathedral, Regina, SK

For park map or event details, visit
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‘Good Samaritan open to all peoples’: Thévenot

By Paula Fournier

PRINCE ALBERT — On Aug. 26, the Prince Albert Catholic School Division (PACSD) held their annual opening school mass and faith formation session for teachers and staff.

In his homily, Bishop Albert Thévenot, M. Afr., referred to the Gospel of the Samaritan, speaking of the challenging

commandment of love.

“We find it is difficult loving others. It takes mercy, forgiveness and understanding. A Good Samaritan is open to all peoples. In your classroom, you will encounter wounded children who need time, attention and friendship. Some feel anger and rejection. You are the Good Samaritan for the students in your schools. Love them as they are and not how you would like them to be.”

He spoke of teachers who could be carrying doubts and hard times in their lives as well, and need to be listened to. He encouraged them to be a listening ear to help them be who they are meant to be.

“As Good Samaritans, this is how we live our faith. Give your time, an encouraging word, understanding, compassion and love.”

On behalf of their schools, principals and administrative staff

received a handcrafted bowl with the word “Faith” carved on the outside, a bottle of holy water to remind staff of the commitment to live the faith, and the school theme Faith: Live It poster.

Deacon Harrold Salahub, religious education co-ordinator, explained, “This bowl will hold holy water, a source of grace when we need it.”

Following the eucharistic cele-

bration at the annual faith formation session, board of education chair George Bolduc welcomed and thanked teachers and staff for their role in Catholic education.

Director of Education Lorel Trumier said actions of staff and teachers are critical to how children feel and learn. Those involved in Catholic schools are fortunate to be able to support students in a special way. Decisions made each day, she said, should relay the message of faith.

“Faith is an encounter with God, when the love of God is communicated through us in every interaction we have with the people around us. We can feel confident in our actions of charity, mercy and love that God speaks through us. Our faith is a language our children need to learn, that they cannot afford to misinterpret. Remember, you can have a tremendous impact on others around you.”

Keynote speaker was Rev. Tony Ricard, a Catholic revivalist and youth speaker from New Orleans. He lives out his ministry teaching high school, is chaplain for the New Orleans Saints football team and director of Camp Pelican for children with serious pulmonary diseases. He is an author with Two Knights Publishing, and his company, KnightTime Ministries, is involved in many youth academic opportunities.

In 2012, the documentary Father Tony presented was a touching portrait of his unshakable faith in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina as he counselled storm survivors.

Ricard said teachers are often given the opportunity to have an encounter, but they often don’t have their eyes open. He told the educators that they are privileged to be in the position they are in; it’s a task not everyone is up to.

“One thing I’ve realized on the journey that we’re on is that we don’t know when Christ is going to come back again. Better to treat every child as if he or she is Christ come back again, than to end up before the judgment seat and find out we treated Jesus as if he or she was nobody.”

Part of our challenge, he said, is to be on the constant search for signs of Christ in this world.

He is chaplain of an all-boy Catholic high school of 700 kids. Ricard considers himself very blessed that God has allowed him to be with God’s children. He said one can only imagine some of the stuff the kids have to deal with.

“I don’t know if you realize, but Christ could be here today and waiting for us to recognize him. Christ could be a child in your school and you just don’t know yet. My prayer for you this morning is that you open your eyes ’cause you just might see him.”

Annual Compassionate Healers Mass celebrated

By Frank Flegel

Regina — Regina Archbishop Daniel Bohan doesn’t differentiate between the sick and the healthy whenever he is called to administer the sacrament of the sick to a group. “I used to emphasize that the sacrament is for the sick, whose sickness is interfering with their lives,” said the archbishop in his homily at the Sept. 9 annual compassionate healers mass held at Holy Child Church. “I don’t do that anymore because I found that the healthy would come forward too. It is evident how much we all seek healing in our lives.”

The archbishop continued that sickness and death are part of everyone’s life, but God gives us hope. “In our ministry we bring the same message. Life without God gives us what sickness gives us,” said Bohan. He lamented that some young people have been seduced by modern secular society and believe that life on earth is heaven. He talked about the beauty of the earth, but it is not heaven, he

said. Heaven is what is waiting for us at the end of life. “As we visit the sick and give them comfort, we are showing them the kingdom of God.”

The mass began with Sister Alvina Charlebois carrying the pyx in the opening procession and Maureen Wild carrying a small vessel of the oil of the sick. The two were chosen because of their long voluntary ministry at the Wascana rehabilitation hospital. Immediately following the homily the congregation lit small tapers, which they held as they took part in the rite of commissioning, renewing their commitment to whatever ministry they served in ministering to the sick.

The Compassionate Healers Mass is an annual event sponsored by the Catholic Health Association of Saskatchewan (CHAS). It is held annually in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert. Past CHAS president Bonnie Thiele Hunt brought greetings on behalf of CHAS, thanked everyone for coming and invited all to take part in the reception that followed the service.



Flegel

COMPASSIONATE HEALERS — The mass began with Sister Alvina Charlebois (right) carrying the pyx in the opening procession and Maureen Wild carrying a vessel of the oil of the sick. The two were chosen because of their long voluntary ministry at the Wascana rehabilitation hospital.

Opening mass celebrated for Saskatoon schools

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — Go Make Disciples was the theme of an opening day celebration for some 2,000 Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools (GSCS) teachers and staff Aug. 28 at the Cathedral of the Holy Family in Saskatoon.

“Looking around, I am reminded of what a diverse group we are,” said Diane Boyko, GSCS board of education chair. “The readings in the different languages remind me of Pentecost. Here we are, Christ’s followers, gathered together, anticipating a new beginning — the beginning of our school year.”

Boyko stressed the important role of each staff member in the mission of Catholic education, quoting St. Teresa of Avila: “Know that Christ has no hands or feet but yours.” She added, “You are how God serves the world . . . you create a nurturing, welcoming environment, an environment in which the seeds that are planted can sprout and flourish.”

Every school year includes challenges, she acknowledged, listing efforts to meet a range of diverse needs and an ongoing struggle to find resources. Priorities in the coming year will include construction starts on six new schools. The elementary schools will be built in the communities of Warman and Martensville

and in the Saskatoon neighbourhoods of Stonebridge, Rosewood, Hampton Village and Evergreen, with an anticipated 2017 opening date, Boyko said.

She described board efforts to advocate for education funding, the ongoing and important fundraising support of the GSCS Foundation, and the work of the school district’s Together in Faith and Action committee to support and enhance service projects and social initiatives, faith formation of staff, and connections between home, school and parish.

“It is in a spirit of humble service, compassion, mercy and forgiveness that our schools in faith walk together toward our common goal of educating children, rooting them in the Catholic faith and identity, helping them to grow and to think as disciples themselves, so they in turn will reach out and transform the world,” Boyko said.

GSCS Director of Education Greg Chatlain reflected on the “why” of Saskatoon Catholic schools, focusing on the parable of the last judgment from Matthew 25.

Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta described the Gospel in five words, one for each finger: “You did it for me,” Chatlain said. “This, ladies and gentlemen, is our ‘Why.’ This is our call, regardless of our role in Catholic education.”

The call to feed the hungry is

lived out in Catholic schools in a myriad of ways, such as the extra lunches and clothing provided by teachers out of their own resources to students in need, as well as the intellectual, social, emotional, physical and spiritual formation provided each day in schools, Chatlain said.

“I was a stranger and you welcomed me” is the call to accept every child unconditionally, he continued. “Unless students feel that welcome and acceptance, very little learning will happen.”

In Catholic education, “I was naked and you clothed me,” involves all that is done to help protect the vulnerable, he added. “The worst part of my job is receiving reports in my office about suspected or reported abuse of children,” he said, adding that he takes comfort knowing that teachers and staff are there to protect the vulnerable, to be their voice and to walk with them in love, care and respect.

“At those times when you can become dismayed or disillusioned at the cruelty of our society, our call brings us back renewed and continuing to be that voice, to struggle for peace, to struggle for justice, to struggle for harmony, for change,” Chatlain said.

Living the call of “you did it for me” provides hope to students, families and the community, he

added. “We seek God and we hope that we will someday rest in the Lord. In the meantime, our students encounter hope every day because of the good in you and in our schools. Through living our call, our students and our families experience real hope.”

Other speakers at the opening celebration were Laurie Karwacki, chair of the GSCS Foundation, and keynote speaker Colm Leyne, co-ordinator of youth ministry for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

The young father of two urged GSCS teachers and staff to ground themselves in the real reason for all they do — the love of Jesus Christ. “The children that you will receive in your schools next week are God’s gift to you,” he said.

“When you know God’s love and mercy, you can give it,” Leyne added “When they look in your eyes, will they truly see the light of Christ?”

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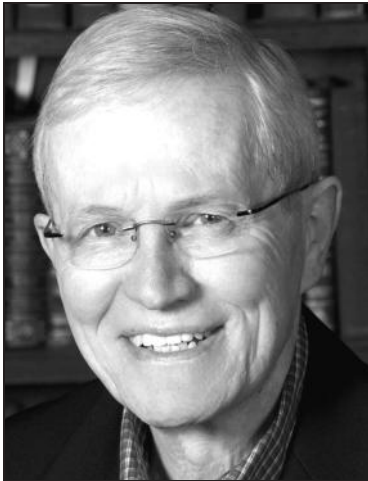
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Symposium, pilgrimage planned for Winnipeg

By James Buchok

WINNIPEG — An academic symposium examining the Archdiocese of Winnipeg at 100: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, is planned for Oct. 22 - 24 at St. Paul's College at the University of Manitoba. The symposium is open to the public, admission is free, and it is one of many events planned for the final quarter of the archdiocesan centennial year.



Rev. Terence Fay, SJ

The annual Hanley Lecture at St. Paul's College will be held in conjunction with the symposium and will be given by Archbishop J. Michael Miller of Vancouver to open the conference. Miller will speak on The Future of the Universal Church and the Place of the Local Churches in that Future.

From 1992 to 1997 Miller worked in the Vatican's Secretariat of State, and in 2003, Pope St. John Paul II appointed him to the episcopacy and named him secretary of the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education and vice-president of the Pontifical Work of Priestly Vocations. He served as a member of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples, for the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses, and as a consultant to the Congregation for Bishops.

Miller currently serves on the Commission for Christian Unity of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, and represents the Conference at the Pontifical Committee for the International Eucharistic Congresses. He has received six honorary doctorates from universities around the world and is a specialist on the papacy and modern papal teaching.

Friday will open with a lecture by Dr. Peter Meehan on the Archdiocese of Winnipeg prior to Vatican II. Meehan is currently principal of St. Mark's College and president of Corpus Christi College, both located on the campus of the University of British Columbia. Meehan is a Canadian historian with a focus on the social, educational and political history of the Catholic Church in Canada.

Among three panel sessions on the agenda for Friday is a dialogue on the Archdiocese of Winnipeg

and the Indigenous Peoples of Manitoba with participants including Dr. Ovide Mercredi, past national president of the Assembly of First Nations and Lisa Raven, executive director of Returning to Spirit.

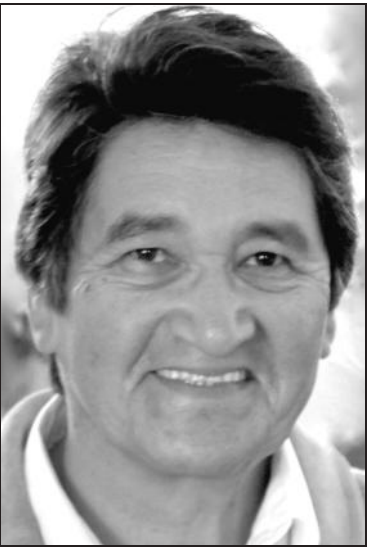
A formal dinner will be held on the Friday evening, tickets are available by contacting the college.

On Saturday morning the conference concludes with an address by Dr. Terence Fay, SJ, speaking on Highlights of Canadian Catholic Spirituality. Fay is a professor of the history of religion at Toronto School of Theology at the University of Toronto for St. Augustine's Seminary and the University of St. Michael's College. He is the author of A History of Canadian Catholics: Gallicanism, Romanism, and Canadianism, former president of the Canadian Catholic Historical Association, and a current member of the executive council of the American Catholic Historical Association.

Other centennial events planned

for October include a pilgrimage of more than 500 km, by bus, on Oct. 10, starting at 6 a.m. at St. Edward the Confessor Church, to all four Pilgrimage Churches named by Archbishop Richard Gagnon where the faithful may gain the jubilee indulgence. The pilgrims will go north more than 400 km to Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Church in Camperville, Man., also known as the Cathedral of the North, then back south to St. Augustine of Canterbury Church, Brandon; east to St. François Xavier Parish Church, St. François Xavier, Man., the oldest church in the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, and conclude at St. Mary's Cathedral, Winnipeg.

On Oct. 18 religious congregations that have been part of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg for the past 100 years will be recognized with a liturgy at St. Mary's Cathedral. Certificates will be presented to representatives of each of the 40 religious communities that have served in the archdio-



Ovide Mercredi

cese and a permanent memorial plaque naming all of the communities will be installed at the cathedral.

For details on these and more Archdiocese of Winnipeg centennial celebrations visit www.arch-winnipeg.ca

Challenged posed is a Gospel challenge

Continued from page 1

Appointed to the CCCB justice and peace commission in his second year as bishop, Bolen was named chair of the commission a year ago. "It has been a beautiful but a demanding thing to be mandated by the bishop's conference to address justice and peace issues, in the midst of Pope Francis' pontificate," he admits.

At first, Bolen tried to read everything Pope Francis said about justice and peace issues, but found that he couldn't keep up. "Hopefully this document will help all of us to keep up with the central themes that Pope Francis has been addressing."

The pope speaks as someone who has experienced internal conflicts, political crises and widespread poverty in South America, Bolen adds. "It's a gift to the church to have a pope who comes from the developing world and who speaks out of that context to the whole church. It is an opportunity to come to terms with global equalities and to face global issues in a new way."

When the Body of Christ suffers in any part of the world, we all suffer, notes Bolen. "And through our political and economic practices and institutions, we are directly implicated in the structural inequality affecting the developing world, which keeps some people poor and allows wealth to be concentrated in others," he adds.

"There are also many people in this country who deal with injustice and suffering in many ways.

In this text then, we are eager to invite a conversation to take place between Pope Francis and our experience here in Canada."

The challenge posed by the document is a Gospel challenge, stresses Myron Rogal, co-ordinator of the Justice and Peace Office in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

"A church seeking justice is a signpost which crystalizes the reality of our Canadian story by pointing to areas in need of healing with a sense of urgency and hope in Christ," says Rogal.

The document points to the breadth of Catholic social teaching, says Bolen. "It highlights that justice and charity go hand in hand, but the Gospel response is never just one or the other — it is always both."

It supplements the election guide that the CCCB produces, presenting a series of issues to consider, says Bolen, while noting there is no political party that embodies Catholic social teaching in its fullness.

"Jesus' ministry was a constant outreach to those on the margins of society, those in need. He not only reached out to them to draw them into the life of the community, to draw them into God's mercy, to assure them they were loved by God, he also identified directly with them, saying 'whatever you do to these, you do to me.'"

In interviews conducted in the weeks ahead, Bolen will reflect upon the three sections of the document, which address human dignity, war and peace, and economics.

Sod turned for three new schools

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — Six gold-painted shovels dug in, officials made speeches, children watched and the three new joint-use schools project officially got underway Sept. 10. The Catholic school to be built on the sod turning site in the newly developing southeast area known as The Greens On Gardiner will be named St. Elizabeth. The public school is yet to be named.

It was a bright, sunny and warm day as the Minister of Education Don Morgan, Catholic school board chair Rob Bresciani, Public school board chair Katherine Gagne, J.U.M.P. director Sheldon Ramstead and Grade 5 students McKinley Szauner from St. Gabriel School and Jasmine Flaman from W.F. Ready School wielded the shovels. J.U.M.P. is the acronym for the consortium that won the bid for construction of the Regina schools.

The actual site of the schools is

about a city block north of the sod-turning site. Heavy rain on the weekend previous left the actual site a muddy mess. It could be seen in the background while Elder Noel Starblanket prayed in Cree over the site and Deacon Joe Lang recited a blessing and sprayed the area with holy water.

Speakers described the occasion as historic: the beginning of actual construction of Regina schools under the controversial P3 process. All speakers thanked the two boards of education, the ministry and everyone involved in the planning that has advanced the project on time that brought it to this stage.

"Some among you will be the first students in these schools," said Morgan addressing his initial remarks to the Grade 5 students who should be entering Grade 7 in September 2017 when the schools are due to open. "You are the reason we are here."

The three joint-use elementary

schools will house about 3,000 students when completed. They are part of the massive school building project that will see 18 new schools built in Regina, Saskatoon, Warman and Martensville. "This is building a bright new future," said Morgan.

Bresciani said the process has been "a rewarding collaboration with all partners and our colleagues at the Regina Public School Board." He noted St. Elizabeth School is named after the mother of John the Baptist. Gagne thanked Starblanket for reminding everyone that we are all Treaty 4 people. The new schools, she said, "will change the way we look at the education of our children." The naming process for the public schools will begin this fall and she issued an invitation to all citizens to take part in the consultations.

The joint-use schools will also contain 90 daycare spaces as well as rooms that can be used for community meetings/events.



Flegel

SOD-TURNING CEREMONY — Six gold-painted shovels dug in, officials made speeches, children watched and the three new joint-use schools project officially got underway with a ceremony in Regina Sept. 10.

Canada illegally dumping waste in Philippines

By Tracy Glynn

MANILA — Filipino activists gathered at the International Peoples’ Mining Conference are not just talking about mining abuses by Canadian mining companies, they also want Canadians to know that Canada is illegally dumping its waste in their country.

About 50 container vans of mixed waste from Canada was discovered in Manila’s port in June 2013. More container vans of waste have since been discovered in the ports of Manila and scenic Subic as well as near a new landfill site in Central Luzon, just north of the capital. The landfill has displaced people.

“It’s an environmental justice issue,” says Francisco Dangla III, Secretary General of BAYAN in Central Luzon. “Canadian companies are extracting raw resources from our country and Canada is dumping its waste.”

Sister Stella Matutina is from the natural resource-rich island of Mindanao that has attracted several multinational mining companies like Canadian-based TVI, which is connected to the murders of activists, kidnappings, illegal detentions, torture, threats, displacement and loss of livelihoods.

“Mindanao is not for you foreigners!” declared Matutina to conference participants. “You have taken our gold and now you give us your garbage!”

“There’s money in garbage. Landfills are needed but having a private corporation managing the waste means that waste is connected to profit. More garbage, more profit,” says Dangla.

Twenty-seven of the 50 container vans of the waste that was sitting in the Manila port was suddenly dumped in the Philippines between



Tracy Glynn

MESSAGE FOR CANADIANS — Sister Stella Matutina of Mindanao, the Philippines, has a message for Canadians about their mining and waste dumping at the International Peoples’ Mining Conference in Manila on July 31, 2015. Matutina is set to receive this year’s Human Rights Award given by the German city of Weimar for her work in Mindanao. She is to receive the award, which is supported by aid organization Missio, during a ceremony in Weimar on Dec. 10, coinciding with International Human Rights Day.

June 25 and July 8. The activists call the dumping illegal because it failed to have a court order.

Local environmental and health groups as well as international groups that work on enforcing the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal denounced the dumping. Both Canada and the Philippines are signatories to the Basel Convention that aims to prevent the dumping of hazardous materials from developed nations to less developed ones.

Charges have been filed against the local importer in the Philippines but no charges have been laid against the Canadian exporter.

BAN Toxics, Basel Action Network (BAN) and Greenpeace Philippines are condemning the Canadian government for “calious disregard of international law.”

“We had warned President Aquino about the consequences of letting Canada push us around by agreeing to bury their first illegal shipment on Philippine soil. How long will the Philippines be willing to submit to what is nothing less than waste colonialism?” said Richard Gutierrez, executive director of BT in a statement on May 22.

Basel Convention, Annex II stipulates that household waste cannot be exported to any country

without prior notification and consent. Activists say that Canada did not seek nor receive such consent. They say that the Convention instructs Canada to take back the waste and criminally prosecute the exporter.

The waste is being exported to the Philippines by Canadian com-

pany Chronics Inc. Canada’s Foreign Affairs Department is claiming that it cannot legally force the shipper of the waste to return its waste to Canada. BAN disagrees and feels that this is a clear case of non-compliance with the Basel Convention. BAN plans to file a complaint with the Basel Secretariat.

The Philippines’ Department of Environment and Natural Resources has issued waste dumping permits but the people and local government of Central Luzon oppose its dumping. Besides the Basel Convention, activists say the importing of waste violates several local laws such as those concerning recyclable materials that contain hazardous substances.

According to a customs official who wishes to remain unnamed, one batch of waste that arrived from Canada was wrongly declared as plastic recyclables when it was mixed household waste.

The dumping of the waste has been condemned in street protests and recently in May before the 12th Conference of the Parties of the Basel Convention in Geneva.

More than 38,000 people have signed a petition asking the Canadian government to take back the garbage. The petition states: “Canada, pick up your garbage! Philippines is not your trash can!”



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Africa: refugees’ lives torn by famine and terrorism

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

DOLLO ADO, Ethiopia (CCN) — Fifty-one-year-old Somali refugee Abdi Mahdi is one of about 25 students taking an English class offered by the Jesuit Refugee Service in the Kobe refugee camp, about three kilometres from the border between Ethiopia and Somalia.

He’s also one of nearly 42,000 refugees in this particular camp, one of more than 200,000 Somalis gathered in five refugee camps around the tiny Ethiopian town of Dollo Ado, one of 255,000 Somali refugees living in Ethiopia, one of 1.1 million Somali refugees scattered through the world, one of 2.3 million Somalis driven from their homes by the terror group Al-Shabaab. He’s also one of 14.9 million refugees in Africa and one of 59.5 million refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people worldwide.

It’s hard not to look at Abdi and read a grim script for the rest of the 21st century. It’s hard not to imagine that the global population of refugees, almost as large as the population of the United Kingdom, will not shape this young century. This vast, desperate host spread across Africa, the Middle East, Asia and South America, is knocking at the doors of Canada, the United States, Europe and every other safe, stable country asking for nothing extraordinary — just the opportunity to resume their interrupted, suspended, frozen lives. It’s a knock that frankly scares us.

Europe quakes at every poor Eritrean or Somali or Syrian or Iraqi that lands in Greece or Italy, or sets out for the European heartland through Hungary and Austria, or dashes through the Channel Tunnel that connects France and Great Britain. Already in 2015 close to 400,000 migrants have reached the European Union. More than 2,700 others died trying, including three-year-old Alan Kurdi, found washed ashore in Turkey, according to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

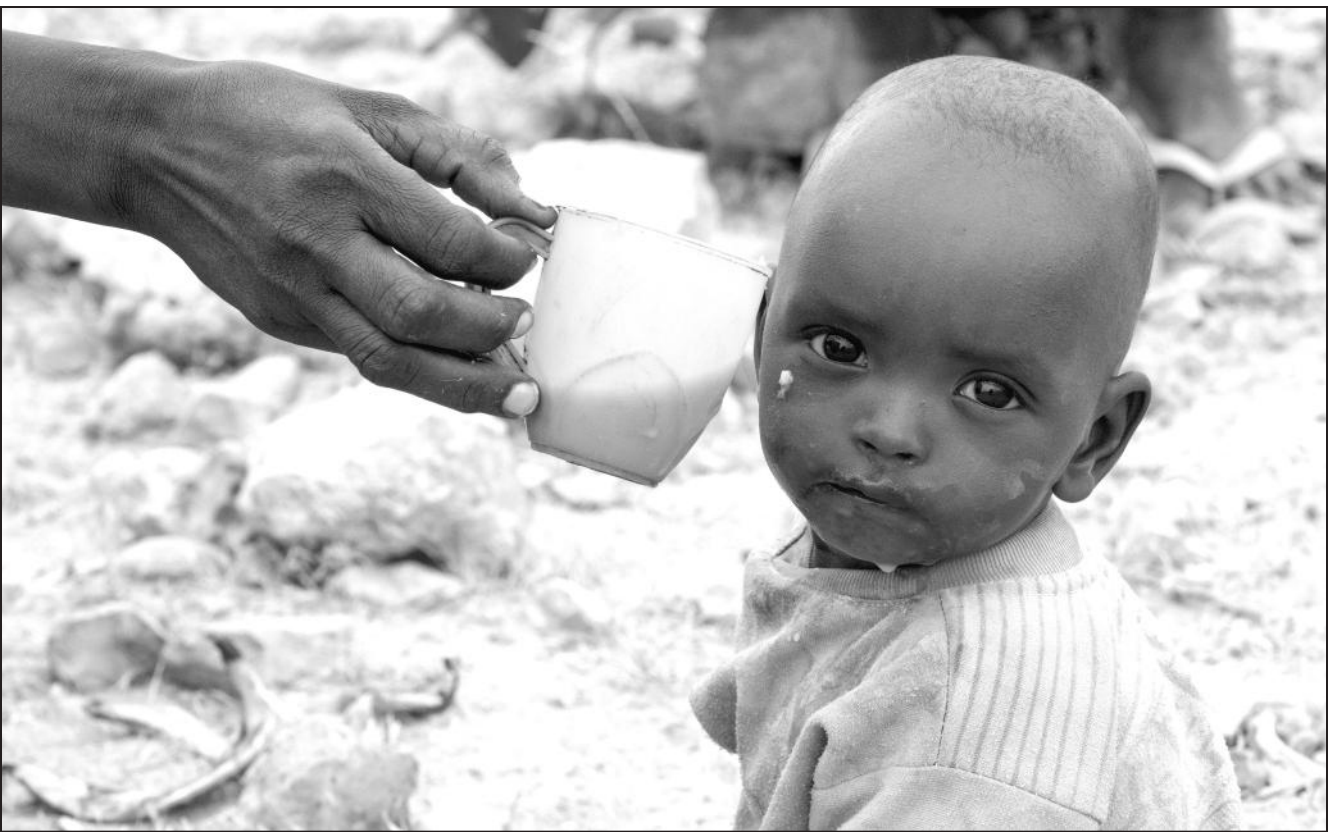
Every day, the global number

of refugees and people displaced by war or famine grows by 42,500. That number has almost quadrupled in five years. More than half of them are children.

At the Kobe refugee camp, there’s no chance Abdi is going to actually learn to converse in English. In the best of circumstances, learning a language above the age of 50 is an uphill climb. Now imagine you grew up in a nomadic culture, driving your family’s herds from pasture to pasture with the changing seasons. Imagine you never went to school for any significant period of time and never acquired the skills or habits of literacy in your first language. A second language, completely unrelated to your first, is going to be tough.

Abdi has three realistic hopes for this class in the world’s dominant language. One is that he learns to phonetically master the Roman alphabet. This would help him to read signs and instructions when his own language is written in the script. It would help him fill out forms if he ever had a chance to apply for resettlement in another country. Second, he hopes to be an example to his nine children and two wives. He knows their future lies in a world very different from the one he grew up in. Third, he would rather be a part of the good side of life in the camp — the side that maintains hope and stays close to the Jesuit Refugee Service.

There is a bad side to the refugee camp. After 6 p.m. all the aid agencies — from the Ikea Foundation to Doctors Without Borders to the



Catholic Register/Michael Swan

VAST NUMBERS — There are more than 200,000 Somalis gathered in five refugee camps around the tiny Ethiopian town of Dollo Ado, one of 255,000 Somali refugees living in Ethiopia, one of 1.1 million Somali refugees scattered through the world, one of 2.3 million Somalis driven from their homes by the terror group Al-Shabaab, writes Michael Swan. There are 14.9 million refugees in Africa and 59.5 million refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people worldwide. “This vast, desperate host spread across Africa, the Middle East, Asia and South America, is knocking at the doors of Canada, the United States, Europe and every other safe, stable country asking for nothing extraordinary — just the opportunity to resume their interrupted, suspended, frozen lives. It’s a knock that frankly scares us.”

International Committee of the Red Cross, dozens of them — are sent out of the front gates and into their compounds. Ethiopian police take their place and patrol the dusty tracks between rows of identical tin shacks.

The refugee camps around Dollo Ado have been there almost five years. In that time the NGOs, under the watchful eye of the Ethiopian government, have turned them into model camps with drinkable water, regular garbage pickup, recreation facilities, schools. As I walked from one program to another inside the JRS sections of the Kobe and Melkadida camps, chatting with teachers, social workers, community organizers, I peered out toward the rows of one-room houses, glimpsed the market street, saw people trudging through the camp, slipping in and out of their front doors where clumps of

children were gathered.

The Melkadida camp houses 45,000 people, about the population of North Bay, Ont. However, nobody would build a city in the middle of the desert, let alone five of them. And nobody would choose to live in these hot, dry, dusty places. They are one industry towns in which the NGOs are the only employers and almost all the employees arrive on the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service’s Bombardier Dash 8.

The citizenry — most of them women and children — is almost uniformly idle and bereaved. They are there because of famine and terrorism. They mourn their missing children, husbands, mothers, fathers, homes, flocks and ways of life. As they sit in their camps, most of them know their culture, everything they ever knew, has disappeared from under them.

Young people who play soccer, volleyball and foosball, others attending classes to learn a trade or skill, peer counsellors talking through family and community issues of addiction, abuse and depression — they all display gusto, seriousness and dedication. The alternative is sitting in a tin shack staring at the dirt floor from sunrise to sunset.

I’m not surprised when they greet my camera with both fascination and fear. Though the big telephoto lens reminds many of a gun, they know I’m there to peer into their lives. They’re not anxious to be the subject of another foreigner’s curiosity, even though every new face they encounter offers a break from the monotony of camp life. The children want to see themselves in the screen on the back of my camera. The adults turn away. They want to see themselves somewhere else, living some other life.

Some men have gone into business selling khat or miraa, a natural, amphetamine-like drug in the form of the leaves of the khat (also

pronounced chat) bush. Chewing the leaves creates a heightened sense of awareness and excitement, along with insomnia and loss of appetite. Prolonged use can cause hallucinations. It’s not highly addictive and has been a part of social culture in the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula since before Ethiopians discovered coffee around the 14th century (they noticed how goats became more perky after eating those beans).

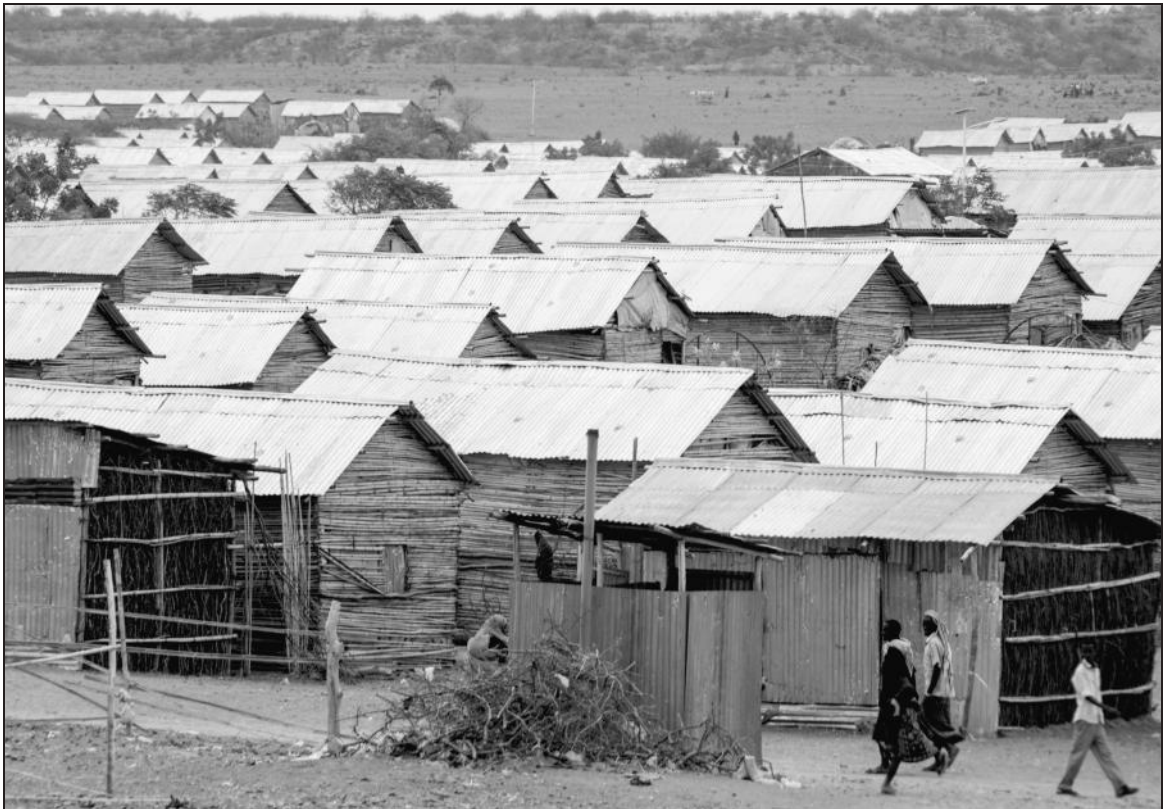
In the context of the camps, however, khat is pernicious. For men with nothing to do all day but chew khat and sometimes drink alcohol, khat fuels a sense of frustration that leads to beatings of wives and children, and fights with other men. It also leads to debts and blackmail.

This is a stretch of semi-arid desert that never did support more than a few families and their goats and camels. The hot wind picks up the sand and throws it in your face. The first night I rolled over on my mosquito net and woke up covered with red bites. Showers were not always possible in the morning because, as miraculous as the camp water system is, it never works all day long. In the current drought, it fails more often than it works. I found myself washing out of a bucket containing less than a litre of water and was glad I brought a family-size packet of Wet Ones.

If these are the deprivations of a visiting journalist who was being pampered and guided by an NGO, imagine living in a tin shack, carrying water in jerry cans, cooking outside on a fire built from the thorny branches of acacia bushes, day after day, for years.

As I walked, or was driven in the Toyota Land Rover, through the camp, I was constantly aware of the privilege I had been given to witness these lives in this place.

— JRS, page 10



Catholic Register/Michael Swan

REFUGEE CAMP — The Kobe refugee camp near Dollo Ado, Ethiopia, is home to some 40,000 refugees.

JRS programs concentrate on youth in camps

Continued from page 9

I was allowed to see the love of these people for their children and for their own lives. And their unexpected hope.

The Jesuit Refugee Services' psychosocial counselling teams are one of the main sources of stability in this context. In group discussions and individual peer counselling under the direction of a professional social worker, the JRS confronts addiction and abuse. But the teams also deal with the despair and frustration behind the addiction. Members of the counselling teams include volunteers and "incentive workers" who collect a small, part-time wage and receive training. More important than the money is the sense of purpose and self-esteem the incentive workers can claim.

Most of the JRS programs concentrate on youth in the camps, where the population is overwhelmingly young. Abdi with his two wives and nine children is typical. There are plenty of men his age with three and four wives. Families sprawl into dozens of children. Given the additional medical care inside the camps, child mortality is low and these traditional family structures are even larger than they would have been in Somalia.

In each of the two Dollo Ado refugee camps where JRS is present, the Catholic agency serves between 12,000 and 15,000



Catholic Register/Michael Swan

NEW TRADES — Young men are learning new trades, one to become a barber and others to become plumbers.

refugees each year. The JRS's first project when they arrived at the Melkedida and Kobe camps was to build schools, which they turned over to Ethiopian authorities to run. They followed up with building and running multipurpose community halls, which have become home to an all-day, every-day stream of barefoot,

pick-up soccer games. JRS volleyball nets and basketball hoops also get near constant use. A pavilion with foosball, ping-pong and pool tables attracts kids all day, particularly in the summer months. The JRS keeps young people connected to a wider world with an Internet cafe.

Where the JRS's engagement

with young refugees is most visible and most hopeful is in vocational classes it runs — a class in the basics of plumbing, another group learning fashion design and tailoring, another dedicated to hairdressing and esthetics, a barbering class. Each of these is brimming with young people who don't want to waste their summer vacations, young mothers trying to further their educations while caring for their families, young men trying to do a little better than the crowd hanging about on the camp's market street.

Ethiopian law forbids refugees from any legal form of employment. And in this tightly controlled society, illegal employment is not an option. Refugees need police authorization just to visit another camp. No permission is granted to leave the camp and apply for jobs in a country with 30 per cent unemployment.

From a distance, it might seem odd that the Jesuit Refugee Service is one of the most popular and respected NGOs among a refugee population that is 100 per cent Muslim. For newly appointed Ethiopia country director Rev. Atakelt Tesfay, the trust they're shown is a sign the agency is doing what it's supposed to be doing.

"Our mission is to accompany them," he said. "In a way, to give them life."

The JRS is not in the business of proselytizing. Many of its employees in Dollo Ado are themselves Muslim, but the JRS preaches the gospel by demonstrating how Christ would respond to refugees, Atakelt said.

"For Christ, it's not the Christianity but it is the humanity," he said. "The concern of Christ is for humanity, justice, peace."

The JRS is not Christian by accident and not Catholic just by the way, said JRS East Africa director Rev. Endashaw Debrework.

"Our difference lies in our uniqueness, based on the Gospel and the social teaching of the church — and then our spirituality as well, the Ignatian spirituality which nurtures our mission, our work," he said.

"In this entire saga of refugees, if there is no hope there is no life," Endashaw said. "So everybody struggles to make sure that tomorrow will be better."

From the crest of one of the rugged hills overlooking the Kobe refugee camp it's difficult to see hope, Gospel values and better tomorrows. The desert-bound rows of shacks are entirely dependent on daily support from a distant world that is quickly losing interest. These Somalis, like millions of refugees in Africa and the Middle East, confined in their camps, waiting for something to happen, were briefly in the news when they were discovered starving as they fled Al-Shabaab militants in 2011. These are the true victims of perverted, violent religious sentiment.

But the complexities of their story are difficult to grasp and harder to get across in a world that boils down its news to 12-second video clips, five-word headlines and screen shots posted on Facebook and Instagram. The global refugee population is being driven by forces more intractable than religious intolerance, bad political choices, collapsing regimes and border flare-ups between unstable countries. The Earth's climate is also creating refugees and putting them in situations not easily solved, Jesuit Refugee Service international director Rev. Peter Balleis said.

— DAFUR, page 16

Canadian Jesuit works in Ethiopia

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (CCN) — The Jesuit Refugee Service in Africa had its baptism of fire in Ethiopia trying to save the lives of hundreds of thousands of starving Ethiopians. Almost as soon as the JRS was founded in Ethiopia, the 1984 famine galvanized world attention, inspired the Band Aid mega-concerts and put the Jesuits to work. The Jesuit who led the JRS in Ethiopia, who tangled with communist government ministers, found 10-tonne trucks to deliver food, put medical care in place, is Canadian.

Rev. Roland Turenne is now 92 years old. His 64 years in Ethiopia include much more than his year of staring down famine. But watching people die and cherishing the ones who lived, being there to serve the country and people to whom he has given three quarters of his life, is the perfect example of what a missionary is for.

Turenne had already been in Ethiopia 30 years when legendary Jesuit Father General Pedro Arrupe came calling. Arrupe was already pushing the Jesuits to do something about the situation faced by Vietnamese boat people scattered across the South China Sea and the Pacific Ocean, but he was alert to the growing problem of displaced Africans caught up in war, revolution and droughts.

At a 1982 meeting with African Jesuit superiors in Nairobi, Kenya, Arrupe took the Canadian aside for a chat about refugees in Ethiopia. Turenne didn't know why the

Father General wanted to see him. He was nervous. He wondered what he might have done wrong.

"He said, 'You, you' — he was like this," Turenne told me at the Galilee Retreat Centre where he still directs people in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. "What are you doing for the refugees in Ethiopia?" (I said) 'Father, I'm sorry, but we're not doing anything.'"

That wasn't an answer as far as Arrupe was concerned.

"Well," he said. "Why not?" I said 'Father, we are involved in education. It's not been our thing.'"

But, in fact, Turenne's career as a geography teacher at Tafari Makonen High School was already winding down and he was helping out a French Catholic charity, Terre Des Hommes. That placed him near the Ethiopian government's relief commission.

Turenne's first team of veteran Belgian Jesuit missionaries and Spanish Dr. Isabelle Arbide, who was with the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, were given a base for their operations in Awasa, 300 km south of Addis Ababa.

"Then the drought erupted in that region" — that region being Tigray, 300 km north of the capital. But the new Jesuit team had a mobile medical unit, so Turenne went looking for a place where it could be put to use.

"We said, 'Which is the hardest place to access? Which is the worst place, worst affected?' " he recalled. "Within two weeks we were there feeding."

What was asked of Turenne in Tigray was more than his drive,

his organizational smarts or even his endless kindness could simply fix.

"I saw people coming on all fours, yeah? They were dying of starvation. They were starving," he said. "I remember this. It has always remained in my mind. It always remained. That lovely young woman, she was sitting against a tree. And I asked Dr. Isabelle, 'Well, what's wrong with her? You feed her.' She said, 'She is beyond feeding.'"

The next morning the young woman leaning against the tree was dead.

"There were thousands like that," said Turenne.

Hundreds of aid agencies followed the JRS into the famine lands and eventually the millions upon millions of dollars (Canadians gave \$150 million in response to the Tears Are Not Enough song and campaign) followed. But Ethiopia's pain wasn't over.

Today the JRS in Ethiopia is just one part of Jesuit Refugee Service operations throughout Africa, the Middle East and Asia. In Addis Ababa it runs a community centre for urban refugees. It is present in two of the five refugee camps near Dollo Ado, on the Somali border. It has programs for child refugees separated from their families in the Mai Aini camp near the Sudan border.

Turenne doesn't find JRS's success surprising. He attributes it to the vision of Pedro Arrupe.

"When you met with him you had the impression that you were not far from God, I tell you," said Turenne. "Compassionate like Christ."



Catholic Register/Michael Swan

LEARNING SKILLS — For the young mothers at this class in hair dressing and other beauty skills, the chance to learn is eagerly embraced and there's nothing unusual about bringing the baby along.

Refugees, stuck for years, play the waiting game

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (CCN) — Yeshi Wubet carries a scrap of hope around in her purse, folded and unfolded to the point of fragility. It's a letter from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees office in Addis Ababa dated July 7, 2014, and signed by Assistant Representative (Protection) Milagros Leynes.

The letter says that her file, number 394-13C00189, was submitted to Canada's visa post in Nairobi on June 26, 2014.

It's the last thing she's heard from either the UNHCR or Canada.

Where the form letter is marked with an X it says, "We will contact you with further information soon."

For an urban refugee like Yeshi, that next contact is typically directly from Canadian officials, not from the UNHCR. The Government of Canada's definition of "soon" would likely surprise Yeshi.

"As the next time the applicant is contacted is often for an interview, it is not unusual that a year or more can elapse between communications," the media relations department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada told The Catholic Register via email.

The last time Canada had immigration officers in Addis Ababa doing interviews was May. Yeshi heard nothing about that. They plan more trips "in the fall and early next year," said the CIC media department. Yeshi has not yet been informed of any of these sessions.

Recently Citizenship and Immigration Canada has been sending officers from as far away as Accra, Ghana, on the other side of the continent, to conduct interviews in Addis Ababa. The department is trying to clear a massive backlog of East African refugees who have letters like Yeshi's. CIC refuses to say just how large its inventory of unprocessed cases is, but it takes an average of 59 months for a refugee with a private sponsor waiting in Canada to be processed through the Nairobi visa post.

Major refugee sponsor agencies, including the Office for Refugees Archdiocese of Toronto, have been strictly limited in the number of refugees they may apply to sponsor from East Africa — home to 1.8 million UNHCR-registered refugees and three million internally displaced people. CIC claims the limits on new applications to sponsor African refugees are there to give it a chance to clear the backlog. For government-sponsored refugees, like Yeshi, CIC claims it manages to process 50 per cent of those cases within 25 months.

Thirty-four-year-old Yeshi has been a refugee five years, stuck in Addis Ababa four years. It's almost the only existence her seven-year-old son Maranatha Anibal and 10-year-old daughter Raenna Said have ever known. But as far as CIC is concerned her case is only 15 months old, dating from the transfer of her file in June of 2014.

Yeshi knows she has it relatively good among Eritrean

refugees. She's been allowed out of the refugee camp and lives in a lower-middle class neighbourhood of Addis Ababa with her half sister Manwella Gudeta, a pharmacy student and a legal resident of Ethiopia because one of her grandfathers was Ethiopian. As a refugee Yeshi can't legally work in Ethiopia and as a student Manwella is competing with 20 per cent of young people in Addis Ababa who are unemployed.

The two women have fallen several months behind on their 1,500 birr per month (\$95) rent for their single room with two beds and shared toilet and laundry facilities. A recent infusion of 800 birr (\$50) from the Jesuit Refugee Service community centre in emergency funds hasn't removed the fear of homelessness that hangs over Yeshi and her family.

Like hundreds of thousands of Eritrean refugees, Yeshi is on the run from religious persecution in Eritrea. Yeshi was born Orthodox. But her first husband was Sunni Muslim. He was drafted into the Eritrean army and simply disappeared. There's no limit on how long any young man may be kept in Eritrea's army in virtual slavery. It's hard to say whether there are more Eritrean refugees running from compulsory army service or religious persecution.

Yeshi's second husband turned abusive. Yeshi began to wonder whether God had denied her any semblance of a life. A neighbour invited her to pray with a small circle of Pentecostal believers who followed the television preachers beamed in from Ethiopia. She found solace in the prayer and companionship with the group.

There are four authorized, tolerated religions in Eritrea — Orthodox Christians (30 per cent of the population), Sunni Muslims (36 per cent), Roman Catholics (13 per cent) and the Lutheran affiliated Evangelical Church of Eritrea (five per cent). The Orthodox and



Catholic Register/Michael Swan

RISING NUMBERS — "Every day, the global number of refugees and people displaced by war or famine grows by 42,500. That number has almost quadrupled in five years. More than half of them are children," writes Michael Swan.

Muslims operate under direct government control. The Catholics and Evangelicals negotiate a maze of regulations and permissions under the constant gaze of police. But Pentecostals gathering in someone's house to pray are definitely outside of the law and Yeshi ended up in jail. Canada's religious freedom Ambassador Andrew Bennett has met this summer with the new Canadian ambassador to Sudan, Nicholas Coghlan, who is also responsible for Eritrea. At last year's review of Eritrea's human rights record by the United Nations Human Rights Council, Canada called on Eritrea to protect religious minorities and respect the human rights of women and political opponents, allow free expression and end indefinite military service.

The Eritrean police let Yeshi out of prison with a warning, but Yeshi knew that a second arrest

would mean a prison term with no end date. And it wouldn't matter whether she was actually caught praying in somebody's house with friends or not. She headed to the border with her children and the help of a smuggler, who charged her 120,000 Eritrean Nakfa (just over \$1,000). She arrived at the border penniless and desperate, but will never forget the kindness of the Ethiopian soldier who greeted her and her children at the border.

Living in the camp, Yeshi was soon depressed and fearful, a circumstance Dr. Bereket Afewerki can attest. He regularly visits the refugee camps where Eritreans are gathered and is confronted with an epidemic of despair and trauma.

Bereket is a doctor and professor of internal medicine in Addis Ababa. But in 1991 he was a freedom fighter battling Ethiopian troops for the independence of

Eritrea. Now he's in exile from the government he helped install. The refugee camp visits are how he maintains contact with Eritrea, and the people's long struggle for freedom.

"People are suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome, some of it going to extremes," he told me.

He knows people who have escaped Eritrea four or five times and each time been sent back. Knowing the conditions in Eritrea, he doesn't question the risk thousands of Eritreans are willing to make to get in leaky fishing boats headed for the Italian island of Lampedusa. After all, since 2012 more than 47,000 Eritreans have made it to Italy and the alternative is death whether you get in the boat or not.

His specialty may be internal medicine, but he's enough of a doctor that he can diagnose florid hallucinations and paranoia, he said. There is only one qualified psychiatrist in all of Eritrea, but Dr. Fitsum Gebrengus has been in jail the last 12 years for the crime of wearing a cross on the outside of his hospital clothes and speaking to people about Jesus in his spare time.

Bereket has documented how Eritreans in the Shemelba refugee camp have organized themselves to care for the mentally ill in the camp, keeping them safe and making sure they don't harm themselves.

In Addis Ababa Yeshi has had the advantage of regular, professional counselling from the Jesuit Refugee Service social worker at the community centre. There she meets and talks with other Eritrean refugees and her kids have the chance to play, take music lessons, get on the Internet. The JRS community centre is the central meeting place for Eritreans in Addis Ababa, but the CIC's interview teams have never been there.

Canada has agreed to resettle 4,000 Eritrean refugees from Sudan and Ethiopia between 2014 and 2018.



Catholic Register/Michael Swan

SERVING REFUGEE POPULATIONS — In each of the two Dollo Ado refugee camps where Jesuit Refugee Service is present, the Catholic agency serves between 12,000 and 15,000 refugees each year. The JRS has built and runs multipurpose community halls, which have become home to an all-day, every-day stream of barefoot, pick-up soccer games. JRS volleyball nets and basketball hoops also get near constant use.

Stephen Colbert discusses faith, joy and humour

By Mark Pattison

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Stephen Colbert, who took over Sept. 8 as host of CBS’ Late Night program, said in an interview for Canada’s Salt and Light Television that his Colbert Report character was intended to be a “well-intentioned, poorly informed, high-status idiot.”

“I would say he’s a fool. And though Christ says, ‘Call no man a fool,’ I am one,” Colbert said. “Willing to be wrong in society or wrong according to our time, but right according to conscience which is guided by the Holy Spirit.”

That character, which tickled North American funny bones for nine years on Comedy Central, has been discarded for Colbert’s new persona as late-night talk show host.

Basilian Father Thomas Rosica, Salt and Light’s founding director, interviewed Colbert and said at one point during the interview that the comedian was “bigger than three popes.” But Colbert corrected him.

“You can’t be bigger than three popes. You can only be bigger that two popes — that’s the most we’ve ever had at one time,” Colbert said. “Oh! Except during Avignon, I guess there were three popes at one point, right?”

Sporting a full beard so white and curly that it could have been worn by Santa Claus, Colbert, 51, a lifelong Catholic, said he told his Colbert Report show staff that their workplace was “the joy machine.”



CNS/Lucy Nicholson, Reuters

FAITH, JOY AND HUMOUR — Stephen Colbert, who took over Sept. 8 as host of CBS’ Late Night program, said in an interview for Canada’s Salt and Light Television that his Colbert Report character was intended to be a “well-intentioned, poorly informed, high-status idiot.” Colbert is pictured in a 2013 photo.

“You don’t want to bank down your ambitions so you’ll do a really hard show in a really hard schedule, and somehow when it was hardest, it would often feel the most joyful or often does feel the most joyful. And that’s when I would sort of jokingly call it the

joy machine,” he said.

“But it’s sort of true because the only way to approach something that is truly hard has got to be with joy, because if you don’t approach it with joy, it’s just a machine. And it will grind you up. And the lesson that I took from that is that: Doing

something joyfully doesn’t make it any easier, it only makes it better. And also, it makes it communal — that we’re all doing it together. When you work in fear, or when you work in distress, you often feel alone. But jokes, laughter, humour, joy whatever you want to call it, it connects people.”

“Faith ultimately can’t be argued, faith has to be felt, and hopefully you can still feel your faith fully, and let your mind have a logical life of its own and they do not defy each other but complement each other. . . . Logic itself will not lead me to God. But my love of the world and my gratitude toward it will. So hopefully I can use my mind to make my jokes and not deny my love for God at the same time.”

“I think you have to make a choice to perceive Christ in the people around you, and to love them without fear that anything will be taken from you in the gift that you give them of your own love.”

Asked what he might ask Pope Francis were he to be a guest on his new show, Colbert replied, “I would ask him about how love leads him to joy, or does love lead him to joy?”

Colbert added that he would ask the pope “about being a fool for Christ,” because “to be a fool for Christ is to love, because we are made, we are here to dig our brief moment in time.

“And I would ask him how he puts that first. Because, how you get to where you are in the church

and not to be consumed by the law as opposed to the love that led to the law?”

Colbert said the name of The Colbert Report, with the “T” silent in each word, came about because “to an American ear anything that sounds French is a little, you know,” using a finger to push up the tip of his nose, “a little snooty, a little frou-frou and so, and I’m ‘coal-BEAR.’ I was born COAL-bert. My father’s a COAL-bert, my brothers and sisters are COAL-bert. I’m one of 11 kids and half of us are COAL-BEAR and half of us are COAL-bert because my father says you can choose what you want. So I chose coal-BEAR because I’m essentially a pretentious person.”

He also engaged in a bit of wordplay with Rosica, needling him for being part of an order founded by St. Basil.

“I’m no fan,” Colbert declared. “Why?” Rosica asked. “St. Arugula — that’s the saint. That’s the saint, that’s the saint I worship. OK? Delicious. With a little Saint Pine Nut and a little Saint Reggiano,” he said, pantomiming slicing cheese through a grater. “Delicious.”

When Rosica suggested “St. Grappa” — an Italian drink — Colbert exclaimed, “St. Grappa! I have worshipped. I have worshipped at the porcelain throne of St. Grappa.”

The interview was broadcast in full on the Salt and Light channel on Sept. 13.

— with files from David Gibson, Religion News Service.

Government leaders need strong grasp of why people flee their countries

By Caitlin Ward

So. Today I read that while in Brazil, Canada’s prime minister locked himself in a bathroom until the Brazilian president gave in to his demands. His demands, apparently, were that toasts and speeches should take place during lunch, as opposed to afterward. Yes, I was also hoping for a more exciting reason for someone to lock himself in the toilets.

I can’t tell you how accurate this report is, but I can tell you that it’s gained a lot of traction online the past few days. I’ve seen it posted and reposted across several social media sites, commented upon, and despaired over. When I read it, I thought it

Soobax
K’naan

seemed strange that our prime minister would be in Brazil during an election season, so I checked the date on the article to find that this alleged tantrum happened in August of 2011.

Well, that’s not exactly news, I suppose, but I’ve no doubt that the article’s sudden recirculation has a lot to do with current

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

events. We’ve got an election coming up; it’s time to dig up all the weird things. The Conservatives are having a particularly rough week, between the revelation that one candidate peed in a cup in 2012 and it ended up on national television, and another candidate uploaded prank calls to YouTube in which he mocked people with disabilities. I have some sympathy for the first candidate, who apparently had a medical condition and was caught by a hidden camera. The other guy — well, I don’t have much fellow feeling for him at all. He seems like a dick.

I’m not sure I’d want a political party to lose an entire election based solely on a few exceptionally stupid incidents — I’m sure candidates from all parties have done some ill-advised things in their time — but it has been a nice diversion from some of the other things that have come up this election. You know, like that time Stephen Harper said we couldn’t bring Syrian refugees into Canada more quickly because of the security risk they posed. Because clearly, people so desperate to flee their homeland that they risk their own lives and those of their children must be terrorists. Then there was that time he said that the best way to deal with the refugee crisis was to escalate military intervention in Syria.

Sigh.

I should clarify my meaning. It’s not that I want to read about

Harper’s histrionics in Brazil to be distracted from the humanitarian crisis in Europe; rather, I want to be distracted from how incredibly depressing it is that we have a prime minister who simultaneously seems to have no feeling for his fellow humans, and a very poor grasp of why people flee countries.

Perhaps Harper ought to talk to — well, someone who knows about these sorts of things. Perhaps K’naan, an internationally renowned rapper who fled

Basically, I got beef
I wanna talk to you directly
I can’t ignore, I can’t escape
And that’s ’cause you affect me

You cripple me, you shackle me
You shatter my whole future in front of me
This energy is killing me
I gotta let it pour like blood, soobax

CHORUS
Dadkii waa dhibtee nagala soobax
Dhibkii waa batee nagala soobax
Dhiigi waad qubtee nagala soobax
Dhulkii waad gubtee nagala soobax

Nagala soobax, nagala soobax
Dadkii waa dhibtee nagala soobax
Dhibkii waa batee nagla soobax
Dhiigi waad qubtee nagala soobax

So for real, who’s to blame?
We lose lives over Qabiil’s name
Disregard for the soul
We just don’t give a fuck no more

Left alone, all alone

Mogadishu at the age of 12, settled in Canada, and spoke to the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees at 21, criticizing the UN’s failed peacekeeping missions in Somalia. Or perhaps Harper should chat with Giles Fraser, whose most recent Loose Canon column reminds us that the cornerstone of Christian faith, the eucharist, is built upon the Passover, a ritual that recalls a people fleeing violence and political oppression in the hopes of building a better life in a new

Settle your issues on your own
What to do? Where to go?
I got to be a refugee damn, soobax

CHORUS

Mogadishu used to be
A place where the world would come to see
Jaziira, sugunto liida, wardhiigleey iyo Madiina
Hargeysa, Boosaaso, Baardheere iyo Berbera
My skin needs to feel the sand, the sun
I’m tired of the cold, god damn soobax

CHORUS

I guess I could use the last bar to flow
I’m known as a lyrical rhyme domino
I’m cynical, well, oh, now you know
Put a hole in an emcee like cheerio

They don’t hear me though
I work for the struggle, I don’t work for dough
I mean what I say, I don’t do it for show
Somalia needs all gunmen right out the door

CHORUS

— VOTING, page 17

Butala’s new book: reimagining the Canadian Prairies

Readings & Meanings

Gerald Schmitz



Through 16 works of fiction and non-fiction Sharon Butala has established herself as a pre-eminent literary voice of the Canadian prairie experience. Moreover, her own deep observations and compelling characters challenge narratives of western development that are too often male-dominated and anglo-centric. Over a century ago her Le Blanc grandparents came from Quebec to settle near St. Isidore de Bellevue, Sask. (where my francophone mother Denise would teach school and where I still have relatives). Butala’s first novel, *Country of the Heart*, drew on that heritage.

the furred body of a great animal blundering determinedly by, the force of its desire set always on something further on, at the far edge of the prairie, while she lay. Already tense, listening over the wind’s noise for the sound of hoofbeats, or the creak of the wagon’s approach.

With a windblown uncertainty stretching to the horizon, a flood of memories and unresolved questions weigh on Sophie as her back-story unfolds between Quebec and Saskatchewan. The newlywed couple’s emotional departure for *la grande aventure* (great adventure) of coming west must have seemed

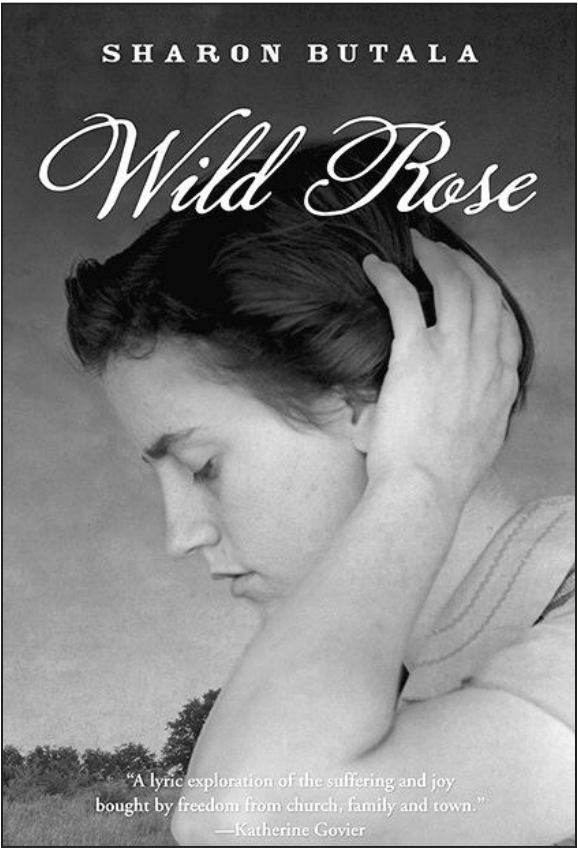
standing, much less mercy. Sophie and Pierre would feel its censorious sting, however unjust. Small wonder that Sophie’s idea to move west, to take up new land of their own, held out the promise of a blessed escape from such pitiless pressures. And under the vast prairie skies a different spirituality entered her soul, one that disbelieved in the established verities:

. . . how thin and small the bosom of the church she had been taught was her only and best home, the place where outside of God, all truth resided. Beside this wonder, she felt the church, its teachings, its power, slipping away from her grasp, it was like trying to catch water in your fingers, it moved on, it grew thin and pale, it vanished. (. . .) God would forgive. He would understand. She shook with the two ideas fighting against each other in her heart and mind, first one, the other, then she prayed: Notre père . . . (Our father . . .)

Throughout it is Sophie’s voice that drives the narrative. One of the special hallmarks of Butala’s writing is the extraordinary intimacy which that narrative voice offers the reader. We get deep inside Sophie’s head, sharing her innermost thoughts and questions.

For four years Sophie and Pierre struggle together to make their prairie home. It’s not all hardship and hard work. There are discoveries — the remains of buffalo bones, Aboriginal stone circles; small epiphanies in the midst of nature’s flora and fauna. There is joy at the arrival of another Québécois couple, Séraphine and Napoleon Beausoleil, as neighbours. Sophie gives birth to a son Charles to whom she is devoted.

Then Pierre never comes home and over the horizon arrives a stranger, Walter Campion, claiming he has bought the land and everything on it. Sophie learns that



NEW NOVEL — This is the cover of *Wild Rose*, Sharon Butala’s latest novel

Her brilliant new novel, **Wild Rose**, dedicated to two elderly Le Blanc aunts, tells the story of a young woman, Sophie Charron, who comes from Quebec in 1884 with her husband Pierre Hippolyte to make a new life on the plains of southern Saskatchewan. Enduring a harsh pioneer existence she finds herself abandoned with a child and must make her own destiny on this exigent frontier.

Sophie’s story is told in a non-linear fashion so that from the beginning we are immersed in the crucial circumstances leading to her ultimate choice. The opening chapter, *Wind*, situates her on the couple’s homestead farm near the primitive village of Bone Pile, a rising anxiety gnawing at her when Pierre fails to return home. From this first page the raw power of Butala’s evocative language is strikingly evident:

Toward dawn, drowsing, she came awake with a start to a low moan in the distance — ceaseless, growing louder as it advanced toward the cabin, until, arriving, it pushed against the cabin walls,

childhood through adolescence in a multi-generational conservative rural household where the traditional power of the Roman Catholic Church brooked no dissent. Sophie was a good if inquisitive girl who embraced the rituals of the faith (first communion was an especially big deal) and attended a convent school. But some things troubled her like why her uncle Henri was denied a proper funeral and could not be buried in consecrated ground. As a teenager approaching adulthood she became attracted to a handsome, slightly older boy, Pierre, but faced pressure from her father to marry someone else of his choosing. Her family strongly disapproved of any romance with Pierre and was ready to believe the worst.

This was a closed and confining world where shameful secrets (suicides, sins of the flesh, pregnancies outside of wedlock) had to be covered up and made right, where patriarchal authority ruled. It was small-minded, sometimes hypocritical, more inclined to summary judgment than under-

Half a cheer for a family-friendly adventure

By Gerald Schmitz

This past week the Toronto International Film Festival has been showcasing the latest works by high-profile Canadian directors, about which more in a future column. Meanwhile, a small Canadian co-production has slipped into a few theatres without fanfare. **The Journey Home** (originally released as **Midnight Sun**) premiered last September at Cinefest Sudbury. It’s a heart-warming if sometimes oversentimental effort from Ottawa-born director Roger Spottiswoode, better known for Hollywood action movies including the 1997 James Bond feature *Tomorrow Never Dies*.

The Journey Home
(Canada/Italy 2014)

No one dies in this movie, except in the past when the father of a young teenage boy, Luke (Dakota Goyo), is recalled having gone through the ice to his death — a mishap unfairly blamed on a wilderness guide/artist named Muktuk (Croatian actor Goran Visnjic looking vaguely Aboriginal; *muktuk*



G. Schmitz

SASKATCHEWAN PRAIRIE — Sharon Butala with Gerald Schmitz’s parents, Denise and Bernard Schmitz (both of whom were pioneers in this province), in the summer of 1995. Butala’s new novel is *Wild Rose*, a story of a woman’s life on the plains of southern Saskatchewan.

she has no legal rights. In this territory of male privilege she’s left with nothing and no recourse. Worse, Pierre has been unfaithful. Another woman is expecting his child. In a cruel irony he may even return to Quebec to seek a church annulment of their marriage.

What is a single mother with no resources to do in this situation?

Sophie is the wild rose of the title, determined not to wilt in the face of adversity and betrayal. She will not become hard-hearted. But she is tough and resilient, with protective thorns as necessary. For a time she finds accommodation in a boarding house in Bone Pile. She makes the acquaintance of a bachelor, Harry Adamson, moving into his shack when he leaves and transforming it into a café to earn money of her own. She spurns the offers of the unscrupulous Campion to set her up in the new town of Garden City near the Cypress Hills. Her sympathy for Bone Pile’s fallen women doesn’t extend to the brothel owner. If she accepts male companionship it is on her terms, main-

taining her identity and self-respect. This is where Sophie’s story opens a future of possibility. Because she has not been defeated by difficult circumstances. She has resisted being at the mercy of men. The choices she makes will be her own. As Butala writes: “She knew a little of herself now, and that knowledge would be the rock on which she would build the rest of her life.”

Wild Rose
By Sharon Butala
Coteau Books, Regina,
©2015

And it would be somewhere in this prairie place of wonder. There’s a final encounter with Pierre when he tells her: “You wanted the West, didn’t you? Now you *are* the West.” He knows he has wronged her and in those last words pays tribute to what has made her stronger, strong enough to overcome his desertion, to stay true to herself and to endure in this land.

actually means whale meat in Inuktitut). Luke lives with his mom in a northern village called Devon (actually Churchill, Man.). She’s a biologist who departs to study a population of beluga whales (along with polar bears, Churchill’s other main attraction), leaving Luke in the care of his aunt. (Trivia point: one of the monitored belugas is named Bond.)

A nighttime close encounter with a female bear, tranquilized to be transported north a safe distance by helicopter, leads to Luke finding her cub stranded in a shed near the house. Luke effectively adopts the playful critter and seeks Muktuk’s help in returning it to its mother. When that doesn’t work Luke decides to head off alone with his furry “buddy” on a reckless snowmobile journey north some 160 kilometres to “Cape Resolute” where the mother bear has been dropped.

Muktuk goes on a rescue mission but predictably a series of challenges test their survival. There are vicious storms. After falling through the ice, Luke is saved by Muktuk bringing him to an Inuit camp. Then he and the cub, named Pezoo (“vagabond”), get separated and stranded on an ice floe. Another

rescue is thanks to a “rig” (which appears to be some kind of floating oil platform as if in Alaska). But Luke mistrusts his saviours’ intentions in regard to the cub and sneaks away, using an abandoned leaky boat to make for Cape Resolute. Of course after these improbable misadventures both mothers and cubs are happily reunited.

There are a few scenes that hint at more: a reference to destroying the Inuit way of life; coming across a group of rich white hunters with their trophy bear. Essentially, though, this is a Disneyfied storyline with melodramatic music to match. The star that steals the show, the adorable cub Pezoo, is actually from a Chinese facility. Unless you watch the credits or notice the “Canada Goose” logos on parkas, the Canadian setting is fictionalized as a mythic Arctic landscape complete with northern lights, presumably to appeal to international audiences.

Still there’s a dearth of human-scale family-oriented movies at the multiplex and this adventure tale of a boy and his friend offers some modest satisfactions. Just as long as the kids don’t ask for a polar bear as a pet.

Cross the antidote for fear of and longing for change



Questioning Faith

Mary Marrocco

“Change is good!” So proclaimed a brightly smiling instructor to her dismayed class, who’d just learned their school was being moved to a different corner of the city. Somehow it didn’t feel quite as good as the neon smile and cheery voice pronounced it should. “Change is good” — perhaps, but change is hard, and we fear it, too. The way to kill an old person, as my mother likes to remind me, is to change the furniture. Even for youth, the September winds of change, from summer heat to autumn coolness, from Grade 2 to Grade 3, can be scary and tough. Something in us seeks change, but something also fears it.

We’ve reason to fear change. “Have you no concept of change, of progress?” queries a man in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, and Caspian replies: “I’ve seen both in an egg. We call it ‘going bad.’ ” Change is decay, corruption, death. If you leave the house for a week, things will be changed when you come back, even if it’s only dust on the furniture. Change is a Florida man swallowed up by the bedroom floor in his sleep, bed and all, when a sink-hole suddenly opened beneath him.

Change is what the fallen world offers as fulfilment. These days, we’re mobile, peripatetic and itinerant, changing jobs, friends, romantic interests, Internet servers, credit card companies, appointment times, hair colour — and trying to find meaning in that. When we pursue it, change

becomes addictive, luring us on, leading us farther into frustration and defeat. We end up “running after less and less, mistaking it for more and more,” as St. Augustine observed 1,600 years ago.

On the other hand, sometimes the more we try to change, the more we become stuck. We seem to progress, then find ourselves seemingly back in the same old place of fear or anger or helplessness. In 2014, marking a century after the beginning of the First World War, many commentators noted that the same 1914 problems still beset the globe. Violence, control, domination, remain with us. *Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.*

Why is change so difficult and so desirable at the same time? Is it our restlessness that makes us seek change, our resistance that braces us against it? Some early Greek philosophers concluded the only thing in the universe that’s constant is change itself. Dickens’ character Miss Havisham, jilted on her wedding day, tried in vain to keep everything the same, never removing her wedding dress, leaving the wedding cake on the table, while everything decayed and crumbled, her body grew old and wrinkled and her spirit increasingly bitter.

Change and decay are the consequence of sin. Sin confuses us into thinking that changelessness is paralysis, and change itself is our salvation. We can’t stop change, can’t control it, can’t quite come to terms with it, can’t find true rest or meaning in it. What, then?

The alternative to change is the cross.

Fittingly, we celebrate the cross in mid-September, season of change. At about this time, one year, I had the chance to visit southern Spain. In a church in



Paproski

STANDING STEADY — “The cross stands steady while the world is turning,” is the motto of the Carthusian order (*Stat crux dum volvitur orbis*), a centuries-old contemplative community, writes Mary Marrocco. “The Carthusians know change, and constancy. In our world, last year’s model is obsolete, and you fear for your job when you turn 30. This August, the Carthusians celebrated their 931st anniversary. And for them, the cross is planted in change. The cross stands still while all else moves.”

Sevilla, an elaborately dressed wooden figure looked down upon us from above the altar: the Virgin of Hope of Macarena. We went closer to see her. My sister, looking through a zoom lens, turned and exclaimed: “*Elle est triste!* She’s sad!” Indeed, she’s famous for the glass tears that bedew her cheeks. Her clothes change with the seasons, the people and society change beneath her as centuries pass, but her love and her sorrow don’t change. Her spiritual and artistic style is less popular in our part of the world, but the whole church celebrates Our Lady of Sorrows (Sept. 15, the day after the Triumph of the Cross), Mary

who was told: “A sword will pierce your heart” — the sword that pierced her son on the cross.

The cross is the antidote to both our fear of change and our longing for change.

“The cross stands steady while the world is turning.” This is the motto of the Carthusian order (*Stat crux dum volvitur orbis*), a centuries-old contemplative community. The motto is portrayed visually in their symbol, a cross planted in a circle. The Carthusians know change, and constancy. In our world, last year’s model is obsolete, and you fear for your job when you turn 30. This August, the Carthusians cel-

ebrated their 931st anniversary. And for them, the cross is planted in change. The cross stands still while all else moves. Only the cross can lead change to fulfilment. Only the cross can answer our longing for the unchangeable.

The unchanging God is a surprise, unpredictable but ever the same, stillness in movement. Thankfully, we’re changeable — we can change from broken to whole, sinful to forgiven, stuck to free — but unchangeably made in the image of God, unchangeably beloved. “He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change: praise him!” (Gerard Manley Hopkins)

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A mathematical formula for healthy discipleship

Liturgy and Life

Gertrude Rompré



Every so often the Sunday readings come along and my first response is, “*Yes, Jesus, but . . . !*” This week certainly fits the bill. The readings are jarring, they shake us out of our comfort zones, and, at least for me, they give rise to all sorts of “rational” reasons why the gospel just isn’t practical in the real world in which we live. Let me give you some examples.

First, Jesus (and Moses) gives us a message of radical inclusion. He suggests that even those that aren’t part of our “in” group are capable of bearing witness to God’s love. Challenging stuff! I want to say, “*Yes, Jesus, but . . .* what if they get it wrong? What if they don’t have the right theology? Or, what if they create another ‘in’ group of your followers that doesn’t look like my own?” But Jesus cuts through my logic and reminds us that the Spirit knows no bounds. Jesus challenges my righteous indignation and calls me to embrace those who look, act, and think differently than I do.

Second, Jesus gets even more radical. If I put stumbling blocks in the way of others’ spiritual growth, then it would

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be better if a millstone were tied around my neck and thrown into the sea. I reply, “*Yes, Jesus, but . . .* what if they don’t know the right path to heaven? What if they choose spiritual practices that make me uncomfortable? What if they’re too charismatic or too traditional or too politically active?” But Jesus doesn’t buy my argument and I’m challenged not to get in people’s way when they’re trying to find their way to God . . . even if that path looks different from my own.

Third, reading the letter of James, we are reminded that the future is bleak for the rich. Again, I want to say, “*Yes, Jesus, but . . .* I’m rich.” Maybe this is the biggest challenge of all. How do I follow the gospel message of radical concern for the poor, what the church calls God’s “preferential option for the poor,” when I reap the benefits of living in a wealthy pocket of the world? I like my creature comforts, I like the security that a bank account gives me and my family, and I really like RRSPs! How do I become part of what Pope Francis calls a “church that is poor for the poor”?

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 27, 2015

Numbers 11:25-29
Psalm 19
James 5:1-6
Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

This week’s readings hit me right between the eyes. But, then again, they are doing exactly what Scripture is supposed to do. The book of Hebrews reminds us that the Word of God “is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb 4, 12). It is meant to shake us out of our comfort zones into a deeper, truer, more compassionate way of living. It is designed (by God, I believe) to shape our imaginations and lead us more fully into God’s vision for humanity. So, what might this

look like in our everyday world?

It might mean thinking twice before presuming that other expressions of discipleship are less valid than my own. It might mean getting off the beaten track of my own spiritual practices and seeking to understand how others seek God. It might mean making different choices about how I spend my money, ensuring that the needs of those who are poor or suffering in any way are taken into account as well.

Fortunately we are not alone in our response to the challenge of the gospel. It might be impossible to follow the scriptural imperative if we were trying to do it solo, but we aren’t. We are trying to follow God’s call in community, as the Body of Christ, as church. So we have beacons that help point out the way. We have only to read Pope Francis’ latest encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, to be inspired to a more gospel-centred way of living in the real world. Or, closer to home, we can read the Canadian bishops’ recent letter, *A Church Seeking Justice*, to help us reflect on what it means to follow God’s call to justice in Canada.

And perhaps we don’t even have to look that far. Who are the prophets in our neighbourhood? Who are the saints sitting next to us in the pew? These are people who help us imagine what it is to live according to the gospel challenges in the real world today.

If I were to write a mathematical equation for this week’s readings, I think it would look like this: TC + GH - J. Start with “tender compassion” toward those who are poor or suffering in any way. Add “gentle humility” regarding our own favourite spiritual paths, and subtract “judgement” of those who look, act or think differently than we do. TC + GH - J just might be the formula for healthy discipleship that Jesus is calling us to embrace today!

Dorothy Day a saint who doesn’t fit traditional notions of piety

In Exile

Ron Rolheiser, OMI



Sometime soon we will witness the canonization of Dorothy Day. For many of us today, especially those who are not Roman Catholic, a canonization draws little more than a yawn. How does a canonization have an impact on our world? Moreover, isn’t canonization simply the recognition of a certain piety to which most people cannot relate? So why should there be much interest around the canonization of Dorothy Day — who in fact protested that she didn’t want people to consider her a saint and asserted that making someone a saint often helps neutralize his or her influence?

Well, Dorothy Day wasn’t the kind of saint who fits the normal

conceptions of piety. Many of us, no doubt, are familiar with a basic sketch of her life. She was born in New York in 1897 and died there in 1980. She was a journalist, a peace activist, a convert to Christianity, who, together with Peter Maurin, established the Catholic Worker Movement to combine direct aid to the poor and homeless with non-violent action on behalf of peace and justice. The movement remains vibrant today. She served too on the newspaper she founded, *Catholic Worker*, from 1933 until her death.

Her person and the movement she started have powerfully inspired Christians of every denomination to try to more effectively take the gospels to the streets, to try to bring together Jesus and justice in a more effectual way. She is invoked today as the primary role model for virtually everyone, Christian and non-Christian alike, working in the area of social justice.

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

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A second feature which characterized Dorothy Day and her spirituality was her ability to simply act, and to act effectively. She not only had faith, she acted upon that faith. She was a do-er, not just a listener, and she was able to institutionalize her faith and embed it into an institution, the *Catholic Worker*, which not only was able to minister directly to the poor but was able to form itself into something larger and more permanent than the faith, vision, and power

of a single person.

Dorothy was able to act in a way that was bigger and more effective than her own person. There’s an axiom that says: *Whatever we dream alone remains a dream, but what we dream with others can become a reality.* Dorothy dreamed with others and made that dream a reality. Today, most of us struggle both to act on our faith and, even more so, to embed our faith concretely into effective, sustained community action.

Finally, Dorothy Day can be an inspiration to us because she did the right thing for the right reason. Dorothy’s commitment to the poor arose not out of guilt, or neurosis, or anger, or bitterness toward society. It arose out of gratitude. Her route to faith, Jesus, and the poor was rather unorthodox. In the years prior to her conversion she was an atheist, a communist, a woman ideologically opposed to the institution of marriage, and a woman who had had an abortion. Her turning to God and to the poor happened when she gave birth to her daughter, Tamar Theresa, and experienced in the joy of giving birth a gratitude that seared her soul. In her autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*, she describes how, at seeing her baby daughter for the first time, she was so overcome with gratitude that a faith and love were born in her that never again left her. Her passion for God and the poor were fuelled by that.

She was also an earthy saint. She will, no doubt, be the first canonized saint whose photographs show a woman with a cigarette in her mouth. She’s a saint for our time. She showed us how we can serve God and the poor in a very complex world, and how to do it with love and colour.

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Barefoot and Preaching

Leah Perrault



It always feels like I am waiting for something — or many things. Life will finally work when I am getting a good sleep at night again; when the house is cleaned up; when the book I have ordered arrives and has all the answers; or when I finally grow up and get what I want. The ordinary time of autumn brings out an especially burning ache for things to fall into place.

Somewhere along the road I walked to this moment, I picked up the expectation that my life is supposed to fall into place, that I

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ought to arrive at some “happily ever after” in which everything I want or hope for is in my possession and stays there. Despite my days being filled with the sounds of children, meaningful work, the love of a spouse and many more blessings, I often find myself waiting for this or that to happen so things can be just right.

Ecclesiastes 3 has been an echo in my heart for the better part of a year: “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.” The writer goes on to list all these times and seasons, for mourning and dancing, living and dying, speaking and silence. Though waiting is not listed, I suspect it is covered by the “every activity” business in the opening line.

But I have such preferences



J. Weber

BEAUTIFUL MOMENTS — “I am carefully releasing my grip on my expectations by begging for the grace to see what is beautiful now. The moments do not have to last to be gifts.” — Leah Perrault

about these activities, welcoming some and rejecting others, drawing deeply from the joy and laughter and spitting out the sadness and restraint with the grieving and the dying. I want the world to be my way, on my time. I want to hold time and what happens within it in my hands. Worse still, I convince myself that if things went my way I would finally have my happiness, peace and joy.

When my kids have one of those miraculous days where they all have a good day at the same time, when my husband folds the towels the “right way,” when one of my ideas takes shape in a meeting or when I think of just the right thing to say at just the right time, I am not satisfied.

At the end of the oft-quoted passage at the beginning of Ecclesiastes, there is a frequently ignored verse that God and I are wrestling with right now: “He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end” (3:11).

What if we are made to thirst for a timelessness that cannot be satiated in time? What if this restlessness does not need to be rejected? What if I can love myself and others and be loved even when I have ridiculous expectations that are not being met?

A poem found me in this questioning state and offered some rest: “who told you that you were permitted to settle in?/who told you that this or that would last forever?/did no one ever tell you that you will never/in the world/feel at home in the world?” (“Untitled” by Stanislaw Baranczak)

I do not know who told me, or who I have told. The lie has been repeated through my lifetime and throughout human history. I have chosen to believe it, and I have chosen my frustration and misery every time. I get so frustrated when my little ones build Lego creations they want to keep forever. I sneak in after bedtime and take apart a few blocks so there are some to add to tomorrow’s inventions. And here I am, day after day, clinging to the things I want to stay the same and waiting

impatiently for them to change without requiring me to let go.

All of this life I am living has a beauty to it, an arc of something being created and taken apart at the same time. Then, by surprise, I forget to keep waiting and stop focusing on what I wish was real — and I get caught up in what is.

And then things are. Totally perfect. For a moment.

Soap bubbles glistening in the kitchen sink when my favourite song is playing. A hug from my husband. All green lights when I am in a hurry. A bowl of soup and a warm bed when I am sick. Perfectly calm water while I float on a boat in sunshine. A word of encouragement when I am afraid. Rain falling when my world feels like it is falling apart.

We do not get to possess these moments, to store them up and or-

ganize them, to frame and preserve them. We get to live them and let them go. When I remember that, I stop waiting for life to be this or that and begin to allow life to unfold as it is, trusting that this time is right for the activity that lies before me.

The world is in a rush, daring me to join a frenetic pace that promises satisfaction later. Increasingly, I am resisting that urge. I am making peace with my restlessness by thanking God for giving me a heart for eternity. I am carefully releasing my grip on my expectations by begging for the grace to see what is beautiful now. The moments do not have to last to be gifts. I need not settle in *only* when I am comfortable. Moment by moment I can make my home in what is, trusting that God has all things held in his time.

Darfur conflict about water

Continued from page 10

“The Darfur conflict is also about water, you know,” said the Dutch Jesuit. “If the Sahara progresses to the South, people move more toward the Darfur mountains where there is more water. The environmental context and the economic poverty is there.”

The world’s biggest refugee crisis — the four million people on the run from the Syrian Arab Republic and 7.4 million forced from their homes inside the country — also had a clear, identifiable environmental trigger. Syria endured a four-year drought leading up to the Arab Spring. Crops failed and nearly a third of Syria’s 10 million rural inhabitants were reduced to extreme poverty. Damascus and other cities were filling up with ex-farmers and herders who had lost everything. When a small protest began in Damascus in the spring of 2011, the situation quickly snowballed and the Assad regime reacted with force to a situation it could not control.

For the most part, the world’s growing refugee problems are concentrated along two bands where exploding population, rapid urbanization and shifting climate are putting additional pressures on feeble governments with no legitimate, popular mandate. One band begins in the Middle East, in Gaza, and runs through Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad, Tehran and on to Kabul and the Pashtun territories of Pakistan. The other skips along the southern edge of the Sahara, the region known as the Sahel. From Mauritania through Mali, Niger, Chad, Sudan and down into Somalia.

“It’s also a fact, and we need to talk openly about it, these are predominantly Islamic countries,” said Balleis. “There is a dimension of how religion plays a role in politics.”

Each new refugee crisis represents a new long-term situation.

On average, from flight until some sort of permanent home, refugees remain refugees an average of 17 years. When the JRS walks into a refugee camp or sets up a centre for urban refugees in a city flooded with new arrivals, they assume they will be there 15 to 20 years.

“These situations don’t just go away so easily, unless you attend to it,” said Balleis. “The question is how to sustain our work.”

Balleis understands people’s wandering attention to this crisis. Nobody can live on a diet of other people’s agony day after day in a complex, changing world.

“Do we want to see every day the fighting scenes from Syria? From Aleppo?” he asks. “On the other hand, it’s sad that the world is not any more aware that Aleppo is in a terrible state.”

Balleis does not believe the refugee problem is unsolvable, or that refugees will define the 21st century. He sees the problem solved daily on an individual level, little by little, through relationships formed between refugees and JRS staff.

“Every little action or deed can be an element to contribute to some solution,” he said. “People do not forget easily who helped them . . . maybe those people being helped today might be the best bridges to the Middle East tomorrow, and feed something back into the Middle East that they learned from our societies.”

There’s no telling what will happen to Abdi Mahdi, his two wives and his nine children. He probably won’t learn English. But he may well remember being a part of something. He will have faced the future even in the bleak situation of the refugee camp, and his wives and his children will have watched him bravely look forward. He will not forget what he received in friendship. Neither should we.

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Dr. Alexandra Kovats, csjp

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Alexandra Kovats, csjp, PhD, has served in formation and leadership in the congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace of which she is a member. She holds a PhD in Ecological Spirituality from The Union Institute and University, Cincinnati and is well-known in the United States and internationally as a teacher and lecturer on ecological and creation spirituality, spirituality and cosmology, eco-feminism and religious life. Currently involved in the ministry of spiritual direction and retreat facilitation, Dr. Kovats is Adjunct Professor in the field of spirituality for the School of Theology and Ministry (STM) at Seattle University.

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Prairie families depended on hard-working women

Around the Kitchen Table

Joan Eyolfson Cadham



I'm not sure what event we were attending, but I do remember that it was autumn and I was catching a ride with a friend. As we drove country roads, he looked out at the combines busy in the fields and said, "It's interesting. We always talk about the pioneer men who worked so hard to open up the prairies, to create the farms, to make the province what it has become. But what about the pioneer women? How could the men have managed without their wives running the house, growing a huge garden, preserving food for the winter, dealing with the farm chores during harvest, looking after the children? Why don't we ever talk about the women?"

I've been reflecting on Bill's comment over the past few days. Sept. 8 was my mother's birthday. Sept. 9 is mine. Mom was 43 when I was born, the 10th child. My younger sister arrived 17 months later. My eldest brother was 24 years older than I was and, given the era, Mom had two babies at home when her two eldest fought in the Second World War. The older girls were away, too, teaching.

I think of Mom as our birthday dates arrive. September. Harvest time, not just in the fields but also in the garden. Pregnant, with the responsibility of cooking for the threshing crew as well as the fam-

ily, bringing in the garden harvest, canning, preserving, making jams and jellies and preserves, putting down chicken and beef for the winter, milking the cows while the men worked the field — and a new baby to tend.

No running water, of course. No electricity. Gas mantle and coal-oil lamps. A wood-burning kitchen stove and a wood-and-coal furnace in the basement. All the wood needed to be split and carted into the house. Ashes to clean out. No stove timer, no thermostat. She could tell the temperature by putting her arm into the oven.

Lines of laundry to do weekly, the water heated in the copper boiler on the stove, the washing machine gas powered. Mountains of ironing with "sad irons" that were heated on the stovetop of that wood-burning stove.

She sold cream and eggs as a source of cash money, the "creamery man" coming to the farm to pick it up — and for coffee — about the same time as the sun rose. Never-ending mending, including repairing binder canvas on her trusty Singer pedal-operated sewing machine.

A never-ending round of work. And yet . . . and yet . . . she always had time to put the coffee pot on if a neighbour turned up for a visit. She always had cookies or ginger-

bread and whipped cream ready to accompany the coffee. She modelled cheerful giving without words, always having garden produce for some neighbour whose crop had not been successful, always finding something for anyone that came to the door.

Her private joy was her flower garden that curved around two sides of the house, marked out by white-washed stones and caragana hedges, flower beds filled with sweet old-fashioned flowers: bleeding heart, lych-nis, Sweet William, sweet rocket, evening scented stock that she grew because Dad so loved the fragrance, and the companion ferns, Little Old Lady and Little Old Man whose Icelandic names I never knew although the original stock came to Canada with my great-grandmother. The front verandah was her greenhouse, filled with geraniums and ferns. She would steal away in the evening to spend time with her flowers, maybe drawing enough peace and strength to make it through another day.

And yet — she found the time,



Eyolfson

PRAIRIE FAMILY — The Eyolfson family on a September day in 1940. Joan is the little bundle in her mother's arms, and her father is beside her.

the resources and the strength to give her two little ones a joyful childhood, taking us outside in the evening and laughing as we rolled around like puppies in a bed of wild camomile, the scent of which still brings back sweet memories. As I grew, she somehow imbued a sense of importance in conquering tasks so that, while I mended or gathered eggs, or ironed the flat pieces, I felt grown-up rather than burdened. She found money to

buy us books; she cut up brown paper bags and stitched them up to form pages that I could use for drawing or writing our own stories; she helped us memorize the weekly recitation we needed for the public speaking session after lunch every Friday at school and quizzed us on our spelling words until we had perfectly committed them to memory.

Yes, as my friend said, What about the women?

Voting demands thoughtful consideration

Continued from page 12

country, and they didn't have the right religion for the other. I'm not sure they were even literate. And I don't know how open Canada's arms were at the time, but the family settled here, nonetheless, and eventually, they thrived.

It's an older story than you might think — the story of my maternal grandfather's family, Irish Catholics named Fitzgerald, leaving in the years around the 1798 Uprising to settle in what is now Quebec. In those days, they might have been

called enemies of the Crown. These days, they might be called terrorists.

I won't pretend that this story means I intimately understand the plight of contemporary refugees, because I certainly don't. But I do wonder how many settler Canadians have at least one story like that in their genealogy. I wonder if Harper has a story like that in his own family history. I wonder how many of us would be here if Canada hadn't opened its arms and its borders when we needed it. I wonder how many of us aren't here because of the times Canada failed to do so.

And I wonder how many of us will think of any of those things when we go to the polls Oct. 19. If current statistics are to be believed, a lot of us will be thinking of those things. Or perhaps we'll be thinking about that time our prime minister locked himself in the toilets to get his way. But to be completely honest, I'm past the point of caring whether this government gets ousted because of its pathetic economic, ecological, and humanitarian record, or simply because its candidates pee in other people's cups. I just want them gone.



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Addressing a global tragedy

The refugee tragedy in the Middle East is tearing at the hearts of people around the world.

How to respond as a “have country” is becoming a political football for political leaders in Canada, as they play to various constituencies in view of next month’s federal election.

Churches are taking a lead in appealing to their members for help and in using this moment to become educated about the Middle East conflict.

In an unprecedented gesture Sept. 6, Pope Francis appealed to every Catholic parish, religious community and sanctuary in Europe to take in a family of refugees. He set the example by hosting two families in parishes inside the Vatican.

A Reuters news story reports resistance and fear in Europe about accepting these immigrants.

When Catholic monks in the village of Ladce in Western Slovakia proposed housing 30 families of Christian Syrian refugees in an empty monastery last month, local opposition forced them to retract the

offer. Residents in the predominantly Catholic town of about 2,600 people signed a petition complaining that the building was too close to a school. One resident said that “Syrian Christians are not like Slovak Christians.”

No doubt, the same attitude is prevalent in Canada. On the other hand, since a majority of those fleeing violence in places like Syria and Afghanistan are Muslim, the pope’s call is a unique opportunity to improve Christian-Muslim relations at a grassroots level.

Both Canadian and American bishops are calling their citizens to become informed about the tragedy.

Archbishop Paul-André Durocher, president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, makes five suggestions to address this “overwhelming and complex problem”: Support a refugee family, donate, get politically involved, be informed, and combat prejudices and fears. See the CCCB website: cccb.ca

The U.S. Catholic Relief Services website lists seven tangible actions “to make a difference in the lives of people who have left their homes behind due to violent and difficult situations.”

The first is Learn More. The website says, “The more you learn about this crisis, the more you’ll understand its underlying causes and can spread the word. Continued warfare in Syria, and violence in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, has contributed to the surge of refugees from those countries, while deteriorating economic conditions in places like Sub-Saharan Africa has led people to Europe in search of a better life.

Other tangible actions are donate, fundraise, advocate, use social media, pray, and support refugees locally. Their website is: <http://www.crs.org/media-center/european-refugee-crisis-7-things-you-can-do-help>

Development and Peace networks with its Caritas partners in Europe to bring relief to thousands of people who are trapped in limbo as they try to escape war, poverty and repression. D&P has committed \$50,000 toward the relief efforts of Caritas. This includes food, shelter and health assistance.

Meanwhile, the Prairie Messenger gives its readers up-to-date and expert information on the unfolding tragedy. No easy answers are in sight. — PWN

Pope’s initiative to forgive sin of abortion reflects practice in Canada



Canon Law For Today

Rev. Frank Morrissey

Ever since Pope Francis invited the entire church to share in a Holy Year of Mercy, dedicated to help all Catholics experience in new ways the loving mercy and compassion of the Lord, we have been expecting a number of important initiatives of his part. As he has often noted, our role is to bring people to Christ, not to try and keep them away!

His first general initiative has been in relation to the sin of abortion. This has raised a number of practical concerns among certain people because persons were not always aware of the consequences of this act. Indeed, the pope’s action opens the door to a renewed

catechesis on this tragic issue.

What Pope Francis did was to allow all confessors to absolve from the sin of abortion during the special Holy Year. This implies two steps: if the person had been excommunicated, then the excommunication must first be lifted. Then absolution from the sin itself can be granted by the confessor.

In Canada, in 1984, shortly after the Code of Canon Law came into effect, diocesan bishops granted to all confessors the right to absolve from the excommunication and also from this sin. The same practice prevailed in the United States. However, in many other countries, the bishops did not see fit to extend the faculty to priests, and reserved such matters to themselves, as the code foresees. The pope’s action, then, applies more particularly to these other situations.

Nevertheless, his gesture pro-

vides Catholics everywhere with an opportunity to reflect on a number of important pastoral issues related to abortion. Because of its seriousness when it is directly procured, the law adds an automatic excommunication on the mother who had the abortion, as well as on those who participated directly in it, or were necessary co-operators. This is not always well known by the faithful at large.

However, before concluding that a woman who had an abortion is necessarily excommunicated, we must keep in mind the condi-

tions spelled out in the church’s legislation for incurring an excommunication. There are three fundamental conditions, which apply not only in this case, but also to other most serious canonical crimes to which an excommunication is attached (such as violation of the Blessed Sacrament).

The first is that there must be grave or serious matter. There can be no doubt that procuring an abortion is a most grave matter. This has been the consistent teaching of the church for centuries.

The second is that the persons

involved are to be fully aware of the consequences of the act: if they did not know the consequences, then they do not incur the penalty. This is one application of the old saying: “Ignorance is bliss.”

The third is that the person must give full consent to the action. It can be questioned in many situations whether a person really consented to the act, or acted out of great fear, shame, or other factors.

There are other additional fac-

— IGNORANCE, page 19

Human dignity overrides all considerations

The CCCB Commission for Justice and Peace resource A Church Seeking Justice: The Challenge of Pope Francis to the Church in Canada examines three aspects of Catholic social teaching to which Pope Francis is giving significant attention: the dignity of the human person and work; teachings on war and peace; and ethical reflections on economics and political responsibility. The Prairie Messenger will carry excerpts from all three sections.

The full document is available in English and French at: <http://www.cccb.ca/site/eng/media-room/4268-a-church-seeking-justice-the-challenge-of-pope-francis-to-the-church-in-canada>. Included in the text are a series of text boxes which focus on the Canadian context.

8. Pope Francis’s message about our world has not been one of doom and gloom. He has proclaimed a Gospel message that joyfully gives and calls us to life. But

he has also focused repeatedly and at length on places of human suffering and injustice, places where human dignity has been wounded or is under threat. The Holy Father has pointed us to economic structures which deny or undermine the primacy of the human person (*Evangelii Gaudium* 55), and reminded us that “the majority of our contemporaries are barely living from day to day,” faced with fear and desperation, violence and disease, making it “a struggle to live” (EG 52). He has decried political discourse which treats human dignity and the common good as a mere addendum while lacking strategies for integral development (EG 203). “It’s necessary to put the dignity of the human person at the centre of every perspective and every action. . . . Other interests, even if legitimate, are secondary.”

9. From a Christian perspective, every human person carries an inherent dignity, not attached to particular human traits, but grounded in our creation in the image and likeness of God. Following his predecessors, Pope Francis has stressed that life is sacred and inviolable from conception to natural

death, challenging moves toward the legalization of abortion and euthanasia in many countries, including Canada.

He has lamented how postmodern values have distorted family bonds, wounding the basic building blocks of society. And he has cried out against the “anthropological reductionism” of social and economic systems where the human person becomes a tool of the system, or where people are simply thrown away: “Children are thrown away . . . the elderly are thrown away, because they are of no use. And now? A generation of young people is being thrown away . . . they don’t work because there are no jobs. More waste. What will be the next thing thrown away? We must stop before it’s too late, please!”

10. The Gospel summons us to engagement whenever human dignity is threatened, binding. . . . It not only moves us to action on the levels of both charity and justice, it also calls us to a vision which “considers the other ‘in a certain sense as one with ourselves,’” seeing their beauty, esteeming them as of great value. “This is what makes the authentic option for the poor differ from any other ideology, from any attempt to exploit the poor for one’s own personal or political interest” (EG 199).

11. Pope Francis describes the task at hand in terms of “restoring solidarity to the heart of human culture,” a task which requires a conversion in the way we see those

— SOLIDARITY, page 19



CNS/Marko Djurica, Reuters

HUNGARIAN POLICE ESCORT GROUP OF MIGRANTS — Hungarian police escort a group of migrants walking against the traffic on a highway Sept. 7 leading to Budapest as they left a transit camp in the village of Roszke.

Root cause for Syrian exodus was drought, not ISIS

The Editor: We need to help the people fleeing Syria as well as address the “root causes” pushing them to flee. Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Immigration Minister Chris Alexander identify the “root cause” of this insanity as ISIS.

Both are part of the “let’s bomb Syria to save Syrians” chorus of some “western” leaders.

Seldom mentioned, even in Development and Peace’s material, is that a significant factor triggering this murderous insanity was Syria’s 2006 - 2011 drought.

The drought resulted in a loss of 75 per cent of their crops and the internal displacement of over one million people.

In September 2008, the Syrian UN Food and Agriculture representative asked for US\$20.23 million in assistance. The international

al response was inadequate.

Meanwhile al-Assad’s regime persisted with policies of subsidizing water intensive crops and promoting irrigation techniques inappropriate for a region experiencing increasing hot and dry spells due to climate change.

The number of internally displaced Syrians grew to five million before the 2011 unorganized outbreaks of civil disobedience which was greeted by al-Assad with military force. This escalated into the civil war. It started in the areas hardest hit by the drought.

ISIS only arrived on the scene about two years ago.

As brutal as ISIS is, they are not the “root” cause of the social and ecological devastation pushing Syrians from their homes. Granted, they are exploiting it and

the indifference of the so-called “Christian” West – as are we. We — Canada — exports weapons.

Repeated UN pleas for humanitarian assistance, including food, have gone relatively unheeded.

In 2014, as it only received 50 per cent of what it needed, the UN launched another campaign. This time it asked for US\$8.4 billion. Please note the shift from “millions” in 2008 to “billions” in 2014.

To its credit, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops put out a special appeal through Development and Peace.

Neither the UN nor D&P’s goals were reached.

As Pope Francis stresses throughout *Laudato Si’* all is interconnected. How is this not a “pro-life” issue? — **Yvonne Zarowny, Qualicum Beach, B.C.**

‘Penitential path’ option to be debated

Continued from page 1

generous mother — may demonstrate the gratuitous love of Christ, which saves us all.”

Lawyers working at the Roma Rota, a Vatican court, are paid

300-400 euros (about US\$330 - \$450) for each case even if those cases take several years to complete, said Msgr. Pio Vito Pinto, dean of the Rota. He did not say what other fees are charged, but “70 per cent to 80 per cent” of the

cases are heard for free.

Although the new rules respond to most bishops’ sense that the annulment process was too cumbersome, they do not resolve all the cases of Catholics who want to return to the sacraments after they are divorced and civilly remarried without having an annulment.

Solidarity is a needed social value

Continued from page 18

in need. Confronting the “individualism of our postmodern and globalized era,” he summons us to break through our indifference. . . .

The call to solidarity is a summons to our parishes and communities to “really be places of hospitality, listening and communion” for those in need, to be places of healing which strengthen the bonds of humanity. Solidarity “is not an additional attitude, it is not a form of social almsgiving but, rather, a social value,” one essential for a civil society.

12. In continuity with Catholic social teaching, Pope Francis draws a close connection between human dignity, the nobility of labour, its relation to the common good, and the crises which inevitably result when labour is dehumanizing or absent altogether. God created human beings in his

own image and likeness to be stewards of his handiwork, responsible for the earth’s cultivation and protection. “Human labour is part of that creation and continues God’s creative work. This truth leads us to consider work as both a gift and a duty.” Addressing steelworkers, the Holy Father affirmed that “employment is necessary for society, for families and for individuals. . . .”

14. Over and over again, Pope Francis has spoken about the great damage caused by unemployment, both to a society and to the unemployed and their families. Work is indispensable to our human development and to family life; it allows us to plan our future, to establish a family, to educate our children. . . . Pope Francis has commented on how unemployment “is spreading like an oil slick in vast areas of the west and is alarmingly widening the boundaries of poverty,” and has particularly lamented the number of young people who find themselves without work. . . .

15. Far more horrific than unemployment is slave labour and human trafficking. . . . (Pope Francis said) the physical, economic, sexual and psychological exploitation of men, women and children that is currently inflicted on tens of millions of people constitutes a form of dehumanization and humiliation.” . . .

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G. Schmitz

Autumn Wind

The maple’s
gold leaf dome
peels away
in the rapture.
Light floats
down the wind,
quilts the ground
with glory.

By Nancy Compton Williams

Change needed in Canada’s health care

The Editor: Most developed countries have doctor-prescribed drugs included in their public health care programs.

Canada is the exception. According to the University of British Columbia (UBC), Canada has the worst prescription drug system in the world,

It is estimated that one in 10 of all Canadians cannot afford to buy the drugs that have been prescribed for them. This could result in being confined to a hospital. And we know that even one day in a hospital is a far greater cost than the price of the average prescription.

It is estimated by the UBC that if prescription drugs were includ-

ed in our national health care program, there are a number of changes that could result in an overall saving of about \$7 billion annually.

There is a way and a responsibility for all Canadian voters to promote placing prescription drugs into our national health care program.

There will be a federal election held in Canada on Oct. 19 of this year. It is the responsibility of every Canadian who votes, and even those who do not vote, to pressure those we send to our House of Commons to implement the incorporation of doctor-prescribed drugs into our national health care program. — **Leo Kurtenbach, Saskatoon**

‘Ignorance is bliss’ rule applies

Continued from page 18

tors mentioned in the code that must also be kept in mind: such as age, mental state, and the like, but these are external to the mind of the persons involved and are more easily verified.

Therefore, it follows that we must be most careful before making general statements in relation to the excommunication incurred for abortion.

But this brings us back to the pope’s gesture. By allowing women who have had an abortion to be absolved, he is implicitly waiving the excommunication during the Holy Year, because otherwise they could not receive absolution. This gesture of mercy does not in any way change the teaching relating to the gravity of abortion; but,

rather, it focuses on the person who truly regrets her actions and seeks reconciliation with the Lord and with the church community.

The pope did not speak of co-operators and others involved, but only of the woman who had an actual abortion. Others would have to follow the normal canonical procedures in effect in the diocese.

So, this first of what will probably be numerous gestures will have significance for those who felt that they could not be forgiven for their sins. And, as the Lord said elsewhere: “Let those who are without sin throw the first stone.” We can take this opportunity to reflect on our own attitude of mercy and compassion toward others who appear to have slipped away from the loving embrace of the Lord.



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Parishes must be like a welcoming family: pope

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — A church that lives according to the Gospel must always have its doors open and be a welcoming community, not “an exclusive, closed sect,” Pope Francis said.

“Churches, parishes, institutions with closed doors must not call themselves a church; they must call themselves museums,” he said to applause during his general audience in St. Peter’s Square

Sept. 9.

As part of a series of talks about the family, the pope focused on the close bond that should exist between the family and the Christian community.

The son of God chose to be born and immersed in the everyday life and routine of a simple family in a poor village, the pope said.

In fact, the family is where the “irreplaceable, indelible” start of one’s life story begins, which is “why the family is so important.”

When Jesus began his public ministry, he formed around him a community with a shared vocation, “that is, a con-vocation of people. This is the meaning of the word, ‘church,’ ” the pope said.

The group Jesus gathers around him has the features of “a hospitable family, not an exclusive, closed sect,” he said.

“We find Peter and John, but also the hungry, the thirsty, the foreigner, the persecuted, the sinner, the tax collector, the Pharisees and the multitudes. And Jesus never stops welcoming and speaking with everyone, even with those who no longer expect to encounter God in their life.”

Jesus’ example is a valuable lesson for the church today, the pope said, as is recognizing that Jesus chose his disciples to take care of these people, “this family of God’s guests.”

Pope Francis said it was “indispensable and urgent” for the bond between the family and the Christian community to be renewed and strengthened.

“The family and the parish are the two places in which this communion of love, whose ultimate source is God himself, is realized.”

Families and parishes must share this bond and be “centres of love” that are an alternative to the prevailing “centres of ideological, financial and political power” in the world, he said. “Our hope is in these centres of love, evangelizing centres, abundant in human warmth, based on solidarity and participation and also forgiveness

between us.”

A generous spirit is required to find the courage and intelligence to reach out to families, the pope said, because sometimes they “pull away, saying they do not measure up” to expectations or are too “messed up” with too many problems or not enough strength to pull through.

“But nobody is worthy, nobody measures up, nobody has the strength. Without the grace of God, we can’t do anything,” he said. Only when people put themselves in God’s hands can mira-

cles happen, even just “every day miracles when the Lord is there in that family.”

The pope asked Christian communities and parishes to do their part, avoid acting too much like impersonal functionaries or managers and engage more in face-to-face dialogue to build mutual understanding and respect.

The Christian community, he said, “is the home of those who believe in Jesus Christ as the source of the unity of the entire human family.”



CNS/Stefan Wermuth, Reuters

DEMONSTRATOR AGAINST ‘ASSISTED DYING’ — A demonstrator against “assisted dying” joins a protest outside the Houses of Parliament in London Sept. 11. Archbishop Peter Smith of Southwark has welcomed the overwhelming defeat of a bill to legalize assisted suicide in England and Wales.

British Parliament rejects right-to-die bill

By Simon Caldwell

MANCHESTER, England (CNS) — An English Catholic archbishop has welcomed the overwhelming defeat of a bill to legalize assisted suicide in England and Wales.

The Assisted Dying Bill was rejected, 330-118, after a debate Sept. 11 in the House of Commons, London.

Archbishop Peter Smith of Southwark said afterward that he welcomed “Parliament’s recognition of the grave risks that this bill posed to the lives of our society’s most vulnerable people.”

“There is much excellent practice in palliative care, which we need to celebrate and promote, and I hope now the debate on assisted suicide is behind us, that this will become a focus for political action,” said Smith, chair of the Department for Christian Responsibility and Citizenship of the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales.

The vote at the end of the second reading of the Private Member’s Bill was the first time members of Parliament had the opportunity to vote on assisted suicide since 1997.

It would have allowed terminally ill adults who were deemed six months from death the right to obtain lethal drugs to commit suicide, pending approval of two doctors and permission of a High Court judge.

The bill came under sustained attack from members of all political parties during a four-hour debate.

Fiona Bruce, a Conservative Party member of Parliament opposed to the bill, said in a statement after the vote that “the most vulnerable, as well as the courts, now have absolute clarity that assisted suicide is not the route this country will go down.”

“That is a victory for the vulnerable, not least the many disabled people who have campaigned so passionately against this dangerous bill. This bill proposed that suicide was sometimes an answer, and that we should sometimes respond to a person’s suicidal feelings with a lethal injection.

“That is against everything that our health care system is built on regarding the value of life and protecting the vulnerable and would have been a backward step,” she added.



CNS/Christian Escobar Mora, EPA

PEOPLE HONOUR COLOMBIAN SOLDIERS — A woman and soldier place flowers in front of an army headquarter in early April in Cali, Colombia. in honour of the 11 members of the Colombian army who died after an attack by Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC, rebel group. Members of Colombia’s largest rebel group asked for Pope Francis’ blessing as they enter a third year of peace talks with the Colombian government.

Panelists seek genocide declaration

By Mark Pattison

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Some panelists at a Sept. 9 forum



CNS/Leonhard Foeger, Reuters

MIGRANT IN AUSTRIA — A migrant sits wrapped in an emergency blanket at the crossing point between Hungary and Austria in Nickelsdorf, Austria, Sept. 11.

on Islamic State atrocities want the United States and United Nations to declare the Islamic State’s actions in the Middle East a genocide.

“We failed with the Armenian genocide in Turkey. We failed in Srebrenica,” Bosnia-Herzegovina, where 8,000 boys and men were slaughtered by Bosnian Serb nationalists 20 years ago, said former U.S. Rep. Frank Wolf, now a distinguished senior fellow at the 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative.

“Will we fail again in the Middle East?” Wolf asked.

Some panelists referred to genocide as “the g-word.”

“The evil of the past is upon us,” said Katrina Lantos Swett, chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. “The indifference and the wilful inability to hear is something my own family endured,” she added. Her father, the late U.S. Rep. Tom Lantos, was a Holocaust survivor.

“No religious group has been free of ISIS’ depravations,” Swett said. Christians, Yazidis and even Muslims who do not subscribe to the Islamic State’s ideology and worldview, have been killed, and women raped and taken as slaves. “Silence is no option, nor was it even an option, for men and women of conscience,” she said.

Maronite Bishop Gregory Mansour of Brooklyn, New York, although not a panelist, was invit-

ed to stand and offer remarks.

“There has to be an us-vs.-them,” Mansour said. For the Islamic State, he added “the ‘us’ isn’t just Christians. It’s anybody who thinks differently. . . . These totalitarian regimes have it in for everybody.”

“We need to bring ourselves together to talk about the crime” and not merely the concept of genocide, said Catholic University of America law professor Robert Destro. “To do an effective military prevention of genocide, you have to surround the targets and keep the bad guys from getting to them.”

Destro said, “We need a court” to determine whether genocide has occurred, suggesting the creation of an Arab court of human rights as one possible judicial vehicle. “I don’t want us to be 10 years down the road and say, ‘We don’t have any convictions,’ ” he added.

Aram Suren Hamparian, head of the Armenian National Committee of America, warned of Islamic State’s power during the panel discussion, “ISIS, Genocide, and an International Response,” held at the National Press Club. The Islamic State is also known as ISIS.

“The perpetrators of genocide know that if they have sufficient power and sufficient strength, they’ll be able to get the West to back off,” Hamparian said. “As long as we treat genocide as a political commodity, we’ll fall silent again and again.”

Any kind of expectation creates a problem. We should accept, but not expect. Whatever comes, accept it. Whatever goes, accept it. The immediate benefit is that your mind is always peaceful.

— Sri Swami Satchidananda