



Winnipeg synod

With the conclusion of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg's centennial year, Archbishop Richard Gagnon is seeking wide participation in a synodal process, its next long-term initiative.
— page 3

100 years

Sister Helen Hoffart, an Ursuline Sister of Prelate, celebrated her hundredth birthday in November.
— page 6

Response to TRC

Campion College, a federated college with the University of Regina, has outlined three initiatives it intends to take in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
— page 7

Dystopian visions

The concluding episode of *The Hunger Games: The Mockingjay - Part 2* was released last month, but whether it's worth seeing is debatable, writes Gerald Schmitz.
— page 9



Opening doors

As we begin this Jubilee Year of Mercy, there's been a lot of talk about opening doors, writes Gertrude Rompré. How do we as Christians about to celebrate Christmas open the doors to both our hearts and our homes?
— page 10

Wired for violence?

Given the terrorist attacks of the last few weeks, one might be forgiven for feeling a bit bleak about the human species, writes Marcia Pally. "It turns out, however, that we're evolutionarily wired not for violence but for co-operation."
— page 11

Welcoming refugees

It is heartening to see Canadians rallying to welcome Syrian refugees, but before we congratulate ourselves too heartily we should acknowledge that our contributions are modest and the need is great, writes Dennis Gruending.
— page 12

Pope opened Year of Mercy on Dec. 8

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — When Pope Francis planned the Year of Mercy and the opening of the Holy Door, he did not mean to



CNS/Malcolm Gear Designers

give the starting signal for a frenzied wave of pilgrims to Rome.

More than call to sign up for an Eternal City package tour, the pope is inviting people to strike out on a yearlong spiritual journey to recognize a loving God who's already knocking on their door.

He says he wants the Year of Mercy to usher in a "revolution of tenderness."

Once people realize "I'm wretched, but God loves me the way I am," then "I, too, have to love others the same way," the pope said in an interview pub-

lished just a few days before the Dec. 8 start of the jubilee year.

Discovering God's generous love kick-starts a virtuous circle, which "leads us to acting in a way that's more tolerant, patient, tender" and just, he said.

Speaking with *Credere*, an Italian weekly magazine run by the Pauline Fathers, the pope gave an in-depth look at why he sees such an urgent need to highlight God's mercy.

"The world needs to discover that God is father, that there is mercy, that cruelty is not the path,

that condemnation is not the path," he said. "Because the church herself sometimes follows a hard line, she falls into the temptation of following a hard line, into the temptation of underlining only moral norms, but so many people remain on the outside," he said.

The pope said the thought of all those people — sinners, the doubtful, the wounded and disenfranchised — conjured up that iconic image of seeing the church "as a field hospital after the battle."

— OPEN DOORS, page 15

Climate change march held in Saskatoon

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

SASKATOON — Hundreds of people of all ages walked, cycled and pushed baby strollers in a Saskatoon march Nov. 29, one of many public events around the world calling for action on the

environment on the eve of an international gathering on climate change being held Nov. 30 - Dec. 11 in France.

The 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change involves leaders from around the world discussing an international agreement on climate change, with a goal to keep global warming below two degrees centigrade by limiting greenhouse gas emissions.

The Saskatoon march from Kiwanis Park across Broadway Bridge to Oskayak High School concluded with presentations by a number of speakers representing a range of concerned environmental, justice, and faith groups.

Mark Bigland-Pritchard of Climate Action Saskatoon welcomed participants to the event. "We want strong targets set in Paris and we want strong policies that can actually meet those targets and we want justice in the world," he said.

Bishop Donald Bolen of the

Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, who also serves as chair of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, pointed to *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' recent encyclical calling for care of the earth and for justice for those most affected by climate change.

"That document was published in June precisely so it could be in the public domain before Paris (COP21)," Bolen said. "In that document Pope Francis notes that our world is falling into serious disrepair."

Humanity is caught in a spiral of destruction with a way of living that is contaminating the earth's waters, land and air, and bringing about changes to the global climate, said the bishop, quoting from the papal document. "Pope Francis draws attention to the human dimension of the crisis as well. The same tendencies and structures which lead to environmental disasters also contribute to increasing

— ENVIRONMENTAL, page 6

Canadian refugee aid to top \$1 billion

By Michael Swan
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — Another \$100 million in federal government aid to Syrian refugees fleeing their nation's civil war brings Canada's spending on the refugee crisis so far to nearly \$1 billion. But a dollar-for-dollar matching fund open until Dec. 31 with approved charities is certain to push Canada's aid to the region well past that mark.

The Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace is among the organizations eligible for matching funds. Its programs and partner organizations in the region deliver such basic necessities as food and warm clothing but also are involved in education, trauma counselling and community organizing. Development and Peace has so far raised \$1.1 million to be matched by the government. Between January 2013 and Sept. 12 this year, when Ottawa announced its Syria Emergency Relief Fund, Development and Peace had raised another \$3 million outside the matching fund program.

Aid to the vast majority of Syria's 4.2 million refugees in Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt, as well as the country's 6.5 million internally displaced people, is the right thing to do, said Development and Peace executive director David Leduc.

"Absolutely it's important and I would say in some ways more important (than resettling refugees in Canada)," Leduc told The Catholic Register.

Money spent in the region helping refugees survive the next winter, keep their kids in school and peacefully co-exist in their new situation will help far more families and individuals than resettling refugees in Canada, he said.

As a former program director for Oxfam-Quebec working in the Palestinian refugee camps of Lebanon, Leduc is familiar with the challenges of refugee life in the region.

— PEACE, page 5



Yaworski

CLIMATE MARCH — Hundreds of people gathered in Saskatoon Nov. 29 to call for action on the environment.

Missionary spirit means witness, not proselytizing

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Missionary spirit is manifested by preaching love, humanity and faith through one’s witness and not through proselytism, Pope Francis said.

Faith in Jesus Christ is shared first through “witness then with words,” the pope said Dec. 2 at his weekly general audience.

The pope dedicated his audience to reflecting on his trip to Africa Nov. 25 - 30 when he visited Kenya, Uganda and the Central African Republic.

He said that his first stop, Kenya, was a country “that represented the global challenge of our time” in presenting a “model of development” that cares for creation in a “balanced, inclusive and sustainable” way. However, he said, there also is a noticeable situation of “wealth and misery” existing side by side.

“This is a scandal, not only in Africa but also here, everywhere,” the pope said. “Co-existence between wealth and misery is a scandal, a shame for humanity.”

Stressing the need for giving witness to the “natural and spiritual wealth” of the country, the pope remembered the victims of the terrorist attack at Garissa University April 2 where Al-Shabaab militants targeted and



CNS/Paul Haring

CHILDREN GREET POPE FRANCIS — Children sing and wave flags before Pope Francis’ meeting with priests, religious and seminarians at the cathedral in Kampala, Uganda. In his general audience talk Dec. 2, Pope Francis said he marvelled at the sight of so many young people during his trip to Africa.

executed 148 Christian students.

“Their blood is the seed of peace and brotherhood for Kenya, for Africa and for the whole world,” the pope said.

An example of the fruits of such a witness was reflected in the history of Uganda, the second leg of his trip, where the memory of the 19th-century Catholic and Anglican martyrs is

still strong. Pope Francis thanked the catechists, charitable organizations and the youth of the country who “protect the gift of hope and seek to live according to the Gospel and not according to the world; going against the current.”

The pope said that the final stop of his trip, the Central African Republic, took him to “the heart of Africa” and it was the primary reason for his visit given that it “is a country that suffers so much.”

Shooting at clinic antithesis of pro-life

By Veronica Ambuul

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (CNS) — A priest who celebrates mass every Friday morning on a sidewalk near the Planned Parenthood clinic targeted by a lone gunman Nov. 27 said the shooter’s actions were the

antithesis of the pro-life cause.

“We want the conversion of Planned Parenthood, not their destruction,” said Rev. Bill Carmody, the longtime Respect Life director for the Diocese of Colorado Springs. “The pro-life movement has no place for violence.”

The attack on the clinic in northwest Colorado Springs left three people dead, including a police officer, and nine others wounded. The clinic reported that none of its employees or patients was among those killed or seriously wounded in the Black Friday attack.

The clinic sits near a busy shopping centre that includes a grocery store, a bank and several other businesses. After the attack broke out around 11:30 a.m., local time, patrons and employees of the businesses “sheltered in place” for nearly six hours while police tried to contain the alleged shooter, Robert Lewis Dear, 57. The standoff ended with Dear’s arrest at 4:52 p.m., local time.

Among those killed was Garrett Swasey, a police officer at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and father of two.

The clinic is the frequent site of prayer vigils and other activities, in addition to the pro-life masses, leading several national media outlets to speculate that Dear was a member of the pro-life movement.

However, Carmody said he did not recall ever having seen or spoken to Dear. On the day of the shootings, he had celebrated his usual weekly mass, but he said that he and others in attendance

departed shortly afterward because of the snowstorm hitting the region.

“We were long gone” before the attack started, Carmody told The Colorado Catholic Herald, the diocesan newspaper of Colorado Springs.

Others who regularly pray outside the clinic also said they did not recall seeing Dear at any pro-life events.

Law enforcement officials would not discuss a motive for the shootings because their investigation was still underway. Dear was scheduled to appear in court Nov. 30.

According to The Gazette daily newspaper, Dear previously lived in South Carolina and North Carolina and had arrest records in both states. Voting records show that Dear maintains a residence in Hartsel, a small town about 200 kilometres west of Colorado Springs, The Gazette reported.

“Yesterday, our community experienced an act of pure evil at the local Planned Parenthood clinic,” Bishop Michael J. Sheridan of Colorado Springs said in a statement. “As Pope Francis recently reminded us, ‘The path of violence and hate can never solve the problems of humanity.’”

The National Right to Life Committee’s president, Carol Tobias, said her organization “unequivocally condemns unlawful activities and acts of violence regardless of motivation. The pro-life movement works to protect the right to life and increase respect for human life. The unlawful use of violence is directly contrary to that goal.”

Climate deal must transform, papal envoy tells Paris talks

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Heads of state discussing carbon emission limits must create a global and “transformative” agreement built on justice, solidarity and fairness, a papal representative told the UN climate conference in Paris.

Pope Francis has said “it would be tragic” if special interests “manipulated information” and won out over the common good, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, said Nov. 30.

The cardinal delivered a speech on behalf of the pope during the Nov. 30 - Dec. 11 Conference of Parties, or COP21, in Paris. The Vatican released a copy of the speech Dec. 1.

A global agreement must have three interrelated goals in mind: “alleviate the impact of climate change, fight poverty and let the dignity of the human person flourish,” the cardinal said in a speech delivered in French.

A meaningful global pact must be guided by a clear ethical vision that sees all of humanity as belonging to one human family, and has “no room for the so-called globalization of indifference,” he said.

“Given the urgency of a situa-

The early opening of the Holy Door at the cathedral of Bangui, he said, was done as “a sign of faith and hope for that people, and symbolically for the whole African population who are most in need of rescue and comfort.”

Pope Francis said that the final mass at the Bangui stadium was “wonderful” and marvelled at the sight of so many young people.

He also expressed his admiration for the work of missionaries in Africa, men and women “who have left everything” for the Gospel. Speaking off-the-cuff, the pope recalled meeting an 81-year-old Italian nun along with a three-year-old girl who called her “nonna” (“grandma”). Both made a harrowing trip to Bangui for the papal visit via canoe.

The nun, he said, told him that she works as a nurse in the Congo and went on to become an obstetrician, helping to deliver over 3,000 babies.

“That is how missionaries are, they are courageous,” the pope said. “Like this nun there are many, so many nuns, so many priests, and so many religious who ‘burn up’ their lives to announce Jesus Christ. It is beautiful to see this! It is beautiful!”

The pope appealed to all young people, calling on them to reflect on their vocation and “to not exclude the possibility of becoming a missionary” and to preach with their lives, not by proselytizing.

“Those who are looking for something else are the ones that (proselytize),” he said. “Faith is preached first through witness then with words — but slowly.”

tion that requires the broadest collaboration possible in order to reach a common plan,” it is important the agreement recognize everyone’s responsibility to help others and according to one’s abilities and means.

An agreement must send “clear signals” to governments, businesses, the scientific community and local communities on how to adjust or change their behaviour and policies in ways that lead to a low carbon economy and integral human development, he said.

Finally, the cardinal said, the COP21 endeavour must be part of an ever-evolving commitment to future generations with constant updates, followup and enforcement.

“It’s necessary to take into serious consideration the realization of models of sustainable production and consumption and new behaviours and lifestyles,” he said.

“Technical solutions are necessary but not enough,” he said, adding that teaching and supporting sustainable lifestyles are critical. People must become more aware of their responsibility and that today’s lifestyles based on an unsustainable “culture of waste” have no place in new models of education and development.



CNS/EWTN

MOTHER ANGELICA — Mother Angelica, who spearheaded the founding of the Eternal Word Television Network, has been placed on a feeding tube as she continues to battle lingering effects of two strokes she suffered 14 years ago. She is pictured in an undated photo.

Quebec/Ottawa battle shaping up on euthanasia

By Deborah Gyapong

OTTAWA (CCN) — A jurisdictional battle between Quebec and the federal government over euthanasia and assisted suicide is heading for the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC).

On Dec. 3, the federal government asked the SCC for a six-month extension on the Carter decision that had struck down sections of the Criminal Code against assisted suicide. The Carter decision comes into effect Feb. 6, 2016, but the extension, if granted, would extend the suspension until August 6, 2016. That would leave the present prohibitions against assisted suicide and euthanasia in place until then.

Quebec argues “medical aid in dying” is health care and falls under provincial jurisdiction. It wanted to go ahead with its euthanasia law as planned Dec. 10 and seeks an exemption from the extension. Interested parties were given a Dec. 10 deadline to file with the SCC. The federal government asked for an expedited hearing on the matter.

Euthanasia Prevention Coalition (EPC) executive director Alex Schadenberg said his organization would prefer the use of the notwithstanding clause and no law permitting euthanasia and assisted suicide. However, EPC has filed a factum with the court opposing Quebec’s being granted an exemption. Schadenberg said the worst scenario is a patchwork of differing laws on euthanasia across the country.

“The Quebec law is euthanasia,” Schadenberg said. “It’s not another form of assisted suicide with a few little interesting caveats. The Quebec law says doctors will do lethal injections.”

“From the beginning we say Quebec does not have the right to

go it alone on this,” he said.

If the extension is granted, the federal government will establish an all-party special parliamentary committee to study the issue and make recommendations to the federal government on a legislative approach. The Criminal Code provisions would remain in place. The extension would also ensure provinces and territories “have the necessary time to continue the good work that is underway and responsibly prepare for the full implementation of the Carter decision,” a justice department release said.

“Canadians have made it clear they are looking for a real conversation about personal choice, health care and end-of-life care, and strong protection of the vulnerable,” said the release.

The Attorney General’s factum to the Supreme Court notes the importance of protecting “vulnerable people who might be at risk of a premature death, contrary to their true wishes. The significance of such a risk cannot be overstated.”

However, the Quebec National Assembly passed a unanimous motion Dec. 2 demanding Ottawa recognize the validity of its “medical aid in dying” law. Quebec politicians also expressed outrage that the federal government had intervened on the side of Montreal physician Dr. Paul Saba and a disabled woman, Lisa D’Amico, who successfully sought an injunction against the law.

Quebec Superior Court Justice Michel Pinsonnault granted the injunction Dec. 1.

Pinsonnault ruled the federal government has jurisdiction over the Criminal Code and “medical aid in dying” is a euphemism for euthanasia and creates confusion in the public between euthanasia and palliative care.

The judge said Criminal Code provisions apply until the Carter decision comes into effect Feb. 6.

The judge pointed out that the SCC did not add the word “medical” to aid in dying, and therefore did not shelter provincial laws that are incompatible with federal criminal law.

The Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, the Physicians’ Alliance Against Euthanasia and Living with Dignity, the Quebec-based grassroots group opposed to euthanasia, welcomed the injunction.

“With this clarification by the Quebec Superior Court, one cannot hide behind the obligation to provide ‘medical care’ in order to force Quebec physicians to participate,

directly or indirectly, in the euthanasia of human beings,” said Living with Dignity in a press release.

Saba, who sought the injunction as an individual, though he is president of the Coalition of Physicians for Social Justice, said the Quebec law would force him as a physician to either perform euthanasia or refer patients. “I will neither perform the act nor refer so my ability to practise medicine is prejudiced,” he said.

He could be “severely sanctioned” by the College of Physicians for refusing to be involved in an act “that goes against the practice of medicine.”

“Euthanasia is not a medical act,” Saba said, noting that even

in the jurisdictions like Holland and Belgium where it is legal it is not classified as health care the way Quebec is trying to do to.

The jurisdictional battle has Attorney General Jody Wilson-Raybould on the hot seat with journalists for intervening in the Quebec case.

In a Dec. 4 scrum, Wilson-Raybould tried to convey a conciliatory message. “We’re working to find a solution that will ensure that we respect the substantive work that Quebec has done with respect to their legislation, recognizing other provinces and the Government of Canada as we move forward on this very sensitive and important issue,” she said.



Art Babyeh

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS ACROSS CANADA — The 31st edition of the Christmas Lights Across Canada program was launched Dec. 2 at an official illumination ceremony on Parliament Hill that included a 13-minute multimedia show that cost \$350,000. The show features a musical soundtrack and a quest for light by the main characters — a bear, a fox and a snowman. The show plays continuously each evening until Jan. 7, and will be reprised in the annual program in the following two years.

Synod will ask fundamental questions

By James Buchok

WINNIPEG — With the conclusion of its Jubilee Centennial Year, the Archdiocese of Winnipeg is embarking on its next long-term initiatives, namely, the archdiocese’s first synod, and a review and revitalization of its Stewardship Office and annual appeal known as Sharing God’s Gifts.

“Pope Francis has asked that the church become a synodal church and this is very timely for us because the Archdiocese of Winnipeg has never held a synod and now that we have celebrated our 100th anniversary it is a good time to begin this process in the local church,” said Archbishop Richard Gagnon.

The archbishop explained that synod is a Greek word meaning “to walk together. It will be an assembly of the archdiocese, to listen to each other, to learn from each other. To take our baptismal responsibilities in the church in listening to and proclaiming the Gospel of Christ.”

The synod process will be undertaken over a two-year time frame, beginning in the spring of 2016, and will determine future directions for the Archdiocese of Winnipeg. It will involve a wide spectrum of people, including clergy and religious, “and a good

number of lay people who will come together to hear and listen to different points of view that will help frame archdiocesan direction for years to come,” the archbishop said.

An archdiocesan Office of the Synod will be created that will guide the synodal process. Focus groups will be gathered throughout the archdiocese in large listening sessions with a variety of people, “to hear what they have to say,” the archbishop said.

“Much of the work of the synod will be decentralized in the archdiocese.”

Gagnon said discussions will revolve around central themes in the same way former Archbishop James Weisgerber’s 10-Year Pastoral Plan, which concluded in October 2014, had four basic pillars.

“The synod will ask fundamental questions in order to determine future directions,” the archbishop said.

At the synod’s conclusion there will be a series of large public gatherings in which future



Buchok

SYNOD INITIATIVE — With the conclusion of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg’s Centennial Year, Archbishop Richard Gagnon is seeking wide participation in vital initiatives.

directions will be finalized. Then the archbishop will promulgate the various initiatives and proposals that come out of the synod that will frame the way the Archdiocese of Winnipeg operates going forward.

Gagnon is now in the process

— GAGNON, page 5

Whitehorse bishop named

By Evan Boudreau
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — Growing up, Rev. Hector Vila never dreamed of visiting the Yukon. But now the Redemptoris



Catholic Register/Boudreau

Rev. Hector Vila

Mater priest from Peru can’t stop thinking about making his first trip to northern Canada.

“It never crossed my mind,” said Vila, “but now I plan to make a short trip within the next

few weeks.”

Vila will be making the trip, about a 10-hour flight from Toronto, as part of his preparation to take over as bishop of the Diocese of Whitehorse.

“What I’m looking forward to is meeting the people,” he said. “My main concern is to get to know them, to get to know the needs that they have and see or to seek whatever is within my power to help them.”

The date of Vila’s ordination as bishop of Whitehorse has yet to be finalized. Until then he will continue to server as rector of Toronto’s Redemptoris Mater Missionary Seminary.

Spanning 725,000 square kilometres, which includes areas of northern British Columbia as well as the entire Yukon, the Diocese of Whitehorse is among the world’s largest geographically despite only having 23 parishes and missions.

“It is a vast area,” he said. “The distances to travel from one place to another is going to be a challenge.”

Not only are the diocese’s 7,500 parishioners spread across the

— SHORTAGE, page 13

Rabbi traces history of Jewish-Christian relations

By Ramon Gonzalez
Western Catholic Reporter

EDMONTON (CCN) — Catholics and Jews have a lot in common, says Rabbi Daniel Friedman of the Beth Israel Synagogue.

“There is more that unite us than what divides us. We are very fortunate to be able to sit here and share together our Judaeo-Christian heritage.”

That’s all thanks to *Nostra Aetate*, the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions.

“It has taken 50 years to watch our relationship blossom, to watch our relationship come to fruition, to be able to sit like this together and wonder what the fuss was ever about because it seems like we have always gotten along.”

But as Friedman said, it took Christians and Jews 2,000 years to get along. In a presentation marking 50 years of *Nostra Aetate*, the rabbi outlined centuries of persecution and exclusion.

More than 200 people attended the 50th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* at Beth Israel Synagogue, including Auxiliary Bishop Greg Bittman.

Friedman said he read part of *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis’

encyclical on climate change, and couldn’t help but be amused at the pontiff speaking of “Judaeo-Christian values.”

“To hear Pope Francis refer to Judaeo-Christian values is shocking and amusing because our Judaeo-Christian relationship of thousands of years has been fraught with tension.”

Friedman walked his audience through some of the history between Jews and Catholics “so we can truly appreciate what happened 50 years ago at the Second Vatican Council.”

Christianity, he said, grew as a sect out of Judaism. Christians hoped all Jews would join. When that didn’t happen, they appealed to the pagans.

Slowly but surely this new sect within Judaism took on a life of its own. “It bothered the Christians that Jews didn’t get it. Why don’t they understand that Jesus is our Saviour, that Jesus is our Messiah, that this is the correct path?”

During the first period of Christianity, the Church Fathers developed a doctrine of the relationship between Jews and Christians. Jews who had failed to accept Christianity were wrong. They were put on this earth simply to bear witness to the origin of Christianity “but they should be reviled, repudiated, persecuted and oppressed.”

And so they were for 2,000 years.

In 1095, for example, Pope Urban II called upon Christians to rid Jerusalem of infidels. “Tens of thousands of Christians took up arms and began a crusade,” l a m e n t e d Friedman.

The rabbi said some Christians realized many “infidels” were also living in Europe and so they began the killing at home, slaughtering hundreds of thousands of Jews and decimating hundreds of Jewish communities along the way.

In 1242, Pope Gregory IX declared that the Talmud, a central text of Rabbinic Judaism, should be burned. “Twelve thousand volumes of the Talmud were publicly burnt in Paris, France, in 1242,” lamented Friedman.

“These were the days before the printing press, the days when it would take a scribe a year to painstakingly write the Talmud.



WCR/Gonzalez

Rabbi Daniel Friedman

We are talking 12,000 years’ worth of work publicly burned in Paris at the decree of the pope.”

In 1487, Pope Innocent VIII began the Spanish Inquisition and Jews were told to either convert or leave. “Those who were found to still be practising Judaism were burned at the stake in the name of Christianity. These were our Judaeo-Christian relations.”

Even though Pope Pius XII is

not personally responsible for the Holocaust, Jews will forever remember the “deafening silence of the Vatican” during the Second World War, Friedman said.

“That was the Christianity that we knew for thousands of years,” he said. But “everything was suddenly turned around” with the release of *Nostra Aetate* in 1965.

“With great courage, with great bravery, the Vatican did a 180 (degree turn) on Judaeo-Christian relations.”

In 1979, Pope John Paul II prayed at Auschwitz and asked for forgiveness. In 1986, he was the first pope to visit a synagogue. In 1993, the Holy See established diplomatic relations with Israel.

Friedman said the Jewish community and the Catholic Church now share a strong bond. “Today the Catholic Church, particularly here in North America, is a strong friend of Israel.”

Catholics and Jews share Judaeo-Christian values. “We stand shoulder to shoulder against the onslaught of secularism and pagan values that are attempting to take over our Judaeo-Christian values,” Friedman said.

“We share the Judaeo-Christian values of life, whether at the beginning of life or at the end of life. We share traditional family values.

Alberta food banks scramble to meet skyrocketing demand

By Thandiwe Konguavi
Western Catholic Reporter

EDMONTON (CCN) — Anawim Place is not scheduled to open for another 30 minutes, but early on a chilly fall morning, the lineup in front already stretches past the entrance, slinking along the building.

The volunteers in the back quickly huddle together to say Grace and a prayer for the men, women and children they will serve, before opening the doors to let them in.

“You have to bear with us,” said Sister Estela Andaya, director of the food depot operated by the Sisters of Providence and many lay volunteers. “It’s really like a stampede.”

The demand at the inner-city charity is not an unusual sight these days, as meal providers

across Alberta grapple with a 23 per cent increase in food bank usage this year.

According to HungerCount 2015, the national study of food bank use in Canada, Alberta saw the highest jump for food bank usage in the country.

Bob McKeon, former co-ordinator for the Edmonton archdiocese’s office for social justice, said it is interesting that Alberta’s numbers went up so much, while the national numbers showed relatively little change.

“People have lost their jobs and they’re trying to hold on. One thing they can do is get some help from a food bank,” said McKeon. “So that’s sort of the human face of what we read in the business sections of oil companies laying people off; there’s a very human face of people showing up in our communities trying to get food

for their families.”

Across Alberta, 75 per cent of food banks reported an increase in demand for services in 2015. Significant increases were seen in Calgary, Edmonton, Parkland County, Samson First Nation, Wood Buffalo, Red Deer, Athabasca, Olds and Medicine Hat.

Sheri Ratsoy, executive director of the Parkland Food Bank, which provides food assistance to residents of Spruce Grove, Stony Plain and Parkland County, said the charity has seen a 35 per cent increase in the amount of people fed this year over 2014, averaging 250 families fed on a weekly basis.

“We were already seeing an increase in client usage due to the high cost of living in the area, but the decline in the economy is responsible for most of the increase,” said Ratsoy.

McKeon agrees that the downturn in the economy is not the only thing driving up food bank usage.

Children account for about 40 per cent of those being helped by food banks in Alberta; a number he said is “way too high. To feed their kids, people are going to food banks. We need to really look at better solutions.”

John Gee, community development facilitator for the Anglican Diocese of Edmonton, said initiatives such as Mayor Don Iveson’s End Poverty Edmonton task force, are looking at the root causes of poverty, including high housing costs and insufficient social allowance rates.

The boom and bust cycle is especially harmful for people who are just struggling to get by, said Gee.

“When the economy is booming, often people at the bottom are in even worse shape because the price of everything gets driven up, especially housing.”

Tamisan Bencz-Knight, spokesperson for the Edmonton Food Bank, said the organization started seeing its client numbers increase in September 2014.

“We didn’t know why, but all of a sudden the numbers started going up and we were like, ‘OK, this isn’t normal.’ Then of course November and December is when they started talking about layoffs in the oil industry. We actually felt that barometer in the economy before announcements were being made,” she said.

In one year, numbers for the Edmonton Food Bank have gone up 21.5 per cent, she said. In October, the agency provided 17,722 people a food hamper through its hamper program and served about half a million meals and snacks.

“Those are huge numbers for us and it’s been a struggle,” she said. “The food is being donated but the food is going out faster than it’s coming in.”

The primary warehouse has not run out of food but agencies have.

For the first time in 30 years, the west end St. John the Evangelist Parish food depot ran out of food last month. Volunteers had to direct clients from the neighbourhood to the main food bank.

In addition to the main food bank doubling its food shipments, the parish has coped through the generosity of parishioners, said volunteer Vince Klemen.

“When we have a need or when we put out an appeal for

Christmas hampers, the response is always tremendously positive,” he said.

Anawim Place distribution co-ordinator Donna Farrell said she has also seen more donors support the agency directly as awareness has grown of the need.

“Last Friday, we were just down to bones but we have never had to send someone away with nothing,” said Farrell. “It’s providence.”

Anawim Place, which does not have the resources to advertise, also reaps the benefits of increased donations to the main food bank.

Food bank programs and services are not government funded and rely on donations from individuals, community groups and businesses.

Bencz-Knight said people have been especially generous this year, with records broken at the Tackle Hunger and Heritage Festival food drives last summer, and at the agency’s city-wide drive in September.

“But all that food is gone. It’s because of the volume we’re trying to help right now,” she said. “We’re doing our best, but the shelves are pretty lean.”

The spike in food bank usage will likely continue through 2016, she added.



WCR/Konguavi

COPING WITH DEMAND — Volunteers at Anawim Place in Edmonton scurry to get ready for the morning rush of people seeking food.

Are you Moving?

Please let us know a month in advance.

Write to:
Circulation Dept.
Prairie Messenger
Box 190, Muenster, Sask. S0K 2Y0
pm.circulation@stpeterspress.ca
Undeliverable papers cost twice as much to return.

Advent a perfect time to reconcile with the past

By Jean Ko Din
The Catholic Register

TORONTO (CCN) — The truth part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process is done; now is the time for Canada to enter into reconciliation, said Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald.

MacDonald, who is the first National Indigenous Bishop of the Anglican Church of Canada, spoke at Toronto's St. Gabriel's Parish Nov. 25 to reflect on what Christians can do to repair Canada's relationship with the indigenous people.

He said the Advent season is a good time to reconcile with the church's dark past surrounding Indian residential schools and move forward with an improved vision of the future.

"At the beginning of this Advent . . . we also should begin to identify where the living Word of God lives among us," said MacDonald. "And I would like to suggest that the living Word of God lives among us in the recovery of indigenous rights."

MacDonald is of Ojibwa descent himself and can speak from his family's experience, as well as his experience as the pastoral leader of indigenous ministries. He said the report issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in June offers Canadians hope.

The commission was first established in 2008 to collect documents and testimonies to record the history of Canada's residential school system over the previous century. Many of the more than 150,000 Aboriginal children who attended residential schools experienced physical, psychological and sexual abuse.

The report released in June marked the conclusion of the commission's investigation. The 381-page document outlined 94 recommendations, including specific recommendations for a second papal apology for the Catholic Church's role in running about 60 per cent of the 139 residential schools. The report also called for the church, along with other faith communities, to work with indigenous spiritual leaders to recognize "the responsibility that churches have to mitigate such conflicts and prevent spiritual violence."

"During the Truth and Reconciliation process, a lot of Catholic indigenous people were very critical of the Catholic hierarchy," said MacDonald. "I think that it's time for the Roman Catholic Church to reclaim its past . . . I believe that God is calling the Christian churches, the Roman Catholic Church in specific, to a reset of our relationships and to begin to live in hope, justice and peace."

The 94 recommendations outlined in the commission's report

are a good start, said the Anglican bishop, but Christians can do more, even as lay people.

"If even three of you decided to go to your MP and say 'I am outraged at the disparity of education for First Nations people to every other Canadian; I am outraged that people in Canada don't have access to drinkable water,'" said MacDonald. "I think if that was expressed strongly and positively, I think we would see a very different picture."

MacDonald also suggests people be more engaged with the native people's culture and traditions. The 2011 census estimates that 56 per cent of Aboriginals now live in urban areas.

MacDonald suggests that a good way to learn more about indigenous culture is by seeking out local powwows and creating community relationships. It's also important, he said, to seek out ways to be more welcoming to the native culture within the church community.

"There is a (Native) Peoples' Mass at St. Anne's Church (in Toronto). You might want to attend that," he said.

"The indigenous people here in Toronto who are Roman Catholic probably would love to attend a mass that has some of their symbols and culture integrated . . . I think that as more cultures are integrated into the life of our churches, both An-

glican and Catholic, and other churches as well, that they find better ways to welcome people."

Overall, MacDonald said he had great hope in the resilience of the Aboriginal people. The young people, especially, value both their Aboriginal heritage and their Canadian heritage. In that, MacDonald said, is a good glimpse of a better future.

"I think the problem before was that there was a hidden assumption that indigenous people would have to adapt and become like everybody else," he said. "I think I'm very hopeful and very excited for the young people who are able to carry their indigenous identity into a hopeful sense of broader identity within Canadian society."



Art Babyeh

MP DIAGNOSED WITH ALS — Ottawa-area Liberal MP Mauril Belanger, seen here with his wife, Catherine, announced Nov. 30 that he has been diagnosed with ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. The popular MP dropped out of the race to become the new Speaker of the House of Commons and says he will chronicle his ordeal so Canadians can learn more about the disease and the medical search for a cure. On his Twitter account to Belanger, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau wrote, "My thoughts are with you my friend. Stay strong. We will always have your back." The average life expectancy for those with ALS is two to five years.

'Peace is needed to stop this crisis'

Continued from page 1

"It can be a cruel winter . . . in Lebanon in particular, where the refugee camps are located in the north in the Bekkah region, winters are very cold, with a lot of snow and ice. When you're spending your time in an unheated tent, it's very difficult."

The Canadian money will go to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which manages and co-ordinates hundreds of programs working with thousands of non-governmental and governmental organizations in the region. Development and Peace partners are likely to benefit from the UNHCR funding.

The Jesuit Refugee Service also works closely with UNHCR. There's a clear need to fill in for shortfalls in funding to organizations on the ground in the region, said JRS Canada country director Norbert Piché.

"That's where the problems are the most severe," said Piché. "They're just not able to function properly with the amount of funding they get from different countries or the UN or whoever is financing them."

The needs both in official refugee camps and for refugees living independently come down to basic survival, said Piché.

"We hear stories of parents not getting enough to eat themselves, because they want to make sure their kids get enough to eat," he said. "When you hear those stories you say, 'There's a problem there that needs to be resolved.'"

Funded in Canada through

Canadian Jesuits International, the JRS concentrates on education in refugee camps, but also delivers forms of basic aid from food to clothing. Education is one way to keep problems from getting worse, Piché said.

"It helps to stem those kinds of problems that occur a generation later. We see those problems when people don't have the education."



CCN/Gyapong

David Leduc

While the UN system is probably the most efficient way to deliver aid to the region, Catholic Near East Welfare Association Canada executive director Carl Hetu worries that governments are mistaken or naive in trying to make their humanitarian funding religiously neutral.

"Ignoring religious minorities as a criteria is showing a serious

lack of understanding of the reality in the Middle East," Hetu said. "All are equally victims of war, but in this case minorities such as Christians are also victims of persecution because of their faith. In northern Syria there are hundreds of Christians held prisoner by ISIS since last winter because they are Christian."

Even a billion dollars from Canada isn't going to solve the Syrian crisis, said Hetu.

"Peace is needed to stop this crisis," he said.

Peacebuilding and community engagement is precisely where Development and Peace is concentrating much of its effort, said Leduc.

"We're not there for the first week or the first month or the first year," he said. "We are there to ensure local citizens are active players in the decision-making in terms of disaster relief and reconstruction and long-term rebuilding of their community."

Unlike many agencies, both CNEWA-Canada and Development and Peace aren't limited to the refugee camps outside of Syria. Their contacts and partners include churches and agencies inside the country, where the UNHCR has identified 13.5 million people in need of aid. Well over 250,000 Syrians, mostly civilians, have been killed and more than one million wounded since the civil war broke out in 2011.

"It's taken some years really for people to feel how severe and how horrific it is for the ordinary family that is living there," said Leduc.

Gagnon looking for people to take leadership

Continued from page 3

of putting together an archdiocesan synod office and calling together members of a synod commission. "I am looking for people to take leadership," he said.

The formal opening of the synod will take place with a liturgy at St. Mary's Cathedral.

Meanwhile, the Archdiocese of Winnipeg has begun a review of its Stewardship Office and its annual appeal, Sharing God's Gifts, with the creation of a steering committee that is examining the forms the office and appeal have taken since their inception in the late 1990s.

The archdiocese has engaged the services of a consultant specializing in diocesan transformation. Focus group meetings have been held over the last few months at St. Dominic's Church in Neepawa, and at St. Anthony of Padua Church (West Kildonan), in Winnipeg.

Gagnon said the gatherings have produced positive engagement, with the participation of a wide cross-section of people, both laity and clergy. Many who have been part of the focus groups have expressed appreciation for the opportunity to be consulted. There has been some confusion around the appeal and parish assessment and people are sug-

gesting a need for a clearer, simpler formula.

Though there have been many questions and concerns over the function and goals of the appeal and the stewardship office over the last 15 years, there is acknowledgment that in many ways Sharing God's Gifts and the Stewardship Office have served the archdiocese well.

It is Gagnon's belief that, as we complete our Centennial Year, "now is the time to examine how the appeal and the stewardship office can be made stronger."

The purposes of the review are to:

- Create a simpler and clearer formula for the Sharing God's Gifts appeal target for each parish and mission that pastors and parishioners can understand and agree is fair;
- Provide ongoing information, education and formation from archdiocesan leadership with respect to community life and how the archdiocesan operations and pastoral needs are funded;
- Discuss and decide upon ways of integrating the Stewardship Office and process with the appeal process; and
- Foster laity and clergy ownership and active support for the stewardship and appeal efforts and process.

An initial consultant's report is expected by the end of January.

Ursuline celebrates 100th birthday

By Louisa Brost, OSU

SASKATOON — Sister Helen Hoffart, an Ursuline of Prelate, celebrated her 100th birthday Nov. 8 at St. Angela Merici Residence in Saskatoon.



Bernice Duratha

Sister Helen Hoffart, OSU

A program with messages, tributes, a biographical slide show, and sharing of memories, a mass celebrated by her nephew, Rev. Louis Hoffart, OMI, and a banquet marked her milestone birthday.

Hoffart's life had a double focus: her creative talent in art and her passion to assist the poor.

Born Nov. 3, 1915, on a farm near Kerrobert, Sask., she was the third youngest in a family of 12 children. They moved to Tramping Lake when she was eight years old. She attended St. Angela's Academy at Prelate to finish her Grade 12 and entered the novitiate in 1933. Hoping to begin a career in teaching, she went to Normal School in Moose Jaw, but was interrupted by a

nine-month stay at the Providence Hospital for the treatment of tuberculosis. She completed her teacher training the next year.

In 1942, it was clear that teaching art was Hoffart's forte. She began with students from the towns nearby Prelate — Sceptre and Leader. She tackled the huge task of painting an outdoor Christmas crib set, and this was soon followed by demands to create stage sets for drama programs at St. Angela's Academy.

A desire for missionary service was awakened when the call came for her to teach at LaLoche in northern Saskatchewan. Here she spent eight years facing many challenges, one of which was a fire which destroyed part of the trailer in which she and her companion, Sister Bernadette Feist, OSU, lived.

Hoffart's thirst for missionary work took her to Swaziland from 1978 - 1982, where she worked at a rehabilitation centre for the handicapped at St. Joseph's Mission near Manzini, Africa.

When she returned to Saskatoon, Hoffart spent a brief time assisting with the work of the infirm and spent several months in a renewal program at Arnprior, Ont., in 1983 - 84.

Her achievements were many. She restored and painted statues for churches and chapels such as Duck Lake, St. Paul's Co-Cathedral and the Liebenthal Heritage Church, and many more statues were brought to her while she resided at St. Angela's Convent in Prelate. She taught art in the classroom at the academy for many years. In her retirement years, her painting has expanded to paint on almost anything — velvet, trophies, hand saws, bottles, old clocks — always creating an array of interesting works.

Jesuits endorse middle school

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — Mother Teresa Middle School (MTMS) now has the official endorsement of the Jesuits of the English Province of Canada. While MTMS is based on Nativity Miguel Middle schools founded in the United States by the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) MTMS here was not sponsored by Canadian Jesuits. Its administration and faculty are lay people, although Jesuits in training do volunteer at the school.

"It links us officially to the network (Jesuit schools) in Canada, it also links us to the schools in the U.S.," said MTMS Director of Education Curtis Kleisinger in an interview. The endorsement agreement was signed by Provincial for English Canada, Rev. Peter Bisson, SJ, and MTMS board chair Paul Hill at a special event held Nov. 30 at the school.

The Regina school is the only one in Canada, but a similar school is being organized in Winnipeg.

Kleisinger said there won't be much change in the way the school delivers its programs, but it will require more liaison with the Jesuit Canadian Province to ensure it continues with Ignation principles of education.

"It's something we've always done since we began in 2011," said Kleisinger. "We've been very intentional in providing the spiritual piece

for our staff and students. This will allow us to have a little more access, to have people come in and some of the resources are there to deepen the faith and the spiritual component of what we provide."

The school follows the five Jesuit principles of education: graduate students that are loving, intellectually competent, religious, open to growth and, committed to doing justice in the world.

"We've got a good Jesuit foundation," said Kleisinger. "Our animating principle is that we believe God is present in all things." Everything the school does is deeply aligned with Jesuit tradition and closely aligned with Scripture.

The school was established in 2011 by the Hill family following a visit with Mother Teresa. As Hill told the story at the time, Mother Teresa would not accept cheques from the group in the visit but urged them instead to

use their wealth to better their own community.

The Hills became aware of the Nativity Miguel Middle Schools in the U.S. and decided to bring it here. It offers faith-based middle school education for underprivileged children; an expanded curriculum, pre- and after-school programs as well as summer programs, a mentoring program and a support system that follows students through high school and post-secondary institutions.

The first Grade 8 graduates in June 2014 are now in Grade 10 and have an attendance record of 92 per cent and a passing rate of 93 per cent. MTMS is now an associate school of the Regina Roman Catholic School Division. As an independent school it receives 80 per cent of the funding provided other schools and relies on donations for its special programs such as breakfast, lunch, snacks, uniforms and special programs.



Paul Labelle

GOSPELFEST — Our Lady of Guadalupe parish choir was one of the groups singing at the second annual Guadalupe Gospelfest held Nov. 28 at St. Mary's Parish Hall in Saskatoon. Singers from Saskatoon, Canoe Lake, Ile a la Crosse and Deschambeault Lake participated in this year's Gospelfest, which ran from noon to 10 p.m. Admission was free and two meals were served during the grassroots community event.

Environmental degradation has a negative impact on the poor

Continued from page 1

economic inequality that leads billions of people in poverty."

Environmental degradation has a particularly negative impact on the poor, Bolen added. "Technological and scientific discoveries have not been accompanied by an increasing maturity in our decision-making."

It is not too late to intervene positively, the bishop stressed. "We can shoulder our responsibilities. The challenge is urgent. Prosperous nations such as Canada bear a major responsibility. There is an increasing recognition that we are depleting our natural resources and those of many other nations as well, and we are not living in a way that is sustainable."

What is required is genuine conversion, Bolen said — "with personal, corporate, economic and political dimensions."

There is a need to face reality about the threat to our common home, enter into dialogue, and take concrete action, Bolen said.

"We must be willing to pay the price for a new and healthier way of living on this planet."

Indigenous peoples have long recognized that we have a shared

responsibility for others and for our world, he noted. "That includes a sense of responsibility to future generations."

Indigenous rights advocate Nina Wilson, a co-founder of the Idle No More movement, pointed to the importance of the treaties to living together in harmony, and working "to help save sacred Mother Earth" for future generations.

"Corporations come to the most impoverished people and offer trinkets so that we poison our own children," Wilson said. "We are not impoverished by accident."

Service Employees' International Union (SEIU) West President Barb Cape spoke from a trade union perspective, challenging the "false choice" of jobs versus the environment. She pointed to studies about the long-term job creation in renewable energy sectors, and called on government leaders to promote a green economy and the economic benefits and the quality, skilled jobs that go along with it. "To change everything, we need everyone," she said.

Jenna Gall, a member of the Canadian youth delegation team that is submitting resolutions to COP21 in Paris, stressed the importance of taking action now to

make changes to achieve the goal of reducing global warming.

"We are calling upon leaders to adopt a fair, ambitious and binding international agreement that will keep global warming below two degrees Celsius, recognizing that two degrees is still going to have catastrophic impact for many people. We further call on the Canadian government to commit to a national, justice-based climate policy," she said. "We need to wake up every single day with the intention of shaping our future."

Rachel Malena-Chan, a graduate student at the University of Saskatchewan, spoke about being a member of a transition generation. "We know we cannot continue to live on this planet as we have, and we know that in our lifetime everything will change. We are a generation on the brink," she said. "Right now we are living our story like we are the very last ones who will enjoy the planet as we've known it."

A bold and courageous new vision is needed in order to inspire meaningful action, she stressed. "We so often have an easier time imagining the end of our civilization than we do imag-

ining an alternative system to our own. Where is our imagination for a new economy, for a way of living on this planet together?"

Malena-Chan described how the prospect of climate change generates feelings of fear, paralysis, and despair — a conviction "that our story will end all too soon." However, the tone and the conversation can and will change when the narrative changes, she said.

"Leadership is about telling stories about those that we refuse to leave behind, about lines that we will never cross, about action that we must take together," she said, calling for a new narrative of purpose and hope.

She quoted a friend's Facebook post: "Climate change makes me feel alone, but when I think of green energy, a green economy and a collective understanding that the environment is sacred, I feel excited, rejuvenated, and inspired."

Malena-Chan added: "Instead of wasting time on old narratives about endless growth or new ones about knee-capped economies and austerity, let's start talking about the future we actually want and get inspired and excited about the transition to a new economy. Instead of facing the uncertainty with fear,

let's imagine a future where reconciliation and solidarity and equity guide our collective decisions about what matters most."

Think about someone you know under the age of 10 — the ones that we love — to imagine this new world, she said. "What kind of world will they grow old in?" she challenged. "If we take on our role as the transition generation, what kind of place might it become?"

She urged all those concerned about the future to become part of this transition generation. "Let's not be last. Let's be the transition. Let's listen and learn from those who live in balance with the land. Let's get ready to rebuild our systems to promote life instead of destroy it. Let's stop waiting for our leaders to give us the courage to act, and start empowering one another to make bold decisions, because there is no time to lose."

Advocacy and materials related to climate justice by groups such as Climate Action Saskatoon, Development and Peace, and blue-dot.ca were also highlighted during the event, which concluded with Nancy Greyeyes singing the White Buffalo Calf Woman Song, a reminder to work together as a human family.

Stained glass windows recognize pioneers

By Paul Paproski, OSB

MUENSTER, Sask. — St. Peter's Parish, Muenster, has an addition that gives the parish a sense of completion. Twenty-eight new stained glass windows commemorating pioneer families and the religious who once served them have been added to the church. The windows were installed during the renovations of the church, Christy Waldner said to 150 people gathered Nov. 22 at the St. Peter's Parish celebration in recognition of the completion of renovations and the installation of the windows.

The church is an historical building that was built in 1910 and it is famous for its 80 life-sized frescos, painted in 1919 by Count Berthold Von Imhoff, an artist originally from Germany. The sanctuary honours the saints, and now they are joined by the pioneers and the Ursulines, Franciscans (Elizabethans) and Benedictines, said Waldner, who serves on the St. Peter's Parish Fundraising Committee.

The large stained glass windows in the lower sanctuary incorporate a landscape theme which complements the rural district.

The theme was chosen after consultation with Elaina Adams of Prairie Glass, Humboldt, who designed the windows and installed them.

"Elaina once mentioned to us that she thought her strong point was choosing glass for the windows. I would agree with her. Look closely at the windows and the colours and textures and swirls of the glass, and the detail the glass itself lends to the image or shape it is representing," Waldner remarked.

Families were given the opportunity to choose religious symbols and customize their windows with natural landscapes familiar to them. Window designs incorporate local history which gives a glimpse into the past and offers thanks for God's abundant blessings. The two choir loft windows, The Good Shepherd and Our Lady of Guadalupe, emphasize themes of colour, she said. The upper windows, in the main body of the church, have symbols that are meaningful to their sponsors. The semi-circular window above the back door of the church displays the keys of St. Peter. The four windows in the sacristy incorporate the four seasons. A Bible verse is

displayed on the bottom of each.

The project at St. Peter's Parish was successful because of the tremendous support of the parishioners who gave generously of their time and money, Ralph Britz, project supervisor, said. He expressed his appreciation to those involved in the painting of the sanctuary. Britz, 82, joked that it was a challenge to climb scaffolding that went 20 — 35 feet high. Similarly, it was a challenge working with carpenters who did not speak English. The two carpenters who came to install the siding on the church were from Quebec and only understood French. However, they worked very well with everyone, he laughed.

The renovations, which were completed in October, began in 2008 with improvements to the church's exterior foundation. In the spring of 2009, new windows, doors and outside siding were installed, as well as new outside steps. Five windows that had leakage problems were removed from each of the church towers and sealed. Some improvements were made to the roof to correct water seepage.

Work resumed on the church sanctuary in the fall of 2009 and it



Paproski

ST. PETER'S PARISH — A candle, rosary, praying hands and musical notes adorn the bottom of a stained glass window at St. Peter's Parish, Muenster. The symbols represent the importance of faith to a pioneer family, and their love of music. The window is sponsored by the John and Anna Korte family and is among 28 stained glass windows that were installed in the church.

continued from October to May each year until 2012. Repairs were made to the sanctuary ceiling and walls which had cracks or peeling paint. The church was repainted using some new colour schemes. The Stations of the Cross were repaired and repainted. The side altars and radiators were given a fresh coat of paint.

Attending the celebration were Elaina Adams; Rev. Daniel

Muyres, OSB, pastor during the renovations; Louise Sarauer of Saskatoon, an original member of the fundraising committee; and the other two committee members, Glenda Rueve and Teresa Wassermann. A DVD presentation was given of the history of the renovations. The evening concluded with the blessing of the windows, tours of the parish, dessert and fellowship.

Campion College responds to TRC

By Frank Flegel

REGINA — Campion College, a federated college with the University of Regina, Nov. 18 outlined three initiatives it intends to take in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

The TRC, headed by Justice Murray Sinclair, released a report in May with recommendations intended to reconcile differences between Canada's Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population. Most have to do with the impact residential schools had on First Nations society. The announcement included remarks from Jesuit provincial for English Canada Rev. Peter Bisson, SJ, Campion College president Rev. John Meehan, SJ and Cree elder Noel Starblanket.

"As a Jesuit college, Campion plays an important role in promoting reconciliation with indigenous peoples in Canada," said Meehan in a prepared statement following the announcement of the initiatives. "This is not only a priority in our college's new strategic plan; it is also a key priority of the Jesuits in English Canada."

A 10-person Advisory Circle has been created to advise on practical steps to build bridges between communities. It contains representatives from the college, the Aboriginal and the non-Aboriginal community. It is charged with the responsibility of developing a Campion-specific response to the TRC recommendations.

Jesuits in training will take a summer course at First Nations University, another federated College of the University of Regina, in what is called an Indigenous Immersion Experience. They will learn indigenous culture and wisdom from elders at "culture camps," ceremonies and other events.



Flegel

JESUITS RESPOND — Campion College has outlined three initiatives it intends to take in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Shown here, from left, are: Cree elder Noel Starblanket; Rev. Peter Bisson, SJ, Jesuit provincial for English Canada; and Rev. John Meehan, SJ, president of Campion College.

Jesuits in training will also work with First Nations at the Mother Teresa Middle School here; serve with organizations that work with First Nations people and get to know them first-hand to learn about their experience. This initiative is in direct response to the TRC recommendation on training of clergy, said Meehan.

A scholarship fund has been created for students at the Mother Teresa Middle School (MTMS), a partner institution, to enable students to attend Campion and the University of Regina. Students from Mother Teresa Middle School, established in 2011, will become of university age in 2017 when Campion celebrates its centennial.

Meehan said Campion can do much through its academic mission, its care of the person and its relationship with indigenous and non-indigenous partners, including

MTMS, the Regina Archdiocese Aboriginal Relations Committee, First Nations University, Aboriginal Student Centre and Friends on the Outside (FOTO), a group that works with released or paroled individuals, helping them deal with issues related to reintegration in society.

Meehan suggested in his statement that inequalities between indigenous and non-indigenous people in Canada remains one of the most pressing social issues Canada faces and it's one of the top priorities of the Jesuits in English Canada. Part of that is historic, said Meehan. "We came to Canada 400 years ago to work with indigenous people. More recently we've been very involved with the TRC and very supportive of those affected by residential schools and forthcoming with documents" for the TRC.

Montessori tradition aids with the aged

By Jacquie Berg

SASKATOON — According to Dr. Paulette Hunter, assistant professor of psychology at St. Thomas More College, residents living in long-term care often do not have adequate access to personally meaningful activity, and this has a negative effect on their quality of life.

From May through July 2015, Hunter collaborated with Luther Special Care Home (LSCH) to facilitate a trial of a unique volunteer-assisted program to promote quality of life.

Fifteen residents participated in the program, which borrowed from the Montessori tradition in childhood education.

The Montessori approach is among several emerging models of care tailored specifically for long-term care residents with dementia. It emphasizes the opportunity to participate in personally meaningful activities at a level that respects cognitive, sensory, and motor abilities. Initial research suggests the method has potential to improve mood, reduce agitated behaviour, and foster the maintenance or enhancement of certain abilities.

Unfortunately, what is personally meaningful and suited to one resident's needs does not always meet the needs of others. Given the finite resources available for recreational programming in long-term care, recreation teams are not always able to accommodate a resident's individual interests. Instead, they often focus on group programming that is likely to interest many, though not all, residents.

To support the work of recre-

ation teams, Hunter and LSCH project lead Murray Tempel recruited volunteers to learn about visiting "the Montessori way." Eighteen volunteers committed to a minimum of 20 one-to-one visits with residents over the summer.

Hunter says that the volunteer-led activities catered to a wide range of interests and abilities. Some residents enjoyed reviewing a map of Canada with their volunteer visitor and discussing where they had travelled. Others enjoyed organizing electrical couplers and other parts in a parts organizer drawer, making a flashlight work, or playing a simple dice game. A female resident who had done a lot of needlework in her younger days greatly enjoyed simply having the opportunity to help wrap a ball of yarn.

Tempel says the program "is a fresh approach to providing meaningful moments for many of our residents. Our staff does a great job with recreation programming, but they find it difficult to give timely attention to everyone who needs it, each time they need it. Putting the Montessori research to good use, our volunteers interacted one-to-one with our residents in activities based on that person's specific interests. If we continue to improve the present moments of our residents like that, it obviously means a lot to their families, too."

Hunter's team plans to publish a report on the feasibility of volunteer-delivered Montessori programming, and is also looking for possible effects of the summer program on residents' mood, agitation, and engagement in goal-directed activity.

Film raises questions of concern

By Allison Janett

I watched Spotlight this afternoon, a film that depicts the story about a team of investigative journalists from The Boston Globe who exposed the horrific years-long sex abuse scandal in Boston by members of the Catholic Church. There is a quote from the film in which a former priest who is helping the team uncover the story says that he is able to separate spirituality from the institution. The quote perfectly articulated my feelings about the church.

I was raised in a small, strongly Catholic community in the middle of the prairies. My grandma and grandpa on my mother’s side were both extremely religious and deeply involved with the Catholic Church. It was not rare for the parish priest to join our family for brunch after Sunday mass. Sisters and monks came by my grandparents’ house regularly for coffee or for evening visits. These people were well-respected, active members of the community. I write about them to illustrate that I understand the deep-seated relationship the clergy may have with members of their community.

My experiences give me an understanding of how, in Boston, the Catholic Church and its clergy members had an impact on the lives of their congregations. It was a privilege for priests to pay visits to family households. Such a

Janett is a teacher in Saskatoon.

privilege, in fact, that even mothers and fathers sometimes denied that there may have been suspicious relationships between their sons or daughters and the priest who was paying special attention to him or her. No one wanted to believe that a servant of God could be responsible for any vile act. And, if families did reach out with concern, they were largely ignored. This is how the toxic perpetuation of child abuse existed within the Catholic Church for so many years.

I am not so foolish as to blame all clergy for the sex abuse scandal, but the sheer number of priests and higher-up officials involved in actively and aggressively covering up the atrocities committed by parish priests is alarming. And the colossal abuse of trust is nauseating.

I have struggled for many years to understand how religion fits into my life. As a child I went to church regularly with my family. I listened to the adults in my family discuss the Sunday homilies. I was even a casual reader and server, but I did not participate willingly. The only part I enjoyed was sitting beside my grandma, who played the organ at many a Sunday mass.

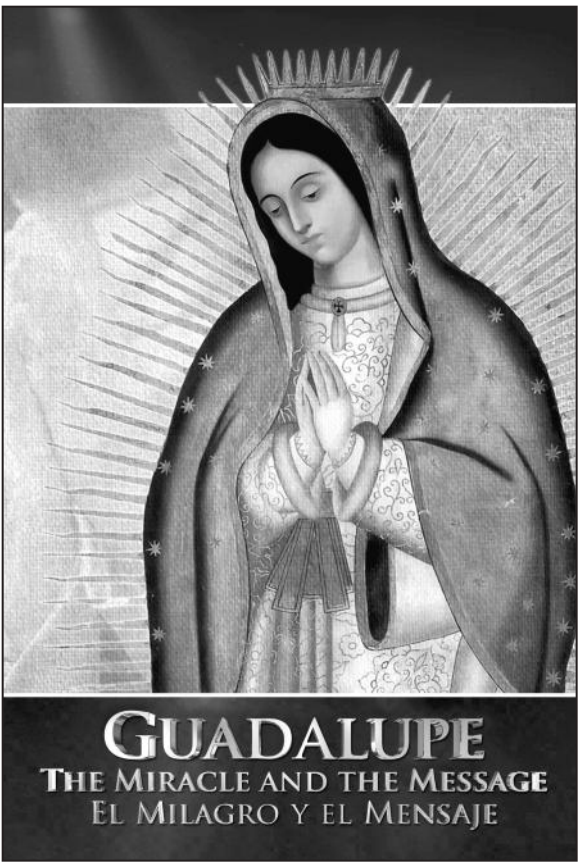
Now that I’m older, I am able to see the beauty in attending church — the music, the history, the sense of belonging. However, there is an underlying, inescapable anger I feel when I attend as an adult, which these days is only in the case of weddings or funerals. How can an institution whose leadership is comprised typically of elderly men pos-

sibly represent me — a 26-year-old female? What knowledge does a celibate man have about my life and my story? What right does he have to pass input on my reproductive choices? How can I be part of an organization that discriminates against gay people and the transgendered? Why, in 2015, are females still not allowed to be priests?

I was born and baptized Catholic, but am I still considered Catholic if I believe in heaven, but not in hell? Am I still Catholic if I pick and choose which practices to follow? Am I still Catholic if I have ceased going to church? I’m not sure there are answers to my questions. What I do know is that Catholicism excels at creating shame in individuals, and I struggle with feelings of guilt for not being the *right* kind of Catholic. But by whose judgment? I’m not sure.

There are many aspects of my Catholic upbringing that continue to guide me. We need to be kind, understanding, forgiving, and to do unto others as we would have done unto us. These concepts are important to my daily life. But I keep wondering, how could an institution that turned a blind eye to the cries of thousands of innocent people who were preyed upon by trusted figures be guided by the same practices?

I suspect I’ll spend most of my life trying to navigate through my thoughts on what it means for me to be Catholic. Meanwhile, the institution is separate from my spirituality.



OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE — A new documentary film narrated by actor Jim Caviezel offers original insights into the details, story and impact of the 16th-century apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe — one of the most recognizable religious icons in the American hemisphere. The Knights of Columbus-produced film, *Guadalupe: The Miracle and the Message*, paints a comprehensive and inspiring picture of the history, facts and legacy of the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The documentary will be airing on Salt and Light TV and is available on DVD. For more information, visit www.guadalupefilm.com or follow the hashtag [#guadalupefilm](https://twitter.com/guadalupefilm).

Sinatra’s 100th birthday yields new surprises with Smithsonian release

By Caitlin Ward

I find myself listening to music more often as the snow falls. Spring, summer, and autumn find me on a bicycle more frequently than walking or in a car. And despite what some of my colleagues might insist, it’s not a good idea to cycle with headphones on. As a result, it’s during the months that I find the

I Found a New Baby
Frank Sinatra with the Nat King Cole Trio

roads too icy to navigate on two wheels that I listen to music while mobile. My iPod doesn’t get much of a look from April to November, but these days, I’m charging it every second day.

Luckily, this occurrence has coincided nicely with the Smithsonian releasing a new album of mostly never-before heard tracks from back in the day when Frank Sinatra was a radio star. You know, before he became Chair of the Board. It’s when he was young, and about as fresh-faced as a tough from Hoboken is ever going to be. It’s when his voice was closer to tenor than baritone, when he sang with Tommy Dorsey,

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

before he’d been married seven or eight times. OK, so he was only married four times. That still seems a bit excessive.

That’s not the point. The point is, as soon as my sister alerted me to the existence of this album, I ordered it. They tell me it’ll come in time for Christmas, but in the meantime, they’ve released a few teaser tracks on Soundcloud that hold pride of place in my iPod. I’ve listened to them enough times that I’ve got the patter between Sinatra and Nat King Cole down. And that patter? It’s perfect.

I haven’t got the album just yet, so I won’t be singing its praises for a few weeks, at least. I’m sure I will be, though, because it’s exactly the sort of thing I love — and one of the things I am most looking forward to is that patter. The thing about Sinatra in particular, but that type of entertainer in general, is that half the appeal of any of them is how charming and funny and quick they are when they’re performing live.

You see, Sinatra had a distinctive voice, and a good one too, but I don’t think that’s what made him so beloved—in those early days by the bobby-soxers, and later on by seemingly most of the western world. He never sang songs the way they were supposed to go. It’s a curious irony, for example, that he was instrumental in popularizing the songs of Cole Porter, when apparently Porter despised every Sinatra rendition of a Porter song ever done. Porter wrote songs with complex and exact melodies. Instead of trying to match Porter’s difficult

phrasing, Sinatra just ignored it. I don’t think you listen to Sinatra because he sings Porter note for note, though. If you wanted that, you’d have to listen to someone who was classically trained and/or more musically accomplished.

No, you listen to Sinatra for the heart you can hear in his voice and the funny, sometimes terribly off-colour things he says. I have a fantastic rendition of him singing Irving Berlin’s *Blue Skies* with the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra, in which he starts laughing at the male chorus shouting behind him while still trying to carry on some semblance of the melody.

I have four or five different live versions of *One For My Baby (And One More For the Road)*, not because they sound particularly different from one another, but because his introductions are different each time. And each time, they’re solid gold: “It’s rather obvious that his problem stems from a girl — a broad — I don’t care what it is, but that’s where his problem came from. And this is very difficult to defeat. Hitler you can beat, but not a dame — it’s murder.”

Of course, now that I’ve typed that out for the first time, I’m realizing there’s an undercurrent of domestic violence in that joke I hadn’t noticed previ-

ously. And the patter by this column — well, despite how very civil rights-minded he was, Sinatra had a tendency to call black men “boys” an awful lot.

So even though there’s a personality in all of it that I just love, I’m also pretty sure it’s an era and a style that’s passed us by. People who try to sing like that these days don’t get it right. Rod Stewart put out a few albums of the *Great American Songbook* a few years ago, and though he’s got the dirty womanizing cred, he doesn’t have the voice. Michael Bublé — well, we all know how I feel about Michael Bublé. I probably don’t need to get into it again.

But, you see, this is why it’s so exciting that there are these new unreleased Sinatra tracks from his radio days. With an era long gone, it’s not often heard of that there might be a whole set of songs I wouldn’t know, or a set of patter I’ve yet to learn. It’s a time I wouldn’t want to ever have repeated, but I do like to visit now and again. And for the first time in a very long time, I’ll be able to hear a new version of a Sinatra song for the first time.

Sinatra: Folks, before we latch up for the night, how’s about latching on to the King Cole Trio? All in favour says ‘aye.’	Her new way of lovin’ Has made me her slave Her sweet turtle dovin’ Is all that I crave
Cole: Aye.	
Sinatra: Well, hi, Nat Cole, what tune would you like to do?	Sweetest miss, with a kiss full of bliss Can’t resist, somehow Tells me lies, but she’s wise Naughty eyes mesmerize, I vow and how
Cole: Well, I kinda thought we’d kick around a little thing called I Found a New Baby, but on one condition.	
Sinatra: You’ll kick around baby on what condition?	I don’t mean maybe
Cole: That you kick around with us.	
Sinatra: First tell me this, you think this tune’ll stand that much kicking around?	I just had to fall I got myself a new baby A new baby, that’s all
Cole: Oh, this tune is kind of rugged.	
Sinatra: OK, real tough. Let’s break her down.	(piano interlude)
(singing) I found a new baby Found a new girl My fashion-plate baby Has got me a whirl	Spoken: That boy’s gone, you know that, don’t you? He’s gone. I don’t mean maybe I just had to fall ’Cause I found a new baby A new baby, look at me now

Youth, violence, tyranny, fear: finding resistance

Screenings & Meanings

Gerald Schmitz



We live in fearful times and, although a movie called Joy arrives Christmas Day, there are precious few tidings of comfort and joy on theatre screens this Advent season. I don't take seriously sappy "holiday" movies like Love the Coopers released in November along with the Santa Claus parades and ubiquitous jingles urging us to buy more stuff. For the kids, the Disney Pixar animated feature The Good Dinosaur may be a minor diversion. Fans of the Rocky franchise may be tempted to get back into the boxing ring with Creed, receiving respectful reviews on the strength of its director Ryan Coogler and lead actor Michael B. Jordan who teamed up in the 2013 Sundance top prize winner Fruitvale Station.

Generally it's a rather grim violent world on screen as we await the biggest blockbuster of all — a new Star Wars epic set to splash across over 10,000 screens Dec. 18 — and the year-end spate of weighty dramas and Oscar-qualifying prestige pictures (e.g. In the Heart of the Sea, Carol, The Danish Girl, the aforementioned Joy, Macbeth, The Revenant, arguably The Hateful Eight). That's not counting the horror genre (Crimson Peak, another "Paranormal" travesty, Victor Frankenstein). There's been a lot to leave one with a shudder.

Hardest to ignore is the movie that most exemplifies the popular current trend of adapting young-adult fiction in which the young are the protagonists in dystopian nightmarish visions of societies based on violence, fear and oppression. The concluding episode of **The Hunger Games: Mockingjay - Part 2** was released last month along with bombastic theatrical trailers for The 5th Wave (January) and The Divergent Series: Allegiant (March). In September there was Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials.

Frankly these movies depicting evil afflictions to come almost

pale in comparison to the real-life horrors currently being perpetrated and disseminated to a global audience. Many of the victims of Syria's civil war are children. Equally appalling is the indoctrination of children and the young by fanatical jihadist organizations — poisoning their minds with hate, training them to kill, sometimes as suicide bombers. In contrast to ISIS propaganda videos, at least the ultimate Hunger Games is just a movie.

Whether Mockingjay - Part 2 is worth seeing is debatable but I'll give it a maybe, mostly because of a twist in the conclusion that offers a way out of the cycle of violence.

A twilight of chaos has descended on "Panem" ruled over by the tyrannical evil President Coriolanus Snow (Donald Sutherland), determined to use his "peacekeeper" army and high-tech defences of explosive "pods" to protect the privileged caste of "the Capitol" from the outlying districts, some devastated by civil violence as loyalists battle insurgents. Recalling previous episodes, the figurehead of the rebellion is the ultimate survivor of Panem's deadly teenage games, the "mockingjay" Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence), an inspirational heroine with more lives than a cat, and lethal with her ever-present bow and arrows.

As the movie opens Katniss is broken up over Snow's evil deeds that include brainwashing her fellow games survivor, and love interest, Peeta Mellark (Josh Hutcherson). He's been rescued from captivity but turned into a hostile threat unless somehow deprogrammed. He's also got competition from Gale Hawthorne (Liam Hemsworth), Katniss' childhood fellow hunter who still carries a torch for her. Katniss and company are young warriors in the vanguard of the rebellion being led by the icy Alma Coin (Julianne Moore), now being



CNS /Lionsgate

MOCKINGJAY - PART 2 — Natalie Dormer and Jennifer Lawrence star in The Hunger Games: Mockingjay - Part 2. "Whether Mockingjay Part 2 is worth seeing is debatable but I'll give it a maybe, mostly because of a twist in the conclusion that offers a way out of the cycle of violence," writes Gerald Schmitz.

advised by Snow's turncoat former chief gamesmaker Plutarch Heavensbee. (He's played by the late Phillip Seymour Hoffman who appears in key moments excepting a last crucial one that had not been filmed when he died in February 2014. Instead games veteran Hamish reads his final words from a letter.)

Coin and cohorts are preparing to launch an assault on the Capitol in the name of freedom for the oppressed. But Coin orders Katniss to stay back from the frontline, arguing that she will be most useful as a propaganda symbol for the revolution, not as a fighter. You might suspect there's more to it than that. In any event, no way is Katniss going to stand down. Her mission is personal. She wants to be the one to confront and kill President Snow.

The capture of the Capitol proceeds in drawn-out agonizing and ultra-violent stages in which some of the valiant perish, including some close to Katniss. (Some of the scenes made me think of images from the Syrian civil war: bombed-out streets; the flight of displaced people, many women and children, toward a savage fate.) Cutting to the chase, once the takeover is complete, with Snow completely isolated and alone, Coin promptly installs herself as the new president. It's a brave new era but, as they say, to the victor go the spoils.

Coin has a proposal that reminded me of the refrain in The Who's song Won't Get Fooled Again: "Meet the new boss, same as the old boss." Katniss agrees to it, provided she's given the honour of dispatching Snow to the netherworld. Everything comes down to one arrow. You just knew it would be up to Katniss whether there's hope for Peeta and for peace in Panem.

If teenage fantasies aren't your thing, wait for Jennifer Lawrence's very adult star turn as Joy in **Joy**. Fellow Oscar winner Julianne Moore also delivers much more substantial roles in the moving true story Freeheld and the dramatic comedy Maggie's Plan, both of which premiered at the Toronto film festival.

There is, however, one underlying theme of the Hunger Games saga that resonates beyond its young-adult demographic and world of make believe — namely that of resistance to the corruption of power and the manipulation of the masses through fear. Sometimes it takes individual acts of resistance to challenge a climate of fear.

That was famously the case in Hollywood's own dream factory during the Red Scare and McCarthyism of the late 1940s and 1950s targeting a "black list" of show business figures accused of being "communist" subversives. The investigations by the notorious House Un-American Activities Committee swept up many liberal Democrats. There were also those who did have an association with the Communist party, a legal organization, and who vigorously defended both workers' rights (including those of striking film crews) and their First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and association. One of the most prominent on the list was the novelist and legendary screenwriter Dalton Trumbo who was a party member from 1943-48.

Director Jay Roach's **Trumbo**, based on Bruce Cook's biography, recalls both the man and the era with great panache and a pointed dig at the politics of fear. Bryan Cranston (Breaking Bad) delivers an amazing performance as Trumbo, capturing his voice, manners and outsized character that at times exasperated family and friends as well as enemies. Trumbo was a prolific genius at the typewriter, sometimes while propped up in a bathtub fuelled by cigarettes, booze and Benzedrine. Fittingly the movie brims with terrific dialogue and wit.

Trumbo was Hollywood's highest paid writer on contract to MGM when compelled to appear before the House committee in 1947. When he and others refused to testify or admit to any wrongdoing they were cited for contempt of Congress. Eventually, when a Supreme Court appeal was lost, the "Hollywood Ten" (nine of whom were writers) had to serve a degrading one-year prison sentence.

Contracts were cancelled, people were fired, families suffered. Suspicion also fell on leading actors like Edward G. Robinson (Michael Stuhlbarg), a close Trumbo friend and supporter until later, under duress and desperate to save his career, he would name names and claim to have been duped. That betrayal was more painful to Trumbo than the hostility of right wing super-patriots like John Wayne (David James Elliott), cowed studio bosses, and the relentless vitriol against "dangerous radicals" of Hollywood gossip maven Hedda Hopper (Helen Mirren at her viperish best).

Trumbo found ingenious ways to get around the blacklist, enlisting family members (Diane Lane plays his wife Cleo and Elle Fanning his spunky eldest daughter Niki), in making deals to put others' names on his scripts, and slumming for the unabashed B-movie factory of Frank King (a scene-stealing John Goodman). Trumbo was a sustaining force among blacklisted writers, represented by the cancer-ridden composite character Arlen Hird (Louis C.K.).

While blacklisted, two of Trumbo's scripts won Oscars under another's name and a pseudonym — the first in 1954 for Roman Holiday and the second in 1957 for The Brave One (a beautiful story of a Mexican boy and his bull that was shown on the Turner Classic Movies channel last month). As this became known and famous actors and directors approached Trumbo openly — Kirk Douglas for Kubrick's Spartacus and Otto Preminger for Exodus — the blacklist was effectively broken.

Not only does Trumbo the movie have a fine cast and script, it does an excellent job of evoking the period, expertly blending in telling archival footage with recreated scenes. (Don't miss the 1970 clip of Trumbo's reflections during the closing credits.) The result is both highly entertaining and timely.

"In our political environment these days, the use of fear and outrage and victimization is very common," says director Roach. "I feel it's just as much a film about today as it is about what is was back then."



Bleecker Street

TRUMBO — Bryan Cranston and Hellen Mirren star in Trumbo, a film about the novelist and legendary screenwriter Dalton Trumbo. The film, based on Bruce Cook's biography, "recalls both the man and the era with great panache and a pointed dig at the politics of fear," writes Gerald Schmitz.

Fling wide open the doors of our hearts and homes

Liturgy and Life

Gertrude Rompré



As we begin this Jubilee Year of Mercy, there’s been a lot of talk about opening doors. On the first Sunday of Advent, Pope Francis opened the door of Bangui’s Cathedral in the Central African Republic, calling citizens of that wartorn country to work for peace. On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (Dec. 8) he formally declared the Year of Mercy by opening the Holy Doors at St. Peter’s Basilica. Now, the tradition of opening Holy Doors will continue throughout Advent at cathedrals around the world, reminding us that mercy is “the bridge that connects God and humanity, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved

Fourth Sunday of Advent December 20, 2015	Micah 5:2-5a Psalm 80 Hebrews 10:5-10 Luke 1:39-45
--	---

forever, despite our sinfulness” (Pope Francis, The Face of Mercy). So perhaps it is fitting that the main event of this week’s readings happens around the opening of a door. Let’s imagine that moment. . . . Mary arrives at Elizabeth and Zechariah’s house, likely a little saddle sore and weary, and knocks on the door. Before she even has a chance to say hello, the child leaps in Elizabeth’s womb and she proclaims, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” Elizabeth opens the

Rompré is the director of Mission and Ministry at St. Thomas More College in Saskatoon.

door to Mary and recognizes the coming of her Saviour. This door-opening moment, however, would not have been possible without a prior door-opening moment, the moment when Mary responded to the angel’s announcement with an open heart, “be it done to me according to your word.” By opening her heart to God, Mary became the bearer of the one who “shall be peace” (Micah 5.5a) and ushered forth the coming of our Saviour into the world.

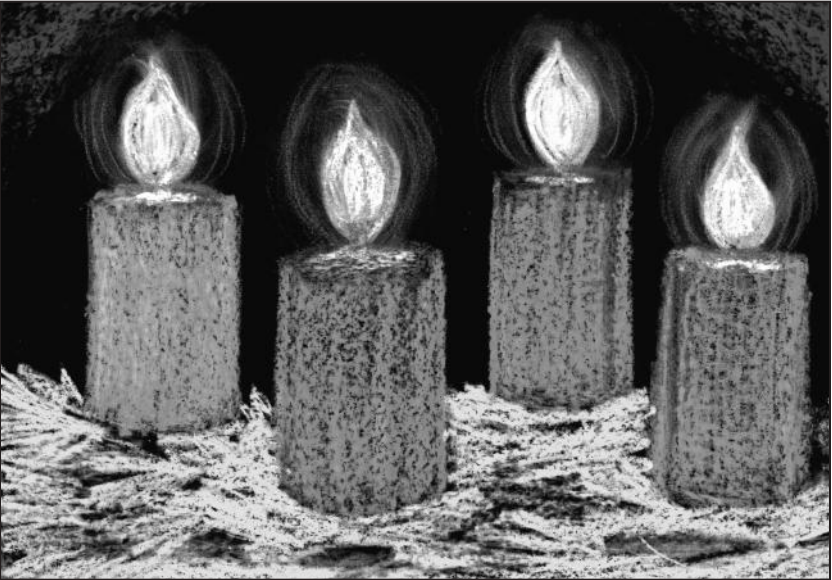
It all hinges, pardon the pun, on our willingness to open doors. So how do we as Christians about to celebrate Christmas, open the doors to both our hearts and our homes?

First, we need to recognize that door opening is a spiritual practice. It begins with an act of faith where we choose to hope, as the pope suggests, in the possibility of being loved forever. For many of us, this is a fundamental challenge. It’s easy for us to believe that we are unworthy of love, to focus on the sinfulness and brokenness of our lives. As Christians we are called to a different response, to believe ourselves loveable, to open our hearts to God’s love, and then extend that love to the wartorn landscapes — both local and global — of our world.

This brings me to my second point — the need to translate this spiritual encounter into action. The reading from Hebrews, with its focus on the will of God, helps us understand how to do this. We are called to discerning action as we listen and respond to God’s will. It is not a question of us, as individual Christians, taking up every good cause that comes our way. Rather, it is up to us to respond to the specific call to action that the Spirit has planted in each of our hearts. As St. Paul taught us in his letter to the Corinthians, there are a variety of gifts (1 Corinthians 12.4). But there are also a variety of needs, many doors of human suffering that we can open. To which need is God calling us to offer hospitality at this time?

Finally, we ought to reflect on how we open the doors of both our hearts and homes. Do we open the door a crack, tentatively peeking to seek who it might be that wants to come in? Or, do we fling the doors of our lives wide open, embracing the other graciously and with generosity? I suspect Elizabeth chose the latter option and that we, as Christians, are called to do the same.

All this talk about opening doors is especially poignant



Stushie Art

as we prepare, as a nation, to welcome refugees. Will we open the doors of our nation just a crack, begrudgingly letting them in but relegating them to the margins of our communities? Or, will we fling the doors wide open, inviting them in as Elizabeth greeted Mary, reminding them that we are blessed to welcome them into our home? May our celebrations of Christ’s birth fill us with love, hope and joy. May these, in turn, give us the courage to open the doors of our hearts and homes, welcoming those who will bear Christ to us in new and surprising ways!

The hiddenness of God, the darkness of faith, and overpowering light

In Exile

Ron Rolheiser, OMI



When I first began teaching theology, I fantasized about writing a book about the hiddenness of God. Why does God remain hidden and invisible? Why doesn’t God just show himself plainly in a way that nobody can dispute? One of the standard answers to that question was this: If God did manifest himself plainly there wouldn’t be any need for faith. But that begged the question: Who wants faith? Wouldn’t it be better to just plainly see God? There were other answers to that question of course, except I didn’t know them or didn’t grasp them with enough depth for them to be meaningful. For example, one such answer taught that God is pure Spirit and that spirit cannot be perceived through our normal human senses. But that seemed too abstract to me. And so I began to search for different answers or for better articula-

tions of our stock answers to this question. And there was a pot of gold at the end of the search; it led me to the mystics, particularly to John of the Cross, and to spiritual writers such as Carlo Carretto. What’s their answer? They offer no simple answers. What they offer instead are various perspectives that throw light on the ineffability of God, the mystery of faith, and the mystery of human knowing in general. In essence, how we know as human beings and how we know God is deeply paradoxical, that is, the more deeply we know anything, the more that person or object begins to become less conceptually clear. One of the most famous mystics in history suggests that as we enter into deeper intimacy we concomitantly enter into a “cloud of unknowing,” namely, into a knowing so deep that it can no longer be conceptualized. What does this mean? Three analogies can help us here: the analogy of a baby in its mother’s womb; the analogy of darkness as excessive light; and the analogy of deep intimacy as breaking down our conceptual images: First: imagine a baby in its mother’s womb. In the womb, the baby is so totally enveloped and

surrounded by the mother that, paradoxically, it cannot see the mother and cannot have any concept of the mother. Its inability to see or picture its mother is caused by the mother’s omnipresence, not by her absence. The mother is too present, too all-enveloping to be seen or conceptualized. The baby has to be born to see its mother. So too for us and God. Scripture tells us that we live, and move, and breathe, and have our being in God. We are in God’s womb, enveloped by God, and, like a baby, we must first be born (death as our second birth) to see God face to face. That’s faith’s darkness. Second: excessive light is a darkness. If you stare straight into the sun with an unshielded eye, what do you see? Nothing. The very excess of light renders you as blind as if you were in pitch darkness. And that’s also the reason we have difficulty in seeing God and why, generally, the deeper we journey into intimacy with God, the deeper we are journeying into Light, the more God seems to disappear and become harder and harder to picture or imagine. We’re being blinded, not by God’s absence, but by a blinding light to the unshielded eye. The darkness of faith is the darkness of excessive light. A final analogy: deep intimacy is iconoclastic. The deeper our intimacy with anyone, the more our pictures and images of that person begin to break down. Imagine this: A friend says to you: “I understand you perfectly: I know your family, your background, your ethnicity, your psychological and emotional

temperaments, your strengths, your weakness, and your habits. I understand you.” Would you feel understood? I suspect not. Now imagine a very different scenario. A friend says to you: “You’re a mystery to me! I’ve known you for years, but you’ve a depth that’s somehow beyond me. The longer I know you, the more I know that you are your own mystery.” In this non-understanding, in being allowed to be the full mystery of your own person in that friend’s understanding, you would, paradoxically, feel much better understood. John of the Cross submits that the deeper we journey into intimacy, the more we will begin to understand by not under-

standing than by understanding. Our relationship to God works in the same way. Initially, when our intimacy is not so deep, we feel that we understand things and we have firm feelings and ideas about God. But the deeper we journey, the more those feelings and ideas will begin to feel false and empty because our growing intimacy is opening us to the fuller mystery of God. Paradoxically this feels like God is disappearing and becoming non-existent. Faith, by definition, implies a paradoxical darkness: the closer we get to God in this life, the more God seems to disappear because overpowering light can seem like darkness.

Receive 45 issues per year

**NOW AVAILABLE
e-Edition subscriptions**
visit: www.pmonline.ca
for more information

Mail coupon to: Prairie Messenger, Circulation Dept.
Box 190, Muenster, SK S0K 2Y0
Phone: (306) 682-1772 Fax: (306) 682-5285
email: pm.circulation@stpeterspress.ca

☐ One Year \$37.00

☐ Two Years \$67.00

☐ U.S. \$126.00

☐ Foreign \$152.00

Applicable tax included

☐ New

☐ Renewal

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/Town: _____ Prov: _____

Postal Code: _____ Tel: _____

Visa/MC: _____ Expiry: _____

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

We are wired not for violence, but for co-operation

By Marcia Pally
©2015 Religion News Service

Given the terrorist attacks of the last few weeks, one might be forgiven for feeling a bit bleak about the human species, its frequent use of violence and its failure to negotiate solutions. We must be hard-wired for violence. Or perhaps “war is a force that gives us meaning,” as Chris Hedges put it in his 2002 book of the same title.

It turns out, however, that we’re evolutionarily wired not for violence but for co-operation. “The vast majority of the people on the planet,” writes Douglas Fry, “awake on a typical morning and live through a violence-free day — and this experience generally continues day after day after day.”

The real story should be the 13,748 gazillion times human beings default to co-operation and kindness!

So we might want to look a bit closer at aggression and its causes.

For three millennia, the Abrahamic religions have said we’re created — “wired” by God so to speak — for covenantal relationships. Violence is a sin against God.

But in the modern era, some think religion causes violence — though the French philosopher Rene Girard, who died earlier in November, believed violence causes religion.

These causal claims miss the target.

Pally teaches Multilingual Multicultural Studies at New York University and is a guest professor in the theology department of Humboldt University, Berlin. Her book, Commonwealth and Covenant: Economics, Politics, and Theologies of Relationality, will be out in early 2016.



CNS/Paul Haring

HOPE — A child lights a candle in *Republique* square in Paris Nov. 14 in memory of victims of terrorist attacks. “Given the terrorist attacks of the last few weeks, one might be forgiven for feeling a bit bleak about the human species, its frequent use of violence and its failure to negotiate solutions, writes Marcia Pally. “It turns out, however, that we’re evolutionarily wired not for violence but for co-operation.”

First, the idea that religion causes violence is belied by the staggering amounts of it perpetrated by secular regimes. The mayhem of the 20th century was unleashed by Europe’s economic competition, by Stalinism, and by Nazism.

None of these had the defining feature of faith: a transcendent being whose principles one cannot tweak to suit oneself. We can look also at the violence committed by Pinochet, Idi Amin, Robert Mugabe, Mao, and the remaining roster of faithless murderers. Or we can look to the violence of East Asia, which proceeded for millennia without religion as motive.

In fact, the major faith traditions move us to compassion and understanding.

The first advocates of toleration before the 18th-century En-

lightenment — Sebastian Castellio, Baruch Spinoza, Roger Williams, and John Locke — were schooled in Judaeo-Christian teachings.

With this in mind, blaming religion for human aggression is like blaming adultery on the marriage vows.

And to the list of modern religious leaders who championed peace (Dorothy Day, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, Martin Luther King Jr., Desmond Tutu, Emmanuel Levinas, Abraham Joshua Heschel, etc.) we can add the Grand Mufti of Egypt, the Council on American-Islamic Relations and many other Muslims who condemn ISIS and its recent attacks.

So it seems religion doesn’t cause violence. But neither does violence cause religion, as Girard held. The religion scholar maintained that a scapegoat must be found to resolve societal strife. The scapegoat is then expunged in a

group rite that releases pent-up aggression and unites the group. This rite, Girard held, is the root of religion and other societal institutions.

Trouble is, Girard’s theory is unsupported by evolutionary biology and anthropology. We are not governed by competition but rather by “hyper-co-operation.”

The evolutionary benefits include improved hunting among co-operative rather than competitive clans and basic survival, as families and communities helped each other rear children. Even war is not genetically hard-wired but emerged through historical/ cultural processes that are neither universal nor biologically necessary.

The idea that our gravest aggression is not biological but cultural suggests that we don’t need to alter our co-operative nature but to address perversions of it.

One perversion comes not

from competition for what others have but from fear that they will take what we have. This was Hobbes’s point: fear drives people to “us-vs.-them” polarization and to zero-sum thinking. It overrides our co-operative biological default and yields Hobbes’ famous “war of all against all.”

A second violation of our “reciprocal altruism” is the absence of a life commitment. The search for purpose beyond survival and “lifestyle” pushes us toward our greatest achievements in work, art, and moral conduct. A lack of such meaning — of self-transcendence — is corrosive. It leads to the familiar apathy, substance abuse, crime, suicide, and vulnerability to any “meaning” that comes one’s way.

Millions of people in the Middle East, Central Asia, and immigrant neighbourhoods of the West have reasons to feel that what they had (resources, dignity, control over one’s life) has been taken away from them or their societies. Or they can’t see any future opportunities. This is the upshot of longstanding regional problems, political and economic corruption, colonial policies, and globalization that leaves entire economic sectors and socio-economic classes out of the game.

So when a chance for purpose comes along, a chance to belong, to repair wrongs, and work for a cause that gives one status and a sense that one matters, it’s inviting. Self-sacrifice in war or terror can seem the greatest self-transcendence of all.

This is by no means justification for violence, just a bit of explanation of how our co-operative default gets sabotaged and ISIS-type “causes” move in.

Something to think about if we want to halt the violation of our biological good-naturedness so we can get to the 13,749 gazillionth human encounter of co-operation and kindness.

Make Christmas Brighter for a Child and their Family

SPONSOR TODAY!
1-800-776-6855 **www.chalice.ca**

Consistently rated a top charity in International Aid & Development by MoneySense Magazine pm1215a

PRAIRIE MESSENGER PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY

KAPOOR, SELNES, & KLIMM

Barristers & Solicitors
W. Selnes, B.A., LL.B.;
G. Klimm, B.A., LL.B.;
J. Streeton, B. Comm., LL.B.
Phone (306) 752-5777, P.O. Box 2200
Melfort, Saskatchewan S0E 1A0
Phone (306) 873-4535, P.O. Box 760
Tisdale, Saskatchewan S0E 1T0

WEBER & GASPER

Barristers & Solicitors
Russel Weber (B.A., LL.B.)
Tabbatha M. Gasper (B.A., LL.B.)
517 Main Street, Humboldt, Sask.
Phone: 306-682-5038
Fax: 306-682-5538
E-mail:
weber.gasper@sasktel.net

Assante

Assante Financial Management Ltd.
Peter Martens, FICB 301 - 500 Spadina Crescent East
Financial Advisor Saskatoon, SK S7K 4H9
T: (306) 665-3244
Cara Martens, CFP 1-800-465-2100
Financial Advisor E: pmartens@assante.com

VOLUNTEER INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN SERVICE

requires Teachers, Administrators, Medical Professionals and Trades People, aged 21 - 65. If you are interested in serving overseas for two years, we may have an assignment for you! Please call **306-374-2717**, Email: vics1@telusplanet.net or visit our Website at www.volunteerinternational.ca

MAURICE SOULODRE

Architect Ltd.
Maurice Soulodre, B.A., B.Ed., M.Arch., SAA, MRAIC
1815C Lorne Ave., Saskatoon, SK S7H 1Y5
Tel: (306) 955-0333 Fax: (306) 955-0549
E-mail: soularch@sasktel.net

MCKERCHER LLP BARRISTERS & SOLICITORS

SASKATOON:
(306) 653-2000
L.J.(Dick) Batten, QC
Michel G. Thibault
David M.A. Stack, QC
Curtis J. Onishenko
REGINA:
306.565.6500
David E. Thera, QC

Committed to serving the needs of Religious Organizations for over 80 years.
MCKERCHER est. 1904 mckercher.ca

MOURNING GLORY

FUNERAL AND CREMATION SERVICES
John Schachtel
1201 - 8th St. East
Saskatoon, Sask.
(306) 978-5200

Schuler-Lefebvre Funeral Chapel

"Dedicated to those WE SERVE"
Ph: 306-682-4114 Humboldt, Sask.

MALINOSKI & DANYLUK

FUNERAL HOME
HWY 5 EAST HUMBOLDT
Humboldt's only 100% locally owned and operated.
PH : 306-682-1622

Satisfaction Hearing Systems Ltd.

Hearing Aid Sales, Service & Repair
Ph: 306.979.4543 #16-1945 Mc Kercher Dr.
Cell: 306.881.8602 Saskatoon, SK S7J 4M4

St. Peter's Press

Commercial Printers Since 1904
Fine Quality Printing
Muenster, Sask. S0K 2Y0
Ph: 306-682-1770
Fax: 306-682-5285
press@stpeterspress.ca

Place your professional ad here
Call 306-682-1772

Canadians rally to welcome Syrian refugees



Pulpit & Politics

Dennis Gruending

It is heartening to see Canadians rallying to welcome Syrian refugees, but before we congratulate ourselves too heartily we should acknowledge that our contributions are modest and the need is great. In the 2015 election campaign, the Liberals rashly promised to provide for 25,000 government-sponsored refugees by Dec. 31, 2015. Immigration Minister John McCallum has now announced that this deadline cannot be met and it has been moved back. That is sensible, but it also represents a sleight of hand.

Revised plan

The revised plan is for Ottawa to sponsor 15,000 Syrians by March 1, 2016, and to rely on private sponsorships, including faith groups, for the remaining 10,000. McCallum has also promised an additional 10,000 government sponsorships by the end of 2016. That means it will take the Liberals 15 months to accomplish what they promised to do in three

A shorter version of this post appeared on the United Church Observer website (www.ucobserver.org) on Nov. 26, 2015. Gruending is an Ottawa-based writer and a former member of Parliament. His blog can be found at <http://www.dennisgruending.ca>

months in terms of government sponsorships.

That political deception aside, private sponsors appear ready to do their share to help out. I frequently attend at an Ottawa church which decided recently to sponsor related families involving nine Syrians. The cost to the congregation to support the new arrivals for one year will be approximately \$60,000, but nobody blinked and the motion to proceed was accepted unanimously.

Vetting refugees

Unfortunately, recent despicable attacks in Beirut, Paris and Mali have created some fear and uncertainty in Canada regarding Syrian and other refugees. Those attacks, however, were carried out for the most part by homegrown terrorists and not refugees. What's more, the Canadian government will accept only those Syrians already in refugee camps and who have been vetted by both the United Nations and Canadian officials. In fact, Canada's priority will be to accept women, children and families but it will refuse to consider most single men as government-sponsored refugees. This is discriminatory and not necessary given all of the safeguards in place.

Millions displaced

Millions of Syrians have been driven from their homes by armed conflict. The United

Nations says that seven million have been internally displaced. Another four million who fled the country have become convention refugees, while many others remain undocumented. Most of these people are living in neighbouring countries which can ill afford to support them: 1.5 million in Lebanon — about one refugee for every four Lebanese; 1.4 million in Jordan; and 1.9 million in Turkey.

Humanitarian assistance

We must resettle Syrian refugees, but that is only part of the solution. There is an urgent need for humanitarian assistance allowing people to remain in host countries such as Lebanon until they can go back home. The United Nations Food Program

also needs more support. The UN has been forced to limit rations and to shut down entirely in some areas because it lacks money to purchase food. The world's governments must step up their humanitarian assistance and individuals can also donate to organizations such as the Humanitarian Coalition, the Mennonite Central Committee or the Red Cross, all of them credible organizations involved on the ground.

Political solution

Ultimately, however, the solution must be a political and diplomatic one which ends the civil war in Syria. The Assad dictatorship continues to attack and bomb its own people; ISIS and other jihadist groups are carving out large portions of Syria and Iraq

for their dreamed-of caliphate; other countries, including Iran and Saudi Arabia, are engaged in a proxy war in Syria; and finally the United States, Russia, France and Canada have all been bombing at will. Ironically, our bombs are partly responsible for creating at least some of the refugees who we will now be accepting in Canada.

No turning back

A political resolution to the conflict remains elusive so in the interim we should continue to resettle refugees and provide humanitarian assistance. We cannot turn away. I overheard a resettlement co-ordinator for a Canadian NGO say recently that this is a marathon and not a sprint.



CNS/Alkis Konstantinidis, Reuters

WE CANNOT TURN AWAY — A Syrian refugee carries her child in a thermal blanket as refugees and migrants arrive Nov. 10 on an overcrowded boat on the Greek island of Lesbos. The extensive vetting process that all refugees undergo before arriving in Canada means there is no threat to Canadians' safety.

Contemplation amidst the sanctuary of pines and poplar



Porch Light

Stephen Berg

Thomas Merton, who wrote as much as anyone about the contemplative life, stated somewhere that nothing can be said about silence and solitude that has not already been said better by the wind through the pine trees.

The ancient Hebrew poets agree. When they ask us to contemplate the handiwork of the creator in the natural world we are not asked to tighten our grip on Intelligent Design theory.

Berg works for Hope Mission, a social care facility for homeless people in Edmonton's inner city. His poetry and prose have been in staged performances and have appeared in such publications as the Edmonton Journal, Orion, Geez, and Earth Shine. He blogs at growmercy.org

Contemplation is not a mechanism for getting answers, or fashioning a strategy for life. It is simply the practice of clearing an avenue between the creative heart of the divine, or the transcendent heart of creation, and our own yearning hearts.

There is something in this understanding that keeps me coming back to the woods.

The city has its captivating delights and its conglomerate energy, but too long in its palm can jangle nerve endings, sear the ears, and stampede the pulse. Without a reorienting break, downtown's ubiquitous plate-glass mirrors will surely distract, disquiet, belittle you; and too long in the suburbs will drain the colour from your imagination.

Without the fuel of reflection we yield to the competition

spawned by comparison — the grand consumerist levelling.

There are, of course, many ways to find a place of centring and renewal. For me reflection is best found in the wild.

I used to find reasonably remote trails west of our city. Now, more often than not, I head to the few acres of bush I've been blessed with.

Resisting the impulse to tackle the wild and accomplish something, I try simply to take my news-hollowed mind and traffic-addled bones to where things like to grow on their own — to see what comes.

The late fall morning rumoured more rain, but by noon a breeze came up, the sky cleared, and the sun reached me through the trees.

I took down a poplar that was sick at the core. Carpenter ants had made a general go of it at the base of the trunk and had constricted sap flow. The tree was choking and, unlike the ants, would not last many more seasons. I notched the tree's north side close to its natural lean, then with one slant cut on the south side it collapsed — gratefully I thought — along my intended path.

I built a fire, got up a sufficient base of heat and gave the branches, top, and decaying pieces to the flames. The rest I cut into splitting lengths and stacked between the trunks of two trees.

I spent the rest of the day clearing deadfall from a trail, tending my fire, watching squirrels and making peace with a pair of agitated northern goshawks whose territory I had obviously invaded. They flew to trees nearby and squawked at me at from above. After an hour or so they received me, or dismissed me — I was fine either way.

My sanctuary is here in the woods. I meet myself and touch something transcendent with the aid of hawk and squirrel, rain and woods, sun and blossom.

Here, not drawn and quartered by the arbitrary, or played by impulse and caprice, I taste, in some way, the domain of possibility.

But I've also dropped out, not taken the risk of self-discovery inherent in the risk of solitude. For it's also possible to let distraction follow you into the woods — to bring possessiveness instead of receptiveness; to bring one's insecurities to the

woods, resent their capacity to engulf me, reduce me, and remind me of my incapacity and contingency.

But then there are times I stay still, lie on my back and watch the sky through the scaffolding of spruce and poplar and allow all this to wash over and away. I know then I've been called here to give up my gnawing need for approval, to accept my acceptance, relearn the art of listening and regain my love for creation and her occupants through what the monastics call *otium sanctum*, serious play, holy leisure.

**To advertise in the
Prairie
Messenger
call
306-682-1772
or fax
306-682-5285
email:
pm.ads@stpeterspress.ca**

Upside of insomnia is finishing stacks of novels

Around the Kitchen Table

Donald Ward



You can only say so many rosaries. My record is five in a row, one after the other. I can imagine Mary saying to one of the angels, “It’s Ward again. He’s trying to get to sleep.”

“Can’t you just put him to sleep?” asks the angel.

“I could,” says Mary, “But that’s not the point. You’re supposed to be attentive during the rosary, meditating on the mysteries. Half the time Ward doesn’t even know what mystery he’s on.”

Then there’s the Jesus prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” I’ve recited a good few hundred of those as well, trying to get to sleep, but I find my mind making up little tunes for each line, which is distracting, and I can only imagine what Jesus is thinking, if he’s still listening by that time.

I once counted backward from 500 to one, telling myself with each breath that I would fall asleep at one. I didn’t.

Insomnia manifests itself in many ways, but basically it comes down to the inability to sleep — to fall asleep, to stay asleep, to sleep restfully or deeply. Google “sleep disorders” and you get over 21 million hits. Google “insomnia” and you get nearly 55 million, so it’s not rare. According to one source, some 40 million Americans suffer from it, and we can assume that a comparable number of Canadians do as well.

I envy people who can fall asleep the minute their head touches the pillow. My wife, Colleen, can lie down and go to sleep whenever the fancy takes her. Mind you, she is suffering from a brain injury, and they are notoriously exhausting. But even before her aneurysm, I can remember only one night of all our married life together when she had trouble sleeping. It is a gift.

On the upside, you can get an awful lot of reading done when you’re not sleeping. My bedside library is teetering with books that I have finished reading in the middle of the night. I prefer mystery novels, though I occasionally resort to the classics. I finished two one night before giving up and getting out of bed.

They say that if you can’t sleep you should get up and do something, otherwise your body will come to equate being in bed with not sleeping. My body made that connection long ago. Still, I often get up in the night and cruise the Internet. Ear buds ensure that I don’t disturb the rest of the family.

I enjoy watching cooking shows. Back in the ‘80s there was a flamboyant chef called the Frugal Gourmet, whose weekly half-hour presentations are now available on YouTube. Jeff Smith, his name was. He had a degree in philosophy and sociology, and was an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church. His TV program ran for a total of 261 episodes, though only a fraction of those are available on YouTube. I have watched each of them at least twice.

He was once criticized for being neither frugal nor a gourmet. His response was that being frugal didn’t mean that you were cheap or only cooked with inexpensive ingredients, but that you threw nothing away. Following this philosophy has sometimes made me want to gag — such as when he prepared pig’s intestines — but still, he always makes me smile.

Smith fell from grace when seven men charged him with sexual abuse. Six of them claimed he abused them as teenagers in the 1970s; the seventh claimed to

have been abused by Smith when he picked him up as a hitchhiker. Formal charges were never brought, as Smith settled the cases through his insurance company, but the allegations were enough to end his television career.

He died in 2004, yet he still goes on — at two and three and



D. Ward

BEDSIDE READING — The upside of insomnia, writes Donald Ward, is that you can get an awful lot of reading done.

four o’clock in the morning. Perhaps his sins have been forgiven. Perhaps mine will be, too. In the meantime, I read and watch the Internet and I pray, waiting for blessed sleep. Whatever happens, all this prayer can’t be bad for me.

Shortage of priests an issue

Continued from page 3

large area, they also have an inadequate number of priests to serve them — slightly more than one priest to every 1,000 Catholics.

Not only “is there a shortage of priests,” he said, the eight already serving in the diocese are religious order priests meaning that “they are only there for a short period of time.”

Born in Lima, Peru, Vila is the youngest of 10 siblings and in 1979 came to Canada with his father at the age of 16. Eventually Vila would study mechanical engineering at Toronto’s George Brown College followed by a career in the field.

Then in 1988, less than 10 years after immigrating to Canada, Vila headed to Rome where he had been accepted to study at the Redemptoris Mater Missionary Seminary.

In 1995 St. John Paul II ordained Vila, welcoming him into the priesthood. Upon returning to Canada in 1998 Vila took over as rector of the Redemptoris Mater seminary in Toronto where he has remained.

“Coming from the Diocesan Missionary Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Rome established by St. John Paul II, I was humbled by this new call to serve God’s people in the Diocese of Whitehorse, in knowing that God has a plan and will guide me on His path,” said Vila.

“I look forward to this new mission.”

Dynamic, growing parish seeks full-time

Youth Minister

Christ the Redeemer Parish in Swift Current, Sask., is looking to hire a dynamic, faith filled individual with a heart for young people and their families.

The successful candidate will be:

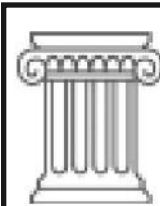
- a faithfully practising Catholic
- willing to engage in ongoing training
- possess excellent interpersonal, organizational and communication skills
- able to work well both independently and as part of a team.

Salary is negotiable, commensurate with experience and education.

For further info contact:
Jackie at Christ the Redeemer Parish (306)773-9524.

Please send resumé and references to:
Youth Minister Committee
c/o Christ the Redeemer Parish
600 Circle Drive
Swift Current, SK S9H 4E1
Email: ctrsc@sasktel.net

Deadline for submissions is December 31, 2015.



BOSCO FOUNDATION

John Bosco

Child & Family Services Foundation

The John Bosco Child and Family Services Foundation (Bosco Foundation) is a public foundation dedicated to the provision of buildings and facilities used for the treatment, education and housing of children, adolescents and adults who are in need of support.

Bosco Foundation believes in assisting non-profit and charitable organizations who provide vital services which aid vulnerable people in our society. We do this by providing our facilities to various non-profit and charitable agencies at below market level rental rates.

Our facilities are used for social services group care, foster care, adult mental health care, the St. Francis Food Bank, two AA groups and a NE Edmonton cadet core among others.

In addition, we provide volunteer services to assist two small non-profit organizations working with low income seniors and victims of stroke with fundraising and volunteer recruitment assistance.

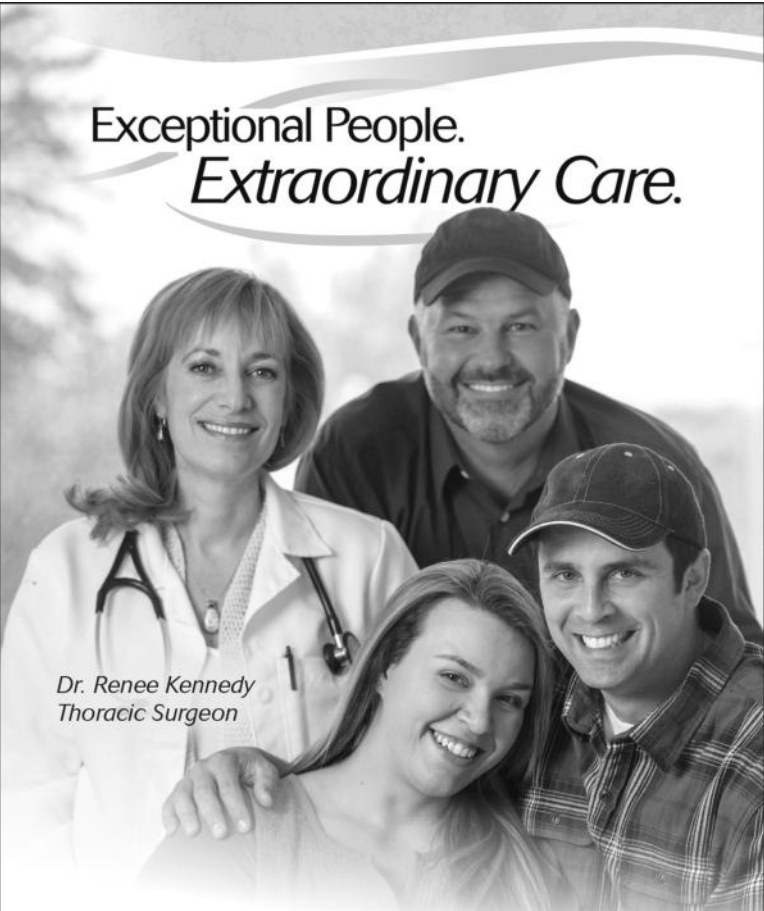
The Bosco Foundation is currently working with a large service organization on a joint project with the aim of providing affordable housing for low-income seniors.

100% of donations go toward charitable purposes.
Administrative expenses are covered by other sources.

Please forward your donation to:
Bosco Foundation
315-6770 129 Avenue NW,
Edmonton, AB T5C 1V7
Tel: (780) 809-8585 ♦ Fax: (780) 809-8586
www.boscofoundation.com

Charitable Tax Number: 85985 8664 RT0001


Exceptional People.
Extraordinary Care.



Dr. Renee Kennedy
Thoracic Surgeon

In surgery, every minute matters.
Support operating room advancements at St. Paul’s Hospital.
Improved Efficiency. Reduced Wait Times. Advanced care.

GIVE GENEROUSLY
Visit sphfoundation.org
or contact Lecina Hicke,
Manager of Major Giving at (306) 655-5832



God is full of mercy

Pope Francis initiated the Year of Mercy by opening the Holy Door in St. Peter’s Basilica on Dec. 8.

He wants the Year of Mercy to usher in a “revolution of tenderness.” It’s not just a church door he wants to open; it’s the door of tenderness in our hearts.

The pope explained that he is highlighting God’s mercy because the world “needs to discover that God is father, that there is mercy, that cruelty is not the path, that condemnation is not the path. . . . Because the church herself sometimes follows a hard line, she falls into the temptation of following a hard line, into the temptation of underlining only moral norms, but so many people remain on the outside.”

Any meditation for the Year of Mercy could well begin with a reflection on the message of the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel. He says: “You will remember your past behaviour and all the actions by which you have defiled yourselves, and you will loathe yourselves for all the wrongs which you have

committed. And you will know that I am Yahweh, when I treat you as respect for my own name requires, and not as your wicked behaviour and corrupt actions deserve” (Jerusalem Bible, 20:44).

This scriptural message challenges our usual human reaction and our need to get even for any hurt done to us. “An eye for an eye. . . .”

Pre-Christian philosophers like Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics tended to regard mercy, pity and compassion as useless sentimentalism. Mercy for Aristotle was not a virtue, but a weakness of the elderly and children. For the Stoics, it was a mental aberration. By way of contrast, Cicero rejected the Stoic conception of mercy as absurd; for him mercy was an index of wisdom, morality and goodness.

The Old Testament portrays God’s anger as short-lived, but his mercy as everlasting. For example, psalm 103 says: “God does not treat us as our sins deserve, nor repay us as befits our offences.” The prophet Isaiah, proclaimed repeatedly in our Advent liturgies, says, “For the sake of my name I shall defer my anger, for the sake of my honour I

shall be patient with you, rather than destroy you” (Is 48:9).

This picture of a God merciful beyond our comprehension is best portrayed in Jesus’ parable of the Prodigal Son. The younger son expected nothing on returning home, not even his father’s love. But his father threw a feast. We are flabbergasted, as was the elder son.

The Second Letter to Timothy reflects Ezekiel’s insight: “If we are faithless, God remains faithful — for he cannot deny himself” (2 Tim 2:13).

Spiritual author Rev. Richard Rohr captures how difficult it is for humans to switch to an “economy of grace.” He writes: “We base almost everything in human culture on achievement, performance, accomplishment, an equal exchange value, or some kind of worthiness gauge.” He says we need to “experience a dramatic and personal breaking of the rules of merit (forgiveness or undeserved goodness)” to operate outside the rigid logic of our human culture.

Mercy is more than a gift. It is also a personal challenge, to a new way of acting. — PWN

Prophetic voices calling for ‘new paths’ in Paris are squashed by fear

Soul Mending

Yvonne A. Zarowny



“Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing. . . . You will know them by their fruits.”

Matthew 7:15/16

As I write this, western media is doing near hysterical 24/7 coverage of the tragic loss of 129 “innocent” lives and the injuring of another 300+ in Paris.

The president of France has declared war on ISIS/ISIL. ISIS wins.

Very occasionally there is mention of the ISIS bombing of mostly Muslim “innocents” in Beirut and Bagdad in the days before Paris.

There was no hysterical coverage of these tragedies; no buildings lit up in the colour of their flags to show solidarity.

Why is that? In Canada the Opposition leader is calling for the Liberals to reverse their promise to withdraw our jets from the U.S.-led bombing missions. These are killing or maiming hundreds of thousands of “innocents” while *not* containing or degrading ISIS/ISIL.

Why? These missions help ISIS recruitment.

Others are calling for the Liberals to reverse their election promise to take in 25,000 refugees. Islamophobia spreads. ISIS wins.

As tragic as these bombings are, it was the nature of the Paris coverage that generated a deep fear gripping my gut and heart.

Why? Then it struck me. Paris — it cannot be!

ISIS knows us well. It certainly knows how to push the buttons of most of our leaders, media, and war/surveillance technology profiteers.

By the time you read this, Paris will be or have hosted the vitally important COP21 Climate Summit.

If these power brokers do not agree to implement an effective strategy to address the root causes of the environmental devastation our current dominant mode of development requires, we will continue to careen toward self-destruction. ISIS wins.

Laudato Si’ states: “The problem is that we still lack the culture needed to confront this crisis. We lack leadership capable of striking out on new paths and meeting the needs of the present

with concern for all and without prejudice toward coming generations” (53).

France’s prime minister has announced that events during this Summit will be limited to “core negotiations.”

This threatens all public events to pressure our leaders to negotiate effective “new paths” to achieve the kinds of deep structural changes required.

As outlined in *Laudato Si’*, constructively addressing the real existential threat to our and all other earthlings that is anthropogenic climate change — is more complex than merely reducing greenhouse gases.

If we make the necessary structural changes to stop our rabid environmental devastation, we would also be starting to *effectively* address the root causes of the quagmire that is the Middle

East, spreading while *not* contributing to ISIS recruitment. ISIS loses.

Now, all that is at risk. The long-planned march on Nov. 29 of 200,000+ from around the world was threatened.

The numerous concerts celebrating life with dignity for all Creation are at risk.

Surveillance restricts people’s capacity to take actions drawing attention to the numerous authentic sustainable modes of development that enable us to have higher qualities of life for all.

The president of the U.S. states these attacks were against “all humanity” and the “universal values we share.”

Given the real threat anthropogenic climate change is to us, and how much fossil fuel is burnt

— ECOSYSTEM, page 15

Thousands of Canadian kids end up in foster care

By Marni Brownell and Neeta das McMurtry, Winnipeg Troy Media

What happens when authorities determine that children can’t live safely with their own parents or caregivers?

Thousands of Canadian children go into foster homes or other types of out-of-home care on behalf of child welfare agencies. But we don’t know how many, nor do we know how well they are doing.

Canada does not keep reliable national statistics on kids in care, instead relying on provincial reporting. But each province has its own child welfare policy and its own definition of children in care, which may not include other types of out-of-home care, such as care from family relatives (kinship care) or group homes.

Brownell is an expert advisor with EvidenceNetwork.ca and a senior research scientist with the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy (MCHP). McMurtry, a freelance writer, specializes in making academic and scientific writing accessible to broader audiences. www.troymedia.com

It is difficult to know how to improve outcomes for kids in care if we don’t keep track of what is going on. Some analysts say child welfare systems suffer from underfunding, staffing cuts and not enough foster families or resources to support them. But policy-makers have a difficult time identifying best practices and deciding what to fund without statistics to measure possible outcomes.

What we know

In 2011, the National Household Survey counted approximately 30,000 foster kids in Canada. This single-day count does not include children in other types of out-of-home care, such as group care. Also, statisticians caution that voluntary surveys such as this often result in less accurate data from low-responding groups such as indigenous peoples, new immigrants and low-income families.

In 2007, the Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal reviewed provincial annual reports and counted more than 65,000 Canadian children in care on a single day.

— CANADA, page 15



CNS/Edgardo Ayala

SALVADORANS MARK ANNIVERSARY OF CHURCHWOMEN — U.S. delegates and Salvadorans march in procession Dec. 2 in Santiago Nonualco, El Salvador, to the spot where four churchwomen were murdered by guardsmen in 1980. A memorial service was held in this rural community to commemorate the 35th anniversary of their killings. Salvadoran National Guardsman abducted, raped and murdered Maryknoll Sisters Ita Ford and Maura Clarke, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and Cleveland lay missionary Jean Donovan. They were among 75,000 people who died in El Salvador during a decade of violent conflict.

We fear what we don't know, especially foreign immigrants

The Editor: I feel compelled to write this letter after hearing the many false and misleading statements currently circulating on the Internet and in the press pertaining to Muslims and their Islamic faith.

It reminds me of quotes from Bill Waisers' book, *Saskatchewan: A New History*. In the 1920s many feared the immigrants as they were perceived as "dirty, ignorant, garlic smelling continentals." Others feared "the country becoming a mongrel nation." And still others "blamed them for an increase in crime and for spreading communism" (pages 248 - 249).

These quotes from the 1920s seem to reflect the same fears and anxieties that many are feeling today in regard to new immigrants and people of different faiths, particularly Muslims. The fears and anxieties of the 20s led to thousands of Saskatchewan citizens taking out memberships with the Ku Klux Klan, as it supported their xenophobia toward certain ethnic and religious groups. Waiser writes, "By 1929, the Klan boasted 25,000 members" (p 251).

We need to move away from labelling and demonizing certain ethnic, political and religious groups. It is in giving in to anxiety and fear that we increase the probability of conflict.

Instead of believing falsehoods and rumours on the Internet how about stepping out of your comfort zone and visiting a local mosque or volunteering at one of the local agencies that work so hard to settle newcomers.

As Rev. Ron Rolheiser wrote in a recent column "In the name of truth and what's best in us as Christians and Canadians, this is the time to offer more, not less support for Muslims. We all have the same God and are part of the same family. More than ever we must offer our understanding, sympathy, support and fellowship in faith." — **Sheila Murray, Saskatoon**

Cost to earth's ecosystem is neglected

Continued from page 14

each time a jet takes off on a bombing mission, I really have to wonder what these values are.

Based on the "fruits" we are experiencing, obviously they don't include peace, inclusive economies or a planet that sup-

ports life with dignity for all its co-habitants.

At the G20 meeting in Turkey, Obama stated: "ISIS is the face of evil."

That is the same language ISIS/ISIL uses to describe "us" — western civilization.

Let us remember the G20 is a meeting of the world's richest nation-states — whose militaries tend to defend the "rights" of the world's richest global corporations — no matter the cost to earth's ecosystems of which we humans are a part.

To me, they are all false prophets — except for the ones like Francis who are calling for honest dialogue enabling us to co-create a variety of authentically sustainable economies.

Open doors of your hearts

Continued from page 1

"The wounded are to be treated, helped to heal, not subjected to cholesterol tests," he said, meaning a too narrow scrutiny of minutiae delays staving off the broader disease of conflict and indifference. He once illustrated the same concept by painting a visual image of pastors who prefer to coil and comb the wool of the tiny flock in the pews rather than seek the sheep that are outside in danger or lost.

"I believe this is the time for mercy. We are all sinners, we all carry burdens within us. I felt Jesus wants to open the door of his heart," he said in the magazine interview.

The opening of the holy doors in Rome and around the world will be a symbol of how Jesus is opening the door of his heart.

In fact, dioceses have been asked to designate and open their own Door of Mercy in a cathedral, an important church or sanctuary. The pope also will send out from Rome "missionaries of mercy" — priests mandated to the world's peripheries to show patience and compassion in their ministry.

Such gestures suggest the pope still wants people to avoid the expense of travel — like his post-election suggestion to fans back home in Argentina to give to the poor the money they would have spent for a trip.

To help people at home feel "just like being there" in Rome, the Vatican television centre will start broadcasting major papal events during the Holy Year in lat-

est generation Ultra HD 4K resolution as well as HD, 3D and standard definition.

With the appropriate displays or TVs, people will be able to watch events with increased depth and detail, and, for the opening of the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica Dec. 8, 19 cameras were to be deployed to capture every angle, including a unique papal point of view.


The Vatican also planned to set up 4K screens in a prison in Milan, a hospital in Rome and possibly in the Holy Land so people who are physically confined could feel part of the opening ceremony.

From the very start of his pontificate, Pope Francis has been showing what the way of mercy means.

The pope's very first Angelus address and homily in 2013 centred on mercy, as he explained God always waits for that day of awakening and conversion, then forgives everything. The real problem is people — not God — who give up on forgiveness, he said.

But mercy changes everything, he said; it "makes the world a little less cold and more just."

He said in the magazine interview that one Friday of every month during the Year of Mercy "I will make a different gesture" that shows God's mercy. He had asked the world's young people to rediscover the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, like feeding the hungry and counselling the doubtful, and choose one to practise each month as they prepare for World Youth Day in July.



J. Weber

While Looking East

Light falls
in between
hand out and coin,
flesh and spirit,
dream and act,
young and old,
red lights and green lights,
city lights and rural nights,
your rights and my rights,
centre and edge.

Always falls,
always bends,
in between
here and
Bethlehem.

By Michael Dallaire

Canada tops kids in care

Continued from page 14

More recent provincial data tell us that Canada has one of the highest rates of kids in care in the world.

Let's take Manitoba, which has reliable statistics on the issue. In 2014, Manitoba Family Services reported more than 10,000 children in care. Alarming, by age seven, 7.5 per cent of all Manitoba children have been in care at some point. Manitoba's rate of out-of-home care for children under 11 years old was 10 times higher than that of Western Australia. Manitoba rates of care for children during the first year of their lives are also higher than Sweden, Western Australia, England, New Zealand and the U.S.

Manitoba is not alone. For example, in 2013, *Association des Centres Jeunesse de Quebec* reported 11,250 children in kinship care, foster care and group care. In 2012, the Saskatchewan government reported 6,738 children in out-of-home care.

We also know that not all Canadian children are equally likely to be placed in care. The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada estimates that indigenous children comprise 30 to 40 per cent of kids in care even though Aboriginals comprise less than five per cent of the total population of Canada.

So why does Canada have so many kids in care?

Canada (like the U.S.) favours a "child safety" approach to children's welfare. This means that if a welfare agency identifies a child at risk, he or she is removed from the home. Child welfare agencies rely on foster homes and other types of placements to provide temporary, day-to-day care for children until the risks of abuse or neglect are resolved. But with so many kids in care, securing quality out-of-home care is a challenge across Canada.

Australia and several European countries take more of a "family welfare" approach. When a child is at risk, the whole family is given intensive home support to try to remove risks while the child stays with the family. Sweden's child and family well-being policy has made remarkable progress in reducing child poverty and family violence, two major risk factors for child welfare.

It's time we took a dramatic new approach to kids in care and overhauled our system to focus on preventing rather than reacting to child maltreatment. That requires federal leadership to develop a national strategy that ensures our most vulnerable citizens are treated as valued and respected members of our society.

There is no greater folly than wasting the potential of our children — or worse, putting them at risk.

Africans seek ‘just and clear’ global climate accord

By James Martone

CAIRO (CNS) — Africa is among the world’s regions most in need of a “just and clear” global accord to combat climate change, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi told the UN climate conference in Paris.

“All African nations are contributing less to the total harmful emissions and are the most affected by climate change,” he told other global leaders at the gathering.

The summit aims to achieve a legally binding and universal agreement on measures to stem climate change and protect the environment.

Earlier this year in Cairo, ministers and delegates from 54 African nations committed themselves to reaching a binding climate change agreement in Paris, but they indicated that any accord would need to reflect Africa’s “priorities and aspirations,” the UN Environment Program reported at the time. The report highlighted worst-case scenarios for Africa if global warming went unabated:

If temperatures increase by four degrees Celsius, “projections for Africa suggest sea levels could rise faster than the global average and reach 80 cm above current levels



CNS/Yoan Valat, EPA

President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi

by 2100 along the Indian and Atlantic Ocean coastlines, with particularly high numbers of people at risk of flooding in the coastal cities of Mozambique, Tanzania, Cameroon, Egypt, Senegal and Morocco,” the report warned.

After Pope Francis’ June encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, on Care for Our Common Home, Bishop Emanuel Barbara of Malindi, Kenya, described the pope’s message as a “radical encyclical that

opens our eyes to our situation” that should push people across the region to speak loudly about environmental issues.

“We need development program that respects the environment and is tailored to the African context,” Barbara told Catholic News Service at the time.

“It is important that we do not copy the development model used in other parts of the world as we now know what happens when development goes ahead with no regard for consequences,” he said.

Sisi, who leads a climate change committee of African leaders at the UN, has presented his and other African initiatives to face climate change and called for international technical and financial support to help the continent’s different countries face climate change impacts.

“Africa demands an international, just and clear agreement that considers disparity of burdens between developed and developing countries,” Sisi said on the opening day of the Nov. 30 - Dec. 11 conference.

Leading up to the UN conference, the World Bank announced a plan of action to help Africa deal with increased poverty due to climate change impacts, some

of which were already “unavoidable,” accord or no accord, the World Bank said.

It said those included “the loss of cropland, a decline in crop production, worsening undernourishment, higher drought risks and a decline in fish catches.”

The conference gathers more than 150 countries and hundreds of other concerned groups from around the world, including communities of Catholic priests, nuns and laypeople working against the backdrop of *Laudato Si’*, which argues that a change of heart is necessary to protect the earth and all its inhabitants.

On the way home from his late-

November trip to Africa, Pope Francis said it would be tantamount to “a suicide” if a global climate accord is not reached soon.

Many scientists argue that an increase in natural disasters such as flooding, droughts and rising sea levels across the world are all but inevitable if limits are not placed on the greenhouse gases causing global warming.

But those gases are caused by fossil fuels, which many poor countries depend on for energy and income. Any agreement on global warming must therefore contain measures that safeguard the poor, through financing and technology, say their advocates.

Pope lauds patriarch’s commitment to creation

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis conveyed his gratitude to Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople for his commitment to peace and reconciliation between the Catholic and Orthodox churches as well as his commitment to the care of creation.

“I wish to express my deep appreciation for your holiness’s fervent commitment to the critical issue of care for creation, for which your sensitivity and awareness is an exemplary witness for Catholics,” the pope said in a written message delivered Nov. 30 to the patriarch in Istanbul.

The pope’s message was given to Patriarch Bartholomew by Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, who led a Vatican delegation to Istanbul for

the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle, the patriarchate’s patron saint.

In his message, the pope recalled his visit to Turkey last year in which he celebrated the liturgical feast with the Orthodox patriarch, saying that it was “a moment of grace” that renewed “the bonds of friendship with you and with the church over which you preside.”

Although there are differences that have not yet been resolved, Pope Francis noted that there is no obstacle “which cannot be overcome through prayer, the purification of hearts, dialogue and the affirmation of truth.”

The pope also praised Patriarch Bartholomew’s dedication to the protection and care of the environment, calling him an example for Catholics. The World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, celebrated by both churches Sept. 1, he said, “is a hopeful sign for Catholics and Orthodox.”

Poor invited to Vatican movie premiere

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The usual fanfare that comes with the world premiere of a movie is pretty standard: the lights and cameras, the celebrities walking down the red carpet and scream-

ing fans trying to catch a glimpse of their favourite actors.

At the Vatican, however, a movie premiere is not your typical star-studded event.

The world premiere of *Call Me Francesco*, the first movie based on the life of Pope Francis,

took place in the Vatican audience hall Dec. 1 and those considered celebrities in the eyes of the pope were in attendance.

“To this exceptional premiere, the Holy Father wished to invite the poor, the homeless, refugees and the people most in need, together with the volunteers, religious and lay people, who work daily in charity,” a statement from the papal almoner’s office said.

Parishes and charitable associations in Rome were given 7,000 tickets for the poor to attend the premiere at the Vatican. The night also included a concert featuring the Pontifical Swiss Guard’s musical band. The papal almoner’s office said that many of the Swiss Guards offered to play during their free time as a gift to the homeless.

The poor were also offered a brown-bag dinner “donated especially for the occasion by several benefactors.”

Directed by Italian filmmaker Daniele Luchetti, *Call Me Francesco* details the life of Jorge Mario Bergoglio, from his humble beginnings in Buenos Aires, Argentina, to his election to the papacy in 2013.

At the premiere, Luchetti expressed his hope that the movie would be “an emotional moment” in following “the footsteps of a man we admire.” While all the details of the pope’s life are not known, the Italian director said he was optimistic that the film would explain “how he came to be and for what reasons.”

David, one of the thousands of homeless people attending the premiere said that it was “truly emotional” to see the path followed by Pope Francis. “His way of being close to the poor, close to people in need and the endless struggle against evil” was particularly moving, he told CNS.



CNS/Anto Akkara

FLOODS IN INDIA — Archbishop George Antonysamy of Chennai, India, poses with an elderly woman near floodwaters surrounding St. Antony’s Parish in Chennai, India. The heaviest rainfall in over a century caused massive flooding across the region, driving thousands from their homes, shutting auto factories and paralyzing the airport in capital Chennai.



CNS/Olivia Obineme

KCs DONATE WINTER COATS — Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore walks with children from Catholic Charities Head Start Nov. 30 after helping distribute 1,000 winter coats donated by the Knights of Columbus to neighbourhood children at St. Edward in Baltimore.

Two choices go together: to stop climate change and curb poverty so that human dignity may flourish.

— Pope Francis in Dec. 6 Angelus talk