



On the 'front line'

A Chaldean Catholic archbishop from Iraq recently reflected on the persecution of Christians in his country at the hands of Islamic extremists, asking Canadians for prayers, as well as for welcome, inclusion and support for Iraqi Christians who have settled here.

— page 7

Restoring politics

Bob Rae wants to restore politics from its current maligned status to a proper role as a purposeful



public pursuit devoted to the betterment of people's lives, writes Gerald Schmitz. He reviews Rae's new book: What's Happened to Politics?

— page 9

Hunger in Africa

In the second of a three-part series, Michael Swan reports on the drought emergency that is changing a way of life that has lasted for thousands of years.

— pages 10-11

Human relationships

The readings for the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time remind us that Jesus welcomed us all with "an abundance of kindness," and so should we, writes Lorette Noble.

— page 12

Pope's visit

One nation under God will have five days this month to consider its unity and its divisions, its aspirations and its relationship with God as Pope Francis comes to challenge, console, cajole and confound 325 million Americans.

— page 13



Moral test

The global refugee crisis is a "very stern moral test," for us all, writes David Gushee.

— page 16

Serve people, not ideology, pope tells Cubans

By Cindy Wooden

HAVANA (CNS) — As Cubans finally face the prospects of calmer relationships and greater ease of communication and commerce with the United States, Pope Francis told the Cuban people that love and service, not anyone's ideology, are the keys to their happiness.

"We do not serve ideas, we serve people," the pope told hundreds of thousands of people gathered in Havana's Revolution Square for mass Sept. 20.

For decades the square has been the site of major communist government rallies and is dominated by a huge image of Ernesto "Che" Guevara, an Argentine Marxist who became a leader in the Cuban Revolution of the 1950s.

The image of Che was prominent at the pope's mass, but so was a banner proclaiming Pope Francis a "missionary of mercy" and an even bigger image of the merciful Jesus.

After decades of communism, mass attendance in Cuba is low; even the Vatican reports that only 60 per cent of the population is baptized Catholic. But as a sign of the pope's hopes for the growth of the church in Cuba, he granted an exception to his normal practice of personally giving communion only to the altar servers and other ministers at his public masses. Five Cuban children received their first communion from the pope at the mass.

In his homily, Pope Francis



CNS/Paul Haring

MASS IN REVOLUTION SQUARE IN HAVANA — Pope Francis and Cardinal Jaime Ortega of Havana arrive to celebrate mass in Revolution Square in Havana Sept. 20.

focused on an aspect of Jesus' ministry that he tries to imitate: First of all, identify the good in a person, then help or challenge him

or her to build on that good instinct or behaviour.

Using the normal Sunday mass readings, the pope's homily was a

reflection on the Gospel passage from St. Mark in which the disci-

— JESUS, page 19

Bishops call for notwithstanding clause

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA — Canada's Catholic bishops called unanimously Sept. 18 for the federal government to

invoke the notwithstanding clause in response to the Supreme Court's Feb. 6 Carter decision on euthanasia and assisted suicide (see also the editorial, page 18).

"We urge the government that is elected on Oct. 19 to invoke the notwithstanding clause and extend this timeline to five years," said the past president and the new president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops at a news conference in Cornwall, Ont. "If ever a legal decision warranted invoking this clause in our Constitution, this is it."

The federal government has never invoked the clause to overrule the Court's rulings, and the Conservative government has already said it was not a path it would take.

Archbishop Paul-André Durocher, outgoing president of the bishops' conference, and Bishop Douglas Crosby, the new president, spoke at a news conference Sept. 18 to wrap up the bishops' annual plenary, held Sept. 14 - 18 in this city along the St. Lawrence River.

The bishops said the one-year period the Supreme Court gave Parliament to craft a new law is "far too short for such a fundamental change in our laws to enter into force."

"In the face of the terrible suffering that can be caused by illnesses or depression, a truly human response should be to care, not to kill," said Crosby. "Likewise, the response to the anguish and fear people can experience at the end of their lives is to be present to them, offering palliative care, not intentionally to cause their death."

"The need for palliative care

— BISHOPS, page 4

Refugee crisis: response in the diocese

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — Parishes, groups and individuals in the Diocese of Saskatoon are actively reaching out to assist refugees, says

Christine Zyla, co-ordinator of the diocesan Office of Migration.

The Migration Office has been responding to many inquiries in recent weeks about how to help refugees — particularly in light of worldwide attention on the plight of some four million Syrian refugees fleeing violence, war and persecution.

"We currently have five Syrian cases in process," Zyla reported at a

diocesan Administration Day Sept. 10 at the Cathedral of the Holy Family in Saskatoon. This includes a refugee family of seven from Syria, who arrived Sept. 17 at the Saskatoon airport, co-sponsored by St. Philip Neri Parish and a family member in Saskatoon.

In addition to



Tim Yaworski

REFUGEE CRISIS — A mother and child from Eritrea arrive this summer at the Saskatoon airport, coming to Canada through a refugee sponsorship undertaken by Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Saskatoon. A number of other parishes in the diocese are also involved in refugee sponsorship, including sponsorship of individuals and families from Syria.

the Syrian cases, there are some 20 sponsorships underway this year for refugees from other countries, as well as many files from cases submitted in previous years that are still awaiting arrival dates.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon is a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) — one of about 95 across Canada. "My job in the Office of Migration is to co-ordinate the work, handle the paperwork, keep track of the numbers, monitor the arrivals, make sure everything is running smoothly," described Zyla.

As an SAH, the diocese must ensure that the numbers of applications do not exceed the allocations permitted by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and that the Constituent Group (parish or organization) has the means to fully support the refugee for a period of 12 months, since privately sponsored refugees do not have access to government support.

"A sponsoring parish or group can count on spending about \$30,000 (for a family of four), but it could be more if there are unforeseen things, or it could be

— PARISHES, page 4

Pope Francis thanks women religious for hard work

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Calling himself “a bit feminist,” Pope Francis praised women religious for always heading to the “front lines” to bring the church’s tenderness and motherly love to those most in need.

“The church thanks you for this, it is a beautiful witness. This is being close. Be close! Close to people’s problems, real problems,” he said during an audience Sept. 17 with young consecrated women and men from around the world, including Iraq and Syria.

He began the audience by directing attention to “our martyrs in Iraq and Syria, our martyrs of today,” revealing that he now keeps on him a small cross that a priest held in his hand while he was being murdered for his faith.

“A few days ago in (St. Peter’s) Square, an Iraqi priest came up to me and gave me a small cross. It was the cross being held by the priest who was beheaded for not renouncing Jesus Christ,” he said. The Vatican press office had no information about the priest mentioned by the pope.

About 5,000 people gathered in the Vatican’s Paul VI hall for the hourlong papal audience; they were taking part in the World Meeting for Young Consecrated Men and Women Sept. 15 - 19.

At the pope’s request, members of the audience asked him questions, which he said he received in advance. The questions came from a Salesian priest from Aleppo, Syria; a member of the Sisters of Charity from India; and a cloistered nun not in atten-



CNS/Paul Haring

POPE FRANCIS LEAVES AUDIENCE WITH RELIGIOUS — Pope Francis leaves an audience with religious from around the world in Paul VI hall at the Vatican Sept. 17. The pope praised women religious for always heading to the “front lines” to bring the church’s tenderness and motherly love to those most in need.

dance but whose question was read aloud. In response, the Jesuit pope spoke 40 minutes off-the-cuff about living out a religious vocation in today’s world.

When talking about how successful evangelizers have a heart filled with fire and are driven to warm other people’s lives with Christ, the pope said he wanted to add something to that.

“Here I would like to — forgive me if I’m a bit feminist — give thanks to the witness of consecrated women. Not all of them though, some are a bit frantic!” he said to laughter and applause.

Women religious “have this desire to always go to the front

lines. Why? Because you’re mothers, you have the maternal instinct of the church, which makes you be near” people in need, he said.

He told a story of three South Korean sisters who went to Buenos Aires, Argentina, to help staff a Catholic hospital in the archdiocese he once led, but “they knew as much Spanish as I know Chinese — nothing!”

Nonetheless, the three sisters immediately went to the wards, helping patients, holding them, giving them a smile, and the patients kept praising how wonderful the sisters were even though they never said a word.

“It was the witness of a heart

on fire. It is the motherhood of nuns,” he said.

“You truly have this function in the church, the icon of Mary, icon of the church’s tenderness, the church’s love, the motherhood of church and the motherhood of Our

Catholic Charities campaign takes aim at poverty rate

By David Gouger

OMAHA, Neb. (CNS) — Seeking to create awareness about poverty in the United States and to stand in solidarity with Pope Francis’ commitment to the poor, Catholic Charities USA has launched a new national campaign.

Dominican Sister Donna Markham discussed the effort Sept. 10 in her first address as president and CEO of the organization during its national convention in Omaha.

Dubbed #End45 — Raise a Hand to End Poverty in America, the name reflects the 45 million people in the U.S. who live in poverty.

“That’s scandalous,” said Markham, the organization’s first female president.

The campaign is appearing online nationwide on member websites, Facebook, Twitter and other social media accounts, with videos of people who have been helped by Catholic Charities. In addition, people are encouraged to show support by taking a picture of their hand with End45 written on their palm and post it to their social media channels using the hashtag End45.

“We are asking our country to work with us to end 45,” Markham said.

John Griffith, executive director of Catholic Charities of Omaha, said the local agency long has partnered with other organizations locally and nationally. The new campaign can help increase awareness about their efforts and

Lady. Do not forget this. Always on the front lines, but like this.”

Evangelizing, in fact, is all about showing “with your flesh, with your life” that Jesus Christ is alive, Pope Francis said.

“We are not a soccer club looking for members or supporters,” he said.

Religious men and women can take courses on evangelization and deepen their studies, which “is good, but the ability to warm hearts doesn’t come from books, it comes from your heart!”

Men and women living in religious communities, he said, need to guard themselves against “narcissism,” gossiping and never forgiving one another, which is “one of the sins I often find in communal life.”

Open dialogue and discussion, including with superiors, can lead to arguments, the pope said, but being open to the Holy Spirit means also being able to forgive and not seek revenge, especially by bad-mouthing the other.

“Gossip in a community hampers forgiveness” and draws people further away from each other. The pope told his audience to go to confession if they were guilty of gossiping because “it’s a sin.”

Pope has high hopes for trip to Cuba-U.S.

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis asked for prayers for his trip to Cuba and the United States, calling it “a mission” he had high hopes for.

He said while the main purpose of his 10th apostolic journey abroad, Sept. 19 - 28, was to attend the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, he also highlighted his planned visit to the United Nations in New York as it marked its 70th anniversary.

“I greet with affection the Cuban people and the people of the United States, who, guided by their pastors, have spiritually prepared” for the visit — “a mission I’m preparing for with great hope,” the pope said at the end of his weekly general audience in St. Peter’s Square Sept. 16.

The pope said his talk Sept. 16 would be his last audience talk on the family and marriage, thus concluding a series he began in December 2014. The reflections were meant to help prepare for the now imminent World Meeting of Families Sept. 22 - 27 and the gathering of the synod of bishops on the family in Rome Oct. 4 - 25.

A correct vision and culture of the family are necessary for defending the world from many threats, he said in his catechesis.

Society today seems like it is being run by an “economic technocracy,” which has “massive

resources and enormous media support” at its disposal and has made ethics subordinate to “the logic of profit,” he said.

“A new covenant between man and woman becomes not just necessary, but also strategic in order to free people from the colonization of money,” he said. “This covenant must once again guide policy, the economy and social coexistence.”

God did not design the family to cultivate an intimacy whose sole goal is taking care of itself, he said, but gave it a loftier, more “thrilling project of taming the world.”

The family, he said, is the beginning and the foundation of the kind of global culture that will save humanity from many attacks, destruction and “ideological colonization that so threatens the world. The family is the basis for defending oneself.”

How men and women live together in their families has a major impact on everything, including the state of the environment, passing on an awareness of life and the bond between memory and hope, he said.

Refusing God’s blessing to be custodians of creation leads “fatally to a delirium of omnipotence that ruins everything,” he said.

However, despite the stain of original sin, “we are not cursed or left to fend for ourselves,” the

pope said.

“Let us never forget,” the pope said, that God always loves and mercifully protects his sinning children.

Pope Francis said God reached out in a special way to women when he told the serpent in the garden that “I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers,” and she will always strike at serpents.

“God marks the woman with a protective shield against evil,” the pope said, which means she “carries a secret and special blessing” to be able to defend her offspring from the devil.

While too often the woman is displayed as a temptress leading others toward evil, he said, “there is room for a theology of women that is commensurate with this blessing by God” that makes her and her descendants strong adversaries against evil.

Christ was born of a woman, and he “is God’s caress upon our wounds, our mistakes, our sins. But God loves us as we are and he wants to bring us forward with this plan” of salvation, Pope Francis said, adding that “the woman is the one who is stronger, carrying forward this plan.”

The pope concluded by saying salvation is meant for everyone and that with “sufficient faith, families on earth will recognize this blessing.”



CNS/Jaclyn Lippelmann

PROGRAM TO HELP FORMER PRISONERS — Msgr. John Enzler, president and CEO of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington, speaks to the press on Sept. 11 about the agency’s Welcome Home Program to help former prisoners re-enter society.

Bishop's Appeal launched at Administration Day

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — Another ministry year was launched in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon at an Administration Day held Sept. 10 at the Cathedral of the Holy Family.

Representatives of parishes from across the diocese gathered with ministry leaders, representatives of Catholic organizations, and Bishop Donald Bolen for the day of information and reports.

An overview of the 2015 Bishop's Annual Appeal was provided by BAA co-ordinator Cathie Rogers. The 2015 goal is the same as last year — \$1.5 million, needed to fund a wide range of ministries and programs across the Diocese of Saskatoon.

Rogers encouraged parishes and volunteers to share stories of the impact of the appeal, and to build community connections in many ways, including home visits.

"Whatsoever you do for the least of these" is the 2015 theme, taken from the parable of the last judgment in Matthew 25.

"Our Bishop's Annual Appeal always has two directions: to build up the parish community and to reach out in love," noted Bolen.

"This year our focus is very much on reaching out. In our theme text from the parable of the last judgment, Jesus not only reaches out to the poor, but identifies himself with the poor, saying 'I was hungry and you fed me. I was a prisoner and you visited me.'"

When it comes to "reaching out in love," donations to the appeal support ministries such as Catholic Hospital Chaplaincy provided at Royal University and Saskatoon City Hospital, as well as spiritual care through St. Paul's Hospital.

For some 25 years, the Bishop's Annual Appeal has supported deaf ministry, one of the programs of outreach and inclusion that is highlighted in a video to be shown in parishes this fall. "This is a very important service to bring to our deaf people," says Roberto Godoybaca, who provides sign language interpretation each week at St. Paul's Co-Cathedral in Saskatoon. "Without it, they would not feel they also are a part of the Body of Christ."

Supported by the Bishop's Annual Appeal, the diocesan office of Restorative Ministry provides pastoral outreach at local prisons, and engages volunteers and parishes in answering Jesus' call to care for the prisoner.

"When I go into the prison and I visit the inmates, I am letting them know that someone cares," says Restorative Ministry co-ordinator Dianne Anderson in the video. "We all need that love. We all need forgiveness. I remind them of how Jesus stretched out his arms and said, 'Forgive them, they know not what they do.'"

Prison ministry volunteers Russ and Yvonne Powell have seen first-hand the challenges of prison ministry and the hope it is bringing into darkness and pain. "We can see hope in their eyes, and you can see their yearning, to want to change," says Yvonne. Some of the men they encounter at the jail fall in love with Jesus, others cling to prison ministry in

the hope of finding a new way of life, Powell said. "I see prison ministry as a place where we can help them to heal."

Marriage and Family Life, Catholic Family Services, Friendship Inn, and Justice and Peace are other areas of outreach supported by the BAA. "Each person is an intrinsic gift to be cherished," stresses Myron Rogal, co-ordinator of the Justice and Peace office, a position that recently became full-time in the Diocese of Saskatoon, supported by donations to the appeal.

Rogal works with a range of partners in the community to address such issues as poverty, homelessness, human trafficking, the environment, and threats to life through abortion, assisted suicide or euthanasia. The diocesan office promotes the call to build peace, raises awareness about the plight of suffering people around the world, and works to foster healing and justice with First Nations, Métis and Aboriginal peoples.

Ministries supported by the Bishop's Annual Appeal that are "building up the church" include youth ministry, Lay Formation and Aboriginal Lay Formation, the diocesan Resource Centre, Foundations: Exploring Our Faith Together programs, diocesan communications, vocations promotion and the education of priests and future priests. The appeal also supports the diocesan office of Christian Initiation and Catechetics, which assists parishes as they bring people of all ages to lifelong faith and discipleship through the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and eucharist.

After the screening of the BAA video, Administration Day continued with presentations from Muenster Engaged Encounter, Farmland Legacies, the Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue, the diocesan Office of Migration, and the Diocesan Council of Truth and Reconciliation (watch for upcoming articles about these presentations). Financial administrator Tanya Clarke provided information about government rules and regulations around charitable giving, and a number of upcoming events were highlighted.

Updates from committees working on development of a Justice and Outreach Year of Formation and a plan of formation for permanent deacons in the diocese were also presented. The day concluded with remarks from the bishop about the Year of Mercy.

"Pope Francis has called for a jubilee year that begins on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on Dec. 8," said Bolen, presenting a number of ideas and encouraging parishes to also think about celebrating the year.

"It is a real challenge and invitation to you and your parish communities to take time during this year to ask how you are going to give attention, give a focus to God's mercy, that is revealed in so many ways in our lives," he said.

Bolen also drew attention to the new document, A Church Seeking Justice: The Challenge of Pope Francis to the Church in Canada, produced by the justice and peace commission of the CCCB. "It bridges Pope Francis' teaching with the Canadian context," he noted.



K. Yaworski

ADMINISTRATION DAY — Representatives from parishes across the diocese gathered for prayer at the start of a diocesan Administration Day Sept. 10 in Saskatoon, held to provide resources, updates and information at the start of another ministry year.

Bolen also announced the upcoming visit to Saskatoon by the Apostolic Nuncio to Canada, Archbishop Luigi Bonazzi. A number of local events are planned in conjunction with the Oct. 2 - 3 visit,

highlighting Catholic education, Catholic health, and restorative ministry, providing opportunities for clergy and religious to meet with the nuncio, and also involving the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of

Saskatoon and Sacred Heart Chaldean Church.

There will be a diocesan mass with the apostolic nuncio at 5 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 3, at the Cathedral of the Holy Family.

Mercy is key to annulment reform

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — Pope Francis never claimed to be a canon lawyer, but he knows Mary and he knows mercy. Mary and mercy are the keys to understanding the first major reform in the church's marriage laws since 1741 and the first changes to the Code of Canon Law under Pope Francis, said the only North American among 12 canon lawyers consulted on changes to church marriage annulments.

"The decree was signed Aug. 15, the Assumption (of Mary). It was made public Sept. 8, the Nativity of Mary. And it takes effect the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (of Mary, Dec. 8)," said Rev. Frank Morrisey, professor of canon law at Saint Paul University in Ottawa. "Mary, who saw the needs of others, who, you know (said), 'They have no wine.' He (the pope) is putting it in her perspective. That's another example of mercy and the poor."



Rev. Frank Morrisey

Morrisey was the lone North American among eight Rome-based canonists and three others who reviewed the new law and procedure once the committee finished its work. Having somebody from outside the tight Vatican circle was important.

"It just completes the picture," Morrisey said.

The new church law announced in early September will make it possible for divorced Catholics to have their previous marriage declared null in as little as 45 days. Fees for the process will be dropped or minimized. The old requirement that every case be automatically appealed to have the first judgment confirmed or overturned is dropped, though the right to appeal to a higher court remains. Bishops are to act as judges in expedited processes and metropolitan archbishops are to act as appeal judges.

Morrisey is an old colleague and good friend of Msgr. Pio Vito Pinto, president of the Roman Rota, who taught canon law with Morrisey at Saint Paul University in the late 1970s and early '80s. Pinto chaired the special commission appointed to revise the annulment process.

The new church law was written with a particular eye to places where the church lacks the resources to set up marriage tribunals, Morrisey said.

"It's important to keep in mind again that this is universal. So many countries just do not have marriage tribunals," he said.

The new procedures won't change Canada's system of regional marriage tribunals and a single national appeals tribunal in Ottawa. For Canadian bishops, the new law will challenge them to be more directly involved as judges on cases that go through the expedited, 45-day simple process.

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and Saint Paul University are planning a two-day conference Nov. 19 - 20 to work out the details of how Canada will adopt the new system. But the new canons won't require the Canadian bishops to create new particular law for Canada, Morrisey said.

Though the changes may seem sudden, coming together less than a year after the first extraordinary synod on marriage and the family, they actually represent more than 30 years of thinking about the annulment process among canon law experts.

"There's nothing in this reform that was not asked for in the years prior to the (1983) code," said Morrisey.

At that time Rome resisted quicker, more accessible annulment processes.

"There was just total blockage because of what they deemed to consider the exaggerations of the time in the U.S.," he said. "That's disappeared over those 30 years."

While the expedited process is a dramatic change for Canadians and others who have waited years to receive decrees of annulment, changes to the rules governing the competence of tribunals, which will allow local tribunals to hear far more cases involving immigrants whose marriages were contracted in other countries is just as important, Morrisey said. Many Canadian cases have been backed up for years or abandoned because local tribunals have had to seek documents or refer cases to countries that don't have the same system of marriage tribunals.

Morrisey argued for giving lay canonists the same standing as priest canonists, but lost that battle.

The faster process and the requirement for sole judges to be priests will mean that Canadian bishops have to start sending more priests to study canon law, said Morrisey.

"Our basic structure remains in place, but it's still hanging on by a thread," he said. "I mean, we have people over 90 years old working in our courts. From a long-term perspective, this is not very sound."

One small change that will make a big difference in many cases is the addition of faith, or lack of faith, as grounds for granting an annulment under the expedited process.

Morrisey believes it will take a couple of years for canon lawyers and marriage tribunals to get used to the new system.

"It took us 10 years to get the '83 code well oiled, for us to get very comfortable with it," he said. "I expect it's going to take us a couple of years to get the kinks worked out."

Aboriginal ministry: new cloth of right relationships

By Archbishop emeritus
Sylvain Lavoie OMI

VANCOUVER — The eighth annual Directions for Aboriginal Ministry session took place Aug. 17 - 20 at the Rosemary Heights Retreat Centre in Vancouver. About 80 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants came from as far away as the Northwest Territories and Ontario. The Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs of the Assembly of Western Catholic Bishops began this initiative in 2007 to provide orientation for pastoral ministers entering Aboriginal ministry. It builds on a similar initiative begun by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1993.

Rennie Nahanee, who is studying to be a deacon, shared lessons he learned from his family on trust and forgiveness, and led us in a



Lavoie

Rennie Nahanee

prayer drum song. Bishop Gary Gordon of Victoria, chair of the

SCAA, welcomed the group, as did Archbishop Michael Murray on behalf of the Archdiocese of Vancouver. Sister Eva Solomon, CSJ, director of the Building Bridges Project for the SCAA, set the tone for the gathering by sharing a short reflection on a puny little child with a giant heart and a giant of a man with a puny little heart (1 Samuel 17 — the story of David and Goliath, New International Version).

Solomon invited the whole group to take a moment of silent reflection and then asked them to pick up a paper heart from the floor, complete the sentence, “Love is . . .,” and share that with several others. She then invit-

ed one person from each clan to read each of the definitions aloud to everyone. They were then added to the tree of love on the wall. She also reminded all present that a relic of St. Kateri Tekakwitha was on the centrepiece.

Bob McKeon of Edmonton, theologian and social justice activist, welcomed us on behalf of Newman Theological College and set the context, mentioning factors such as the 50th anniversary of Vatican II, the Canadian election, the inspiration of Pope Francis, and the report of the TRC and its Calls to Action. He challenged the group with the question, “Where do we go from here?”

The theme of the session was Decolonizing Pastoral Ministry. A planning committee headed by Solomon facilitated the event that featured three main resource persons. Marie Battiste, educator and author of Decolonizing Education, spoke first on the history of colonization, the negative impact of Euro-centrism, and the need for unravelling the long history of colonization and returning well-being to the Aboriginal peoples.

Michel Andraos, anthropologist and theologian, then shared his knowledge and experience of the work of Bishop Samuel Ruiz in Chiapas, Mexico, including a video. Finally, Mary LeMâitre, educator and specialist in social discourse, expounded on how colonial attitudes help form and are formed by a negative environment made up of many factors “in the air” such as art, social media, literature, etc. Her

presentation was made more poignant by sharing two of her poems with the group. Archbishop emeritus Sylvain Lavoie, OMI, shared videos of ordaining a young Oblate in Kenya, and his experience of Sunday liturgies there as an example of decolonization.

The participants were grouped into small clans or sharing groups to discuss questions that were provided by the resource persons. A plenary followed each presentation. Prayer services incorporated First Nations spirituality, as did the opening eucharist presided mostly in Dené by Archbishop Murray Chatlain.

Rev. Garry LaBoucane, OMI, and Sister Priscilla Solomon, CSJ, helped the participants integrate the valuable input and clan sharing through an experience of weaving and forming clay hearts. The hearts were then placed in a heart garden at the foot of a cedar tree that was planted by the participants the previous year. Cultural anthropologist Jean-Guy Goulet and Solomon summed up the session with a theological reflection. The spirit of the closing mass, celebrated by Lavoie, led to animated drumming, singing and dancing to close the event.

A reflection shared by Solomon concisely summed up the content of this session: “We have failed to respect each other and the land. That old fabric of life must go. We must take apart the threads of colonization and create a new cloth of right relationships among brothers and sisters, making this land truly home for us all.”

Many parishes sponsoring refugees

Continued from page 1

less if the family gets on their feet fairly quickly, which a lot of them do,” Zyla said. Entering into a private sponsorship is a legal commitment to support the family for a year, which includes “weathering all the storms of culture shock and settling into a new country.”

Zyla stresses that the refugee crisis is even bigger than the Syrian crisis. “Iraq, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Burundi, Somalia, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo — I could go on,” she said.

“Although the focus is on Syria, the Mediterranean is a graveyard, not only for Syrians, but for Eritreans, for Iraqis, for so many — and so is the Sinai desert, where Eritrean refugees are walking to get somewhere safe.”

Three congregations in the city — Sts-Martyrs-Canadiens, St. Anne Catholic Parish and Resurrection Lutheran Church — are working together on a Syrian refugee sponsorship. Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Philip and Holy Spirit parishes are also involved in Syrian sponsorship cases, Zyla reported.

These parishes — along with St. Mary, Holy Resurrection Orthodox, Holy Trinity Ukrainian Orthodox, St. Augustine, St. Francis, St. Joseph, and St. Patrick parishes in Saskatoon — all have sponsorships from other countries, as well. St. Vincent of Lerins Orthodox Parish is also planning to get started on sponsorships, reported Zyla.

“Holy Spirit is trying to bring a family of four from Syria (currently living in Lebanon), and they also have a sponsorship underway to bring a young Syrian couple here to join their childhood friend who is acting as the co-sponsor. Our Lady of Lourdes is working with a local crop scientist who has family members in Kurdistan,” Zyla described.

In a recent report to parishioners, the Holy Spirit refugee committee wrote, “In the fall of 2014, when the federal government indicated that they would ‘fast-track’ the Syrian refugee applications, Holy Spirit Refugee Committee submitted an application for a family of four. This fam-

ily is currently living in Lebanon. It was suggested that the family could be here within six months. Currently, we do not have any indication as to when they will arrive.”

The parish also applied in June 2015 to sponsor a young couple from Syria. “The plight of all refugees is ongoing,” the report continued. “We have learned the younger brother of another man we agreed to co-sponsor died along with 900 others, mostly Eritreans, trying to cross the Mediterranean in the spring of this year.”

Holy Spirit refugee committee is also waiting for 10 other individuals they are co-sponsoring. In June they welcomed two couples that had been waiting about five years to reach Saskatoon.

During the current crisis, the federal government has not increased their quota of Syrian refugees that will be allowed into Canada, observed the Holy Spirit committee report. “The quota is divided among the many churches like Holy Spirit, organizations and individuals who are ready and willing to assist with the relocation of individuals and families.”

“The long wait times that you have been hearing about on the news are very much the reality,” Zyla agreed. “This is frustrating, but if a parish does decide to take on a sponsorship there’s a lot they can do while they are waiting. That includes getting a committee together who are ready to do the work, finding out what agencies in the city there are to help, where to go for language classes — all of those things that the parish volunteers will need to do once the arrival happens.”

Parishes that can’t take on a sponsorship themselves might consider assisting those parishes in the diocese that are actively involved in a sponsorship, she suggested. “Really, it is the volunteers who do the tremendous amount of work that is happening in our diocese.”

The bishops of Canada have also recently endorsed a joint fundraising campaign to assist Syrian refugees, encouraging donations to Development and Peace, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), and the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA),

which have all been assisting refugees from Syria and other Middle Eastern countries for years.

“The Catholic community, and in fact, the broader community within and beyond the diocese, are demonstrating a tremendous outpouring of compassion and care for those who are suffering,” said Zyla.

“There are sincere efforts underway to find ways to work in opposition to what Pope Francis calls ‘the globalization of indifference.’ What we need, instead, is the ‘globalization of hope.’”

Bishops took aim at Carter decision

Continued from page 1

should be one of the most pressing preoccupations of our country and its institutions,” he stressed. “This is where the energies and resources of our elected leaders should be directed. This is why we advocate making high-quality palliative care, long-term care and home care easily accessible to all Canadians.”

The bishops also took aim at the Carter decision itself.

“We cannot but express our outrage at the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada to create a new ‘constitutional right’ in Canada, the so-called ‘right’ to suicide,” said Durocher. “Nor can we suppress our profound dismay, disappointment and disagreement with the Court’s decision.

“The ruling would legalize an action that, from time immemorial, has been judged immoral: the taking of innocent life. Moreover, it puts at risk the lives of the vulnerable, the depressed, those with physical or mental illness and those with disabilities.”

The lack of debate on the issue on the campaign trail did not escape the bishops’ attention.

“We are in the midst of a federal election campaign,” said Crosby, who now begins a two-year term as conference president. “The candidates’ silence on the question of assisted suicide astonishes us.

“This question is fundamental for our society and its future. Have we relinquished the ability to debate the profound questions



CCCB/Rene Laprise

CCCB PLENARY — Past CCCB President Gatineau Archbishop Paul-André Durocher with incoming president Hamilton Bishop Douglas Crosby, who began his two-year term at the close of the annual CCCB plenary Sept. 14 - 18 in Cornwall.

of life that touch us all?”

The bishops also appealed for the protection of conscience rights of all caregivers. In August, the Canadian Medical Association voted to deny doctors conscience rights when it comes to assisted suicide.

“Requiring a physician to kill a patient is always unacceptable,” said Durocher. “It is an affront to the conscience and vocation of the health care provider to require him or her to collaborate in the intentional putting to death of a patient, even by referring the person to a colleague.

“The respect we owe our physicians in this regard must be extended to all who are engaged in health care and work in our society’s institutions,” he said.

The bishops said their views are informed by “reason, ethical dialogue, religious conviction and a profound respect for the dignity of the human person.”

“(Jesus) showed most fully what it means to love, to serve and to be present to others,” Crosby said. “His response to the suffering of others was to suffer with them, not to kill them.”

“He accepted suffering in his life as the pathway to giving, to generosity, to mercy. One does not have to be a believer to recognize in Jesus’ life and action a supreme example of humanity. The values of Jesus of Nazareth are the basis for our views on assisted suicide. Canada has nothing to fear in committing itself to these profoundly human and life-giving values.”

Organizations join forces to help Syrian refugees

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — For the first time, several Catholic aid agencies are mounting a joint appeal along with the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) to raise funds to help Syrian refugees.

“We’re thinking it’s quite good to show the united face of the church,” said Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (CCODP) communications director Ryan Worms

“It’s a common effort to reach as many Catholics and the wider public as possible,” said Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA) Canada national director Carl Hétu, noting the strategy includes the bishops sending their communiqué to their dioceses, and from there to individual parishes to “invite a mobilization on this issue.”

Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) communications officer Robert Lalonde said his organization will, like the others, have a social media campaign as well as direct outreach to their benefactors.

CCODP, CAN, CNEWA and the CCCCB issued a joint press release Sept. 17, saying their united response reflected “the magnitude of this tragic crisis.”



CCN/D. Gyapong

JOINING FORCES — CNEWA Canada national director Carl Hétu, CCODP’s new executive director David Leduc, and ACN executive director Marie-Claude Lalonde have joined forces to appeal for aid for Syrian refugees. They worked out their joint news release while attending the CCCCB plenary as observers Sept. 14 - 15.

“Funds collected through this appeal will go toward humanitarian aid for Syrians living through the suffering of war and those who have fled to other countries, including Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey who are hosting the vast majority of Syrian refugees,” said the release. All the aid agencies are recognized by the Holy See and CCODP is part of the *Caritas*

Internationalis federation. The release noted the Canadian government will match any donations made to these agencies prior to Dec. 31, 2015.

“This fund was announced in the wake of a mass influx of refugees from Syria, as well as from Iraq, Afghanistan, Eritrea and other countries plagued by poverty, war and lack of human rights,

that are making treacherous journeys to enter Europe,” the release said. “Pope Francis called on parishes around the world to open their doors to Syrian refugees, and dioceses across Canada have launched sponsorship initiatives.”

The release cited a recent open letter from CCCCB past president G a t i n e a u Archbishop Paul-André Durocher, who wrote: “The refugee crisis is an important moment to deepen our faith, extend our charity, and summon up hope. Together we can make a better world for all those in need, and so witness to Christ’s kingdom.”

Canadians can donate to the humanitarian efforts of these agencies that have been working with Caritas partners and directly with the churches in the region to help Syrian refugees since the beginning of the crisis, the release

said. They can also donate directly to diocesan refugee sponsorship programs. The CCCCB will also ask for special parish collections for the appeal.

Ongoing civil war has displaced seven million Syrians within the country and forced another four million into exile.

Hétu said CNEWA will make resources and a donation button available on its website and he and others will continue to reach the public through speaking engagements and other means.

ACN’s executive director Marie-Claude Lalonde has made a video that has been uploaded to their website, and a new pamphlet is in the works, said Lalonde. On Sept. 18, ACN also published an interview with Aleppo Bishop Antoine Audo, which can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0S-o9aFC92g>

“Bishop Audo asked everyone to help them stay in Syria,” Lalonde said, noting only 50,000 Christians are left in that Syrian city which once had 150,000 Christians.

Donations can be made via the agencies’ various websites or by phone: CCODP at devp.org or 1-888-634-3387; CNEWA cnewa.ca or 1-866-322-4441; and ACN at acn-aed-ca.org or 1-800-585-6333.

CCCCB examines response to Truth and Reconciliation commission

By Deborah Gyapong

CORNWALL, Ont. (CCN) — Canada’s Catholic bishops examined how they could implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) Calls to Action during their annual plenary Sept. 14 - 18.

“Though the CCCCB was not involved in running residential schools, we recognize this moment as a true kairos in which the future relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the rest of Canada needs to be rearticulated and founded anew,” said Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops president Gatineau Archbishop Paul-André Durocher in his welcoming remarks to almost 90 bishops gathered for the meeting. “We will take time to reflect together on the impact of this commission and on the ways we, as a conference, can help implement its Calls to Action.”

Among the Calls to Action is a request for an apology from Pope Francis.

An apology would be up to Pope Francis and it is possible the CCCCB will be consulted, said Saskatoon Bishop Donald Bolen, chair of the CCCCB’s justice and

peace commission.

The request to the pope for an apology comes because he is a spiritual leader and “his apology would matter greatly,” he said.

The request makes sense in light of the indigenous understanding of the family, he said. When one member did a wrong, the whole family would be held responsible for making reparations.

The pope is seen as the head of the Catholic family and the only one who can speak for all of us, he said.

Keewatin-Le Pas Archbishop Murray Chatlain and Bolen, representing the CCCCB’s justice and peace commission, explained the Calls to Action pertaining to the CCCCB before the bishops discussed a response in private working groups.

Other Calls to Action deal with faith communities’ response to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) that the CCCCB is already on record supporting, the bishops said.

The UNDRIP concerns the rights of indigenous peoples to “self-determination in spiritual matters, including the right to practise, develop, and teach their own spiritual and religious traditions, customs, and ceremonies,” they said, noting the CCCCB’s support of religious freedom is consistent with this.

Chatlain said the Calls to Action have a strong emphasis on the importance of dialogue and of people getting to know each other and speaking together. They also point out going forward “requires dealing with the pain of the past,” including the way that pain has

been passed on to present generations, he said.

Bolen noted the TRC exposed “untold depths of pain.” The TRC invites us to “open ourselves to a history that has much pain” and “to allow ourselves to be touched and changed by it.”

A good example of the healing needed is found in the Returning to Spirit program, which starts with a circle of Aboriginal people sharing their stories of hurts, Chatlain said. There is also a church circle in which people tell what they tried to do, or share how it feels to be misunderstood.

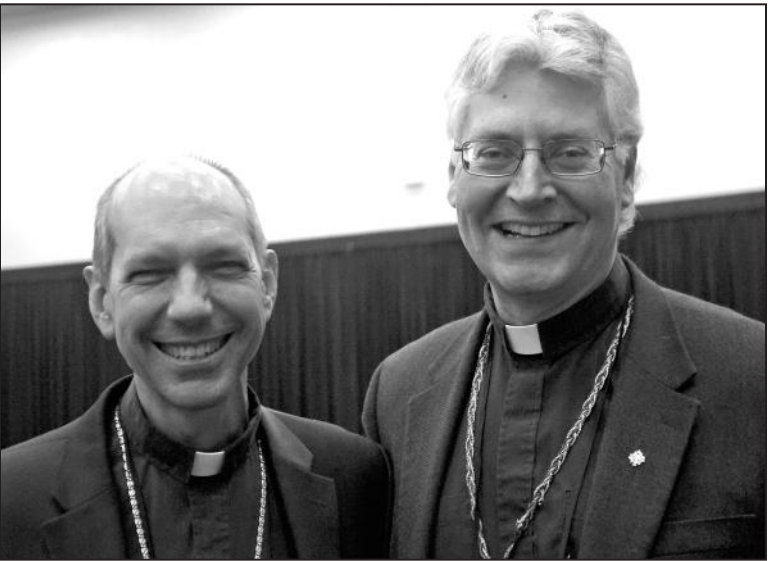
“We have to find a way to get out of those defensive postures, to create a third circle of the two, where we are really speaking to each other in a new relationship of mutual respect and relationship,” he said.

Bolen said the Catholic Church’s track record with indigenous peoples was not good during the residential schools period.

The TRC executive summary asks the other faith communities to “formally recognize” indigenous spirituality “as equal to our own,” Bolen said.

“The Catholic Church can say it looks to indigenous spirituality with the same openness as it looks at other religions,” he said. “It’s important not to shut down the conversation when we reach the limits.”

One of the Calls to Action asks religious denominations to repudiate “concepts used to justify European sovereignty over indigenous lands and peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullus*.” The justice and peace commission is studying the role of Catholic teaching in the seizure of



CCN/D. Gyapong

TRC REPORT — Saskatoon Bishop Donald Bolen and Keewatin-Le Pas Archbishop Murray Chatlain spoke on the CCCCB’s response to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

indigenous lands, Bolen said. *Terra nullus*, or no one’s land, was the idea unoccupied land could be seized by colonial powers.

He noted there were “deeply problematic church documents in the 15th century” used by Spain and Portugal to justify actions that resulted in great suffering for Aboriginal peoples.

“When we look to the big picture, underlying assumptions of cultural superiority did shape our relations with indigenous peoples,” Bolen said.

In speaking to Aboriginal people, and asking them what kind of response would be most appreciated, most are looking for a statement that missionary activity did lead to political and economic activities that harmed them and led to unjust seizure of Aboriginal lands, he said. “We are opposed to concepts of European sovereignty used against Aboriginal peoples.”

Chatlain said one of the Calls to Action calls for a more open and respectful approach to indigenous spirituality. “We have to be willing to learn more,” he said. He described going on a 30-day vision fast and he was asked to bring a sacred pipe. He went to a native elder and asked to borrow a sacred pipe. “They asked, ‘Can we use your chalice?’ For them they are similar in dignity,” he said.

There is already more openness in the Catholic Church toward elements such as sweetgrass and drums, but there are complicating issues, Chatlain said. Aboriginal peoples have many different practices. There is not one spirituality and Aboriginal understanding of spirituality is evolving and there is some borrowing among different groups.

The CCCCB will also look at responding to Calls to Action on education and other matters.

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Sister Cadron-Jetté ‘visits’ church in Winnipeg

By James Buchok

WINNIPEG — Sister Rosalie Cadron-Jetté, who founded the Sisters of Misericorde in Montreal in 1848, paid a visit to a gathering of catechists at St. John XXIII Church in Winnipeg Sept. 17, to tell her story of a life well-lived in boundless compassion for young unwed mothers and the burdens they faced.

In fact it was Mary Jane Zonneveld, 77, playing the role of

Sister Rosalie in her own one-woman presentation. As a young woman Zonneveld herself was given a chance by the sisters to train as a nurse and spent her career at Misericordia Hospital in Winnipeg and its nursing school.

As Sister Rosalie, she said in her time a pregnant girl would be “kicked out by their own family, they were good for nothing. They could come back, but not with the baby, and no one would ever know.” With no social agencies to

help, there was nowhere to turn. “I said to myself, ‘I have got to do something,’ and my parish priest told me, ‘you are going to accomplish a great deal and God is going to be helping you. You have got to start a religious community.’”

At this point in her life Sister Rosalie had been a wife — her beloved Jean Marie had died in a cholera epidemic — and they had 11 children, five of whom died young. Two of her sons, 14 and 15, became shoemakers so there was some money coming in. She got a house and other women to help and started taking in unwed mothers.

“But we were resented by neighbours who said it was misguided charity and these people were sinners and the priests would not baptize their babies. Or they said, ‘I’ll be killed by the women I am helping.’ I told them I have been picked by God to do a job and I am going to do it.”

She said some of the women who received help would stay with the community to provide the same care for others that they had received. “They became known as the Magdalenes, the helpers of the Sisters of Misericorde.”

Sister Rosalie made the acquaintance of Ignace Bourget, Bishop of Montreal, who encouraged and helped her to start the Hospice Sainte-Pélagie in the attic of a house her son had leased. With an additional caregiver and fundraiser, Sophie Raymond, also

a widow, the hospice cared for up to eight women at a time. Their work attracted the financial support of Antoine-Olivier Berthelet, a wealthy philanthropist, who later contributed to a building for the Misericordia Sisters.

At age 53, Sister Rosalie took religious vows with seven other women who had worked with her at the hospice. She took the religious name *Soeur de la Nativité* (Sister of the Nativity).

After her 25-minute monologue — it was only the third time she has performed it — Zonneveld said she believed she “owed the sisters” who did

so much for her.

She and her husband Jack are parishioners at St. Ignatius Church in Winnipeg.

Rev. Kelly Wilson, director of catechetics for the Archdiocese of Winnipeg (and parochial vicar at Our Lady of Victory Church), arranged the evening after seeing Zonneveld perform for a group at Misericordia Place Personal Care Home.

“It’s a way of connecting to the roles of those who came before us,” Wilson said, especially during the current Year of Consecrated Life, which concludes Feb. 2, 2016.



Buchok

IN CHARACTER — Mary Jane Zonneveld, in character as Sister Rosalie Cadron-Jetté, with husband Jack.

Life in the Spirit Seminar held

By MaryAnn Hammond

PRINCE ALBERT — A Life in the Spirit Seminar was held Sept. 4 - 6 at St. Joseph Parish in Prince Albert, encompassing 23 hours. The seminar consisted of worship, Bible readings, personal testimonies, eucharistic celebrations, baptism, reconciliation, singing and praying.

The facilitators of the seminar consist of three groups, each from Vancouver, Edmonton, and Hum-

boldt, Sask. The group’s name, *Bukas Loob sa Diyos*, or BLD, is translated as Open in Spirit to God.

As a result of the seminar, a local team was created to promote our continued growth. The groups will gather once a month for potluck suppers. Rev. Roque Concepcion, pastor of St. Joseph Parish, will be the speaker.

Meetings will consist of singing, group discussions on how the experiences from the seminar has given participants a chance to

grow in their faith and how to share it with others. Praise and worship weekly meetings are planned in the future.

All parishes in Prince Albert had representatives in attendance for the seminar.

One member shared, “It is our prayer that through this we will all grow closer in our love for each other and for Jesus. My prayer life is more meaningful, we were all very blessed by this Spirit-filled weekend.”



Derrick Kunz

BLESSING THE SITES — A blessing ceremony was held Sept. 15 at the site of six elementary schools to be constructed in the Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools (GSCS) district over the next two years. Elder Celia Clennell, GSCS First Nations and Métis cultural leader Delvin Kanewiyakiho, and Rev. Kevin McGee, vicar-general for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon (from left) participated in the celebration at each site. Students from the various neighbourhoods did a Scripture reading and led prayer intentions. Expected to open in 2017, the new schools include four in Saskatoon — St. Nicholas, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, St. Kateri Tekakwitha and St. Lorenzo Ruiz — as well as Holy Mary in Martensville and Holy Trinity in Warman.



Flegel

PRAISE IN THE PARK — Praise in the Park II took place in Regina’s Victoria Park, Sept. 12. Bright sun, little wind and a temperature that spent most of the day in the high 20s attracted about 2,000 people over the course of the day and evening to listen to highly energized praise bands from various Regina churches.

Second Praise in the Park held in Regina Sept. 12

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — It couldn’t have been a better day for Praise in the Park II, which took place in Victoria Park, Sept. 12. Bright sun, little wind and a temperature that spent most of the day in the high 20s attracted about 2,000 people over the course of the day and evening to listen to eight highly energized praise bands from various Regina Christian churches.

“We are here to demonstrate our faith together,” said Sonlight Christian Reformed Church pastor Charles Kooger in his opening remarks. “Before Christ died on the cross he prayed that we all might be one.”

Kooger also noted that it was also honouring the Military Day and expressed thanks for the military keeping Canada safe. Military units were gathering on the other side of the park preparing for their march to City Hall where they received the Freedom of the City.

Most of the bands came from Evangelical churches with the exception of Vision, a band whose members are from several Roman Catholic churches. Regina archdiocesan vicar-general Rev. Lorne Crozon introduced Visions pointing out its members were representative of the archdiocese. Pastors or other church representatives introduced the other bands.

The feature act of the evening was a performance by Phil

Wickham, an award-winning Christian songwriter and singer based in San Diego. He played guitar, performed several songs from his albums and had the young people crowded around the stage singing with him.

The crowd was a good mix of older and younger people; many came as families.

“Looking for a good vibe,” said one of the groups, and another individual said he was “just looking for a good afternoon enjoying the music.”

The Salvation Army provided free hot dogs; a couple of food service trucks from the adjacent Farmers’ Market kept their trucks open and provided a variety of foods for purchase. The First Baptist Church across the street opened its doors for anyone who wished to have some quiet time and several Christian service organizations established booths alongside of the open area providing information about their services, and a couple of booths provided space for prayer or contemplation.

Praise in the Park is endorsed by the Regina Council of Churches and the Regina Evangelical Ministerial Association. It is part of Love Week Regina.

The event is free, but to help cover costs a donation table was set up. There were several large sponsors and Kooger said they managed to raise sufficient funds to cover all costs.

‘We are on the front line’: Iraqi archbishop

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — A Chaldean Catholic archbishop from Iraq recently reflected on the persecution of Christians in his country at the hands of Islamic extremists, asking Canadians for prayers, as well as for welcome, inclusion and support for Iraqi Christians who have settled here.

Archbishop Yousif Thomas Mirkis, OP, Chaldean Archbishop of Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah in Iraq, was visiting family in Saskatoon this summer, after a trip to France to attend the ordination of a French-born Chaldean Catholic priest.

“We ordained the first (Chaldean Rite) priest born in France. So it was an occasion to celebrate with all the community there, about 15,000 persons — Chaldeans living in France,” said the archbishop.

That community in France — and the archbishop’s own family in Canada — are part of the large Chaldean Rite diaspora, with about two-thirds of the world’s total population of Chaldean Catholics now living outside Iraq.

“We have to think about them, to try to see how we can help them to be Chaldeans outside of Iraq. . . . What does that mean to be a Catholic and belonging to an Eastern Rite?” Mirkis said. He noted that while most of the world’s Catholics belong to the Latin or Roman Rite, some two per cent are members of Eastern Rites, such as Armenian Catholic, Syrian Catholic, Copt Catholic, and Chaldean Catholic.

In North America, there are three Chaldean dioceses — one in Canada, one based in Michigan, and one in California. In Saskatoon the Chaldean Catholic community of Sacred Heart consists of some 250 families, or about 1,200 people, says local pastor Rev. Sabah Kamora.

Mirkis expressed his hope that Canadians would welcome the Iraqi Christians who have come here seeking a new home. Until newcomers are integrated into their new society, “they are not so free as a Canadian person,” and are easily marginalized, the archbishop said. “It is harmful to let the diaspora live at the edge of society, at the edge of the church.”

Mirkis said that he encourages Chaldean Catholics living outside Iraq to keep their traditions, while also becoming immersed in their new society, taking all the best that it has to offer. As a young man studying in France, he himself did just that.

Born in 1949 in Iraq, Mirkis joined the Order of Preachers (the Dominicans), and was ordained a priest in 1980. He has a PhD in theology (Strasbourg, France) and a master’s degree in ethnology (Nanterre, France). Mirkis served as



Yaworski

VISIT WITH FAMILY — Archbishop Yousif Thomas Mirkis, OP, Chaldean Archbishop of Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah in Iraq, visited Saskatoon this summer. Photographed during a visit to the Cathedral of the Holy Family are (from left) the archbishop’s nephew Nabil Haskil of Saskatoon, Rev. Sabah Kamora of Sacred Heart Chaldean Church, the archbishop, and his niece Najlaa Haskil of Saskatoon.

editor of *Al-Fikr Al-Masihi*, The Christian Thought Magazine, which in 2007 won an award from the International Catholic Union of the Press, which praised the magazine for promoting free speech, peace and harmony among peoples. He was consecrated as bishop in 2014.

Since his appointment as archbishop 18 months ago, Mirkis has helped his two archdioceses deal with the huge influx of Iraqi Christians fleeing from persecution and violence in Mosul and the Nineveh valley.

The archbishop describes the atrocities of DAIISH (*Dawlat al-Islamiyah f’al-Iraq wa al-Sham*) — an Arabic term for the “Islamic state” movement plaguing Iraq and Syria, which the west knows as ISIS or ISIL — and the relentless and brutal persecution of Christians and other minorities, such as the Yazidi population.

“We are facing a very difficult time in our history,” Mirkis said. “About 130,000 Christians left their homes in Mosul and Nineveh valley. About 13 towns and villages were emptied. . . . They left completely — nothing, nobody remains.”

Told they could stay if they denied their Christian faith and became Muslim, none accepted, choosing to risk all and to leave everything behind, Mirkis described. “This is something amazing. We must see it as a very special case in our time. They considered that their Christian faith is the best thing that they own.”

Some 100,000 Christians living in Kirkuk and northern Iraq welcomed the displaced people, he said. However, those displaced were not only Christians. “More than two million refugees are now in the north,” a great burden on existing infrastructure.

“For example, in the city of

Kirkuk we were 1.5 million, and we welcomed 500,000 refugees . . . everything’s very difficult, but the oriental hospitality is very famous,” he said, describing one family that welcomed relatives to the point that 71 persons were living in one small house.

“What is happening in our country, we are on the front line. But it is very dangerous for the world,” Mirkis said. “You cannot consider yourself far (from the

violence), because what is happening now in Syria and Iraq, it is something very new, related to globalization. If you imagine people who consider beheading people is something very easy, very simple, and they behead persons on YouTube — I think nobody can see that and not be afraid. Even those in Japan, even those in North or South America.”

As with Nazism in 1933 — 45, the actions of DAIISH threaten the whole world, Mirkis said. “All crimes committed by DAIISH must be taken seriously . . . we have to be awake and aware of what is happening. It is very dangerous.”

The victims of DAIISH are not just Christians, he added. “It is not a question of Christian and Muslim. It is a question of a dangerous ideology.”

In 2006, Mirkis founded an Academy for Human Sciences in Baghdad in an effort to build awareness and understanding in Iraq. “I wanted to gather all the intelligentsia, the elite, the Iraqi elite, to think,” he said, adding that he wants a better life for all Iraqi citizens, not just Christians.

“If Iraqi Christians leave Iraq, Iraq will become like Afghanistan, which is in the hands of the Taliban. When we (Christians) are there, we can be bridges between humanity and terrorism. The curse of the Iraqi population is that the majority of the people are help-

less, paralyzed. We need to tell them, tell 99 per cent of the population — you cannot stay like that, you have to do something.”

It is also important to raise awareness in the international community and in western countries, to prompt political, medical and even military help, he said. “Because if DAIISH takes more countries in the Middle East, the cancer will be very difficult to heal. You have to start today, before tomorrow.”

In the latest crisis, his two archdioceses were struggling on the front lines to help those displaced by violence and persecution, people who were starving, who had nothing. It took months for aid from Caritas and other NGOs to arrive, hampered by bureaucracy.

For more than a year, the archbishop and his Catholic community has fed some 800 families, found them shelter, schools for their children, placement at university for youth and medicine for the sick. “We have found jobs for at least 30 to 40 per cent of them. They consider themselves happy to not suffer so much. It is difficult, but we obtain good results. Death among them is very seldom.”

A dispensary with volunteer service provided by 15 doctors — 10 of them Muslim — has been established. The archbishop found

— VOLUNTEERS, page 9

Molecular imaging advancing at St. Paul’s

By Sandhya Padmanabh

SASKATOON — The prevention and treatment of kidney disease for Saskatchewan residents was strengthened Sept. 15 as PotashCorp announced a \$500,000 donation to support the St. Paul’s Hospital Chronic Kidney Disease Outreach Program, and to help fund the Hospital Foundation’s purchase of a SPECT-CT, the most advanced molecular imaging equipment available in Canada.

“We are thankful to PotashCorp for the leadership and commitment they have shown in advancing molecular imaging in our region and province,” said John Agioritis, SPH Foundation board chair.

“The new SPECT-CT will advance diagnosis and treatment options for various forms of cancer and for complications stemming from diabetes. This gift also strengthens the Hospital’s Chronic Kidney Disease Outreach Program which brings nurses and coordinators to northern communities to screen individuals for signs of kidney disease and provide education about disease prevention and management.”

“We believe it is important to enhance the well-being of our communities and this investment achieves that,” said Wayne Brownlee, PotashCorp Chief Financial Officer. “We are pleased to support the essential work of the outreach program and the acquisition of new diagnostic technology. Both will make a meaningful difference to patients and their families.”

The SPECT-CT combines two



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MOLECULAR IMAGING — From left: St. Paul’s Hospital Foundation board chair John Agioritis, St. Paul’s Hospital president and CEO Jean Morrison, Wayne Brownlee, executive vice-president and chief financial officer of PotashCorp, and Dr. Sundeep Nijjar, division head of Nuclear Medicine, hold up a cheque totalling \$500,000 to help fund the hospital foundation’s purchase of a SPECT-CT, the most advanced molecular imaging equipment available in Canada.

forms of imaging, a gamma camera that provides physiologic information related to function, and CT technology that provides anatomic detail related to structure.

“This combination of technology results in superior physiologic and anatomic images of the body which, when combined, provides much more sensitive and specific information. This allows for earlier and more accurate diagnoses for multiple scenarios such as cancer staging or determining the extent of infection,” said Dr. Sundeep Nijjar, division head of Nuclear Medicine.

“Earlier and more accurate diagnoses help physicians choose the best treatments for patients, and also allow physicians to closely monitor treatments once initiated.

This equipment will help us provide our best care to many people in our city and our province.”

PotashCorp has been supporting advanced imaging in Saskatchewan for decades. In 1990, the corporation matched \$1.5 million in community donations to bring the first Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) equipment to Saskatchewan. In 2013, PotashCorp supported the purchase of PET-CT technology, leading to the creation of the PotashCorp Molecular Imaging Centre at Royal University Hospital. The corporation continued to support development in this area by working with the community to attract the industry’s top specialists as well as provide the most advanced technologies.

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Canada's Catholic bishops meet at annual plenary

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — Canada's Catholic bishops elected a new executive, changed the way their conference is financed and came out against assisted suicide and for helping refugees at their annual plenary in Cornwall, Ont., Sept. 14 - 18.

The unanimous, strongly worded statement criticizing the Supreme Court of Canada's Carter decision last February striking down Criminal Code provisions against assisted suicide called for the newly elected federal government in October to invoke the notwithstanding clause. "If ever a legal decision warranted invoking this clause in our Constitution, this is it," said the statement (see story, page 1).

The CCCB also participated in a first-ever joint-campaign with three Catholic charities, the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (CCODP); the Catholic Near East

Welfare Association (CNEWA); and Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) to mobilize resources to help Syrian refugees (see story, page 5).

The newly elected president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops is Hamilton Bishop Douglas Crosby, who began a two-year term at the plenary close.

Crosby, the former CCCB vice-president, replaces former CCCB president Gatineau Archbishop Paul-André Durocher, who wrapped up a two-year term. Saint-Jean-Longueuil Bishop Lionel Gendron, the former co-treasurer, was elected to serve as vice-president; Halifax Archbishop Anthony Mancini remains as co-treasurer representing the English sector. The French sector elected a new co-treasurer, Sherbrooke Archbishop Luc Cyr. These four will make up the CCCB executive for the next two years.

The conference also has a new general secretary in Msgr. Frank Leo, from the Montreal archdiocese.

He replaces Msgr. Patrick Powers who stepped down after serving the limit of two three-year terms.

Leo is fluent in English, French and Italian, and a man "of great organization," said Crosby. "Our first experience of him was very positive; the bishops seem very pleased." Leo has had some international experience, having worked in nunciatures in Japan and Australia.

Luc Picard, a Timmons native with expertise in international development work, having worked for the United States' Catholic Relief Services, most recently in South Sudan, will replace outgoing assistant general secretary Bede Hubbard, who worked for the CCCB for more than 20 years, Crosby said. Picard "has a lot of international and administrative experience."

At the plenary, the bishops changed the way the conference is funded. "We made the decision to move from a per capita taxation to a revenue-based contribution," Crosby said.

"Dioceses will fund according to the revenues they receive, the revenues the parishes receive. That gives us a sense of the health of the diocese and the capacity of the diocese."

The bishop pointed out another problem of assessing a contribution on the basis of the number of Catholics in a diocese is that the CCCB can't verify the number of Catholics any longer since the question is no longer asked on the census form.

The bishops marked the 50th

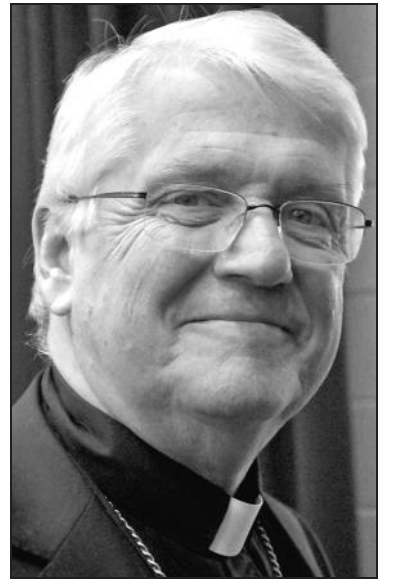
anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council in two ways during the plenary.

First, the CCCB commissioned a video produced by Salt and Light Television that premiered Sept. 15. It featured interviews with the living Canadian bishops who participated in the Council as either new bishops or as advisers. Structured to touch on the many reforms of Vatican II, such as the change from Latin to the vernacular in the liturgy, the recognition of permanent deacons, ecumenism, the role of lay people and the new attention to Scripture, the documentary also featured interviews with Canada's two cardinals, Toronto Archbishop Thomas Collins, Quebec Archbishop Gerald Cyprien Lacroix and with Archbishop Paul-André Durocher and looked ahead to what aspects of the Council still need to be worked out. The video also featured profiles using historic film footage of Popes John XXIII and Paul VI that bookended the documentary.

Second, the plenary featured speakers representing three inter-faith dialogues, Jewish, Hindu and Muslim, to mark the 50th anniversary of the Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate*.

"It was a wonderful presentation and very encouraging on every level," said Crosby. "These dialogues go on quietly behind the scenes and they produce fruits and please, long-lasting fruit."

Among other business, the bishops created an ad hoc committee to look at how the conference can help support six northern missionary dioceses that are now under the Congregation for the Evangelization of the Peoples but are expected through a Vatican decree to become normal dioceses. These dioceses — Whitehorse; Mackenzie-Fort Smith; Churchill-Hudson Bay; Moosonee; Grouard-McLennan; and Keewatin-Le Pas — are in the process of moving under the Congregation for Bishops. At the



CCN/D. Gyapong

Bishop Douglas Crosby

plenary Keewatin-Le Pas Archbishop Murray Chatlain and MacKenzie-Fort Smith Bishop Hagemoen gave slide presentations illustrating the challenges and graces of serving in the North and urged brother bishops to support them both financially and through personnel.

The bishops also received a progress report on the replacement for the CCCB's seminal child sexual abuse document From Pain to Hope (see related story).

The bishops also heard presentations from the four bishops elected to attend the synod on the family in Rome this October. Crosby pointed out that Durocher had explained at the news conference at the close of the plenary that what the bishops say at the synod "belong to the synod, are confidential and not to be put out there."

The four bishops who are attending: Cardinal Collins; Edmonton Archbishop Richard Smith; Valleyfield Bishop Noel Simard; and Durocher each selected a portion of the synod's working document or *instrumentum laboris* to speak on at the synod.

"We listened to the four presented; they talked about what they were thinking about the discussion," Crosby said. While there was some discussion about "adding or considering one thing or another," each bishop is responsible for his own statement.

While the plenary was underway, Pope Francis announced his appointees to the synod Sept. 15, and included Lacroix. The synod runs from Oct. 4 - 25 in Rome.

For Crosby the highlight of the five-day gathering was the Mass of Thanksgiving marking the Year of Consecrated Life in Montreal at the St. Joseph Oratory.

The mass Sept. 17 drew about 1,500 religious and interested people to the shrine. Crosby said the bishops wanted to thank Canada's religious men and women for the work they have done in building up the church in Canada, and for their work in health, education and social services.

He said he saw sisters from his Hamilton diocese, and from his former parish in Ottawa. Four sisters drove all the way from Prince Edward Island to attend, he said. At the end of the celebration, instead of processing out, the bishops moved into the congregation to greet the many religious present, the bishop said.



CCN/D. Gyapong

CANADIAN BISHOPS GATHER — Almost 90 bishops and eparchs gathered for the annual CCCB plenary in Cornwall, Ont., Sept. 14 - 18, beginning each day with the celebration of the eucharist.

Update on From Pain to Hope has focus on healing

By Deborah Gyapong

CORNWALL, Ont. (CCN) — A document to update From Pain to Hope will focus on healing, Archbishop Anthony Mancini told the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops plenary here Sept. 14.

When from Pain to Hope came out in the early 1990s, the Canadian bishops were "in the avant garde in the church in providing assistance to bishops and others" in the clerical sexual abuse crisis, he said. "The intention is to show that much has happened in the last 25 years."

The document-in-progress will also stress accountability, said the head of the ad hoc committee established after the 2012 plenary to rework From Pain to Hope.

"The Holy Father is demanding we be more accountable," Mancini said. "In fact some of the accountability that comes from Rome now has consequences. A few of the bishops have experienced the consequences of not doing what's being asked."

The ad hoc committee decided to name the new document On the

Protection of Minors because it addresses a different topic than what From Pain to Hope addressed, the archbishop said. "The change in name is not a minor change."

"Our work as a committee has been to try to draw from our experience of the last 25 years or so, bring it all together, and see what we can provide for our bishops," Mancini said. The document will also make a statement about how lay people and various parts of the church interact with each other.

"We want tone of the document to be primarily pastoral," he said.

"Because the nature of this crisis has become more than what we imagined at the time," there are new rules and new expectations coming to us from the Holy Father, and from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "so we needed to update our own guidelines," he said.

The work of the ad hoc committee has required "gathering updates on where we are as a church," and reviewing the literature on the crisis, "which was not just a local crisis," he said.

So far, the committee has developed an outline. A section of the document will need to go to Rome for "recognition" or acceptance by the Holy See, he said.

The committee work has also involved talking with contacts in the Vatican to understand "the new thinking coming from Rome," he said. For example, the document will have to include religious in its set of guidelines, he said. "This was not clear in the past."

Some of the terminology will also change, he said. Rome did not like the use of the word "orientations" largely because of the way it translated into French, he said. Thus the CCCB will be using the word "guidelines."

"We need to figure out how we can work amongst ourselves," he said, noting the problem of establishing ways to live out "what is expected of us."

The committee is proposing developing regional covenants among the bishops in the regional level assemblies, he said.

Grouard-McLennan Archbishop Gerard Pettipas point-

ed out that when a priest in his diocese was charged with sexually abusing a minor, he first heard about the matter from the police. "They had already arrested the priest and done an interrogation," he said. "Once the priest is arrested, once the police are doing an investigation, my hands are off of it. I thought I had no role, in what I thought would be interfering in court proceedings."

"I attended the trial. He was found not guilty. I could see why he was found not guilty," he said.

Pettipas said that if he hears about a crime, "I am obligated to tell the police. Then my hands are off of it."

CCCB President Gatineau Archbishop Paul-André Durocher said the document when finished will likely run 100 pages or more. It will be a "canonical document" that will guide the bishops, but will "have to be integrated with how to deal with live situations like the kind you have discussed."

"Obviously, circumstances will vary from one place to another," Mancini said.

Is there a cure for what ails our politics?

Readings & Meanings

Gerald Schmitz



It makes me sad when someone says to me, “It’s just politics,” usually meaning something dishonest and disreputable. After all, no democratic society is possible without a vigorous politics.

opposition and in government, in victories and defeats. Often there are no easy choices. Rae’s commitment to ideals is tempered by a hard-earned realism. The first chapter, from which the book takes its title, makes no

What’s Happened to Politics? by Bob Rae
(Toronto, Simon & Schuster, 2015)

Still, having worked many years for Parliament on a non-partisan basis, I can’t deny a deterioration of political practice and process especially over the past decade. In another month Canada will have a new, perhaps different, government. But any positive renewal of our politics will take a lot more than electoral change.

This is also the message of a pointed new book by ex-politician, premier and party leader Bob Rae who in six succinct chap-

ter nostalgic claim for some previous golden era of politics. Rather, it argues that a widespread disillusionment with politics is deepening and this matters because: “We are all somehow cheapened when politics and public life go sour.” This is happening against a backdrop of rising socio-economic inequalities, debt burdens and precarious labour markets accompanied by an eroding faith in governments to provide solutions.

Much of the current practice of politics exacerbates this malaise

through forms of incessant messaging and campaigning, amplified by 24/7 digital media spin. “Today, the electorate is sliced, diced, dissected and divided to an extent unimaginable even 15 years ago. All parties are segmenting the electorate and are adopting the tactics of companies selling a packaged product.” Such cynical manipulation can also go negative against com-

petitors. The result turns off many potential voters, especially young people. The latter may even be intended if conservative parties think they can gain by such vote suppression. (Rae doesn’t favour compulsory voting but he advocates more civic education in schools and suggests looking at lowering the voting age to 16.)

A politics of obsessive message control, scripted talking points, soundbites, and stage-managed political events, employing armies of consultants and operatives, is also a politics prone to Orwellian doublethink (or in Stephen Colbert’s phrase, a deceptive “truthiness”). The objective is to win over voters rather than engage in authentic dialogue. Rae argues that this reduces the exercise of democracy to an in-

creasingly expensive and empty contest, ignoring the important tests of democracy in what happens after and between elections. It encourages bad habits that will take more than a change of government to correct.

Chapter 2 on the question of “leadership” emphasizes the need for “vision, persuasion, and implementation.” It is rare to find all three qualities in one individual but Rae sees Churchill and Roosevelt as worthy examples. In Canada he points to Macdonald, Laurier and Trudeau as strong leaders, however flawed. He also has some kind words for Mulroney and gives Harper his due in terms of being able to effect his agenda. But in a healthy democracy leadership isn’t about one person imposing his or her will. It requires leaders able to listen to citizens’ concerns, to “compromise, engage with one another — rather than as caricatures to be derided or ignored — and work within the realities of the present day.”

Chapter 3 on “policy” starts off with Kim Campbell’s much criticized 1993 remark about elections being “a very bad time to be discussing serious issues.” In fact, Rae observes, she simply “spilled the beans” about “what most people in the political business really think.” The more politics becomes a partisan “circus,” the less relevant it is to solving an array of long-term issues facing the country: inter alia, an aging population and intergenerational equity, our place in the global economy, the challenges of environmental sustainability, the future of Aboriginal communities. Rae stakes out centrist positions that lean in a progressive direction, arguing that: “The growth of inequality threatens the fabric of Canadian society, and a sclerosis in social mobility threatens people’s sense of fairness and opportunity.” Austerity is not the answer. Government has a positive role to invest in human development. Rae favours putting a price on pollution including carbon. It isn’t a radical wish list. As a pragmatist Rae offers such proposals to be debated on their merits and decided by evidence. And he makes a plea to renew Parliament as a place for meaningful policy discussion, getting beyond the prevailing “3ps” of parliamentary politics — “pandering, personal attack, partisanship” — as typically displayed in the antics of Question Period.

Rae is at his most eloquent in chapter four on what’s happened to Aboriginal peoples. His current work advocating for First Nations in Ontario has benefited his understanding of what is at stake for the 1.4 million Canadians of Aboriginal ancestry, a rapidly growing population that must overcome a terrible historical legacy of institutionalized racism that has resulted in chronic social problems, a colonial dependency and crisis of governance. That means replacing the Indian Act with new forms of self-government. In tandem with successive Supreme Court judgments which, especially since the

Charter, have expanded Aboriginal rights, addressing the issues demands stronger co-operative action by all responsible governments. Rae also points to the manifest unfairness of some historical treaties — notably Treaty 9 in Ontario, and Treaty 6 covering much of the prairies where native people were notoriously starved into submission. These should be revisited as part of what he calls “the human rights challenge of our time.”

In chapter five on “democracy” Rae warns against the dangers of demagoguery and majoritarian populism. His vision is anchored in strong liberal institutions that provide for an independent judiciary and constitutional protections of civil rights such as the Charter. That also means a strong system of parliamentary checks and balances, not a patrimonial one dominated by the prime minister’s office, marked by excessive partisan control and resort to “omnibus bills” to restrict legislative scrutiny. Rae worries that our parliamentary democracy has developed “dictatorial tendencies.” In addition to reforms to strengthen parliamentary accountability he argues for more cross-party deliberation, recalling his own Ontario experience in 1985-87 when, as leader of the third-party NDP, he entered into a governing “working partnership” with the Liberals. Such pragmatic arrangements are part of democratic accommodation. On the Senate, Rae notes the failure of attempted reforms and the reluctance to reopen constitutional discussions. But he sees no alternative to federal-provincial negotiations if one is serious about the options.

Chapter six addresses the question of Canada’s role in the world. A diplomat’s son, he doesn’t have a rose-coloured view of international politics or international organizations like the United Nations. But he insists that such bodies are necessary, however flawed and frustrating. He sees the risk of a “new isolationism” and a “disengagement from diplomacy.” Simplistic ideological thinking harms the conduct of international affairs. Rae’s lament that Canada is marginalizing itself internationally leads to his harshest criticism of the current government:

In recent years, Canada has become the classic practitioner of

megaphone diplomacy, the place where playing to the domestic gallery trumps what we do in the rest of the world. We lecture everyone, close embassies for symbolic reasons, and generally position ourselves as it suits a



Art Babych

Bob Rae

domestic audience that has already been carved into a thousand slices to consume the latest home-delivered message. Such diplomacy is called principled, but that confuses noise with effectiveness.

In summing up, Rae insists he’s not interested in scoring partisan points but rather showing “the resonance and resilience of a way of politics that is based on assessments of values, ideas, programs, character, and leaders, not on spin, money, image, impressions, branding, and appeals to fear or even hate.”

Of course some will take issue with the positive social liberalism he espouses, or specific policy proposals. Honest vigorous disagreement is part of political debate. The merit of Rae’s book in this election year is to raise our sights beyond the game of short-term advantage, the poll-driven “horse race” between the parties. He sees “a Canada that is determined to increase the franchise of its citizens and that is at the forefront of expanding the rights of people around the globe.”

A politics devoted to such goals might just restore our faltering faith.

Volunteers work to help ‘absorb the trauma’

Continued from page 7

a way to provide eyeglasses to those who needed them. A primary school operated at his cathedral recently got first prize in all the region of Kirkuk, he adds with pride, noting that many of the students are refugees.

Providing infrastructure in a region that only has a few hours of electricity or water each day is not the only challenge, he said. “We have to consider also the psychological part, the traumatic part of the crisis,” he adds. From the beginning his team of volunteers

has worked to find ways to help “absorb the trauma.”

Creative projects offered to children and during summer vacation, utilizing photography, filmmaking and theatre, as well as events and festivities throughout the year celebrating faith are among the ways to deal with the anguish, he described.

“In the church we preach hope always, we invite them to come to church to have eucharistic celebrations, the month of Mary, the month of the Sacred Heart, and it is crowded. Many people come. The faith is strong.”

Schmitz worked in the Parliamentary Information and Research Service from 1981 - 2011, including as principal analyst for international affairs.

Horn of Africa facing worst drought in 60 years

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

JIJIGA, Ethiopia (CCN) — At the end of June the Famine Early Warning Systems Network of the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization issued a warning about dry conditions in Ethiopia, Somalia and the rest of the Horn of Africa. On July 5 the UN called it "the worst drought in 60 years" in the Horn of Africa, with Ethiopia and Somalia worst hit.

Travelling through the affected Somali province of Ethiopia in August, everywhere I went people spoke of the failure of this year's rains.

"This year we have a big fear because of a shortage of rain," said Rev. Teklebirhan Yemataye in Jijiga. "We don't know what will happen."

"We call this a drought in which one camel carries another camel," said Jijiga Catholic development office manager Muluken Asnake.

The phrase means that as herders are forced to sell their livestock rather than watch them starve, prices are depressed. Thus, when a man with two camels sells one, the supplies he can buy from the sale can be easily carried by the remaining camel.

As Muluken and I travelled through Togo Wuchale Kebele an hour east of Jijiga, farmers stopped us to show us their dry wells. There are 53 wells in the area originally drilled 70 years ago by Italian missionaries. Some of them are as deep as 55 metres. For the first time ever, they're all dry.

This is the frontline in the war on climate change. When Pope Francis writes in *Laudato Si'*, "This is why the Earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she 'groans in travail,'" he's talking about the landscape of southern Ethiopia. When the pope reminds readers of "the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet" he is telling us that drought in a far-off country isn't a marginal or scientific issue. It's a human issue that touches the whole human family.

The men we met in Togo Wuchale Kabele told Muluken about members of their families who had fallen into the wells trying to draw water from a great depth, back when there still was water.



Catholic Register/Michael Swan

CHANGING WAY OF LIFE — Somalis have lived for thousands of years as nomads, driving their cattle, goats and camels from one pasture to another. Climate change spells the end of this way of life.

They spoke of children and livestock falling into the wells. They asked whether the East Hararghe Catholic Social Development Organization could cap the wells and provide either pumps or a motorized system for drawing the water in buckets. Drawing water by rope from 50 metres down has left their hands cut and swollen.

They call it "milking water."

They also ask about the possibility of drilling a new, deeper well.

Abdulai Hassoun, a community elder in Meknis sub-kebele, spoke about the coming disaster.

"Now our first priority is to drill a bore hole," he said. "As you see the crops are drying. It's 20 kilometres to drinking water."

His family has been selling its animals for money, but the money won't last long.

By the time I arrived back in Toronto the Famine Early Warning Systems Network was reporting widespread livestock deaths throughout the region.

Abdulai Hassoun lived through the famines of 1973 and 1984-85. He has never seen the country this dry. In early August he was very worried.

Along the way we met a woman drawing water from a 40-year-old cistern used to collect rain water. As she was loading plastic jerry

cans onto her donkey's back she told us the water used to be good for drinking. A glance at the brownish-green liquid established that was no longer the case.

"We have three priorities," Mukulen told me. "The first one is water. The second one is water.

And the third one is water."

Near the village of Muhammed Ali, the development organization of the Hararghe Catholic Secretariat has built a sort of artificial lake lined with plastic sheeting to collect and preserve rain water. They've planted drought-resistant

bushes all around it to slow soil erosion from the constant wind. They call it the GTPALE Project and they've built it with money from the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace and *Secours Catholique Caritas France* using a Sudanese design. It's almost complete, except for the water.

A big puddle of brown water at the bottom of it attracts an unlikely few waterfowl to the middle of the desert. But the water level is 20 or 30 centimetres below the pipe that leads out of the artificial lake, where the water would be fed into tanks to be used for irrigation.

At my hotel back in Jijiga I buy a bottle of mineral water. The blurb on the side of the bottle says: "The rain that falls over the Awash Basin of Ethiopia, after sifting through layers of sand and rocks for thousands of years, becomes a crystal clear, refreshing mineral water. On the receiving end of this precious commodity is the modern mineral water treatment and bottling plant of Vita Springs. As a result, our customers, starting with you, can enjoy the taste and health benefits of a perfectly balanced, clean mineral water."

Even in a drought, some of us drink.

D&P: solutions for sustainable development

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

Climate change has refocused the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace's commitments in Africa and worldwide.

When forecasts of the 2011 drought across the Sahel region south of the Sahara Desert spread in 2010, Development and Peace stepped in along with other Caritas agencies with new funding for its partners in the region. The funding went into community based agriculture and soil conservation projects and forestalled famine in parts of Mali, Chad, Sudan and Ethiopia.

Just five years later and the Horn of Africa faces an even worse drought. But Development and Peace knows its best response overseas is helping local communities with sustainable agriculture in the face of an unreliable climate. It's also the reason behind Development and Peace's Create a Climate of Change fall campaign to push Canada into more robust commitments at December's COP21 United Nations climate change conference in Paris.

"It's also a stock-taking moment, to come back to the simple solutions, those alternatives, those ways of life that we thought needed progress at one time," said Development and Peace's Josianne Gauthier.

In 1967, when Canada's bishops launched Development and Peace, the majority of its development work was with small farmers in Latin America — helping them form co-operatives, grow new crops and band together to get better prices for their produce. Nearly half a century on, food and farmers are becoming even more important to the Development and Peace agenda.



Catholic Register/Michael Swan

DIFFICULT WORK — Development and Peace partners in Ethiopia have to fight a climate emergency at the same time as they plod along the slow path of development, teaching people sustainable farming practices that can feed their families and provide a stable income, writes Michael Swan.

"There is a humbling call to come back to some of the basics of what development is all about," said Gauthier. "We're actually finding that if we give a voice to solutions that the poor have actually been promoting all along we might have the answer right there."

Development and Peace's partnership with Canadian Foodgrains Bank has helped fuel the movement back to the basics of helping the rural poor to sustainable livelihoods.

But Canada's Catholic development agency can't just fund the overseas agriculture projects when its partners in Africa, Asia and Latin America are telling them their climate has changed and their environment is degraded.

The Catholic agency's obligation to its partners is to campaign

in Ottawa and among ordinary Canadian Catholics for solutions to the climate crisis, Gauthier said.

On a per capita basis, Ethiopians produce 0.8 tonnes of greenhouse gases. Compare that to 14.67 tonnes per Canadian. Even if Ethiopians were to completely eliminate their carbon footprints, Canadians will still be pushing planet Earth to the climate brink.

The solution to Ethiopia's problem with climate lies in Canada and other rich nations.

"We have to step out of our comfort zones and get together," said Gauthier. "It's going to take everybody to change this, not just the Catholics. But the Catholics have a moral responsibility to step up to the plate. . . . Step up to the plate, get with the program and join everybody with this common concern."



Catholic Register/Michael Swan

DEMONSTRATION FARM — The East Hararghe Catholic Social Development Organization (ECC-SDCOH), with the support of Development and Peace and its French equivalent, *Secours Catholique*, operates a nursery and demonstration farm, provides classes in basic farming techniques and helps out with tools from ploughs to spades to new, more productive beehives.

Nomadic life in Africa's Somali province dies of thirst

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

JIJIGA, Ethiopia (CCN) — Nasri Yaseen Gourate is a young Somali man, husband and father, a hard worker with a voice among the men of his clan. But the most remarkable thing about Nasreen is that he is a Somali man with no cattle, no camels, no goats, no sheep. He sold them all.

“Now I don’t have even a single hen,” Nasreen tells me and the Catholic development agency representative acting as my interpreter.

The young man is taking an enormous gamble, abandoning the traditional nomadic Somali life and putting his family on the line to become a farmer. He has put everything he’s got into improving a patch of ground surrounded by acacia trees and cactus, 40 minutes by Toyota Land Rover from the nearest paved road. He and nine other families from the same clan have been formed into a co-operative by the development arm of the Catholic Church in southeastern Ethiopia. Development experts from the Hararghe Catholic Secretariat have lured him with the most precious resource in Ethiopia’s vast Somali province — water.

With the help of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, the Ethiopian Church agency has drilled a well and provided a pump with a 10,000-litre fibreglass tank. The pump pushes the water uphill from the well and fills the tank. The tank feeds a drip irrigation system that allows Nasreen and the other families to jointly grow onions, lettuce, cabbage, tomatoes, orange trees, papaya, mint, pumpkin, peppers.

Nasreen’s gamble isn’t an idle bet. It’s certainly not a get-rich-quick scheme. The old life of Somali tradition is dying a hard and sometimes violent death. Driving cattle across the dry, dusty plains had always depended on one thing — rain. Animals need pasture. Pasture needs rain.

In the past the rains came in a predictable pattern — the March to June Belg rains and the July to September Kireempt rains. They sometimes failed — about once every 20 years according to academic researchers — leading to terrible famines. But when the rains came Somalis thrived, their animals fattened and the ancient, nomadic Somali culture literally trekked from one patch of grass to the next.

This year the rains have not come. In some areas there was a short, early burst of rain — enough to get the grass to germinate — followed by more long, dry days with the sun burning off the grass that had just sprouted.

The government has declared a drought emergency requiring food aid to about four million people, a large portion of them in the Somali province. Those four million are in addition to eight million people in food-insecure areas of the country. That’s eight million who receive permanent food aid as part of what Ethiopian authorities call the “safety net.”

These 12 million hungry Ethiopians — the “food insecure” in the

language of the United Nations and NGOs — are part of 795 million hungry people around the world. Since the early 1990s the world’s hungry population has dropped by 216 million, a 21.4 per cent decline, according to the United Nations food agencies. Seventy-two out of 129 countries have met the No. 1 Millennium Development Goal of cutting hunger by half, including Ethiopia. But all that progress, all that hope is threatened by climate change.

If not for the worst drought in 60 years, Ethiopians would continue to whittle down the number of people who can’t feed themselves. As it stands, the Development and Peace partners in Ethiopia have to fight a climate emergency at the same time as they plod along the slow path of development, teaching people sustainable farming practices that can feed their families and provide a stable income.

In the last five years Ethiopia’s ethnic Somalis have faced disastrous flash floods, extended dry seasons, late rains and no rains. Across the country, growing seasons have shortened by an average of 20 per cent since the 1970s even in the good years. In Ethiopian Somali, it’s anybody’s guess where a family with cattle might find pasture. People who once lived off the land by their wits and traditional knowledge are now living out of burlap sacks marked U.S. AID and WFP.

Again, Pope Francis tells us what’s wrong with the burlap sack solution.

“Access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. Our world has a



Catholic Register/Michael Swan

IRRIGATION — Even with an irrigation system, Nasreen Gourate finds it hard to get enough to water everything.

grave social debt toward the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their *inalienable dignity*,” writes the pope in *Laudato Si’*. The italics are the pope’s. He wants us to pay attention to human dignity.

On the Ethiopian side of the border, both the government and development agencies are trying to manage a crisis in Somali culture by providing people with alternatives, easing their transition into new ways of life. Across the border in Somalia, the environmental crisis has translated into the collapse of all meaningful government and the rise of Al-Shabaab — a cross between gang-

sterism and political terrorism that has been absorbing the ambitions of young men who can’t live as their grandfathers did and can’t find a place in the modern world.

The 99 per cent Muslim population in Ethiopia’s Somali province has not read Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’* or any of the UN reports from the International Panel on Climate Change. Most have trouble reading at all given the natural clash between nomadism and the classroom. But they know all about climate change. There’s no debate among the Somalis over whether it’s happening, or whether it has been induced by human activity. The climate has changed, their world is changing, their lives are changing and nobody knows for sure what happens next.

With the well and the pump and the 10,000-litre tank, Nasreen Gourate can ignore the rains.

“We don’t care about the rain,” he bravely declares.

In truth, he wouldn’t mind a little rain right now. The leaves on his orange trees are curling. Even with the irrigation system, it’s hard to get enough water to everything. The pump uses fuel. That’s a cost he and his partners in the co-operative will have to recover in higher prices for tomatoes and onions. It worries him, because the co-op hasn’t made any money yet.

But that isn’t stopping him and his cousins from ploughing another acre between the acacia trees to plant more tomatoes.

Nasreen’s new life as a farmer depends on more than just the well and the pump. The East Hararghe Catholic Social Development Organization (ECC-SDCOH), again with the support of Development and Peace and its French equivalent, *Secours Catholique*, operates a nursery and demonstration farm, provides classes in basic farming techniques and helps out with tools from ploughs to spades to new, more productive beehives.

The Catholics who provide these services are not some minor charity. The ECC-SDCOH employs 750 staff — agronomists,

economists, logistics experts and more. Over an area of 38 counties or kebeles, 2.8 million square kilometres, the organization serves a rural population of about 2.3 million Somali Muslims — a remarkable accomplishment for a Catholic organization in a vicariate of just 22,000 Catholics working with the worldwide Caritas network.

The organization’s executive director in the Ethiopian Somali capital of Dire Dawa, Baleyneh Belete, recalls the struggle to gain people’s trust.

“In fact in the beginning it was not easy,” he told me. “When they saw the cross they didn’t trust us. But in the end they trusted us, they believed in us and then they worked with us, in harmony with us.”

Rev. Teklebirhan Yemataye, vicar-general of the vicariate and pastor of St. Joseph’s Parish, is mystified by a suggestion that the development organization could be anything other than the church in action.

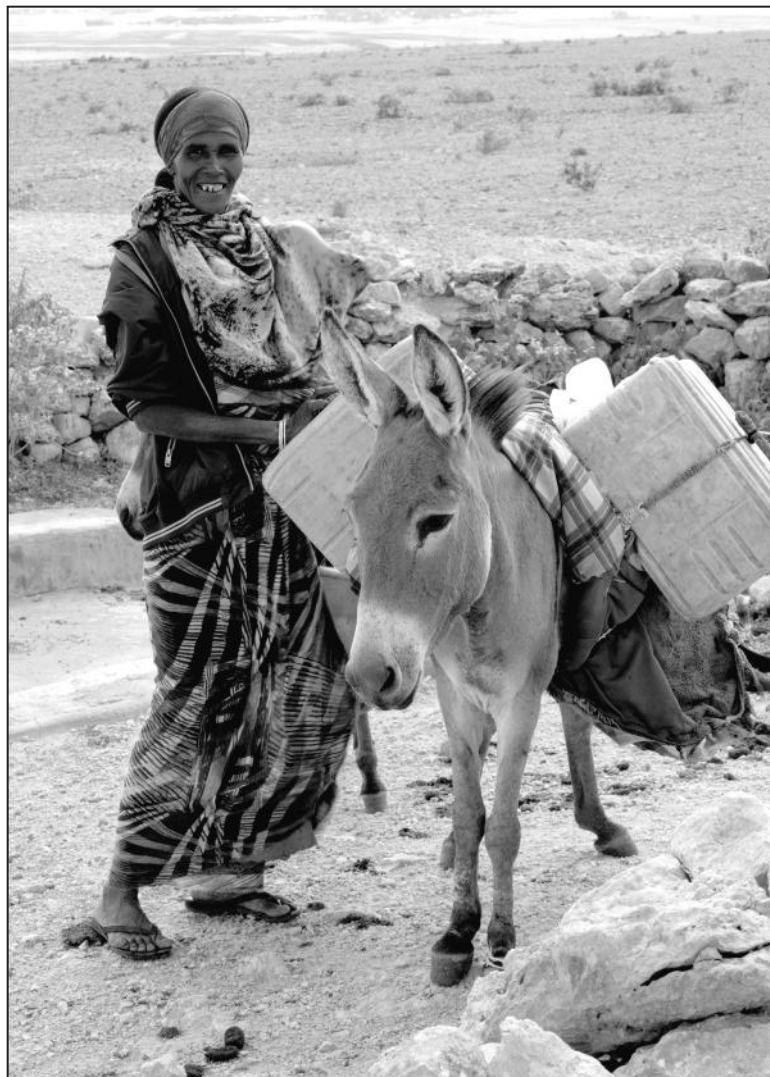
“Of course there’s a relationship (between the church and the development office),” said Teklebirhan. “They are ambassadors of the church. Wherever we cannot reach, they can reach . . . this development office is doing the work of the church.”

In fact the Jijiga office of the ECC-SDCOH sits on a parcel of land in St. Joseph’s backyard. To get from the development office to the church you walk through a gate in the fence.

If the pope wants a church that reaches out to the margins, a church willing to get dirty and bruised, a church that isn’t a sickly, pale prisoner in the sacristy, he can find it in Ethiopian Somali.

“The priority is to help the poor so that the poor can be a person who can help themselves,” said Baleyneh. “So that person can be a complete person — socially, materially, spiritually.”

The Ethiopian church isn’t puzzling over Pope Francis’ phrase “integral development” in *Laudato Si’*. It’s the only development they know.



Catholic Register/Michael Swan

PRECIOUS COMMODITY — A woman loads her donkey with water to take home. The trip will take her half a day.

Treat others with an 'abundance of kindness'

Liturgy and Life

Lorette Noble



Most of us are fortunate to have a parish choir that can sing an opening hymn at the beginning of mass and during communion, so we seldom read or hear the entrance and communion antiphons. Perhaps it might be enriching if, after greeting one's friends on the way in, we could take a few moments to read in our missals these two short Scripture passages before mass begins and after receiving communion. This Sunday the Entrance Antiphon prepares us for the two creation passages in the readings: "For you have made all things, the heaven and the earth, and all that is held within the circle of heaven; you are Lord of all" (Est), and the encouraging Communion Antiphon: "The Lord is good to those who hope in him, to the soul that seeks him" (Lm).

Once, a new boy who had just joined the school where I was pastoral animator, thought I had looked rather worried when I was explaining to the fourth graders about

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

faith as believing something which cannot be proved scientifically. The next day he knocked on the library door, where I used to meet with the children, and said, "Miss, you don't have to worry anymore. I have been thinking about what you said yesterday and I've figured it out. It's magic!"

Well, the story of God's creation of Adam and of Eve might, in today's world, be thought of as rather magical: "The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life . . . then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh . . . and he made (the rib) into a woman." Mike was a wonderful kid to have in the class, so full of enthusiasm and inquiry. I think he began slowly to understand that faith was more than magic.

In the first reading God entrusts the care of every living thing in the garden of Eden to Adam and Eve "to till it and

the work we do so well.

Jesus then goes on to repeat what we also heard in the Genesis reading: "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife and they become one flesh." And he added, "Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." This is what we are called upon to believe is the ideal for marriage. Sadly, however, in our world today there are few of us who have not witnessed a marriage breakup in the lives of our children or our friends or experienced it ourselves. It is comforting to remember Jesus' example of never rejecting anyone who was in this situation. Remember the adulteress whom the bystanders were going to stone and also the Samaritan woman Jesus met at the well? St. Paul in the second reading reminds us that Jesus is "now crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone." Perhaps sometimes we forget that Jesus had human experience and, as St. Paul says: "He is not ashamed to call them (us) brothers and sisters" and, as such, we can surely rely on him to listen, not to reject anyone and to answer our prayers.

A theme running through all the readings also looks at human relationships, between God and us, between men and women, and toward children to whom the disciples "spoke sternly" and whom they tried to keep away from Jesus. This made Jesus "indignant." Sometimes when we feel overwhelmed with what we read and hear in the news, about child poverty, child and spousal abuse, and now about desperate refugees fleeing from their homes and looking for a safe place to live, we would do well, as we hear in the Collect, to pray to God, who has an "abundance of kindness," with as much faith and courage as we can muster. And then, hopefully, try to help where we see the need, so that we can join in the wonderful prayer in Psalm 128: "May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives."

**Twenty-Seventh Sunday
in Ordinary Time
October 4, 2015**

**Genesis 2:7ab, 15, 18-24
Psalm 128
Hebrews 2:9-11
Mark 10:2-16**

keep it." What a coincidence that later this year, in November in Paris, there will be the UN Conference on Climate Change. It's also a good time to ask ourselves what we are doing at home and in our parish communities to preserve our planet.

In the gospel, when Jesus was being tested by the Pharisees on the question of divorce, he evoked the creation of Adam and Eve: "From the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' Several years ago, at the end of the opening mass of a CWL provincial convention, one of the guests was the provincial lieutenant governor, and in his greetings he repeated this phrase about God creating us male and female, and he added, "And we still haven't got it right!" He then encouraged us to keep doing

Our overstimulated grandiosity — and our impoverished symbols

In Exile

Ron Rolheiser, OMI



There are now more than seven billion people on this earth and each one of us feels that he or she is the centre of the universe. That accounts for most of the problems we have in the world, in our neighbourhoods, and in our families.

And no one's to blame for this, save God perhaps, for making us this way. Each of us is created in the image and likeness of God, meaning that each of us holds within a divine spark, a piece of infinity, and an ingrained knowledge of that unique dignity. We are infinite souls inside a finite world. To paraphrase St. Augustine, we are made for the divine and our hearts aren't just dissatisfied until they rest there again, they're also grandiose along the journey, enflamed by their own uniqueness and dignity. God has made everything beautiful in its own season, Ecclesiastes tells us, but God has put timelessness into the human heart so that we are out of sync with the sea-

sons from beginning to end. We're overcharged for this planet, and we know it.

Moreover, that sense of specialness lies at the centre of our awareness: *I think, therefore I am!* Descartes was right: the only thing we can be absolutely sure of is that we exist and that our own thoughts and feelings are real. We may be dreaming everything else. We awake to self-consciousness, aware of our specialness, frustrated by the fact that the world cannot give us what we crave, and insufficiently aware of the fact that everyone else on this earth is also equally unique and special. That's human nature and it's always been this way.

Today, however, a number of things are conspiring together to exacerbate both our grandiosity and our restlessness. In brief, today we are mostly overstimulated in our grandiosity and are not generally given the tools to handle that inflammation of soul.

How are we overstimulated in our grandiosity today? Various factors play together here, but contemporary media and information technology need to be highlighted. Through them, in effect, the whole world is being made available to us during every waking minute of our lives. We are not easily equipped to handle that.

While information alone is mostly neutral, and at times even morally inspiring, the downside is that contemporary media overstimulates our grandiosity and restlessness by inundating us with the intimate details of the lives of the rich, the famous, the beautiful, the talented, the powerful, the super-intelligent, the mega-achievers, and the perverted in a way that titillates, seduces and at times assaults our interior balance so as to leave us cultivating private fantasies of grandiosity, of standing out in a way that makes the world take notice. We see this in an extreme and perverted form in some of the mass shootings that occur in our society, where a lonely, deranged person randomly kills others out of sick vision of grandiosity. We see it too in the growing phenomenon of anorexia. These examples may be atypical, but we're becoming a society within which most everyone is perilously overstimulated in his or her grandiosity.

And today we are generally without sufficient personal tools to handle this. Human beings have always been restless and grandiose, but in previous generations they had more tools — religious and societal — to handle restlessness, grandiosity, and frustration. For example, in previous generations the cultural ethos gave people much less permission to cultivate ego than it does today. Previous to our own generation, one had to be more apologetic about self-promotion, self-canonicalization, overt greed, and crass self-centredness. Humility was espoused as a virtue and no one was supposed to get too big for his or her britches. That threw a lot of cold water on

ego, crass self-assertion and greed, in effect dampening grandiosity. The message back then was clear: You're not the centre of the universe!

By and large, that's no longer the case today. Society, more and more, gives us licence to be grandiose, to set ourselves up as the centre and proudly announce that publicly. Not only are we allowed today to get too big for our britches, we aren't culturally admired unless we do assert ourselves in that way. And that's a formula for jealousy, bitterness and violence. Grandiosity and restlessness need healthy guidance both from the culture and from religion. Today, we general-

ly do not see that guidance.

We are dangerously weak in inculcating into the consciousness of society, especially into the consciousness of the young, a number of vital human and religious truths: *To God alone belongs the glory! In this life ultimately all symphonies remain unfinished. You are not the centre of the earth. There is real sin! Selfishness is not a virtue. Humility is a virtue. You will only find life by giving it away. Other lives are as real as your own.*

We have failed our youth by giving them unrealistic expectations, even as we are depriving them of the tools with which to handle those expectations.

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Pope Francis comes to America, a nation divided

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

One nation under God will have five days this month to consider its unity and its divisions, its aspirations and its relationship with God as Pope Francis comes to challenge, console, cajole and confound 325 million Americans.

Following three days in Cuba, the Pope's Sept. 22 to 27 visit to Washington, D.C., New York and Philadelphia promises conflict, drama and that human touch Francis brings to his role as the global parish priest. The Catholic Register will be there live reporting from New York and Philadelphia on a trip that will see the pope meet President Barack Obama, address the United Nations and the U.S. Congress, canonize Blessed Junipero Serra, visit Harlem and say mass at Madison Square Garden before concluding with a mass in Spanish for an anticipated one million American Catholics and busloads of Canadians in downtown Philadelphia.

"We are so divided that we will have a very divided response to him," American theologian Steve Rodenborn told The Catholic Register.

In a globalized world of mass communications, and with a history of papal visits to American soil dating back to Pope Paul VI in 1965, there's no novelty in a Roman pontiff, even one from Argentina, coming to America. The news in this visit isn't so much in the pope's journey as it is in his encounter with Americans and with this moment in American history.

"We are attracted to him (Pope Francis) on the one hand because

he speaks to who we want to be, an egalitarian country," said Rodenborn, speaking from St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas. "At the same time, he challenges us to confront who we are, which is economically a country that is largely divided."

Though Americans still think of their country and culture as a bold stand against class systems, the gaps between rich and poor, left and right, immigrant and non-immigrant, urban and suburban have come to define the America that Pope Francis will discover, said Rodenborn.

"I'm just not comfortable with the expression 'most Americans,'" he said. "We're pretty divided. Perhaps the political rhetoric in our country right now has divided us even more, and that's really saying something."

The pope's trenchant and consistent criticism of capitalism — particularly in his recent encyclical *Laudato Si'* — and the inequalities it has produced are certain to bother many Americans, said Robert Dennis, professor of Catholic studies at the University of Prince Edward Island.

"He clearly is bringing his Latin American sensibility to looking at capitalism," Dennis said.

While St. Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI both issued stern warnings about the dangers of allowing capitalism to become more than an economic system — capitalism as a culture and a mindset — both accepted the marriage between capitalism and democracy in the West. But for Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* and many of his less formal statements, the culture of capitalism can't be separated from the eco-

nomie system. It's a culture of winners and losers, the included and the excluded.

"I listen to a lot of Catholic thinkers in the U.S. and some of them cringe about what he's saying. They suggest capitalism is a very good thing," said Dennis. "It grows a lot of prosperity. It builds a middle class. It's not all about inequality and corporatism."

Dennis notes that when asked about the American reaction to his criticism of capitalism, Francis said he needed to study the question. It's another example of how Pope Francis reveals himself as

human, humble and willing to learn.

"I'm going to be interested in how he frames messages," said Dennis. "Does it come across critically? Does it come across with some sympathy toward some of the successes of capitalism? We'll find out."

No one should make too much of the clash between Francis and American capitalism, said transplanted American Reid B. Locklin, a professor in Toronto's University of St. Michael's College's Christianity and culture program.

"John Paul II's visits went very well. Pope Benedict XVI's visit went very well. This pope's visits to other places have gone very well. So induction suggests to me that it's probably going to be a terrific visit and the pope will be very well received," said Locklin.

The real drama of Francis' visit won't be his formal statements before Congress and the United Nations, which can already be guessed at, but in his encounters with ordinary Americans as he

— MERCY, page 15



CNS photo/Brendan McDermid, Reuters

A COMPLEX TRIP — The U.S. flag flies in front of a mural of Pope Francis in New York City, Aug. 28. Pope Francis' 10th foreign trip will be the longest of his pontificate and, with stops in Cuba, three U.S. cities and the United Nations, it also will be a "very complex trip," the papal spokesperson said.

Pope Francis: 'Jesus was popular and look how that turned out'

By David Gibson
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In two wide-ranging new interviews, the pope discusses matters both weighty and personal, such as: the perils of his popularity, his plans to welcome divorced and remarried Catholics, and his fear that the church has locked Jesus up like a prisoner.

Speaking on Sept. 13 to the Argentine radio station, FM Milenium, Francis lamented those who posed as his friends to exploit him, and decried religious fundamentalism.

And speaking to Portugal's Radio Renascenca in an interview that aired on Sept. 14, Francis put his own popularity into perspective: "Jesus also, for a certain time, was very popular, and look at how that turned out."

Here are excerpts from the FM Milenium interview provided in English translation by Vatican Radio and National Catholic Reporter:

On false friends: "Friendship is something very sacred. . . . But the utilitarian sense of friendship — to see what I can get out of being close to this person and making myself his friend — this pains me. I have felt used by some people who have presented themselves as 'friends' whom I may not have

seen more than once or twice in my lifetime, and they used this for their own gain. But this is an experience which we have all undergone: utilitarian friendship."

On religious fundamentalism: "In any confession there will be a small group of fundamentalists whose work is to destroy in the interests of an idea, not of a reality. Reality is superior to an idea. God, whether in Judaism, in Christianity, or in Islam, in the faith of those three peoples, accompanies God's people with his presence. In the Bible we see it, Muslims in the Quran. Our God is a God of nearness, which accompanies. Fundamentalists push God away from the companionship of his people; they disincarnate him, they transform him into an ideology. Therefore, in the name of this ideological God, they kill, attack, destroy, and calumniate. Practically, they transform this God into a Baal, into an idol."

On legalistic priests: "When a priest isolates himself, in his solemn or legalistic posture, or in the posture of a prince . . . when he distances himself, he embodies in a certain way those persons to whom Jesus dedicates the whole of chapter 23 of the Gospel of Matthew. . . . Those legalists, Pharisees, Sadducees, doctors of the law that feel themselves

among the pure."

Here are excerpts from an English translation of the Portuguese interview provided by Radio Renascenca:

On playing it safe or taking risks: "Life without problems is dull. It's boring. Man has, within him, the need to face and solve conflicts and problems. Obviously, an education to not have problems is an aseptic education. Try it: take a glass of mineral water, common tap water, then take a glass of distilled water. It's disgusting, but the distilled water doesn't have problems. . . . (laughs) . . . It's like raising children in a lab, isn't it? Please! . . . run risks and always set goals!"

On today's self-centred culture: "We demand our rights, but not our obligations toward society. I believe that rights and obligations should go hand in hand. Otherwise we are creating a mirror education; because education in front of a mirror is narcissism and today we are living in a narcissistic civilization."

On the "god of money" behind today's refugee crisis: "These poor people are fleeing war, hunger, but that is the tip of the iceberg. Because underneath that is the cause, and the cause is a bad and unjust socio-economic system, in everything, in the world.

Speaking of the ecological issue, within our socio-economic structure, within politics, at the centre there must always be the person. And today's dominant economic system has replaced the person at the centre with the god of money, the idol."

On his own immigrant history: "I am the son of emigrants and I belong to the emigration of 1929 (from Italy to Argentina). . . . It is true that, in those days there was work, but the ones from my family — who had jobs when they arrived in 1929 — by 1932, with the economic crisis of the '30s, were out on the street, with nothing. My grandfather bought a warehouse with 2,000 pesos which he borrowed, and my father, who was an accountant, was selling goods out of a basket. So they had the will to fight, to succeed. . . . I know about migration!"

On self-centred societies inviting immigration: "When there is an empty space, people try to fill it. If a country has no children, immigrants come in and take their place. I think of the birthrate in Italy, Portugal and Spain. I believe it is close to zero per cent. So, if there are no children, there are empty spaces. And this not wanting to have children is, partly — and this is my interpretation, which may not be correct — due

to a culture of comfort, isn't it? In my own family I heard, a few years ago, my Italian cousins saying: 'Children? No. We prefer to travel on our vacations, or buy a villa, or this and that.' . . . And the elderly are more and more alone."

On Europe's future: "I believe Europe's greatest challenge is to go back to being a mother Europe (as opposed to) grandmother Europe."

On the need for the Catholic Church to change: "If somebody has a room in his house which is closed for long periods, it develops humidity, and a bad smell. If a church, a parish, a diocese or an institute lives closed in on itself, it grows ill . . . and we are left with a scrawny church, with strict rules, no creativity. Safe, more than safe, insured by an insurance agency, but not safe! On the contrary — if it goes forth — if a church and a parish go out into the world, then once outside they might suffer the same fate as anybody else who goes out: have an accident. Well, in that case, between a sick and a bruised church, I prefer the bruised, because at least it went into the street."

On the church keeping Jesus locked up: "In the Bible, in the book of the Apocalypse, there is some-

— WORK, page 17

What dialogue looks like: Jewish-Christian relations

Leading up to the October anniversary of the historic document *Nostra Aetate*, the *Prairie Messenger* is featuring "capsule biographies," which are also posted on the "Catholic-Jewish Relations" section of the *Scarboro Interfaith website* (<http://www.scarboromissions.ca/interfaith-dialogue/jewish-christian-relations>). By October there will have been featured material on numerous individuals — Jews and Christians, men and women — who have played key roles in drafting the conciliar declaration, or who have led local, national or international efforts to put *Nostra Aetate's* vision into practice, through various forms of dialogue, action and scholarship. This is the eighth in the series.

Eugene J. Fisher (1943 -)

For the better part of the last 40 years, Dr. Eugene Fisher has been one of the most consistent, visible and articulate presences in Jewish-Christian dialogue in the English-speaking world. Especially in the specific realm of Jewish-Catholic relations, it is rare to see an initiative, conference or publication in



Eugene J. Fisher

the field, in the United States or internationally, in which he has not been involved as a central figure. His leadership and scholarly work has been repeatedly recognized by his peers, and he is today one of the *éminences grises* of the Jewish-Christian relationship, continuing a long and distinguished career that has had a major impact on this growing (but still young) field.

Eugene J. Fisher was born in Grosse Pointe, Mich., on Sept. 10, 1943. He was a student at Detroit's archdiocesan seminary (Sacred Heart) during Vatican II, graduating with a BA in 1965. Three years later, he completed a master's degree in Catholic theology at the University of Detroit and then, in 1968, moved to New York to pursue an MA in Jewish Studies from New York University (conferred in 1971), and a PhD (also from New York

University, conferred in 1976), in the field of Hebrew culture and education. As he later recalled, when he began his New York studies, "I had stepped into a career in a field that did not even exist before the Second Vatican Council: Catholic-Jewish relations." Fisher's doctoral dissertation examined the presentation of Jews and Judaism in post-Vatican II Catholic religion textbooks — roughly 15 years after the pioneering study of that question done by Sister Rose Thering, OP. In 1977, he succeeded Rev. Edward Flannery, becoming the first lay associate director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, tasked with the specific mandate of Jewish-Catholic relations. It was a position that he held for 30 years, until a restructuring of the Secretariat in 2007.

Throughout those three decades, he travelled and lectured widely on a range of contemporary issues in the Jewish-Catholic relationship, including the ongoing challenge of anti-Semitism; portrayals of Jews in theatre and film; biblical interpretation; liturgical aspects, and catechetical implications. He has published some 25 books and monographs, and more than 300 articles in major religious journals, many of which have been translated into French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Polish and German. In 1983 he offered concrete suggestions for formation of future Catholic clergy in Jewish-Christian matters (Seminary Education and Christian-Jewish Relations: A Curriculum and Resource Handbook).

Fisher was the principal contributor to several ground-breaking documents of the American bishops, including their 1988 statements *God's Mercy Endures Forever: Guidelines on the Presentation of Jews and Judaism in Catholic Preaching*, and *Criteria for the Evaluation of Dramatizations of*

the Passion. Together with the late Rabbi Leon Klenicki, Fisher edited the definitive collection of Pope St. John Paul II's teachings on Catholic-Jewish relations; it was initially published in 1987, expanded in 1995, and attained its final form (after the pope's death in 2005) as *The Saint for Shalom: How Pope John Paul II Transformed Catholic-Jewish Relations: The Complete Texts 1979 - 2005*.

In 1981, Pope John Paul II named Dr. Fisher as a consultant to the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews and, in 1985, he was nominated to the International Vatican-Jewish Liaison Committee, to represent the Holy See. He was twice nominated for the Nobel Prize by some of his Jewish colleagues. Since his retirement from the USCCB, Eugene Fisher has served as Distinguished Professor of Theology at Saint Leo University in Florida, and he continues to write and speak regularly, pursuing a lifetime of passionate commitment to Jewish-Christian dialogue, and to implementing the vision of *Nostra Aetate* and the church documents that have built upon it since 1965. Fisher is married to Cathie, and they have a daughter, Sarah.

Anna Hedwig Wahle, NDS (1931 - 2001)

Born in Vienna (Austria) on Dec. 17, 1931, Anna Wahle was born into a liberal Austrian family. Although her parents were Catholics, her grandparents had been Jewish and, under the Nuremberg racial laws enacted by the Nazis, she and her family were considered Jewish for government purposes. Her parents (both professionals) thus decided to send her and her brother Franz to safety in England in January 1939, as part of the *Kindertransport* program set up by the Quakers, to evacuate vulnerable children. She lived in England for the next 11 years, being educated in a number of convent schools, including that of the Sisters of Sion. During that period, her parents (who had themselves been in hiding during the war years) remained in contact as much as possible, and provided whatever financial support they could to their children in England. Anna saw her mother once, briefly, in 1947.

In 1950, Anna returned to Austria, but the return to her birth family was painful and awkward:



Anna Hedwig Wahle, NDS

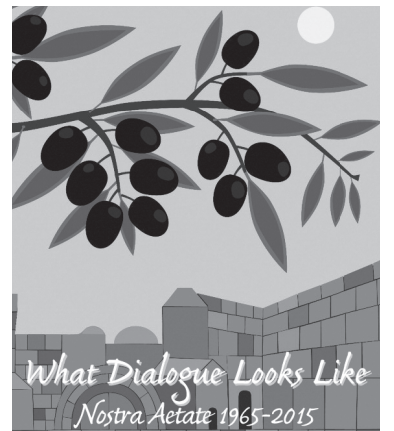
after 11 years living and studying abroad, she had come to feel more English than Austrian, and could no longer speak German fluently. She enrolled at the University of Vienna, studying mathematics and physics, and graduated in 1954. In February 1955, she entered the congregation of the Sisters of Sion, taking Hedwig as her religious name. She told friends that she felt "at home" in the Sion community, with its ethos of respect and love for Judaism and the Jewish people. For several years, Sister Hedwig would teach at girls' schools in France and Austria. From 1962 to 1964 she studied Hebrew in Paris, and began her introduction to formal study of Judaism there, which she would continue at the University of Vienna's Institute for Jewish Studies (she eventually retired from teaching in order to pursue her graduate studies, research and writing full time).

Hedwig was instrumental in founding Vienna's Information Centre for Jewish-Christian Understanding, which opened in October 1967, and was modelled on the SIDIC Centre that the Sisters of Sion had founded in Rome the previous year, in the wake of Vatican II's declaration *Nostra Aetate*. The Centre (which she headed until 1991) was a noted venue for academic study and lectures, organizing special events focusing on the Jewish-Christian relationship, and leading tours of significant local and international sites. Together with Dr. Kurt Schubert and Dr. Clemens Thoma, she co-authored a 1969 study on the presentation of Judaism in religion textbooks, sponsored by the Co-ordinating Committee for

Christian-Jewish Co-operation, and she dedicated much energy to a revision and renewal of catechetical materials in the light of Vatican II's teachings. In 1972 she received her doctorate, with a dissertation on the topic of rabbinic anthropology; she would later also receive a master's degree in theology.

Throughout Hedwig's life, educating teachers and students remained one of her great passions. But her work at the Vienna centre also went hand-in-hand with a great deal of research and writing, stressing the areas of commonality between Judaism and Christianity, and calling on Christians to show esteem and love toward the Jewish people. In 1986 she published a book on parables in the teachings of Jesus and the early rabbis (*Rabbinische Gleichnisse und die Gleichnisse Jesu*), and co-authored (with Alexander Ronai) a second book, *Das Evangelium — ein jüdisches Buch? Eine Einführung in die jüdischen Wurzeln des Neuen Testaments* (Is the Gospel a Jewish Book? An Introduction to the Jewish Roots of the New Testament).

She wrote articles about other dialogue pioneers, a 1988 book on the history of Hungary's Jews, and a 1997 book, *Juifs & Chrétiens en dialogue: Vivre d'une heritance commune* (Jews and Christians in Dialogue: Living Out a Shared



Heritage). In her final years, Hedwig asked to return to England — where she had spent much of her childhood, and where her brother Franz served as a priest — and it was there that she died, in London, on Aug. 31, 2001. Out of the often bitter experiences of her youth, Sister Hedwig Wahle drew a passionate and pioneering spirit that made her a highly respected leader in contemporary Jewish-Christian relations, with a legacy that continues today.

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Pope Francis takes a new angle on supernatural

By John Thavis
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When Pope Francis visits the United States this month, most will welcome him as a plainspoken champion of the voiceless, whose openness to change has brought new energy to the Catholic Church.

Largely lost in this portrait is a devotional side of the Argentine pontiff that reaches back to some of the church's most traditional beliefs — and gives them a characteristic "Francis" twist.

Take the devil, for example. Francis has spoken repeatedly about Satan, describing him variously as a con artist, a dangerous manipulator who "knows more theology than all theologians," or a sly charmer who often comes "disguised as an angel."

What stands out is that, for the pope, the devil is real and not merely a symbolic or allegorical figure. "On this point there is no shadow of a doubt," he says. "A battle exists, a battle in which the eternal salvation of us all is at stake."

When Francis first began zeroing in on the "evil one" in his sermons, excitement spread among the small network of exorcists in Rome. These priests had been promoting the ministry of exorcism for years, often against Vatican resistance, and it seemed the pope was on their wavelength.

Their enthusiasm waned, however, when it became clear that encouraging formal exorcisms was not on the pope's agenda. The devil described by Francis is not someone who possesses people violently, or announces his pres-

Thavis, former Rome bureau chief for Catholic News Service, is the author of a new book, The Vatican Prophecies: Investigating Supernatural Signs, Apparitions, and Miracles in the Modern Age.



RNS/Reuters/Alessandro Garofalo

THE FRANCIS APPROACH — "When it comes to supernatural phenomena — including demons, miracles, apparitions and private revelations — Francis' approach is far more practical than theatrical. That has placed him in the middle of an ongoing tension in the Catholic Church, between the predominantly dry, doctrinal approach of the hierarchy and the thirst among many faithful for something more tangible, and perhaps more spectacular," writes John Thavis.

ence with smoke and sulfur. Instead, this is a devil who leads people into bad habits like gossiping or seduces them with moral compromises, temptations that are all the more insidious because they are so subtle.

When it comes to supernatural phenomena — including demons, miracles, apparitions and private revelations — Francis' approach is far more practical than theatrical. That has placed him in the middle of an ongoing tension in the Catholic Church, between the predominantly dry, doctrinal approach of the hierarchy and the thirst among many faithful for something more tangible, and perhaps more spectacular.

For decades, Vatican theologians have de-emphasized the importance of private revelations and discouraged the hunt for supernatural signs. At the same time, however, officials in Rome cannot be seen as ruling out divine intervention in people's lives.

This is a religion, after all, that was founded by a man who cast out demons, healed the sick and appeared to his followers after his death.

As a result, the Vatican at times appears conflicted about the supernatural: miracles are routinely investigated and approved for sainthood causes, yet personal claims of prophetic visions are kept under wraps; saints' relics known for healing powers are sent on world tours, yet church officials discourage cutting up bodies

for new relics; a handful of Marian apparition sites are officially recognized, while many more are downplayed or ignored.

Francis, who has a keen devotion to the Virgin Mary, shocked listeners two years ago when he dismissed the idea that Mary would send messages every day, like a "postmaster." Later he said that Christians who constantly await divine dispatches were merely seeking novelty, not true faith.

Those words stung in the popular pilgrimage centre of Medjugorje, the town in Bosnia-Herzegovina where since 1981 visionaries have claimed to see, speak with and receive daily messages from the Virgin Mary. The Vatican investigated those apparitions for years, and insiders say the pope's judgment, expected soon, may encourage restrictions on the public activity of the seers, some of whom have become globetrotting celebrities.

At times, Francis seems to be redirecting attention from the miraculous to the more urgent, real-life demands of Christianity. Praying in June before the Shroud

of Turin, which many believe to be the burial cloth of the crucified Christ, the pope avoided any mention of its much-debated authenticity. Instead, he said the image should inspire Christians to help all those who suffer or are persecuted.

Likewise, when he visited Naples in March, the city's faithful proclaimed it a miracle when the blood of their patron, Saint Januarius, liquefied in the pope's presence. The pope practically ignored the prodigious event, and then went off to meet with the sick.

Francis does believe in the power of saintly intercession, and has said that when he prays to Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, he "almost always" receives a rose in response — a sign that those in heaven are listening.

Yet this is a pope who unexpectedly set aside the requirement of a verified miracle for several canonizations. His action prompted some Vatican experts to wonder if the church may be moving away from medical miracles as the presumed "stamp of approval" for sainthood.

Francis believes miracles do happen, but it's a wider understanding of the miraculous. Modern miracles, he says, are more about patient struggle than sudden spectacle, and people who need miracles in order to believe are on the wrong path.

As he put it shortly after his election: "God doesn't work like a fairy with a magic wand."

Catholic higher education and the election

By Terrence J. Downey

"If need be, a Catholic university must have the courage to speak uncomfortable truths which do not please public opinion, but which are necessary to safeguard the authentic good of society" (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities).

Among the various responsibilities of a Catholic university is the call to be faithful to its mission in all its dimensions including the duty to do what is possible to promote a vibrant and just political order. This particular obligation is especially pertinent for Catholic higher education in Canada in this federal election year, and during a period of seemingly bottomless cynicism in the ranks of much of Canada's youth about the nature of federal politics.

Among the most obvious signs of this political malaise in our country is the abysmal voter turnout for federal elections: in the last two elections, 2008 and 2011, the voting turnout was a dismal 58.8 per cent and 61.4 per cent respectively. Of particular concern is the low number of votes cast by younger voters. In the 2011 election for example, only 38.8 per cent of those 18 - 24 years of age voted, and of those in the 25 - 34 age range, only 45 per cent voted — this the demograph-

ic that arguably has the most at stake in election outcomes.

That eligible voters have stayed home in droves on election days is not really surprising given the tone of recent federal election campaigns. Whatever else these campaigns were about, they were certainly not about a greater Canada in that no leader and no party offered even a dimly coherent vision for the country. Instead, these campaigns were characterized by cynical promise-a-day niche marketing of specific policies to selected groups. This noxious pattern of boutique politics is the template for the current federal election campaign, the dominant emphasis of each of the three major parties mostly confined to attending to the so-called "middle class."

While Pope Francis has pleaded for political leaders to "broaden their horizons" to focus on the well-being of all citizens, "the common good" has all but disappeared from Canada's political lexicon. Consequently, with the one exception of refugee policy that has been forced on to the election agenda by the tsunami of refugees overwhelming Europe and the unspeakably tragic case of Alan Kurdi, there is little methodical deliberation of major public policy challenges that impinge on the well-being of all Canadians including health care, inequities in wealth distribution, the environment and sustainable development, euthanasia, industrial and foreign policy, and youth unemployment. In a nation that is surely among the most blessed on the planet in terms

of human and natural resources, there has been little to date in this campaign to inspire Canadians, especially younger Canadians, who would gladly respond to a challenge to create the noble society this country potentially is.

Canada clearly needs and deserves better. In the midst of a federal election campaign Canada's Catholic colleges and universities are obliged to inspire our students to participate in the electoral process by accepting the political and social responsibilities that are requisite for a vigorous democracy. We are called to encourage students to know that governments are our servants not our masters, and that Canadians have a right to expect that the public business be transacted in the overall best interests of country rather than on the narrower interests of particular groups or organizations. We are obliged to provide opportunities for students to appreciate that this majestically complex country requires insightful and visionary leadership by recalling Proverbs: "where there is no vision the nation perishes." We are called to provide opportunities for students to understand that our currently divisive political discourse and ever-widening socio-economic divisions imperil the soul of this nation, but can be effectively addressed by respectful deliberations that focus on the broad public interest — combined with thoughtful attention to those least able to speak for themselves.

Canada's future demands nothing less.

We are a church of mercy

Continued from page 13

visits a Catholic school in Harlem, talks one-on-one with prisoners at Philadelphia's Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility and greets families along Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Locklin suggests.

"He will meet people and he will meet people where they are," said Locklin. "What happens afterward will be the spin of different ideological interests. Those ideological interests run the whole spectrum."

There's far more to this pope than his analysis of economics and the environment, said Rodenborn. Of course Francis will speak to Americans in the language of their own hopes, dreams and aspirations — freedom, equality, justice.

But the pope will also come to the heart of the globalized, media-saturated, modern world to speak to the whole church in the language of mercy.

"I love the language of justice, I really do," said Rodenborn. "But I am perhaps more enamoured with the language of mercy, reaching out to simply everyone without exclusion. . . . Almost everything he says, he always comes back to the coming Year of Mercy."

"But of course it's larger than that. He sees the church as the hospital on the battlefield, a place of free, gratuitous giving and welcoming. We're a community first and foremost of mercy and we've got to be a merciful community. When people in pain reach out to us, we are there to ease that pain."

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Downey is president of St. Thomas More College in Saskatoon, and chair of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities in Canada.

Global refugee crisis a moral test for all of us

By David Gushee
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Western claims to stand for human dignity and human rights usually look pretty hollow whenever a major refugee crisis hits. That is what is happening now, as millions of refugees seek asylum in Europe — and mainly run into closed doors and cold shoulders.

The current crisis is a grave one. According to Amanda Taub, a lawyer and professor of international law and human rights at Fordham University, 19 million people today are refugees. They come from all over, though today especially from Africa and the Middle East. Four million have fled Syria since 2011. They are making global headlines as they surge into Europe, which is for many just the latest stop on a desperate odyssey.

They are dying in disturbing numbers — in rickety boats, sealed trucks and squalid refugee dumping grounds. They are not wanted where they come from and not wanted where they are going.

The post-Second World War world order was predicated on a global commitment to “never again” allow the mass violation of human dignity and human rights that the world had just witnessed. The very first line of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads: “Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the founda-

Gushee is Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics and director of the Center for Theology and Public Life at Mercer University. He is the author or editor of 20 books in his field, including Kingdom Ethics, The Sacredness of Human Life and Changing Our Mind.



CNS/Stoyan Nenov, Reuters

MORAL TEST — A police officer hits a man with a baton as he tries to maintain order while migrants wait for trains at a temporary camp near Gevgelija, Macedonia. The global refugee crisis is a moral test for all of us, says David Gushee.

tion of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.”

Article 14 says “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.”

Articles 15 says: “No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.”

Fine words.

But they beg these questions: Which particular “other countries” are obligated to provide said asylum from persecution? Which particular other countries have an obligation to welcome people desperately desiring to change their nationality?

Not in my backyard. Not my problem. In Europe, with the noble exception of Germany, that pretty much summarizes the answer. The

United States and Canada have been missing in action as well. Not our problem.

Here is the thing about human rights, one of the foundational concepts of the postwar world. They are so elegant, so expansive, so wonderful. Just read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It’s a beautiful statement. Bring a tissue.

But rights imply duties. If I have a genuine right to X, someone has a duty to provide X. If I have a right to a free K-12 education for my children, someone has a duty to provide it. If I have a right to marry the person of my choice, no one can be permitted to block me.

The modern world has seen the shift of almost all such perceived compulsory duties into the hands of the nation-state. If I have a gen-

uine right to something, almost always it is the state that either provides it or bans itself or others from preventing me from obtaining it.

But refugees are between states. They have no state, they have left a hostile state or they have arrived at the borders of a state that they are not permitted to enter. As legal scholar Jeremy Waldron has noted, there is a connection between citi-

zenship and dignity. Serious recognition of the latter seems to depend on recognition of the former.

But this seems to end up meaning: If you are not a citizen you have no dignity and no rights that anybody in particular is obligated to recognize.

This is not the way the postwar world saw itself operating, a world awash in refugees. But it is the world we live in.

Where there are no enforceable rights, everything depends on moral pressure and national moral altruism. It depends on religious, moral, political and civil society voices simply demanding that these particular desperate human beings at the border be treated as if we have an obligation to them. That is precisely what Pope Francis was trying to say when he demanded that every parish in Europe’s Catholic Church offer refuge. It’s what World Relief leader Stephan Bauman was saying when calling for the U.S. to offer welcome to 200,000 refugees right now, and what Canadian church leaders and organizations are saying when they demand 10,000 government-sponsored refugees by the end of the year.

Nobody can make others, or us, do the right thing. Nobody can make us overcome our indifference and inertia and nativism.

That makes the global refugee crisis a very stern moral test for us, for Canada and the U.S., and for the entire world.

World needs optimists and pessimists



Figure of Speech

Dr. Gerry Turcotte

“I have heard many such things; miserable comforters are you all.”
— Job 16:2

There is a funny story of identical twins, one always excruciatingly negative, the other indescribably positive. The first is given a horse and complains that he has to feed it; the other a room filled to the ceiling with manure who exclaims happily: “I know there’s a pony in here somewhere!”

Optimists are often criticized for being unforgivably positive even when events would suggest otherwise. We can all think of the person who always says, “Could be worse,” no matter how catastrophic an event. A friend of mine once dressed down

an irrepressible optimist by pointing out, regarding a disastrous situation, “No, it couldn’t be worse!” After a meaningful pause that suggested he’d got the message, the optimist replied, “So it can only get better!” You could hear the pessimist’s screams all over town.

The world needs optimists and pessimists — the optimist invented the airplane, the pessimist invented the parachute. But the pessimistic mode can sometimes overtake us.

It’s always easier to look at the grim and forget the light, when in fact life is really a product of the interplay of the two. In painting we have the concept of Chiaroscuro, the balance of shadows and light that the painter Caravaggio specialized in and which rendered the images so vividly. So it is with our everyday reality. Unless we remember to see the full picture, we

inevitably have partial vision, and indeed may focus only on the dark.

Calgary photographer George Webber once spoke about his focus on capturing buildings in decay as an obsession with passing and loss. He said of his career that he’d been more of a pallbearer than a midwife. Quite aside from the brilliance of that line, it occurred to me that, in a very different context, many of us might very well live our lives in that way — carrying the negative, rather than welcoming in the wonderful — or as Webber did, turning sadness into beauty.

Recently my assistant and I decided to start our day with a moment of levity: something humorous or light, a positive note or an affirmation. Although we are just starting on this new strategy, it has already helped with our day, compelling us to approach the negative from a more constructive and proactive point of view. When I think of pessimism in the Bible I go immediately to the Book of Job. One of my favourite books, it is a testament to the importance of hope and positivity even when the odds are at their worse. In the end I would rather be a naive optimist than a “miserable comforter.” Now if I could only find that pony. . .

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

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Musings from the bus: a smorgasbord of good times

Around the Kitchen Table

Maureen Weber



In August we visited our daughter Leigh and her husband Nohé in Ottawa. I miss Leigh something fierce, but because she lives far away we have the opportunity to explore somewhere new. Even though moments went by as quickly as the sparks that snapped from a backyard fire on my June birthday, they remain bright in my memory.

Ottawa is hot — the humidity warnings typical of an eastern summer mean air as thick as pudding, especially after dark. Outside only the crickets sound sharp. You can hear them day and night, and try as I might, I can't find a single one near the fence where the chirping seems to come from.

What sounds like a game of laser tag in the trees turns out to be the song of cardinals, and finally I see the bright red-feather flash.

Inside Leigh's cats do acrobatic manoeuvres — ballet on the bannisters. Like silent raptors they glide undetected onto the cupboard where they lick jam, steal a crepe and munch out cookie-cutter shapes.

Tourism with Leigh involves lots of nosh stops, and she knows the best. Early-afternoon patio wine. Wine like flowers. *Alsace*. Hot afternoon. Server snaps a burst of mother-daughter photos. *She's visiting from Saskatchewan*. Fries thin and crisp: aioli, spice, curry, truffle. Pink shrimp on ice.

This culinary escapade stops shy of the slippery looking oysters that wobble in their shells.

Bakery with the appetizing name and happy turquoise wall looks promising. No, Leigh says. Shakes her head. *Such a disappointment*: gluten free and vegan. Baking requires butter, flour and eggs. We stop elsewhere for creme brulée and eat at a table under some trees with the threat of thunder and fat raindrops. A market stand has baskets of Quebec strawberries that glisten. They are as dense and sweet as they look.

Saturday afternoon cupcakes and lemonade at Oscar Peterson's 90th birthday party where a quartet plays on the street and an elderly gentleman in a fisherman hat reminds me of my father, who instilled in me a love for Oscar's music. Later there is Salt, which seems to me the perfect name for a place where jazz fills the room (sax and piano) and a cheese board has fig chutney that tastes like Christmas. We share a dessert called Carney, which looks like deep-fried squid and tastes like fizzy cotton candy crunch served with something cool that is described by a less mundane word than ice cream.

One day we bike by the river. I follow, watching Leigh with her grasshopper legs and flaxen hair, like when she was a kid, only there aren't training wheels anymore.

A bike only gets you so far, and



M. Weber

LANDMARK — The spires of St. Francis of Assisi rise above the Hintonburg neighbourhood in Ottawa.

my favourite mode of transportation in the city is the bus. Rushing to a seat before it surges into motion, and the challenge of wondering if I can stay on my feet if I have to stand. I almost hope there are no seats left.

Every time we go by Parliament Hill I get goosebumps. The buildings seem fantastically unreal, and I half expect it to be packed up like a plywood stage set the next time the bus takes me by, but there it is: steadfast in its majestic grandeur.

The best part of the bus is the gathering of humanity that takes place on any given route — multi-textured colour and accented sound. A candy-apple red-haired mom pushing a stroller; an elderly woman deeply wrinkled, cane in one hand and shopping bag over the other arm; an agitated, scarred woman scolds no one in particular and continues the conversation when she gets off;

beep . . . beep . . . beep and the ramp lowers to give access to a man in a motorized wheelchair. Burqa-clad women with glossy black eyelashes and glittering cuffs on their wrists.

On the 35-minute route the two spires of St. Francis in Hintonburg serve as my landmark. Keep your wits about you so you don't lose track of the stops: Lincoln Fields, Grenon, Lovitt and home.

The holiday comes to an end and in the early-morning humidity Russ walks Leigh out to the bus that will take her to work. I hate goodbyes and go upstairs to finish packing, but like my grandmother

I can't resist sitting by the window to have one last look. Russ gives her a hug and it's enough to unstop the tears. When the 97 goes by Leigh waves from her seat, and Russ waves from the sidewalk. I wish there was time for one more go-round.

On the plane I watch as the tangled mass of forest eventually gives way to the squared-off prairie miles below: perfectly delineated, separate, practical, like prairie people. Cordial with borders. It will be a long time before I am jostled together, shoulder to hip to knee, among the colourful gathering of humanity.

Lots of work a good motivator for pope

Continued from page 13

many different options."

On his own popularity: "I often ask myself what my cross will be like, what my cross is like. . . . crosses exist. You can't see them, but they are there. Jesus also, for a certain time, was very popular, and look at how that turned out. So nobody has their happiness guaranteed in this world."

On trying to break out of the papal bubble: "Yes, I need to get out, but it's still not quite time. . . . But little by little I have some contact with people on Wednesdays (at the public general audience in St. Peter's Square) and that helps me a lot. What I miss most about Buenos Aires is going out and walking in the street."

On what keeps him awake at night: "The truth? I sleep like a rock!"

On what motivates him: "Having lots of work to do."

On how often he goes to confession: "Every 15 or 20 days. I confess to a Franciscan priest, Father Blanco, who is kind enough to come here and confess me. And I never had to call an ambulance to take him back in shock over my sins!"

On how and where he would like to die: "Wherever God wants. Seriously . . . wherever God wants."

On what he imagines eternity to be like: "When I was younger I imagined it would be very dull (laughs). Now, I think it is a mystery of encounter. It is almost unimaginable, but it must be very beautiful and wonderful to meet with God."

thing extremely beautiful about Jesus . . . in which he is speaking to a church and says: 'I am at the door and I knock. . . . If you open the door I will come in and share a meal with you.' But, I ask, how often, in church, has Jesus knocked on the door, but on the inside, so as to be let out to proclaim the kingdom. Sometimes we appropriate Jesus just for us and we forget that a church which is not going out into the world, a church which does not go out, keeps Jesus imprisoned."

On why he was elected pope: "You have to ask the Holy Spirit!"

On why he streamlined the annulment process: "(T)o simplify . . . ease people's faith. And that the church might be like a mother."

On whether the church can welcome couples whose relationships don't line up with church teachings, such as those who are divorced and remarried: "At the synod (next month's Vatican summit of bishops from around the world) we will be speaking about all the possible ways to help these families. But one thing should be very clear — something Pope (Emeritus) Benedict XVI left quite clear: people who are in a second union are not excommunicated and should be integrated into church life. This was made crystal clear. I also said this quite clearly: drawing closer to the mass, to catechesis, their children's education, charity. . . . There are so

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At the conclusion of its annual plenary meeting Sept. 18, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a strong statement on the Supreme Court's decision on assisted suicide and euthanasia. Because of its importance, the PM is carrying the statement in full. — PWN

Support history of caring

Yesterday, we were at Saint Joseph's Oratory in Montreal to celebrate the Year of Consecrated Life. The Oratory is a special place of prayer, inspired by the city's own Saint Brother André Bessette who brought healing and hope to those in need. It honours Joseph, husband of Mary, mother of Jesus. We venerate Saint Joseph as patron of Canada, and also as patron of a good death because he had Jesus and Mary at his side to comfort him in his dying.

There in this sanctuary, where so many have found healing and consolation, we gave thanks for the thousands of women and men from all across our land who have given their lives to their brothers and sisters through prayer, health care, education, and other works of service and solidarity with the poor and marginalized.

Moved by the powerful example of their generosity and how they have promoted and protected human dignity in the many sectors of society, we affirm our nation's long tradition of caring for the sick and the vulnerable. We cannot but express our outrage at the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada to create a new "constitutional right" in Canada, the so-called "right" to suicide. Nor can we suppress our profound dismay, disappointment and disagreement with the Court's decision. The ruling would legalize an action that, from time immemorial, has been judged immoral:

the taking of innocent life. Moreover, it puts at risk the lives of the vulnerable, the depressed, those with physical or mental illness, and those with disabilities.

In the face of the terrible suffering that can be caused by illnesses or depression, a truly human response should be to care, not to kill. Likewise, the response to the anguish and fear people can experience at the end of their lives is to be present to them, offering palliative care, not intentionally to cause their death. The need for palliative care should be one of the most pressing preoccupations of our country and its institutions. This is where the energies and resources of our elected leaders should be directed. This is why we advocate making high-quality palliative care, long-term care, and home care easily accessible to all Canadians.

We are in the midst of a federal election campaign. The candidates' silence on the question of assisted suicide astonishes us. This question is fundamental for our society and its future. Have we relinquished the ability to debate the profound questions of life that touch us all? Are our politicians that terrified by the risk of awkwardly phrased responses, getting "off message," or the ups and downs of public opinion polls? We urge all the citizens of our country to raise this question of life and death at meetings with candidates, to stimulate a true debate worthy of our great country.

The one-year period given by the Supreme Court is far too short for such a fundamental change in our laws to enter into force. We urge the government that is elected on Oct. 19 to invoke the Notwithstanding Clause and extend this timeline to five years. If ever a legal decision warranted invoking this clause in our Constitution, this is it. We need to allow ourselves time to reflect before acting, time to consider seriously the consequences of

our actions in dealing with this crucial moral issue.

Furthermore, we must at all cost uphold and protect the conscience rights of the men and women who work as caregivers. Requiring a physician to kill a patient is always unacceptable. It is an affront to the conscience and vocation of the health care provider to require him or her to collaborate in the intentional putting to death of a patient, even by referring the person to a colleague. The respect we owe our physicians in this regard must be extended to all who are engaged in health care and work in our society's institutions.

As Catholic bishops, we speak in terms that are informed by reason, ethical dialogue, religious conviction and profound respect for the dignity of the human person. Our awareness is shaped by thousands of years of reflection, and by our actions as Christians in following Jesus. He showed most fully what it means to love, to serve, and to be present to others. His response to the suffering of others was to suffer with them, not to kill them! He accepted suffering in his life as the pathway to giving, to generosity, to mercy.

One does not have to be a believer to recognize in Jesus' life and action a supreme example of humanity. The values of Jesus of Nazareth are the basis for our views on assisted suicide. Canada has nothing to fear in committing itself to these profoundly human and life-giving values.

It is in this spirit of collaboration in building a society more compassionate, more respectful of the dignity of all human life, more just and more generous that we make this heartfelt cry.

Remembering the humble witness of Saint Brother André, we invite all Canadians to build a society that respects the dignity of every person. May our call be heard with respect, attention and openness.

Pope Francis develops church teaching on war and peace

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. This excerpt is on War, Peace and Violence.

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.

16. Jesus told his disciples, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Mt 5:9). And when the Risen Lord appeared to his disciples, he most often greeted them

with the words "Peace be with you" (Lk 24:36; Jn 20:19).

The church is called by Christ to seek peace, and the Petrine office has a long tradition of addressing situations of violence and conflict, both calling and praying for peace. Pope Francis has continued and deepened that tradition as with great regularity he has addressed particular conflicts, general trends toward militarization, and the entire world's need and yearning for peace. His message, inspired by St. Francis of

Assisi and the long tradition of peacemaking in the church, has been grounded in the transformative power of the cross of Christ and in the way that God brings forth and summons us to peace. For instance, at a prayer service for an end to violence in Syria, he exclaimed: "How I wish that all men and women of goodwill would look to the Cross if only for a moment! There, we can see God's reply: violence is not answered with violence, death is not answered with the language of death. In the silence of the Cross, the uproar of weapons ceases and the language of reconciliation, forgiveness, dialogue and peace is spoken." . . .

17. Pope Francis has challenged the way we look at war and respond to it. . . .

"War is a scandal to be mourned every day." "War always marks the failure of peace, it is always a defeat for humanity. Let the words of Pope Paul VI resound again: 'No more one against the other, no more, never! . . . war never again, never again war!'"

In the Christian understanding, peace is not simply the absence of war or violence: "peace is at once a gift of God and the fruit of free and reasonable human acts aimed at pursuing the common good in truth and love." We cannot allow the word "peace" to become an empty word. It asks something of us, requires something of us. "Peacemaking calls for courage, much more so than warfare. It calls for the courage to say yes to encounter and no to conflict: yes to dialogue and no to violence: yes to negotiations and no to hostilities: yes to respect for agreements and no to acts of provoca-

tion: yes to sincerity and no to duplicity. All of this takes courage, it takes strength and tenacity."

18. There is a deep dishonesty in much of our political discourse about war and peace, when it is accompanied by support of the industries which make our wars so deadly. "Everyone talks about peace, everyone claims to want it, but unfortunately the proliferation of weapons leads in the opposite direction. The arms trade has the effect of complicating and distancing us from a solution to conflicts."

It is an "absurd contradiction to speak about peace, to negotiate peace and at the same time to promote and permit the arms trade." Pope Francis has invited us to contrast the image of "the great dining rooms, of the parties held by those who control the arms industry . . . the good life led by the masters of the arms trade" with the image of "a sick, starving child in a refugee camp." Identifying the arms trade as "one of the greatest curses on the human race," he has strongly condemned chemical weapons, spoken of the enormous threat posed by nuclear weapons, and decried the priorities which lead to massive spending on armaments while cutting back on programs which would address poverty. . . .

19. Expanding on the relationship between poverty, inequality and violence, Pope Francis has pushed for a recognition of the root causes of social and political instability: "Today in many places we hear a call for greater security. But until exclusion and inequality in society and between peoples

— SYSTEMS, page 19



CONSECRATED LIFE CELEBRATED IN CANADA — More than 1,500 members of the consecrated life joined the bishops of Canada in Saint Joseph's Oratory, Montreal, for a Mass of Thanksgiving to celebrate the Year of Consecrated Life. During the celebration, a joint message was released by the president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Rev. Paul-André Durocher, Archbishop of Gatineau, and the president of the Canadian Religious Conference, Sister Rita Larivée, SSA. After the mass, the bishops mingled with the congregation to thank the religious for their witness.

Subscriptions: \$37.00 per year (45 issues); \$67.00 for two years; tax included; U.S. \$126.00 per year. Foreign \$152.00 per year.
Single copy: \$1.00 GST#10780 2928 RT0001
Copy and advertising should arrive 12 days before publication date.
Change of address: Please allow 3-4 weeks for processing and send both old and new addresses.
Website: <http://www.prairiemessenger.ca>
We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Canada

CN ISSN 0032-664X Publication Mail Agreement No. 40030139

Pope Francis urges Cuba’s youth to love and hope

By Cindy Wooden

HAVANA (CNS) — In a hot and steamy cathedral after listening to a Daughter of Charity talk about her work with people with severe disabilities, Pope Francis set aside his prepared homily and spoke about serving those the world considers “useless.”

“Serving ‘the useless’ makes

Jesus shine,” the pope said at an evening prayer service Sept. 20 with religious, priests and seminarians gathered in Havana’s cathedral.

Pope Francis thanked women religious around the world who dedicate themselves with love to caring for people the world ignores or would like to forget.

“Thank you for what you do

and through you, thank you to all of these women, so many consecrated women, for their service to the ‘useless,’ ” he said. The religious “are not building an empire, you can’t make any money off of it, you can’t carry forward anything absolutely ‘constructive’ in quotes with those brothers and sisters of ours — the smallest, the least of these. That’s where Jesus shines.”

Those “who try to kiss you and cover your face with drool,” he said, “speak of Jesus.”

The pope said he knew the priests present, who work in normal parishes, were probably wondering what they should be doing to serve Jesus in the smallest, the weakest and the least of society.

Start with the 25th chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, he said, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and welcoming the stranger. And, he begged them, spend time offering the sacrament of reconciliation, patiently and tenderly welcoming all.

Jesus did not berate sinners, the pope said, “he embraced them.”

Cardinal Jaime Ortega Alamino of Havana introduced the congregation to the pope, telling him, “the church in Cuba is a poor church,” and the way that Cuban

priests and religious and foreign missionaries embrace that poverty “is admirable.”

Pope Francis said the cardinal “used an uncomfortable word: poverty. The spirit of the world does not know that word, doesn’t seek it, hides it.”

Poverty, he said, can be a person’s greatest wealth, but the search for wealth can destroy a person’s life.

Quoting the Jesuit founder, St. Ignatius of Loyola, the pope said he wasn’t giving his order publicly, but found wisdom in St. Ignatius’ teaching that poverty “is the wall and the mother” of consecrated life. It stimulates trust in God and blocks out worldliness. “Love poverty the way you love your mother,” he told them.

Leaving the cathedral, the pope went outside to meet young people — Catholics, followers of other faiths and non-believers — at the Father Felix Varela Cultural Centre.

Dreaming, hope and friendship were the key topics of his talk, which like his talk inside the cathedral, was ad-libbed.

He began by telling the youth of a saying he likes: “People have two eyes, one of flesh and the other of glass. With the eye of

flesh we see what we look at. With the glass eye we see what we dream.”

“Dream that you can make the world different. Dream that you can make it better,” he told them. “Don’t forget to dream.”

Picking up on one of the themes he was discussing with the religious, Pope Francis told the young people “the empire of the god money” promotes the idea that one can and should discard anything or anyone that is not useful or productive, including young people and the elderly.

Societies and nations that do not invest in their young people, he said, are stripping themselves of hope.

Hope, he said, is not just easy optimism. It takes effort and a willingness to sacrifice and even suffer for a goal.

“It’s not easy. You cannot take it alone,” he said. “There is an African proverb that says ‘If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to walk far, go with someone. I want you to walk with each other.’

“Even though you may think differently, that you have different points of view, I want you to walk together,” he said. “It is the sweet hope of homeland for which we must come together.”



CNS/Paul Haring

POPE FRANCIS BLESSES BOY IN HAVANA — Pope Francis blesses a boy with a disability at the Father Felix Varela Cultural Centre in Havana Sept. 20.

Pope speaks of ongoing crisis for Syrians, Iraqis

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Millions of Iraqis and Syrians are facing poverty and even death, neighbouring countries are bearing more than their fair share of the burden of helping refugees, arms dealers are getting richer and the international community seems helpless, Pope Francis said.

The “atrocities and unspeakable human rights violations, which characterize these conflicts, are transmitted live by the media,” the pope said Sept. 17. “No one can pretend not to know!”

Pope Francis spoke about the ongoing crises during a meeting with Catholic charity and humanitarian organizations working in Iraq, Syria, the neighbouring countries and elsewhere to assist victims of the fighting and those who have fled.

The meeting was sponsored by the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*, the Vatican office that co-ordinates Catholic charitable giving. The purpose of the meeting was to share information about the crisis and the status of Christians and other vulnerable communities, the humani-

tarian needs, projects already underway and priorities for the future.

Cor Unum reported that since 2011, fighting in Syria and Iraq has claimed more than 250,000 lives and injured more than one million people. More than 12 million people in Syria and more than eight million people in Iraq are in need of humanitarian aid. More than 7.6 million people are displaced within Syria and more than three million are displaced in Iraq.

Some four million Syrians have managed to find refuge in the Middle East, with 1.9 million being hosted in Turkey, 1.1 million in Lebanon and about 600,000 in Jordan, *Cor Unum* said.

Pope Francis described the consequences of the fighting in Syria and Iraq as “one of the most overwhelming human tragedies of recent decades.”

“The international community seems unable to find adequate solutions while the arms dealers continue to achieve their interests,” he said. “We need to find a solution, which is never the one of violence, because violence only creates new wounds and new wounds create more violence.”

Rich nations have ‘ecological debt’ to pay

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Wealthier nations have an “ecological debt” they must pay back to poorer countries by ending food waste, cutting back on non-renewable energy consumption and investing in sustainable development, Pope Francis said.

“The environment is a collective good” that everyone has the duty to protect — a duty that “demands an effective collaboration within the entire international community,” he told a group of environment ministers from countries belonging to the European Union.

When it comes to formulating environmental policy and goals, leaders must take into account the

principles of justice, solidarity and participation, he said during the Sept. 16 meeting.

Greater justice, the pope said, means addressing “ecological debt,” that is, the debt richer countries owe poorer countries because of the huge trade imbalances and “disproportionate use” of natural resources wealthier countries have created.

“We must honour this debt,” he told the ministers, first by “setting a good example.”

Nations must limit considerably their consumption of non-renewable energy and provide needier countries with resources that promote sustainable development, he said. They must adopt better ways to manage forests, transport and garbage while “seri-

ously addressing the severe problem of food waste.”

The pope encouraged countries to adopt a “circular economy,” which considers the life cycle of finite resources and develops more self-sustaining methods of production and services.

Fighting ecological degradation must be linked to solidarity and fighting poverty, he said, because the poor are more vulnerable in a ravaged environment. This, too, would entail helping poorer communities access the technology and development they need, he said.

Lastly, there needs to be greater participation in the decision-making process so that people who are often marginalized can have a voice, he said.

Vatican welcomes first refugee family

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Embracing Pope Francis’ request to sponsor a refugee family, the Vatican’s St. Anne Parish has welcomed a family of four from Damascus, Syria.

In an appeal Sept. 6, the pope called on every parish, religious community, monastery and shrine in Europe to take in a family of refugees, given the ongoing crisis of people fleeing from war and poverty.

He said being Christian means giving a concrete sign of hope and God’s mercy to those in need.

The papal Almoner’s Office, which responds to individual requests for assistance and helps co-ordinate Pope Francis’ direct requests for assisting the homeless in Rome, announced Sept. 18 that a refugee family was being cared for by St. Anne’s Parish

inside Vatican City.

The family — a mother, father and two children — belong to the Melkite Catholic Church, one of the Byzantine-rite churches in full union with Rome.

The family arrived in Italy Sept. 6, the day the pope made his appeal, the Vatican said; they have been offered a Vatican apartment near St. Peter’s Square, as requested by Pope Francis.

Their request for asylum had been filed with Italian authorities, the Vatican said, and in accordance with Italian law, family members are not allowed to seek employment for the next six months. St. Anne’s Parish was

providing all needed assistance and care in the meantime.

The Vatican said St. Peter’s Basilica was still in the process finalizing details for taking in a refugee family.

The Almoner’s Office said that for years it has made financial contributions to Jesuit Refugee Service’s Astalli Centre in Rome to help cover the costs of permits that allow refugees to stay in Italy. The office also provides funding and aid in the pope’s name for many refugees who receive services at a variety of other centres in Rome.

In addition, Pope Francis recently made available a mobile medical unit for refugees in Rome.

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to walk far, go with someone.

— African proverb quoted by Pope Francis in Cuba