



# Newsletter of the Diocese of Saskatoon

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MAY 2014

## Addressing poverty

Local religious groups are among those endorsing a Poverty Costs initiative in the province.

In addition to demonstrating the high economic, social and moral costs of poverty, the new Poverty Costs initiative is calling for a provincial poverty reduction plan. A [www.povertycosts.ca](http://www.povertycosts.ca) website has been launched to increase awareness about the cost of poverty and to provide opportunities for advocacy and action. The Poverty Costs initiative is being led by the Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre, the Saskatoon Anti-Poverty Coalition, Upstream, and Unite Co-op.

Organizers report endorsements have been received from church leaders of seven Christian denominations, as well as the Unitarian Church, and the Congregation Agudas Israel synagogue. Faith leaders of these communities are describing how the moral imperative to reduce poverty can unite people of faith across the province.

Addressing poverty is an issue that transcends politics, say local religious leaders.

"This is a responsibility of every political party, and should draw on people of widely diverse political – and religious or philosophical – perspectives, with the

### Justice and Peace initiatives reported by parishes: Pages 8-9

common mission of reducing human suffering by eliminating poverty," says Saskatoon Bishop Donald Bolen.

"The very foundations of religion challenge us to fight poverty," points out Rabbi Claudio Jodorkovsky of Congregation Agudas Israel. "I believe the person of faith is the one who understands his/her responsibility for making a change. That means a call to be generous and caring, but also to be an activist for change, raising awareness and demanding that leaders along the spectrum make the fight against poverty a priority."

It is time to move beyond just addressing the symptoms of poverty, agrees Rev. Amanda Currie, pastor of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Saskatoon. "Even as we continue to do our best to provide for those in our communities with immediate and urgent needs, we can show love and compassion for one another by looking upstream and finding ways to help all our neighbours to live in health, security, and dignity," Currie asserts.



### Parish ambassadors

Laurel and Noah Foster of St. Francis Xavier parish in Saskatoon were among hundreds of parish representatives from across the diocese who travelled to the Cathedral of the Holy Family April 14 to celebrate the Chrism Mass and pick up the sacred oils blessed by the bishop. Find more coverage on Page 15.

- Photo by Tim Yaworski

## Diocese reflects on role of deacons

By KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI

Should the diocese of Saskatoon ordain permanent deacons?

That is the question at the heart of a diocesan discernment launched by Bishop Donald Bolen that has included prayer and discussion at three diocesan Congress Days and a broad consultation among diocesan leaders, priests and religious, lay ministers and volunteers.

The process has prompted discussion about vocation and call, ministry and service, and the roles of the laity and the ordained. It has also raised other questions, such as the role of women in the Church, and how the Church can best respond to the many needs in our world.

"We are so grateful to all those who have participated in this discernment process," said Leah Perrault, director of pastoral services for the diocese of Saskatoon and chair of a diaconate discernment committee established by the bishop in the spring of 2013.

"The diversity of thought and input that we received means that there is still some hard work ahead for the discernment committee."

The committee will now take the feedback gathered over recent months and make recommendations to the bishop.

At Congress Days held in Kindersley Jan. 25, Saskatoon Feb. 1 and Humboldt March 8, participants from parishes across the diocese learned more about the diaconate and various ways in which deacons live out their vocation in the world.

The discernment was grounded in a prayerful examination of the meaning of vocation itself. Personal vocation testimonies by local people were presented at each



At a Congress Day Jan. 25 at St. Joseph parish in Kindersley, Rev. Matthew Ramsay, Rev. Iheanyi Enwerem, OP, Mark and Darcie Lich, Bishop Donald Bolen, Deacon Paul Labelle, and Brother Basil Schaan, OSB, (left to right) were on hand to speak about their vocations, while Gertrude Rompré, Sr. Cindy Lewans, PM, and Deacon Bob Williston spoke via video. Find more coverage of speakers Page 16-17.

- Photo by Kiply Yaworski

Congress Day – either in person or in video – by two deacons, a single person, a married couple, a professed sister, a Benedictine brother, a diocesan priest, a priest from a religious order, and the bishop.

Participants heard about the history of deacons in the Church, grounded in scripture accounts, such as Acts 6:1-6 and Timothy 3:8-13, with the diaconate emerging in the early Church as a ministry of service and justice. Then for many centuries the order of deacons disappeared from the Latin-rite Catholic church, except as a transitional step on the way to being ordained a priest.

However, after the Second Vatican Council, the bishops of the world re-

established the permanent diaconate. Some bishops and dioceses began forming and ordaining deacons immediately; others (like the diocese of Saskatoon) concentrated efforts on other priorities, such as the formation of laity.

### What is a deacon?

As members of the clergy, deacons can proclaim the gospel and preach at liturgical services and they are able to conduct baptisms and witness marriages. They can lead the community in prayer, but do not preside at the Eucharist or the sacrament of reconciliation, which are roles reserved to a priest.

Right now, only men can be ordained as deacons. Married men can be ordained deacons, but if a single man is ordained deacon he cannot later marry, and a widowed deacon cannot remarry.

Both the archdiocese of Regina and the diocese of Prince Albert are proceeding with the ordination of deacons, as have dioceses in Manitoba and Alberta.

Although ordaining permanent deacons is not a requirement for a diocese, said Bishop Don Bolen, there is a question about how to respond to those in our communities who are discerning a call to the diaconate.

### Deacons in our diocese

Permanent deacons who were ordained in other places are already living and serving in the diocese of Saskatoon – including Deacon Bob Williston, who is presently the bishop-appointed Parish Life Director at Leader, Lancer, Eaton and Prelate (on the pastoral team with Priest Moderator Rev. Hoang Nguyen), as well as serving as pastoral associate at Liebenthal, Fox Valley, Richmond and Burstall.

Such parish work is not an automatic role for a deacon, but has come about because of Williston's gifts and experience, Bolen pointed out at the Congress Day held in Saskatoon.

In most cases, a deacon would not be employed or paid by a parish or the diocese, but would have a career apart from the Church.

For instance, another deacon who has moved into our diocese – Deacon Paul Labelle, who was ordained 30 years ago in the diocese of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario – spent his working life as a trade union representative.

Although there are a variety of models and ways in which the permanent diaconate is being lived out in dioceses around the world, Bishop Don Bolen said that he sees service, rather than liturgical function, as the focus for a deacon.

"The heart of the diaconate is serving – reaching out to the peripheries, to the margins of our society and our church, to those who are wounded and hurting, or where there are needs not being adequately addressed," said Bolen, presenting a vision in which deacons serve in an area of need and use their liturgical role to call others to respond in service.

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Excerpts of vocation reflections from two deacons  
and other speakers at diocesan Congress Days  
can be found on Pages 16-17 or as videos posted at:  
[www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/videos](http://www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/videos)

Diocese of Saskatoon holds  
Annual General Meeting - Page 2

Christian Initiation and Catechetics:  
working to nurture a life-long faith - Page 20-21

STR8 UP conference  
- Page 5



# Annual General Meeting includes financial and ministry reports

By KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI

The financial and ministry year from June 2012 to 2013 was the focus of a recent Annual General Meeting for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

The AGM was held March 22 at the Cathedral of the Holy Family, after a Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) meeting that included a brainstorming session about diocesan goals and priorities.

Financial reports in recent years have been provided at an annual diocesan Administration Day and published in the Diocesan Newsletter, rather than being presented at a public meeting.

“This retrieval of the AGM is part of our strategic planning – part of a desire to be more transparent about where we are at as a diocese, and the decisions and the challenges we face,” said Bishop Don Bolen.

The year 2012-13 was the Year of Faith in the Church, with a number of initiatives undertaken in parishes and in the diocese to foster and celebrate faith. “It was also a year where we were really getting settled into our new cathedral,” noted the bishop.

“It was a year where a lot of things solidified,” Bolen said.

“There is so much in this diocesan church that attempts to live out faithful discipleship. It is very encouraging to be part of this. That’s not to say that we don’t have real struggles and real frustrations.... But this is an inspiring place to work.”

2012-2013 was a year of transition for the diocesan financial department, with changes in staff and the introduction of new technology and new procedures, the bishop reported. Tanya Clarke is now the diocese of Saskatoon’s financial administrator, working with accountants Kevin Bentler and Denesta Lambert at the Catholic Pastoral Centre.

Clarke presented the financial report, giving an overview of the audited statements for the year, explaining the work of the Diocese of Saskatoon Catholic Foundation (which is the diocese’s fund-raising arm), outlining sources of revenue (such as parish assessment, the Bishop’s Annual Appeal, other donations and assorted income and fees) as well as the expenses of the Chancery and pastoral services provided by the diocese. (See financial statement, lower right).

Pastoral ministry reports were also presented at the AGM by Co-directors of Pastoral Services, Leah Perrault and Blake Sittler, who have shared the management role at the Catholic Pastoral Centre since February 2012.

Pastoral services in the diocese generally fall into two broad categories: ministries that build up the church, and ministries that reach out in love, said Perrault, noting that for the most part, she oversees those ministries and services related to faith formation, catechesis and enrichment, while Sittler supervises

ministry offices related to outreach and justice.

In 2012-13, Perrault also focused on a ministry services review at the Catholic Pastoral Centre and a strategic planning process launched in the diocese.

As for ministries, the year 2012-13 saw the diocesan, eparchial and Aboriginal Catholic Lay Formation program really “hit its stride” as a combined program, no longer in development, but fully implemented as a three-stream program of faith formation and spiritual growth, she described.

“Christian Initiation and Catechetics underwent a fairly major shift in 2012-2013,” Perrault added. Formerly known as Rural Catechetics, the Christian Initiation and Catechetics office is now serving both urban and rural parishes and supporting catechesis, formation and initiation at every age.

The ministry services review led to other changes at the Catholic Centre, such as the Resource Library now being operated with the help of volunteers rather than a paid librarian, and the appointment of Myron Rogal as coordinator of the Justice and Peace Office in addition to half time as coordinator of the Vocations Office.

In 2012-13, the strategic planning process identified two emerging priorities for the Catholic Pastoral Centre, Perrault reported: nurturing both healthy partnerships and vibrant, healthy parishes. Identifying diocesan goals and priorities continues, with consultative groups and leaders across the diocese meeting in the spring of 2014 to envision where the diocese should focus efforts in the future. The DPC engaged in the process at their March 22 meeting, with priests and other ministry and parish leaders undertaking the process at gatherings in May.

In his pastoral report, Blake Sittler described the establishment of the Migration Office and its ongoing evolution in 2012-13. The diocese also began working more closely with the Micah Mission, an ecumenical restorative justice group providing outreach to those coming out of prison, he added.

Another item of note was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission national event in Saskatoon in June 2012, which led to a commitment to establish a new consultative body in the diocese, operating alongside the Priests’ Council and the Diocesan Pastoral Council. The new Diocesan Council for Truth and Reconciliation includes Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leaders in the community gathering to pray and share insights and undertakings, Sittler described.

In 2012-2013, a new diocesan *Covenant of Care & Sexual Abuse and Misconduct Protocol* was launched, with information and training provided to parish leadership and volunteers across the diocese, he described. “This is simply a plan to make our communities more safe and more



### Goals and priorities

Leah Perrault, Co-director of Pastoral Services in the diocese of Saskatoon, led a process of reflecting on historical context and vision of Church as a way to arrive at goals and priorities for the diocese of Saskatoon during a March 22 meeting of the Diocesan Pastoral Council. Determining goals and priorities is part of a strategic planning process underway in the diocese, which also involved other groups in May, including priests, lay leaders and volunteers.

- Photo by Kiply Yaworski

transparent.” It is something that dioceses across the country are engaged in, Sittler added.

Parish Pastoral Council workshops were another ongoing effort throughout the ministry year, helping councils understand their role and “refocusing on how we as parish councils can deepen and nurture the faith of our people in our parish,” he said.

As a final note, Sittler described one effort of collaboration, between the diocese, Greater

Saskatoon Catholic Schools, and the Saskatoon Friendship Inn, called “Pool Our Love,” where students and their families are made more aware of the needs of the Friendship Inn in responding to hunger in the community, and the collection of paddling pools full of donated most-needed food items for the inn.

The Annual Report published in conjunction with the AGM is available online at [www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/news](http://www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/news)

## Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon Audited Financial Statement For the fiscal year end as of June 30, 2013

	2013 Fund	2012 Total
<b>SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>		
Bishop's Annual Appeal	\$ 1,030,838 (A)	\$ 946,590
Parish Assessments	1,157,650	1,072,821
Investment income	78,160	67,134
Donations	937,288	531,616
Brazil collections	146,186	192,892
Ministry	291,457	128,618
Sundry	1,005,121 (B)	300,940
	<u>4,646,700</u>	<u>3,240,611</u>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Pastoral Services	1,167,832	1,251,291
Outreach grants and donations	381,565	314,412
Clergy and vocations	521,048	584,325
Brazil mission	146,186	96,305
Administration and chancery	2,078,506	1,009,565
Parish support	241,422	324,609
	<u>4,536,558</u>	<u>3,580,507</u>
Revenue less expenses before the undemoted	110,142	(339,896)
Loss on disposal of investments	27,710	(6,144)
Unrealized (loss) gain in market value of investments	(21,196)	(5,002)
	<u>116,656</u>	<u>(351,042) (C)</u>
<b>SUPPORT AND REVENUE LESS EXPENSES</b>		
<b>FUND BALANCE, BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	929,399	1,280,440
<b>FUND BALANCE, END OF YEAR</b>	<u>\$ 1,046,055</u>	<u>929,398</u>

(A) Revenue from the Bishop's Annual Appeal does not all come into the diocese. Some of the revenue is dispersed to Catholic organizations and ministries outside of the Catholic Pastoral Centre. Further, the revenue for the 2012-2013 fiscal year includes a segment of funds from both the 2012 and 2013 Appeals.

(B) Allocated donations to the diocese are held by the Diocese of Saskatoon Catholic Foundation. Many of the funds are specified for a particular purpose, and the diocese must honour the intention of the donors by using these funds as allocated. As per the annual budget, income is transferred to the diocese to cover expenses in these areas. This shows as income for the Episcopal Corporation and expense for the Foundation. The diocese also receives external grant money that is accounted for in this income line.

(C) The deficit in the Episcopal Corporation was covered with a fund transfer from the Diocese of Saskatoon Catholic Foundation after the end of the fiscal year. This money comes from the Unspecified Asset Account.

The 2012-13 Annual Report for the diocese of Saskatoon – including financial statements for the Catholic Foundation and a summary of 2012-13 Bishop's Annual Appeal allocations – is posted at:

[www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/news](http://www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/news)

or for an electronic or a printed copy, call the Catholic Pastoral Centre at: (306) 242-1500 or toll free: 1-877-661-5005 or e-mail: [communications@saskatoonrcdiocese.com](mailto:communications@saskatoonrcdiocese.com)



### Youth support for BAA

The Servants for Christ youth group at St. Augustine parish in Saskatoon – along with youth from St. Patrick and Holy Spirit parishes – recently held bake sales to raise money for the Bishop's Annual Appeal. The young Servants presented the \$700-plus donation to Bishop Don Bolen after Mass at St. Augustine parish in Saskatoon March 16, before joining him for a pancake breakfast. The Bishop's Annual Appeal supports a range of ministries and programs in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon with \$1,457,030 raised in the 2013 Appeal. For more information about BAA allocations, check out the diocese Annual Report online at [www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/news](http://www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/news)

Photo by Janine Baier



# Bishop announces pastoral assignments as of July 1

By KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI

Bishop Donald Bolen has announced a number of pastoral appointments and departures, which come into effect on July 1, 2014.

Fr. Marvin Lishchynsky, who has been studying Canon Law in Ottawa, will return to Saskatoon, and will become the Judicial Vicar for the diocese, a position that has been empty since the death of Fr. Paul Donlevy. Lishchynsky will also serve as Priest Moderator at St. John Bosco parish in Saskatoon, on a pastoral team with Parish Life Director Matthew Courchene.

Fr. Clement Amofah, who previously served in the diocese, will return to Saskatoon, after completing his studies in Canon Law, and will become the Chancellor of the diocese as well as the Adjutant Judicial Vicar. He will also serve as Priest Moderator for St. Mary, Lanigan and Holy Rosary, LeRoy on weekends, working with Parish Life Directors Don and Bonnie Courchene in Lanigan and Leona Wakelam in LeRoy.

Fr. Paul Paproski, OSB, who was serving as Priest Moderator in Lanigan and LeRoy, will now serve as half-time associate pastor at St. Augustine's parish in Humboldt. Fr. Ephraim Mensah will continue as pastor of St. Augustine, Humboldt; Assumption of Our Lady, Marysburg; Holy Trinity, Pilger; and St. Scholastica, Burr.

Fr. Greg Roth, who has been serving as associate pastor in Humboldt, has been appointed pastor of St. Peter parish in Unity and St. Michael parish in Tramping Lake. Fr. Johny Mangalath, VC, who has been serving in Unity and Tramping Lake, has completed his doctorate, and the superior general of his Vincentian community in India has called him to a new assignment.

Fr. Fred Caylan, who has been serving in the Wadena Pastoral Region, is returning to serve in his home diocese in the Philippines.

Fr. Emmanuel Banahene is returning to the Saskatoon diocese and will serve as pastor of St. Mary in Wadena, St. Theresa in Lintlaw and St. Joseph in Kelvington, residing in Wadena, and working as part of a team with Fr. Geoffrey Young, serving the Wadena pastoral region.

Fr. Ron Beechinor will be retiring from his positions as Vicar General, as Priest Moderator at St. Francis Xavier parish in Saskatoon, and as pastoral service associate to Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools (GSCS).

Fr. Kevin McGee will be returning from a sabbatical year, and has been appointed both Vicar General and the pastoral service associate to GSCS.

Fr. Nestor Gregoire, OMI, will continue as pastor of St. Joseph parish in Saskatoon, as well as serving as Priest Moderator of St. Francis Xavier in Saskatoon, on a pastoral team with Parish Life Director Judy Schmid.

St. Joseph parish, Eatonia, will move from the Sandhills Pastoral Region to the Kindersley cluster – which includes St. Joseph, Kindersley; Sacred Heart, Eston; and Sacred Heart, Marengo – with Fr. Emmanuel Azike, OP, as pastor.

Fr. Aloysius Anyichie has been awarded a major scholarship for a doctoral program at the University of British Columbia, and will be leaving the diocese of Saskatoon. The appointment of a pastor for St. James, Wilkie, Our Lady of the Assumption, Handel, and St. Paschal at Leipzig, is forthcoming.

Diocesan seminarian Gregory Smith-Windsor will be ordained to the transitional diaconate at 7 p.m. Friday, June 27 at St. Patrick parish, 3339 Centennial Drive, Saskatoon. He will serve a summer pastoral internship at a parish still to be determined.

Brother Cosmas Epifano, OSB, of St. Peter's Abbey in Muenster, who has been studying in Rome, will be ordained to the transitional diaconate in his home parish of Nova Scotia, and then will serve a summer internship at St. Augustine in Humboldt.

Diocesan seminarian Ed Gibney, who has also been studying in Rome, will serve in a summer pastoral internship at St. Philip Neri in Saskatoon.

"I would like to express my thanks to Fr. Fred Caylan, Fr. Aloysius Anyichie, and Fr. Johnny Mangalath for their time with us, serving in the diocese of Saskatoon, and I wish them all the best as they go forth to take on other challenges," said Bishop Don Bolen.

"I would also like to express profound appreciation to Fr. Ron Beechinor for everything that he has done for this diocese, for his pastoral care of countless people over the years, for his gifts of administration that have blessed our diocese in so many ways and at so many crucial moments, and for his work with the Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools. We wish Fr. Ron every blessing in his well-deserved retirement," said Bolen.

The bishop added: "Thank you to all pastors and parish teams for your continued service to God's people and your commitment to the gospel."

A further announcement about other pastoral appointments in the diocese will be forthcoming.

## Amalgamation of two deaneries

The amalgamation of two of the diocese's deaneries was also recently announced.

After consultation with the parishes in both deaneries, the Saskatoon Rural and Outlook deaneries will be merged into a single Saskatoon Rural Deanery. "The chair of the Saskatoon Rural Deanery has requested a co-chair for the combined deanery, from the former Outlook region. We hope to have that in place before fall deanery meetings," said the bishop.



Visitors to St. Paul's Co-Cathedral in February look over displays and historic items at an 80th anniversary "Where It All Began" presentation by pastoral associate Brigid Fuller in February. The diocese of Saskatoon's 80th anniversary was celebrated with a Mass and gala reception March 21 at St. Paul's Cathedral.

- Photos by Kiply Yaworski

# Diocese celebrates 80th anniversary at St. Paul's

By KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI

On March 19, 1934 the official proclamation establishing the new Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon was read at St. Paul's Catholic Church in Saskatoon – along with the announcement that the community's first parish would be elevated to the status of diocesan cathedral.

Eighty years later, Bishop Donald Bolen, St. Paul's pastor Rev. Pius Schroh and a number of other priests concelebrated Eucharist at St. Paul's Co-Cathedral to mark the anniversary of that historic moment.

Displays and a gala reception were also part of the 80th anniversary celebration held March 21 at the diocese's original cathedral in downtown Saskatoon.

Bolen described how the new diocese's first bishop took up his role in the tough times of the Great Depression. Bishop Gerald Murray, CSsR, came from Victoria, arriving in Saskatoon on April 18, 1934 in the middle of a dust storm. His first Pontifical High Mass was celebrated at St. Paul's Cathedral the next day, on April 19, 1934.

Bolen noted the origins of the Saskatoon diocese lie in tensions about language and leadership, and its creation in the hard times of the 1930s, when one leader, Father O'Leary petitioned the bishop to dispense with Lenten obligations, saying "the Depression is penance enough."

In the ways in which the history of the diocese unfolded, one can see what allowed the pioneers to persevere, he said. "Above all else, I think it was a trust that God was with them; a trust that God had come near to us and continues to be near to us."



Fr. Pius Schroh, pastor at St. Paul's Cathedral, Bishop Don Bolen, and Fr. David Tumbach, pastor at the Cathedral of the Holy Family (l-r) were among the celebrants at the 80th anniversary Mass held on March 21.

"God is on earth, he is among his people," said Bolen, quoting St. Basil's words about the Incarnation. "And the Lord does not only invite us to look at the past ... but we are invited to also look to the present, to see the ways in which God is drawing near to us here and now."

In a reflection on the gospel passage about the Good Samaritan, Bolen said that Jesus is the one who comes to us in the wounded and those needing our help, and Jesus is also the one who bandages our wounds and walks alongside us.

"Jesus is also the one who sends us out to do likewise," said Bolen. That instruction serves as a good path to take for the next 80 years of diocesan life, he said.

## Diaconate:

CONTINUED from PAGE 1

In a presentation at a recent diocesan, eparchial and Catholic school joint meeting, Bolen said there are at least four options:

- **Making no change** – the diocese would not actively engage in the formation and ordinations of deacons, but if a permanent deacon from another diocese comes into the Saskatoon diocese, they would be welcomed and could function as a deacon here.

- **Proceeding on a case-by-case basis** – if an individual comes forward and with their parish and

Excerpts of vocation reflections from two deacons and other speakers at Congress Days can be found on Pages 16-17 or as videos posted at: [www.saskatoonnrcdiocese.com/videos](http://www.saskatoonnrcdiocese.com/videos)

the bishop discerns a call to the diaconate, a deacon formation program would then be arranged to meet their specific requirements, probably involving preparation outside of the diocese of Saskatoon.

- **Establishing a formation process for groups of men from the diocese** – setting up a standard

formation process that would largely take place outside of the diocese.

- **Launching a full diaconate formation program in the diocese** – designing, overseeing and offering diaconate formation on a diocesan level.

There isn't a strong agreement in any particular direction, said Bolen. "The different groups that we consulted do not have a consensus," he said. "But often discernment is like that. This has been a good discernment process and we are going to ponder and pray and make a decision."



## Mother's Day March for Life

The annual Saskatoon March For Life takes place on Mother's Day, May 11 from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. along College Drive. This is a peaceful rally of families and persons who support the right to life movement, says Denise Roth of Campaign Life Coalition Saskatchewan. "It is a gentle reminder to the general public that abortion is wrong, that women suffer from abortion and that we should not be paying for abortions through our taxes. It is also a day where we thank our mothers for the gift of life," she said. Signs are provided and following the march there is a short presentation and refreshments are served. Sponsored by Campaign Life Coalition Saskatchewan, this event will take place rain or shine. For more information, contact Judy at (306) 343-5840.

- Photo from 2013 event by Denise Hounjet-Roth

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**Elder Mary Lee:** “We are a very misunderstood people.”



**Archbishop Emeritus James Weisgerber:** “This is where we meet God.”



**Chief Wilton Littlechild:** “It is a journey of forgiveness and justice – and healing.”

- Photos by Blake Sittler

## STM conference explores future of relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians

BY BLAKE SITTLER

St. Thomas More College, the Catholic college on the University of Saskatchewan campus in Saskatoon, hosted a conference March 8 entitled “*Respect, Reconciliation and Renewal: Exploring the Future of Indigenous/Christian Relations*,” an event including elders, church leaders, community members and academics.

The goal was to discern STM’s role in the process of healing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

Gertrude Rompré, STM’s Director of Mission and Ministry, facilitated and introduced the day. She began by recognizing that the workshop was being held on Treaty 6 land.

The gathering opened in the STM chapel. The 70 participants gathered in a large circle as Lyndon Linklater of the office of the Treaty Commissioner facilitated a smudging ceremony under the guidance of the elders. Smudging is a traditional ceremony that many Aboriginal people practice, using smoke from burning herbs to cleanse themselves of any negative feelings or thoughts, in order to communicate in a healthier manner.

The morning consisted of a panel from three perspectives — Aboriginal, historical, and Church — that examined the context in which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians find themselves today.

Mary Lee, a Cree elder, originally from Chitek Lake, spoke of her childhood and how she feared speaking about her culture or of participating in any traditional ceremonies. “We are a very misunderstood people,” she said.

She described how she experienced racism in her school when children would chase her and try to rub dirt on her to make her look darker skinned.

“I was a good athlete because I had to run for my life after school every day.”

Lee spoke of the STM conference as a place where concrete reconciliation continues. “We need to tell our stories so that we don’t

hold on to the anger...if we learn even one new thing today, that would be wonderful.”

She also spoke about the importance of young Aboriginal people learning Cree to give them pride in their history, “The Cree language was a gift from the Creator.”

Dr. Timothy Foran, who works at the Canadian Museum of History, shared some of his research that focuses on interactions between Aboriginal peoples and Euro-Canadians.

This led to a discussion about the role the early missionaries played at various times, ranging from vanguards of colonialism, to well-meaning evangelizers, to periodic advocates for the Aboriginal people.

Foran explained that the Church had a three-fold plan to evangelize the “new world” through the sacraments, preaching and prayer, and the now notorious boarding schools.

Archbishop Emeritus James Weisgerber, a member of the Order of Canada stemming from his years of work in the area of reconciliation between the Church and First Nations, spoke poignantly about his experience and hope for a vision of moving forward together.

“We have to enter into this dialogue with the awareness that we either all win or we all lose,” he stated.

Weisgerber stressed that non-Aboriginal Canadians need to break down the walls of falsehood that support racist attitudes. To this end, he ensured when he was Archbishop of Winnipeg that every priest under his leadership participated in *Returning To Spirit*, a program designed by both Aboriginal and Church leaders, aimed at reconciliation.

Weisgerber quoted Pope Francis about the need for on-going dialogue and reflection. “We need to get to know each other better so we can see what the Spirit has sown there in each other as a gift for us.”

Weisgerber also described the moving experience of being spiritually adopted by four Aboriginals as a sign of their forgiveness and love.

“In adoption, both sides say, ‘You’re not going anywhere, I’m not going anywhere and we’re going to stay here and work out our differences...and this is where we meet God...in the ‘otherness’ of others.”

In the afternoon, Chief Wilton Littlechild, a lawyer and former Member of Parliament, spoke about his experience traveling across Canada as one of the three Truth and Reconciliation Commissioners hearing accounts of residential school abuses.

Littlechild offered greetings in Cree and spoke about some of the hundreds of reserves and towns he has visited to listen to the stories of those who have suffered in residential schools.

He also addressed a federal government study about missing and murdered Aboriginal women entitled *Invisible Women: A Call to Action*.

The report, chaired by Conservative MP Stella Ambler, made 16 recommendations, ranging from improved cultural training of police to continued support of K-12 education on reserves, but stopped short of calling for a national commission of public inquiry.

Littlechild noted that many of these missing and murdered women were affected by the fallout of the residential school system, which broke the chain of family units.

Littlechild spoke about the various types of reconciliation needed: financial, legal and linguistic, as well as a reconciliation of history, in which the story of the Aboriginal people will be more fully understood and taught.

“Faith groups are going to be very instrumental in reconciliation moving forward,” he said.

“There are many steps between truth and reconciliation. It is a journey of forgiveness and justice – and healing. Then you can talk about reconciliation,” he said. “For me, in broad strokes, I think relationships are getting better...not only between the federal government and First Nations, Metis and Inuit but among us all,” he concluded.

## Michael Coren reflects on importance of speaking up for life

BY KATE O’GORMAN

Journalist and author Michael Coren spoke in Saskatoon Nov. 17, 2013 at an event sponsored by the Knights of Columbus, as well as at a Carlton Trail Pro-Life event at St. Augustine Parish in Humboldt the next day.

The host of *The Arena*, which airs on the Sun News Network, as well as a weekly columnist for a number of publications, Coren is also author of 14 books including *Why Catholics Are Right* and *The Future of Catholicism*.

While Coren became a Catholic in 1985 he says he’s always been pro-life. “I’ve always embraced the logical, self-evident truth that life begins at conception.” He illustrated the importance of using narrative as part of the pro-life movement.

In an illustration of the dignity of all human life, Coren shared a poignant story of his father at a time when he had suffered a stroke: “As I walked into the hospital room I saw my father sitting up with saliva around his mouth, wearing pajamas that were too small for him, dried blood around the stitching in his head from when he had fallen, the I.V. in his arm and his eyes were



**Michael Coren:** “It’s a scientific fact that life begins at conception. It’s not opinion.” - Photo by Kiply Yaworski

nowhere – there was seemingly no recognition on his face. It was pretty bleak.” Coren described how the family sat around his father’s bed engaging in reserved and contrived conversation, not really knowing what to do.

“Suddenly the door of the ward opened and my young niece flew in like a bolt of lightning – like a flash,” continued Coren. “She bound onto the bed – ‘Tigger-like’ and climbed under

the covers, put her arms around her grandpa and fell asleep.”

Coren then explained that his niece, Katie, is profoundly autistic. “She makes loud noises, she doesn’t speak but she may yell for no reason, she’s very tactile, she’ll never be independent – she makes people very uncomfortable.”

“When my sister discovered she was pregnant with Katie,” continued Coren, “her doctor suggested that she terminate the pregnancy. Her response was to find an alternative doctor and Katie was given that great privilege of being born.”

Coren explained that with Katie in the bed with her arms around her grandpa, his father’s face began to show emotion for the first time since the stroke – and he began to cry. (Coren’s father eventually had a 90 per cent recovery.)

“There are legions of people both in and outside of the Church who look at Katie and think ‘Haven’t you heard of birth-control? Haven’t you heard of abortion? Why would you bring someone like that into the world?’ But that little girl, who was meant for abortion, did not judge – she

gave the gift of unconditional love,” stressed Coren.

“The pro-life issue isn’t a religious issue,” said Coren. “It is a scientific and it is a moral issue.”

Citing a case in Britain where a child was allegedly aborted because of a cleft palate – a minor defect that can be repaired, Coren addressed the social implications of abortion.

“It is so difficult for children with disabilities to be born,” he said, adding: “If tests indicate that an unborn child has Down Syndrome, they have probably got a 12 per cent chance of being born. So we are creating a world where no one will ever see a person with Down Syndrome ever again, and we call ourselves civilized. People with Down Syndrome remind us of what it is like to be human. This is abhorrent, it is Nazi-like, and it is social engineering.”

When responding to the argument that the unborn child doesn’t look like a baby at the point of conception and is therefore not a human life – Coren pointed out that a human being looks different when he or she is three years old from when he or

she is 80 years old. “Are we so cosmetic and so facile and so flippant that we judge just by looks? Is a 17-year-old worth less than a three year old?” he questioned.

“It’s a scientific fact that life begins at conception. It’s not opinion. It’s not a debating point. At the point of conception an unborn child has distinct DNA, a unique genomic character unlike any other human being who has ever lived in the past and unlike any human being who will live in the future. It is a separate life – that’s not religion, it’s science.”

Coren also affirmed the social complexities that surround the pro-life position.

“It’s not just about the birth of the baby, it’s about looking after people afterwards. As a society we have to come together to provide education, healthcare, housing – all these things are relevant to the protection of life.”

In his concluding remarks, Coren urged the audience to maintain their work in support of all life. “People must not be silenced,” he said.

“Bit by bit, you can change the entire world. You just have to refuse to compromise with evil.”



## Restorative Justice

### STR8 UP conference:

# Gang recovery through healing, kinship and a 'jobs not jails' strategy

By KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI

A recent sold-out conference in Saskatoon was a powerful experience of solidarity, with a diverse crowd of ex-gang members, representatives of government, police, church and community groups all gathering to reflect on the need to heal the root causes of gang involvement: poverty, trauma, addictions, and the inter-generational legacy of racism and abuse.

Some 650 attended the *10,000 Healing Steps: Resilience and Community* conference held Feb. 5-6 at TCU Place.

The conference involved both STR8 UP: 10,000 Little Steps to Healing, Inc. – a Saskatoon organization helping young men and women leave the violence and despair of a gang lifestyle and find hope and healing to become good parents, faithful partners and responsible citizens – and Homeboy Industries, a much-larger gang recovery organization based in Los Angeles. Representatives of both groups offered insights and powerful testimonies of hope and healing.

The founders of the two organizations – who are both Catholic priests – were opening speakers. Fr. André Poilièvre of STR8 UP and Fr. Greg Boyle, SJ, founder of Homeboy Industries, share a common vision of walking in friendship and compassion with those trying to turn their lives around.

### Partnerships

The conference was organized by STR8 UP in partnership with the Mennonite Central Committee, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, the Aboriginal Education Research Centre at the University of Saskatchewan, the Saskatoon Crime/Gang Reduction Strategy, Saskatoon Police Service, and Affinity Credit Union. The conference was also supported by the national *Moving*



Justice Murray Sinclair was a keynote speaker at the *10,000 Healing Steps* conference banquet. The TRC chair spoke about the long-term damage caused by Indian Residential Schools and racism, calling for a renewal of the education system and our view of history. For more coverage visit: [saskatoonrcdiocese.com/news](http://saskatoonrcdiocese.com/news)



David Johnson: "STR8 UP has given me so much – it has given me hope."

*Forward Together* campaign of the Canadian Catholic Church.

In opening the conference, Poilièvre expressed appreciation for the work of the organizing committee and the support of the community, and he thanked the young men and women who have had the courage to change their lives in the face of huge challenges.

"Our thanks and respect to all past and present STR8 UP members for your courage, your strengths, your tenacity. You are truly the heroes of this conference," Poilièvre said.

### Paths of healing

Stories of those on long roads of healing were heard throughout the two days, presented by both ex-gang members and those who walk with them.

David Johnson, a young father of two daughters, described a lifetime of struggle, abuse and addiction, speaking about the path to healing that he continues to walk as a STR8 UP member.

The 29-year-old plumber described his earliest years, born with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and abandoned by his mother.

"When my mom was pregnant with me, she was incarcerated for stabbing and killing my dad. So before I was even born, I was already in jail," he said.

"Right from the delivery room I was put into the system, and I bounced around foster homes," Johnson described. "I went through all the abuse, all the horror stories you hear about: the sexual abuse, the physical abuse, the emotional abuse." Eventually, addictions and gang involvement led him down a dark and dangerous path.

After encountering Fr. André, and hearing his explanation of the medicine wheel, Johnson said he realized that healing was possible. Johnson joined STR8 UP and did everything the program asked of him: dropping gang involvement, dealing with his addictions, living honestly and with humility, and



Elders Mary Lee and Michael Maurice present a starblanket to Fr. Greg Boyle of Homeboy Industries during the conference banquet, as Fr. André Poilièvre looks on. The elders also honoured Fr. André, founder of STR8 UP, with a starblanket. STR8 UP members then came forward to present gifts of artwork and walking staffs to the two men.

sticking with the program for at least four years.

"STR8 UP has given me so much – it has given me hope," said Johnson. "I'm lucky to have somebody in my corner who cares about me."

As a result, Johnson's life has turned around. "Eight years ago, I wanted to run the streets, now I run a house. I used to get money, now I make a living. I used to want to die young, now I've got something to live for. This is what STR8 UP has done for me."

Similar stories of healing echoed throughout the conference – in presentations by other ex-gang members as well as by Poilièvre, and Boyle, founder of Homeboy Industries and author of *Tattoos on the Heart*.

### Homeboy model

For those leaving gangs in Los Angeles, Homeboy Industries offers a wide range of support and programs to address mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence issues, while also operating businesses – such as a bakery, a diner, and a silk-screening shop. These businesses help fund the support services, as well as providing transitional employment and job skills to ex-gang members.

This "jobs not jails" model is something that STR8 UP is striving to emulate, said board member Diann Block.

The fundamental kinship between human beings was the focus of Boyle's opening address, which followed presentations about STR8 UP methods and goals.

"STR8 UP makes something happen. It imagines a community of kinship such that God might in fact recognize it," said Boyle of the Saskatoon group.

"We must come to a realization that 'we belong to each other,' he added, quoting Mother Theresa.

The benefits of walking alongside recovering addicts and former gang members goes two ways, he stressed. "It's mutual."

Other conference presentations included an overview of

gangs in Canada by sociologist Mark Totten, information about agencies working collaboratively presented by Sgt. Craig Nyirfa of the Saskatoon City Police, and a panel discussion.

Breakout sessions addressed a number of related issues: community-wide approaches to gang intervention and recovery, Circles of Support and Accountability, ways of encouraging social enterprises such as those created by Homeboy Industries, and a youth session led by members of the two gang recovery programs, Homeboys and STR8 UP.

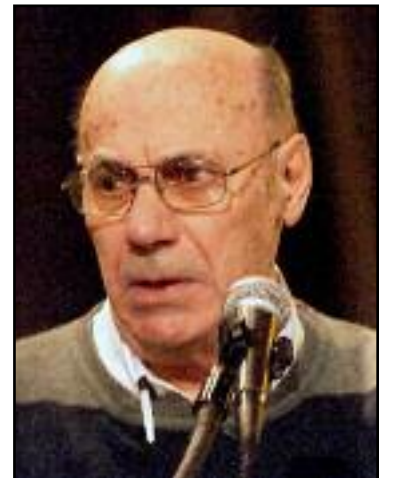
### Lives matter

Boyle and Justice Murray Sinclair of the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission were keynote speakers at the banquet which also included entertainment by comedian Maureen Belanger.

Youth are never seeking anything when they join a gang, Boyle stressed. "They are always fleeing something, always."

To offer a "treatment plan" for those caught up in gangs, it is vital to have the right diagnosis, and to recognize the fundamental need for healing, he described.

Citing scripture, Boyle posed the question: "how do we obliterate once and for all the illusion that we are separate?"



Fr. André Poilièvre, a diocesan priest and former prison chaplain who started STR8 UP to help those struggling to leave gangs, opened the conference with a presentation about the medicine wheel. When a person is physically, intellectually, emotionally or spiritually hurt, balance is lost, and continuing suffering is the result. "But hurting people can heal. Our members are hurting people, and they can heal."

He added: "Our health as a community may well reside in our ability to stand in awe at what the poor have to carry, rather than to stand in judgment."

Boyle urged his listeners to strongly resist an idea that has taken root in the world: the mistaken idea "that there might be lives out there that matter less than other lives."



Fr. Greg Boyle, founder of Homeboy Industries (holding the staff he received from STR8 UP members), and ex-gang members Louis Perez and Fabian Debora of Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, listen to presentations at a banquet held as part of a *10,000 Healing Steps: Resilience and Community* conference on gang outreach and intervention Feb. 5-6 in Saskatoon. When they first arrived in Saskatoon, Perez and Debora were detained at the airport because of their past gang involvement, missing several conference sessions. - Photos by Kiply Yaworski



## Refugee sponsorship, collaboration focus of ecumenical consultation

By KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI

Finding ways for Christian churches and other local groups to collaborate in refugee sponsorship was the goal of a recent consultation held in Saskatoon.

Some 50 representatives of local churches and other organizations responded to the invitation to learn more about refugee sponsorship and how they might work more closely together to increase the number of refugees resettled safely in the community.

The consultation included an introduction to the plight of refugees in the world and an explanation of the private sponsorship system in Canada, as well as presentations by local groups about their experiences of refugee sponsorship, and round table discussions about creating a stronger sponsorship community.

The Feb. 26 event was organized by local representatives of several Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) groups: Dana Krushel of the Mennonite Central Committee, Ellen Erickson of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, Ernie Wooff of the United Church of Canada, Helen Smith-McIntyre of the St. Maratken Community Society, and Klaus Gruber of the Anglican Synod of Saskatoon.

### Definition of a Refugee

Some 10 million people in the world meet the United Nations definition of a refugee – that is, someone who has left their country of origin because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.

“More people drop off the edges of this definition – because they are not believed, or because they just don’t have all the documentation to prove their persecution – people who really should be included,” added Saskatoon Refugee Coalition Chair Helen Smith-McIntyre, noting that there are millions more displaced and endangered persons in the world who fall outside of this official definition. “The number of people ‘of concern’ to the United Nations High Commissioner is 35 million.”

The eventual outcome for refugees might include repatriation (returning to their home country when conditions change), fitting in where they are (usually a neighbouring country to which they have fled), or resettling in another country such as Canada, Australia or the United States.

### Canada accepts only 7,500

Very few refugees receive this resettlement option, Smith-McIntyre stressed. For instance, Canada is committed to accepting only 7,500 refugees each year, if we even make the number. “There are countries much poorer than we are who are absorbing millions.”

Resettlement in Canada includes government-sponsored refugees – people referred to Canada by the United Nations office in a particular country. “They come under the umbrella of the Refugee Assistance Program, which in Saskatoon is delivered by the Open Door Society,” said Smith-McIntyre, noting that government-sponsored refugees receive one year of income, equivalent to social assistance levels.

Canada also has privately-sponsored refugees administered through a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (who have a standing agreement with the government to engage in refugee sponsorship), or perhaps by a community group or by “groups of five” who come together to sponsor on a one-time basis.

Depending on the kind of sponsorship, the commitment for a parish or organization can include full financial support by the SAH-connected organization, or an arrangement of sharing costs with the government, or in some cases, simply providing friendship and assistance while financial support is provided by the government or family.

Beginning in 2012, private refugee sponsorship groups have been limited in how many refugees they are permitted by the government to sponsor, and procedures have become more complicated and uncertain.

“We used to have a 30-day turnaround here in Saskatoon, now

we have an eight-month turnaround coming from a central processing office.” For instance, sponsoring Iraqi or Syrian refugees out of the Middle East can take between 22 and 24 months in the embassies there and eight months here, she noted. “We’re looking at 30 months before we’re going to see the family.”

Klaus Gruber noted that under our present system, refugees resettled to Canada must pay for their medical exam and transportation to come to this country. Since most refugees have nothing, and can’t afford these expenses, the Canadian government offers them a loan that they must later repay, with interest. This is an additional burden for refugee families struggling to start a new life in Canada with debt up to \$10,000, he said.

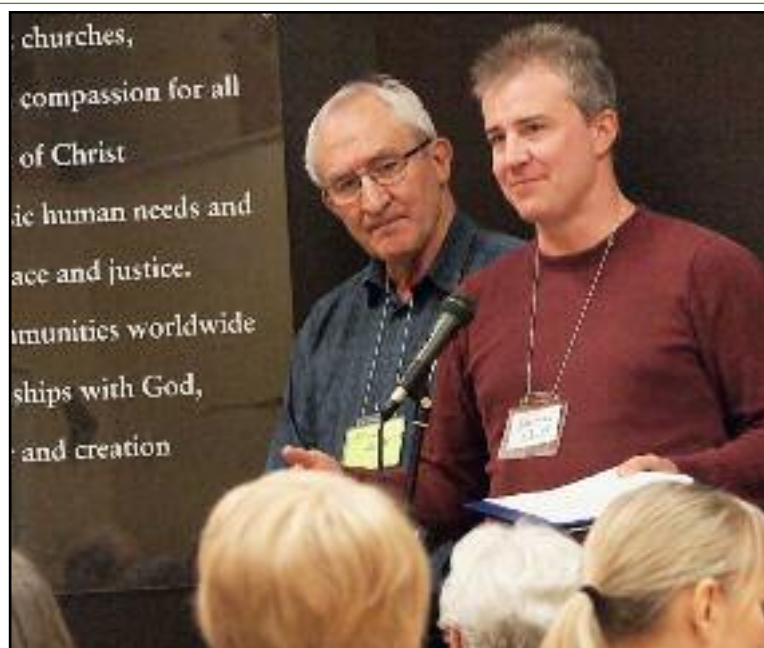
### Sponsorship experiences

The consultation included presentations by representatives of sponsoring groups – Forest Grove Community Church, Nest Saskatoon, St Martin’s United Church and McClure United Church – about the challenges and blessings of refugee sponsorship.

“For John and me, this has been an amazing opportunity to serve God, to rise to the challenges put in front of us and this family,” said Rena Pearson of Forest Grove Church, which has undertaken refugee sponsorships of a family from Eritrea, who lived for many years in limbo as refugees in Sudan.

Sponsorship has provided an opportunity to rely on God, to deepen relationships in the church community, and to form a bond with the refugee family, the Pearsons described. “Probably for the rest of our lives we will be friends with this family,” Rena said. “Every day they are facing things with enthusiasm, thankfulness and interest. They feel blessed to live here and we are sharing that.”

Rev. Darren Wooff of St. Martin’s United Church said the sponsorship experience benefits all those involved. “It is not just about us helping people, but it is about how they change your life by their



United Church representative Ernie Wooff (left) and his son Rev. Darren Wooff shared insights into refugee sponsorship. - Photo by Kiply Yaworski

experiences, by hearing how other people live, by having another experience from another part of the world,” said Wooff.

Advice about how to get started in refugee sponsorship, support and training that is available, and the benefits and challenges of rural communities undertaking sponsorships were among other questions addressed during the meeting.

The meeting concluded with emotional words from Pastor Ameha Haile of God’s Mountain Church in Saskatoon, who described his own experience as a refugee for 23 years, after fleeing from Eritrea.

As a refugee without documentation, a person loses their identity and becomes less than human, Haile said. He related the joy of at last arriving in a place of safety in Saskatoon, where he is now serving as a pastor. His four children are all pursuing their education, and striving to benefit this country, he said.

### Diocesan office

Following the event, Blake Sittler, co-director of pastoral services for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon said the consultation was a helpful way to connect with others in the community who are engaged in refugee sponsorship.

“There is a potential for future partnering among groups,” Sittler said. This might eventually include an ecumenical sharing of resources,

such as jointly funding a staff person to take on some of the often-daunting administrative tasks associated with sponsorship, he noted.

In the meantime, the diocese of Saskatoon will continue with its Office of Migration, established in 2012 with a bequest from the late Fr. Paul Donlevy and family, set up to assist in welcoming newcomers and to administer the diocese’s role as a Sponsorship Agreement Holder.

Longtime volunteer Ellen Erickson was hired to coordinate the office in a half-time position. As she now prepares to retire, the diocese is seeking a half-time coordinator to provide this administrative and technical support to parishes and groups undertaking sponsorships, Sittler said. **Deadline to apply is May 28.**

### Holy Spirit parish funding

Holy Spirit Catholic parish in Saskatoon, recently announced that the parish will financially support the diocesan Office of Migration for three years. This support will be a huge help in continuing this ministry, Sittler said, expressing the diocese’s enormous appreciation to the parish for their commitment.

For many years Holy Spirit parish has been actively involved in working with refugees, including sponsorships, support and outreach. The parish has now decided to also provide this interim funding to the Office of Migration as a way to help the entire diocese in the important work of helping refugees, he said.

## Information for organizations willing to sponsor refugees from Syria

By BLAKE SITTLER

Helping individuals and families from other countries to immigrate to Canada has been the practice and ministry of many Catholic parishes and dioceses for decades. Many of the leaders and volunteers that are currently working with refugees have been involved for many years and are ready to pass on the torch to a new generation.

Ellen Erickson, the current coordinator of the Office of Migration for the Diocese of Saskatoon, is making it her mission in the last few months before her retirement to invite new people and parishes into this important endeavour.

An information meeting about sponsorship of refugees from Syria was held April 3 at the Catholic Pastoral Centre in Saskatoon.

Erickson said that refugee sponsorship is not always simply a matter of a family approaching a church asking for help to bring over



Helen Smith-McIntyre, Ellen Erickson, Dana Krushel and Klaus Gruber (l-r) shared information and insights into refugee sponsorship at a meeting April 3 at the Catholic Pastoral Centre. Photo by Blake Sittler

relatives they left behind. Many refugees who desperately need a place of safety do not have any contacts outside the homeland they are fleeing.

“The archdiocese of Toronto has sent someone to the Middle East to find people who need sponsoring... people without relatives or friends

in Canada,” Erickson reported. Profiles of refugees are provided to inform potential sponsors about the background of candidates, including names, reasons for fleeing their country, level of education, languages spoken and a list of skills.

When a parish first looks at the profiles, it can be overwhelming,

said Dana Krushel, who works on refugee sponsorship for the Mennonite Central Committee.

“It can feel a bit like playing God and that’s a difficult position to be in...deciding who you feel you can help,” admitted Krushel.

Parishes often look at whether or not candidates can speak English or if they have training or education that would easily transfer to Canada.

There was a concern expressed at the meeting that a parish’s choice of a candidate should not be based solely on who would be easiest to support – need should guide that decision as well.

Once the application is completed by the candidates, it is couriered to Canada where diocesan and organizational coordinators take their turn wrestling with some of the bureaucratic obligations that the government requires be met to complete the process of bringing the family over.

Parishioners involved in refugee

ministry help with some of the important details of signing people up for health cards, finding lodgings, furniture, beds and kitchenware, and in some cases raising the funds to financially support the refugees for a period of up to 12 months.

In light of the bureaucracy, paperwork, and changing federal laws and ongoing international crises, it is important to remember that the primary goal is to help families who are escaping situations in their country of origin that included war and persecution, speakers said.

In all her many years of work in this area, Erickson said she has never seen a parish fail to respond to the needs that arise. A few core people help keep the projects and the interest alive in the parish during the waiting period.

Once the arrival of the refugee family is imminent, offers of help increase, Erickson reported.



## Justice and Peace

# St. Mary's sponsors family fleeing religious persecution

By KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI

St. Mary's parish in Saskatoon recently welcomed a family fleeing from persecution in Pakistan and Malaysia.

Shahid, a Catholic Christian from Pakistan, and his wife Sarwet – a Muslim who converted to Christianity – and their two young children arrived safely in Saskatoon, under a full refugee sponsorship undertaken by St. Mary's parish.

The couple spent seven years in Malaysia, having fled from persecution in Pakistan, because Sarwet converted to Christianity when she married Shahid.

Threats, intimidation and violence also followed them to Malaysia, another predominately Islamic country.

The Christian couple endured several attacks while in Malaysia – including a terrifying kidnapping of Shahid that lasted three days.

Refused a birth certificate for their first child by Malaysia, the couple tried to obtain documentation for him by contacting the Pakistan embassy. When embassy staff learned that Shahid was a Christian married to a former Muslim, the family was denied documentation.

Eventually someone from the embassy office lured Shahid to a meeting at a restaurant, where a group of men, including one who claimed to be with the police, kidnapped him, taking his clothes and subjecting him to beatings and intimidation for three days.

Shahid described how he prayed to God during the ordeal, asking to be released from his prison as St. Peter was released in the biblical account from the Acts of the Apostles.

When Shahid's captors all left for early morning prayer, Shahid was able to escape – something he believes is a miracle. Fleeing in just his underwear, he was assisted by a Sikh man he met on the street, who helped him get clothes and escape back to his wife and children.

Years of trying to flee their difficult situation in Malaysia left the family feeling great despair and fear, Shahid described. "I thought maybe we would die in that country."

However, family members and fellow Christians urged the



**A Christian couple and their two children recently arrived in Saskatoon as refugees fully sponsored by St. Mary's parish.**

couple to persevere, and provided financial assistance when they could. "A refugee in Malaysia cannot work, cannot do anything," said Shahid, describing how corruption meant paying officials for any kind of help. The police knew their story as a Christian couple, and they were forced to flee danger several times, he said.

The Catholic Church in both Pakistan and Malaysia was

unable to do anything to help the family, Shahid reported. Christian churches live in fear of violent repercussions falling upon already-besieged Christian communities.

St. Mary's parishioner Nadeem Bhatti, another Catholic Christian who also fled Pakistan, has been working for several years to get this new refugee family safely to Canada.

Shahid believes that it is only by the help of God that the family was able to connect with Bhatti in Saskatoon.

Bhatti did not personally know the family, but heard their story from a Christian friend who attended a Catholic youth conference in Malaysia. Bhatti enlisted the help of his parish in Saskatoon and the diocesan Office of Migration to have the family sponsored as refugees to Canada.

This is a full sponsorship undertaken by St. Mary's Parish, explained Ellen Erickson, coordinator of the diocesan Office of Migration. "The parish is doing the whole thing, and paying for everything."

It is a big challenge for St. Mary's, admitted committee member Lynda Browning, but she said that the parish is joyful and relieved that the family has now safely arrived, and the parish is eager to help them get settled.

Meanwhile Shahid wants Canadians to know about the suffering endured by Christians in Pakistan and Malaysia. "No one is helping," he said, describing the many who are enduring persecution, often for many years, for their Christian faith.

Erickson noted that faced with a huge need and few resources, the United Nations refers fewer than one per cent of the refugee cases for resettlement to a third country, such as Canada. The United Nations office in that area of the world has lately been focusing on refugee cases from Myanmar, she noted.

With limited time and resources, many pressing cases and desperate situations do not get attention, she said.

For more information about refugee sponsorship, contact Erickson at the Office of Migration at the Catholic Pastoral Centre in Saskatoon: (306) 659-5842.

## Our Lady of Lourdes highlights refugee outreach

By KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI

The weather was cold, but the heat of 17 different kinds of chili and the warmth of community characterized a refugee sponsorship fundraising and awareness event held Jan. 26 at Our Lady of Lourdes parish in Saskatoon.

The Chili Cook-Off included a panel of judges selecting the winning chili entry (submitted by parishioner Carol Denis), as well as a silent auction, displays about refugee-producing countries, and a talk by the father of one family recently welcomed to the community.

"Thank you for everything that you did to help us," said guest speaker Mesmer Mesmer, who came to Saskatoon in September with his wife Hajar and two young daughters, fleeing from persecution and danger in their home country of Eritrea and then as a refugee in Sudan.

"What I want to tell you today is that Saskatoon is not cold. You have been very warm for us in all aspects," said Mesmer, smiling

broadly, and emphasizing his family's gratitude for the parish's help and support: "Thank you. Thank you. Thank you."

The Mesmer family came to Saskatoon as a family-linked sponsorship supported by relatives Ghidey and Lejam Petros, members of Our Lady of Lourdes parish. The application was administered through the diocese of Saskatoon's role as a Sponsorship Agreement Holder, with the parish providing friendship and additional help as needed.

Describing the terrors of life in Eritrea under an oppressive regime, and the hopelessness experienced as a refugee in Sudan, Mesmer said there were times when he considered taking dangerous risks like the hundreds of refugees from his country who have died on the Mediterranean Sea in recent months. Thankfully, family member Ghidey in Canada convinced his family to hold fast, he described.

"She gave us hope so we could bear all the hardships we had in Sudan," he said, describing how

Ghidey said she would approach her Catholic parish community in Saskatoon for help.

"We said: 'Oh, there is God! He is sending care, and wants to save us from the risks that we were thinking of,'" said Mesmer.

The family received a file number, but still had to wait about three years before finally arriving in Saskatoon.

"But because of that atom-sized hope, we could feel time passing fast."



**Mesmer and Hajar fled Eritrea and spent years as a refugee in Sudan before arriving in Canada. Along with their two young daughters, they were welcomed at Our Lady of Lourdes parish in Saskatoon.**

- Photos by Kiply Yaworski

For those who do not know the situation in Eritrea, it can be difficult to comprehend why people risk their lives to escape, Mesmer said, describing persecution and violence, and the reality that people are killed, disappear, or are treated "just like property, not like a human being."

Mesmer said he loves his homeland, its culture and relationships, "but, due to the situation, we had no chance... I risked my life going to Sudan, knowing that the chance is one in a thousand, because the rule there is shoot to kill – but staying in Eritrea is more difficult than that."

A Christian refugee from Eritrea has a difficult time in Sudan, he said. "You always feel that you have no safety. You regret coming from Eritrea to Sudan, but at the same time you don't have the chance or the ability to go back, because even if you go back, you will be a prisoner, executed, killed.

The one thing is to see how to get out of Sudan. That is why many people – young men and young women – they risk themselves, and go through the Sahara to reach Israel, some go to Libya and then risk themselves on the Mediterranean Sea."

Mesmer is now working as a youth programmer at the Open Door Society. He described the beauty of his home country of Eritrea, and a longing that one day he might return, and welcome his new Canadian friends to his homeland.

"We experienced a lot of difficult things as human beings, but the day we arrived in the Saskatoon airport, and the way we were welcomed as members of our church, and our new community, from the very beginning, we felt that we were no longer insecure. We really felt that we had come home," he told parishioners.

Finding ways to help some of

the most vulnerable people in our world and welcoming newcomers is one way that Our Lady of Lourdes parishioners are striving to live the gospel, said organizers.

Opening the Chili Cook Off, pastor Fr. Phong Pham prayed that the community would continue to nurture a "culture of encounter" that compassionately reaches out to those in need. Retired Parish Life Director Sr. Juliana Heisler, NDS, also attended the event, continuing years of encouraging the parish to welcome newcomers and refugees.

"In the last year, we have been actively involved with five different families to assist with resettlement efforts," reported June Rivard of the parish refugee committee. Four of the five were family-linked cases, where the parish or parishioners from the parish co-sign the application, but the family assumes responsibility for costs.

"The parish has responded very generously with household items, clothes, food, moving, driving... and maybe most importantly the warm welcome they extend to all the newcomers," said Rivard.

"For one of our large families we put up a list of all the items they needed for their home. The parishioners rallied to provide all of these. Many people took great joy in purchasing new articles, setting aside so much of their own money each week so they could accomplish this."

Storage was set up to collect donations of household items and furniture, she described. "Because of the generosity of many people we have been able to provide for the needs of these families but also help many other families in need," said Rivard, describing how she sees God at work in the response of parishioners. "It has been such a blessing."



**June Rivard and Our Lady of Lourdes pastor Fr. Phong Pham at the parish Chili Cook-Off, held to raise awareness about refugee sponsorship.**



# Diocesan focus on poverty issues includes reports from parishes

- St. Mary, Lanigan**
- **Fundraisers are held for devastated families** when needed - involving Catholic Women's League (CWL), Knights of Columbus (KC) and the parish. - *Charity*
  - **Operation Christmas Child** is held annually - St. Mary parishioners prepare boxes of gifts and supplies for children in poor areas of the world. - *Charity*
  - **Mass is offered when someone is sick** – involving CWL and the parish. - *Charity*
  - Donations to the **Bishop's Annual Appeal** involving the CWL, KC, and the parish. - *Charity and Justice*
  - Monetary **donations are available for those recovering from addictions** to alcohol and/or drugs as needed – involving CWL, KC and the parish. - *Charity*
  - Participated in the **Red Letter Campaign** in Spring 2013, encouraging people to write the provincial government about ending public funding of abortion. - *Justice*
  - Monthly donation to **Development and Peace** by the Catholic Women's League in the parish. - *Justice and Charity*
  - **World Day of Prayer** was hosted in Spring 2013 with the theme "I was a stranger and you welcomed me..." involving the CWL and the parish. - *Charity*
  - **Birthday parties are held at nursing homes**, in addition to regular visits –involving the CWL and the parish. - *Charity*
  - **Collect stamps for missions** – involving the CWL. - *Charity*
  - **Support for foreign missions** – involving the CWL and the parish. - *Justice and Charity*

*Poverty is a Justice and Peace theme in the diocese of Saskatoon for 2013-2014, with a focus on encouraging, initiating and highlighting projects and enrichment undertaken by parishes. Here are some of the ways that parishes are working in charity and in justice to lend a helping hand and work for change, to address causes of poverty, and to alleviate the suffering that it causes.*

Check out the website as other parishes continue to submit their initiatives:  
[www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/office-justice-and-peace/poverty-justice-and-peace-parish-reports](http://www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/office-justice-and-peace/poverty-justice-and-peace-parish-reports)



123rf.com/pakhnyushchyy

- Donations to the **CWL Clothing Depot** in Saskatoon. - *Charity*
  - Volunteering with **Meals on Wheels** – every six weeks, involving the CWL, the Knights of Columbus and the parish. - *Charity*
- St. Eugene De Mazenod, Luseland**  
**Assumption of Our Lady, Kerrobert**  
**Immaculate Conception, Major Our Lady of Grace, Dodsland:**
- The 5 % Pledge** - Beginning after the 2013 harvest season, these four parishes decided that five per cent of their combined collection would be directed to a local charity. Each month, one of the Parish Pastoral Councils (PPC) in Luseland / Kerrobert / Dodsland / Major chooses a local charity to support.

For example, St. Eugene de Mazenod PPC recently selected the Luseland Food Bank. As part of the 5 % Pledge, parishioners receive information about the work of the organization being supported, and awareness is increased through verbal announcements at Mass and by ongoing information in church bulletins.

**Prayer for Justice and Peace** – In Lent 2014, St. Eugene de Mazenod parish at Luseland began praying a special prayer for justice and peace after the Prayers of the Faithful at Sunday Mass (*see prayer, below, to the right*). The reason for the prayer was explained by the pastor and members of Parish Pastoral Council.

**Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Wishart & St. Joseph, Kindersley**

**Loose Change for Change** – Beginning in January 2014, Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Wishart and St. Joseph in Kindersley are both taking up a second collection once a month.

Money collected will be sent to an orphanage in Nigeria, toward education and school supplies for children. Children in the parish will take up this monthly collection, and serve as welcome ministers at the Saturday liturgy to let people know about the initiative. Individual donations will also be accepted.

The local CWL and Knights of Columbus councils are also donating proceeds of brunch events, and helping to increase awareness. The project is being promoted through parish programming, announcements, bulletins and posters.

***"Our hope is that this project will heighten awareness in the area of social justice and encourage an attitude of sharing the many resources that God has blessed us with, in the hope that education will increase our realization of the abandoned in our local community."***

The parishes at Wishart and at Kindersley will seek feedback from the orphanage to determine the value of the project and/or if other needs are a greater priority.

**Holy Spirit, Saskatoon**

**Coffee House at KAP (the Kinsmen Activity Place)** - On the third Wednesday of each month from noon to 2 p.m., members of Holy Spirit parish assist McClure United Church in an outreach/ coffee house project at KAP, which is home to a variety of helping organizations and community outreach groups and programs. Coffee and food are served to drop-ins at KAP by the volunteers involved in this parish ecumenical committee project.

Holy Spirit CWL and Knights of Columbus councils are also donating proceeds of brunch monies raised as well as providing education at council and parish levels. Promotion has been undertaken by posters and by word of mouth. The number of drop-ins varies, depending on the time of year. What began as a coffee house was transformed into a lunch program to meet the need.

**L'Arche Barbecue** - This come and go event was held July 31, 2013, organized by the Holy Spirit ecumenical committee in conjunction with McClure United Church. It was a family-focused casual barbecue, with proceeds going to L'Arche.

The Knights of Columbus assisted with the event. Holy Spirit CWL and Knights of Columbus councils are also donating proceeds of brunch monies raised, as well as providing education at council and parish levels. Promotion happened through the bulletins. The event attracted many families and was also attended by members of the Saskatoon L'Arche community. A total of \$770 was raised and presented to L'Arche.

**Refugee outreach and sponsorship** - for many years, Holy Spirit in Saskatoon has sponsored refugees fleeing persecution and life-threatening circumstances around the world. The parish recently announced that it will fund the diocesan Office of Migration for three years, to assist the entire diocese with refugee outreach.

**A Prayer for Justice and Peace (Luseland)**

Come Holy Spirit,  
Help us to put our trust  
in your power of good  
to overcome evil,  
your power of love  
to overcome hatred.

Come Holy Spirit,  
Enlighten us with  
your wisdom and faith,  
to believe in a new world  
where fear no longer  
leads us to commit injustices,  
nor selfishness to  
bring suffering to others.

Come Spirit  
of Wisdom and Love,  
source of all good,  
teach us your truth  
and guide our actions  
in your ways of  
justice and peace.

***"... I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us.... in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them. The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the centre of the Church's pilgrim way. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them."***

*Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium #198*



iStockphoto.com/alptraum



## Justice and Peace

### Prayer, action and advocacy part of parish initiatives related to poverty

#### St. Philip Neri, Saskatoon

- **Refugee Sponsorship** - An active committee has been in place for many years, resulting in the sponsorship of several families. The current sponsorship will soon come to an end, opening up the possibility of applying to sponsor a Christian family from Syria in the near future. The needs of refugee families are at times met by advertising in the Sunday bulletin. Funds are raised through the weekly collection, using special envelopes, springtime tomato plant sale, sale of fair trade goods from Ten Thousand Villages, (held twice per year before Mass in the welcome area)
- **The Bridge on 20th** – receives financial support from St. Philip Neri's annual Holy Thursday collection and the parish's BAA rebate. Presentations scheduled around Mass included speakers explaining the mission and work of The Bridge on 20th, a faith-based outreach program, meeting the needs of the inner city.
- **Catholic Family Services** - St. Philip Neri partnered with Catholic Family Services to assist a low-income family with monthly housing costs/ rent, with the parish donating \$500 per month (*see boxed news item, right*).
- **Food Bank and Friendship Inn** - St. Philip Neri collects donations of most-needed food items on a monthly basis.
- **Christmas Hampers** - Families or small groups from St. Philip Neri prepare and deliver 40 hampers, as requested by St. Mary's parish
- **CWL Clothing Depot** - Clothing items are collected and picked up regularly. Members of the parish also help out at the depot as required.
- **Extendicare** – A weekly lay-liturgy is held when a priest is unavailable. The Knights of Columbus also conduct a weekly bingo at Extendicare, coordinate yard work with parish youth, and organize a 'coffee with the boys' outing to Market Mall.
- **Missionary Work** – Outreach at Fort Providence NWT, began as a youth ministry initiative to visit and provide needed assistance. Now in its second year, an annual visit is planned, with supplies taken to a parish in Fort Providence. Parishioners have been asked to provide some financial assistance. This is a three-year commitment.

#### St. Gabriel Parish, Biggar

- The Knights put on a breakfast and gave the proceeds to **Philippines relief efforts** after the flood.
- St. Gabriel CWL holds a **clothing drive** in the fall and spring – proceeds from this go to a local charity such as the food bank or Kids' Sport. Any clothing or articles that are not sold are donated to the CWL Clothing Depot in Saskatoon.
- The local Catholic school held a **"We Day"** to highlight ways to create a better world, both locally and globally.
- The annual **Share Lent** collection for Development and Peace is done as one of the designated parish envelopes – and parishioners are encouraged to donate.
- The St. Gabriel CWL **supports an international family**.



Volunteers from Holy Family Cathedral regularly volunteer at the Friendship Inn.  
- Photo by Kiply Yaworski

#### Partnering with Catholic Family Services

*St. Philip Neri parish in Saskatoon is making a big difference in one family's struggle to cover housing costs and find stability*

With outreach to the community as one of the pillars of a parish vision of "Joyfully Building Up the Church," St. Philip Neri in Saskatoon undertakes a number of justice and peace initiatives.

This includes a helping hand for one local low-income family that is making a huge difference in their day-to-day existence and their hopes for the future.

Working in partnership with Catholic Family Services ([www.cfssaskatoon.sk.ca](http://www.cfssaskatoon.sk.ca)), St. Philip Neri provides \$500 in monthly support that goes toward the family's housing costs, as a way to put them on the road to achieving greater independence and stability, explains parishioner Bill Fletcher. It is a five-year commitment.

A lack of safe, affordable housing created a stressful, transient life for this family, as they were plagued by a series of negative rental situations, describes

Fletcher. Securing stable housing was a huge help, eliminating a pattern of having the children constantly uprooted and changing schools.

The head of the family has done well at various entry-level jobs, and now hopes to undertake training or education.

"It seems to be going very, very well," Fletcher says of parish support for the family. The parish respects the family's privacy and leaves it to them to determine the relationship they wish to have with parishioners, he adds.

"We do want to see this idea presented to other parishes as something they might consider doing – it is a way to really make an impact," he says with conviction. Fletcher adds that St. Philip Neri or Catholic Family Services can provide information to other interested parishes about how the arrangement works.



#### St. Francis Xavier, Vanscoy St. Anne, Delisle St. Theresa, Asquith

- St. Theresa gives a yearly donation of \$500 to the Asquith **school lunch program**.
- **Share Lent** yearly donations are sent to Development and Peace.
- Weekly food donations are collected for the **Saskatoon Friendship Inn**.

#### St. Augustine, Saskatoon

St. Augustine, Saskatoon plans to **pause and reflect on all current works of outreach and charity from a justice perspective**. This will include the Knights of Columbus and Catholic Women's League members, as well as the Finance Committee, and Pastoral Council.

#### Cathedral of the Holy Family, Saskatoon

- **Prayer service** from the diocesan Justice and Peace office is used to open a meeting held at the Friendship Inn, as well as at Parish Pastoral Council meeting.
- Visioning process identified an emphasis on **"Making a Difference in Our World"** with one global strategy and one local strategy.
- **Saskatoon Friendship Inn** – The parish's local strategy is to partner with the Friendship Inn. This year, Holy Family engaged 170 volunteers to serve 12 meals throughout the year at the Friendship Inn. That is more volunteers than are needed, so the parish is working with Friendship Inn to discern how to get more involved.
- **Haiti Mission** – As its global strategy, Holy Family sent 15 missionaries (10 teens and five adults) to work with Wings of Hope and St. Joseph Home for Boys in Haiti in August 2013. Knights of Columbus in the parish provided 15 wheelchairs for residents of Wings of Hope.

Holy Family will continue with mission trips to Haiti in 2014 and 2015. In 2016, the parish hopes to send missionaries to the Diocese of Bunda in Tanzania.

- **Chalice sponsorships** - Holy Family continues to sponsor children internationally through Chalice.
- **CWL Clothing Depot** - Holy Family regularly collects items for the CWL Clothing Depot.
- **Christmas Hampers** – Holy Family gives out 80 hampers at Christmas time.
- A variety of other **ongoing efforts**, such as outreach to inmates in prisons, etc.

Justice and Peace  
is supported by the:



#### St. Thomas More, Saskatoon

- **Prison Ministry** is undertaken with Service and Justice students and Campus Ministry.
- The Development & Peace **fall action campaign** is highlighted and undertaken with Just Youth (the Development and Peace student group at STM) and with Campus Ministry.
- **Christmas Hampers** are assembled with support from staff, faculty and the congregation.
- The **Share Lent** awareness and collection for Development and Peace is promoted and supported by Just Youth, Campus Ministry, and the congregation at St. Thomas More. Share Lent activities included a Coffee House and Thinkfast.
- **Peanut Butter Drive for Friendship Inn** was undertaken by STM students, staff, faculty, and the congregation, heightening awareness about needs at the Friendship Inn.



A recent STM Thinkfast: raising awareness and funds for Development and Peace.  
- Photo by Michael MacLean



## Justice and Peace

# Poverty awareness event co-hosted by Catholic diocese and Jewish congregation

BY KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI

A Poverty 101 awareness event was held March 13 at the Jewish Community Centre in Saskatoon, co-hosted by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon and the Congregation Agudas Israel.

On display were words and photos by low-income women given disposable cameras as part of a *Photovoice* project to depict the impact of poverty and of policies related to housing, education, employment, childcare and income assistance. Tables were decorated with a quote from Gandhi: "Poverty is the worst form of violence."

## Poverty Costs

Information from the recently launched Poverty Costs initiative was available at another display table.

"Saskatchewan has a long legacy of strong, hard-working communities, and we are rightfully proud of our generosity and economic success. But 100,000 people in Saskatchewan continue to live in poverty, costing \$3.8 billion in heightened service use and missed opportunity each year," stated one handout.

Representatives of Congregation Agudas Israel introduced the

evening, stressing that behind all such statistics are real families and individuals who are suffering.

"Tonight we will learn, and tomorrow we will hopefully begin the work of reducing poverty and its costs in our community," said one volunteer, describing how the Poverty Costs initiatives fits into the Jewish idea of "*Tikkun olam*" or "repairing the world."

Speakers Vanessa Charles and Betty-Anne Person of the Saskatoon Anti-Poverty Coalition provided insights into the reality of living in poverty.

The women described the debilitating physical, emotional and psychological effects of poverty, and the crushing social stigma that includes judgmental "poor bashing" to add to the stress and burden of not having enough to provide for one's basic needs.

Poverty costs all of society in higher health care costs, justice system costs and missed opportunities for individuals, families and communities, said Person, adding that in spite of a growing economy, poverty has not gone away.

Those with disabilities, recent immigrants, racialized and marginalized groups are all at higher risk for living in poverty, Person stressed. Those living in poverty in our community include

those working at one or more low-salary jobs, struggling to afford food, shelter and clothing – the so-called "working poor," she added.

"Poverty is getting harder and harder to escape, as the cost of living, especially housing, continues to increase and the amount of income required to meet basic needs keeps rising – but salaries are not keeping up," said Person. "Our fair city doesn't shine for everyone."

Charles emphasized the importance of asking those who are actually living in poverty about policies and about what is truly needed. "Nothing about us without us," she said. "If you want to know what poverty is all about, ask us."

Charles listed some of the judgments and myths about those living in poverty, and then went through some of the fears, struggles and budgetary pressures facing those on low incomes. She described the budget of a single mother with three children, living on social assistance.

Stress, fear, humiliation and anger related to living in poverty take their toll on individuals, families and the community, Charles said.

## Together is better

However, resiliency and friendship are also part of living on a low income. "It's a lot easier to get through poverty when you have a circle of supportive friends," she said.

"The milk of human kindness is badly needed," Charles added, calling on groups and organizations to keep the needs and the dignity of those living in poverty in mind when they undertake outreach or plan events.

"Be inclusive when you are arranging events," she said. Having a low-income fee option, considering transportation or child care needs, and providing food at a refreshment table can all be invaluable to those who might be struggling on a low income, Charles pointed out.

Offering to sew curtains for someone who can't afford such luxuries, or donating clothing to places that don't charge a huge cost – such as the Saskatoon Food Bank or the CWL Clothing Depot at the Friendship Inn – might be other ways to help, she suggested.

The bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon and the rabbi of Congregation Agudas Israel also spoke during the event, describing the moral imperative to address the issue of poverty.

## A calamity for society

Reflecting on his own encounters with poverty in South America and citing the Saskatoon Anti-Poverty Coalition presentation, Rabbi Claudio Jodorkovsky emphasized the impact of poverty on human values and relationships.

"We have generations and generations of poor people, and they pass from one generation to another this sense of being less and of humiliation. This is a calamity for our society," he said.

"It is also a calamity for the other person, for the ones who have (enough)... Each of us, we were created in the image of God. And if we lose that image of God we are losing everything."

## Charity and Justice

Caring for those who are suffering is a demand of faith and the call is clearly part of scripture, Jodorkovsky said, but so is the call to change institutions and bring about just laws.

"It is not only about alleviating pain, it is also about doing what is required to solve the problems of our society."

The rabbi added: "We have two calls: generosity, to open our hearts, but also we have the prophetic call." That includes striving to ensure that politicians across the political spectrum work together to eliminate poverty and make a better world, he said.

## Misplaced priorities

Bishop Donald Bolen of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon pointed to the inverted values of our society, which as Pope Francis points out, considers it news when the stock market drops two points, but not when a homeless person dies of exposure.

"We as a society have not made it a priority to address the causes of poverty," Bolen said. "What could be more important?"

Pope Francis has also pointed out that we have "anesthetized" ourselves when it comes to

suffering and to poverty, the bishop noted. "We no longer see poverty, we block it out," Bolen said. "We come up with all kinds of rationalizations to keep us from looking at each other and from looking at our needs."

Bolen expressed gratitude for the Poverty Costs initiative and all the anti-poverty organizations "who bring to us the face of poverty and tell the very human stories and situations of people in our community whose basic needs are not being addressed."

## Call to action

A number of Christian churches, the Unitarian Church and the Congregation Agudas Israel have signed a document of support for Poverty Costs, the bishop noted.

"It is a movement to raise awareness and it is appealing to all the political parties and to each and every person to take the steps, to start to address poverty and to make it a priority."

Bolen called for all politicians and the entire community to "rally together around what is very obviously a common good."

Rachel Malena of Upstream urged all those who are concerned about poverty to write their political leaders or to visit the website: [www.povertycosts.ca](http://www.povertycosts.ca) to sign a letter of support for a comprehensive poverty reduction plan.

## Hear the voice of God

Sometimes prayer is a call to hear how the voice of God is making us uncomfortable, said Jodorkovsky.

To conclude the awareness evening, the rabbi led the gathering in prayer, asking God to "help us to understand that we are your partners in making this world a better place."

Jodorkovsky asked God for a blessing upon leaders and politicians, and for the inspiration to challenge leaders to make fighting poverty a priority.

"Give us the strength and determination to work towards solutions and policy changes that can free our sisters and brothers in our province from the chains of poverty," he said, praying "for strength, determination and willpower to do and not only to pray, to become instead of merely to wish."



Betty-Anne Person, Rabbi Claudio Jodorkovsky, Bishop Don Bolen, Vanessa Charles and Rachel Malena (l-r) were speakers at a Poverty 101 information night March 13 at Congregation Agudas Israel Jewish Community Centre.

- Photo by Kiply Yaworski



## Justice and Peace Way of the Cross

Eileen Bear carries the cross to the third station during an ecumenical outdoor Way of the Cross through the streets of Saskatoon on Good Friday morning. Missing and murdered Aboriginal women were remembered in the prayer that she led at the foot of the statue of Chief Whitecap and John Lake. The annual Way of the Cross linked the suffering and death of Jesus to suffering and injustice in today's world. Find a complete report at: [www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/news](http://www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/news)

- Photo by Tim Yaworski



## Justice and Peace

## Priest serving in diocese fears for South Sudan

BY KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI

Fr. Martin Vuni has followed news reports from South Sudan with great fear at the prospect of an escalating civil war and the ongoing suffering of the people in his homeland.

Originally from the Loa parish in the village of Pageri, near the Ugandan border, Vuni recently arrived in the diocese of Saskatoon on a leave of absence from his own diocese. He is presently providing ministry in parishes at Vanscoy, Delisle and Asquith, as well as at Samaritan Place in Saskatoon.

Distressed by news from his home country, Vuni said that he hopes more Canadians will become aware of the situation in South Sudan, and will encourage the Canadian government and religious leaders to take an active role in working for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

"I have, almost on a daily basis, been in contact with the people at home, monitoring through online resources, through friends whom I can reach," said Vuni. "The best chance for peace is advocacy. I am hoping that the world takes this crisis seriously."

Violence in South Sudan



Fr. Martin F. Vuni

broke out Dec. 15 between government troops and those who support the country's former vice president. It is estimated that a half million people have been displaced by the current conflict, with tens of thousands killed.

With a population of some nine million, South Sudan achieved its independence from Sudan in July 2011, through a peaceful referendum after decades of civil war. That fragile peace is now being threatened, along with so much of the rebuilding that has been undertaken in the north-eastern African country.

Christian churches can play a

powerful role in working for peace, Vuni said. "There would not have been peace in 2005 if it had not been for the advocacy that the churches carried out through the entire world."

During years of conflict in South Sudan, it was the churches who worked to bring forward the viewpoint of the people, and to highlight their suffering, and the churches were the primary advocates for peace, said Vuni, noting that too often in peace negotiations the grassroots concerns of ordinary people of the country have not been heard.

The present conflict is about politics, and not about tribalism as is so often portrayed in news reports, stressed Vuni.

"This is not tribalism. It is about people who hold political power, who hijack the state and turn it into their own private organ for making money for themselves. It is not tribalism. It is politics gone awfully bad."

Vuni said that the traditional tribal leaders in South Sudan are not the ones creating conflict. "Almost all of these tribal leaders are very honest; what they also want is peace. But their voices get nowhere. They have no power."

Ordained in 1997 in a Ugandan refugee camp, Vuni's first assignment as a priest was to his ancestral home in the village of Pageri and the parish of Loa in the state of East Equatoria.

The connections between Vuni's home and Saskatoon are particularly close, thanks to a Saskatchewan grassroots non-profit organization, Friends of Loa, which has been connected to the Loa area since about 2005, raising funds to build and repair schools. Vuni was the person "on the ground," connecting the Saskatoon group with local people to determine how best to use funds raised by Friends of Loa.

The connection with the Saskatoon group – and the way it empowered local people to rebuild – had a big impact on the community, Vuni said. "The school, classrooms, staff rooms and now the hostel for girls were constructed, and the school children did come in big numbers and they were accommodated in these facilities and they used these facilities."

While many areas are still waiting for the government to rebuild schools or health centres,



A youth leads prayers for peace in South Sudan, at a service held March 16 at St. Philip Neri parish.

- Photos by Kiply Yaworski

the Friends of Loa initiative demonstrated that something could happen locally with cooperation and teamwork, he added. "There were a lot of local people involved and that was really good. They could see that it was possible to accomplish something."

Vuni remains hopeful that things will again improve for South Sudan. "I do have hope. I think not to have hope for me would be a crime... that is how we have lived to this point," he said. "If I should not have hope now, I think I would have forgotten my past, our past, and how we have lived until now, and how we have kept going."

## YDA continues to support range of sustainable projects in South Sudan

Although violence has rocked parts of South Sudan since December, the Western Equatoria region where a Saskatchewan-based agency is encouraging sustainable development has not been affected, says director Ron Schira.

The Yubu Development Agency (YDA) is continuing with development plans in the Tombura area, including a much-needed expansion to a health centre, he describes.

The recent conflict has prompted fear and concern among area residents, and prevented Schira from making a planned trip to South Sudan this spring, but it is not deterring YDA projects, he says.

"We refuse to stop unless there is no other choice. This is an example of what cooperation and an attitude focused on the common good can lead to," he says of the hope-filled projects YDA is working on.

Local business owner Schira and former South Sudan resident Luka Beru Francis (who initiated YDA as a way to help his home country) are committed to initiating projects that will be self-sustaining in the long run. "The community also wants to move forward as individuals, families and communities with the pride and dignity of knowing they can own their

future," Schira says. Opening in July 2012 as a YDA project, the Yubu Health Clinic treats up to 1,100 patients a month, and within a year of opening, it was recovering 100 per cent of its operating costs, says Schira.

The demand for medical services at the clinic has increased to the point that an expansion is now vital, he adds.

A machine to build bricks for the expansion project is now in place and this source of building materials will assist in getting the project completed in this remote region. Some 7,000 bricks have already been produced.

Other YDA initiatives include skills training, an agricultural program, partnering with the Catholic church and religious sisters in the area, and support for an orphanage.

Schira personally covers the cost of all administration and travel for YDA, ensuring that 100 per cent of any donation goes directly to development projects.

For more information about YDA, which is a registered charity (able to issue tax receipts) see the YDA website at: [www.ydahelps.org/ydanews](http://www.ydahelps.org/ydanews) or contact Ron Schira at: [ronschira@sasktel.net](mailto:ronschira@sasktel.net)



### ED Feehan donations to children in Uganda

Inspired by Educational Assistant Judith Amolo (right), who was born in Kidera, Uganda, and who is still actively involved in her home community, ED Feehan Catholic high school's social justice team has been raising money to supply soccer equipment and running shoes for the many orphaned children of that community. Judith Amolo is part of the locally-based organization called Friends of VAKU ("Victims of Aids in Kidera, Uganda"). During yearly visits, she works with mothers and grandmothers who are living with the effects of HIV and AIDS and raising their children, grandchildren and other orphans throughout their village. Under the leadership of high school chaplain Gayle Brodie (holding soccer ball) and motivated by the need in Kidera, students have spent the last three years sewing soccer bibs, salvaging soccer balls and collecting running shoes for the children of Kidera. The supplies were delivered to the children in Uganda in February.

- Photo by Kate O'Gorman

## Local organization strives to meet needs of orphanage school in Kenya

BY MICHELLE PETERS

"Kenya Orphanage Mission: Jesus Leads Us" is a non-profit organization under the umbrella of International Christian Mission Services. Administration committee members are Betty Possberg and Michelle Peters of Saskatchewan and Jaclyn Sandmaier of Alberta.

The organization raises money to help build a boarding school in Kenya. The school's goal is to house mainly orphans and raise them in the faith, while also providing excellent academics.

Last year, two young women from Saskatchewan, Ana Perrault and Chelsea Pratchler spent three months with the Sisters of the Handmaids of the Holy Child

Jesus, who run the school and project.

There is a growing demand for a sponsorship program to increase the number of orphans in the community. Kenya Orphanage Mission is currently working on putting together this program so that the doors of the school may be made more accessible to children who have a committed sponsor. The planned sponsorship program will ensure that the cost of a child's education and basic needs are met.

"It is with a lot of heartfelt gratitude to God and to you that I write to inform you that we have managed to complete the first floor of the dormitory block," says Sr. Louise Onyeanus. This has been part of the

mission's goal. Right now, the girls have occupied the first floor while the boys are on the ground floor. The completion of the first floor has served to attract more pupils to the dormitory, thirty boys and thirty girls.

As with all projects, there are setbacks. In early February, the one and only school bus was destroyed by an electrical fire. A new bus costs 3.5 million Kenyan shillings and the school is shopping for a used one at 2.5 million shillings (about \$31,600 CAD).

The convent and school were devastated by the incident and morale was at a low point. They have received 1.45 million shillings from the Saskatchewan organization since the accident. Kenya

Orphanage Mission: Jesus Leads Us is the only financial support that they have.

Kenya Orphanage Mission is always looking for young women who are open to visiting the mission, spending time with the school children and orphans, and helping to raise awareness.

Visit the organization's website at [www.jesusleadsus.com](http://www.jesusleadsus.com) to help support, apply to the mission, or read the latest messages from the sisters, or call (306) 682-0775 for more information.

The organization especially asks for prayers: especially that the boarding school might receive the remaining funds needed to purchase a new bus, before the rainy season begins in Kenya.



## NEWS FROM THE SASKATOON MISSION IN BRAZIL

Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, Sask., (Canada)

# Memories of time in Brazil

By Sr. CLAIRE NOVECOSKY, OSU

As Sr. Louise Hinz and I prepare to leave our adopted home in Brazil and return to Saskatchewan this summer, many memories come to mind.

Back in January, 1973, as I stepped onto Brazilian soil for the first time in the city of Belem, our point of entry, I felt like I was stepping into a sauna. The warm, moist air engulfed me and the feeling is still there today.

Not only the warm air, but also the warmth of welcome of our Brazilian brothers and sisters has sustained me throughout these years. Community, family and friends were miles and miles away, but the people here told us many times, “we are your family,” and family they are, with their welcoming, hospitable and open hearts.

The memory of the efforts made to implant the teaching of Vatican II in the liturgy, in the formation of pastoral agents, in the catechetical renewal, in the creating of basic Christian communities, of having the Word as the source and inspiration for our activities, all left a deep mark on everyone involved.

The many liturgical celebrations throughout these years were highlights as we praised and thanked the Lord for young people committing themselves to the different pastoral works in the parish. We celebrated the adults who faithfully visited the sick and shut-ins. We celebrated the 25 years of the mission here and the presence of Al Hergott, one of the pioneer missionaries.

With periods in which there was no regular pastor, we celebrated the Word in many of our communities. It brought

us much joy to see the growth in our lay people as they assumed leadership for these celebrations.

There are many happy memories of the get-togethers we had with our co-missionaries from União dos Palmares, São José da Laje, Ibatiguara.

The hilarious dramatization of the “marriage” of the Saskatoon diocese (represented by Fr. Don Macgillivray) and St. Peter’s Abbey (represented by Sr. Louise Hinz) presided by Pope John Paul II (represented by Sr. Claire Novecosky) back in 1998 was one among many of these precious events.

And we couldn’t forget the sauerkraut when Fr. Les Paquin announced that he would be coming for dinner: his favorite meal!

I recall the patience of our people and John Milton’s poem comes to mind: “They also serve who only stand and wait.” The patience of the people could be seen in waiting to see a doctor, in waiting to receive their old age pension, in waiting to get a job. Waiting, waiting, waiting was a lesson for this Canadian who wanted everything “right now”!

I remember the tragic deaths of Fr. Sylvester Vredegoor, OSB, in Brazil and Sr. Dolores Jansen, OSE, after her return to Saskatchewan – deaths which left a profound sadness, not only for the missionaries, but also for the thousands of people who had loved these two zealous missionaries who became examples of total giving of self.

The illness and eventual deaths of Sr. Maria Doecker, OSU, and Fr. Don Macgillivray drew our people even closer to each other and to us as they mourned the earthly loss of these much-beloved missionaries.



Back in 1998, the amalgamation of the diocese of Saskatoon and St. Peter’s Abbey was dramatized as a marriage by “groom” Fr. Don Macgillivray, “bride” Sr. Louise Hinz, OSU, and “pontiff presider” Sr. Claire Novecosky, OSU.

Celebration! We celebrated much and I think this is what a Christian is meant to do, recognizing all the wonders that God has worked among us and God’s constant presence in our midst.

So we prepare to leave our beloved second homeland in celebration, grateful that our parish has been deeply blessed with the presence of the Carmelite priests who will continue to strengthen, encourage and bring to fruition any seeds we may have planted. Praise be to God.

## Both arriving and departing involve blessings and challenges

By Sr. JEANNINE RONDOT, SMS

In the Brazil Bulletin pages of the fall 2013 Diocesan Newsletter, Sr. Marie-Noëlle quoted from the Book of Ecclesiastes: “There is a time for everything.”

I wish to add that, indeed, there is a time for coming and a time for leaving! Both are presenting quite a challenge to us missionaries who have attempted to live our vocation in the midst of a third world country.

The time for “coming” offered a great

**Missionaries from the diocese of Saskatoon are leaving the Brazil Mission in the summer of 2014 and returning to Saskatchewan. Watch for details about an event Oct. 19 celebrating the Brazil Mission.**

opportunity for opening ourselves to all that awaited us, not the least of which was meeting and journeying with a new people who gradually became our adopted family in the Brazilian world.

This was anything but an overnight achievement, as it challenged us to have a

great deal of patience and perseverance in the day-to-day process of getting to know one another.

It also called for an attentive listening and sharing of life experience in moments of joy and sorrow, of struggle and satisfaction, of hope and disappointment, but all of that was

the fabric of an enrichment and growth for us all. Over the years, we have often been deeply touched by the beautiful simplicity and firm hope in God that these people showed in the difficult situations of life, as they so readily entrusted their cares and concerns to the goodness of God.

Now, as the time for “leaving” approaches, we feel that we have made use of our few “loaves and fishes” to the best of our ability. We are immensely grateful for the opportunity of having associated so closely with these people in their daily struggles and achievements, along with their beautiful spirit of joy amidst so much suffering.

Yes, we are leaving Brazil, but we will surely carry its people in our hearts and prayers for many years to come, as we entrust them to our gracious God for continued blessings upon them.

At this point, the two of us certainly face the near future with mixed emotions in having to say goodbye to all that has been our life and ministry during these past 21 years in Brazil, while preparing for a new chapter back in Canada – not excluding the terribly cold winters!

On the one hand, there is some excitement in seeing and being with you all again while re-integrating our lives among you on Canadian soil. On the other hand, there is a sense of apprehension about the re-entry and re-connecting with the variety of opportunities that Saskatoon offers, in order for us to carry on with the mission of the church among God’s people in new ways. That can be exciting and overwhelming at the same time, but we shall take it step by step, trusting that all shall be well.

Meanwhile, Sr. Marie-Noëlle and I want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Sisters of Mission Service, to the BMAC members and to the whole of the Saskatoon diocese, for your many expressions of kind support as you journeyed with us in heart and prayer throughout all these years

We often realized that we were not alone in this missionary endeavor and trust that this care and concern for our Brazilian brothers and sisters will be continued for years to come. May God bless you abundantly for your generous and faithful hearts!

## Missionary church adapts to changing circumstances

By ABBOT PETER NOVECOSKY, OSB

I had the good fortune to visit the mission teams in Brazil from Jan. 17-24, 2014 accompanied by my sister, Agnes Tropic.

Back in 1967, Abbot Jerome Weber of St. Peter’s Abbey, together with the superiors of the Elizabethan Sisters of Humboldt and the Ursuline Sisters of Bruno, decided to send a mission team to Brazil.

They were responding to a request made by Pope John XXIII at the Second Vatican Council. The three religious superiors invited the people of St. Peter’s Abbey to support the team in a poverty-stricken area of Northeast Brazil. The diocese of Saskatoon had established its own mission in Brazil a couple of years earlier, in 1964.

I first visited Brazil in 1984 when I took a holiday there. After I was elected abbot in 1990, I visited several times, according to our custom. One of those times was in 1992 after the tragic death of Fr. Sylvester Vredegoor, who was run over by a truck while going by motorcycle to celebrate Saturday evening Mass at one of the mission chapels.

The two Ursuline Sisters in Brazil are no longer in the original parish of São José in the Trapiche area of Maceió. They moved to the neighbouring parish of Marechal Deodoro 25 years ago; there they built a convent and a house of formation.

What struck me this time were the material progress that has been made and also the increased influence of drugs.

I remember driving from the Maceió airport in my first visits and seeing families living in shacks made of discarded tin and plastic. The slums the Sisters worked in at that time had open sewers and little infrastructure. While there are still some open sewers, people seem to be better off, living in better houses.

The missionaries worked with social workers to improve the lives of their parishioners, did a lot of biblical, liturgical and catechetical formation with them and, in this way, empowered them to assume their role as Christians in their communities.

However, the use of drugs has more recently become a big problem. The two Sisters of Mission Service currently working in São José da Laje, Srs. Jeannine and Marie-Noëlle Rondot, reported that they used to minister to families in the outlying areas of the town. However, a drug gang has moved into the area, making it unsafe for them to venture into that neighbourhood.

The two Ursuline Sisters, Srs. Claire Novecosky and Louise Hinz, used to walk from community to community in the evenings after dark. They had no fear and it was safe. However, in the last few years they no longer feel safe going out after dark.

The influence of small Pentecostal churches is evident, and we heard loud music and singing each evening.

The gap between the rich and the poor in Brazil continues after a long history. One of the main crops in the Maceió area is still sugar



Abbot Peter Novecosky visits the tomb of Fr. Sylvester Vredegoor, OSB, in Brazil.

cane, though the harvesting is becoming more mechanized. Maceió is also developing into a tourist attraction because of its beautiful beaches.

But, what is most attractive in Brazil is its people. Despite their poverty, the people are friendly and energetic. There are lots of young people. They face many challenges, but the missionaries have given them new hope and opened new opportunities for them. Above all, when they return to Canada, the missionaries will have left behind a strong and beautiful legacy from the diocese of Saskatoon.



## “Our diocese needs the mission more than the mission needs us”

By BISHOP DON BOLEN

Over 25 years ago, while a seminarian at St. Paul's Seminary in Ottawa, I began hearing about the diocesan Brazil Mission from Fr. Bob Ogle, who was residing at the seminary at the time. Although he had only been at the Brazil Mission for six years, it had changed his life and his way of thinking, and he was passionate about Brazil and about Canadians acting responsibly towards our brothers and sisters in the Global South.

Upon coming to Saskatoon four years ago, I was eager to visit the Mission, but other commitments made it difficult to do so. Then word came that the four sisters serving in the Mission would be returning to Canada in the summer of 2014, and I knew that it was “now or never.” I only had a week there, in late February, but it was a week to remember.

My first and constant experience during that week was exceptional hospitality. From being met cheerfully at the airport after an ill-planned 3 a.m. arrival, to being offered one wonderful Brazilian meal after another, to being shuttled about to the various locales of our Mission past and present, the hospitality was overwhelmingly gracious. And while the people of Alagoas are normally very welcoming, it was clear that the hospitality was also a reflection of a relationship that had spanned 50 years.

The deep gratitude that local communities feel towards our

missionaries past and present was readily apparent. Fr. Emile April arranged to be in Brazil when I was there, and walking down the street with him in União dos Palmares was an adventure; we never got more than 10 metres before another person or group of people spotted him and came out to say hello and to welcome him back.

Accompanying Sr. Jeannine and Sr. Marie-Noëlle Rondot to a street Mass in São José da Laje was another adventure, with the deep affection for our Sisters evident in so many ways.

Starting from their home of Santa Rita outside of Maceió, Sr. Claire Novecosky and Sr. Louise Hinz brought me to the *Fazenda de Esperança* (Farm of Hope), where they have befriended and supported a residential program to assist those recovering from addictions. The next day we attended a Mass where they were thanked for their presence of many decades in the region. They are held in great esteem and much loved.

At Ibatiguara, where Fr. Les Paquin served just prior to returning to Canada, a group of people came out to the church when they heard that Padre Les's bishop was there. We spent close to an hour simply sharing stories, drawn together by mutual affection and friendship for our brother Padre Les.

Over the past 50 years, our missionaries have built a bridge between two dioceses, two cultures, two peoples. They went to serve, and their service has been a gift for



Missionaries past and present meet with bishops from Saskatoon and Maceió during a February 2014 visit: Sr. Louise Hinz, Sr. Jeannine Rondot, Bishop Don Bolen, Sr. Marie-Noëlle Rondot, Archbishop “Dom Antônio” Muniz Fernandes, Fr. Emile April, and Sr. Claire Novecosky (l-r). - Photos submitted by Brazil Mission Awareness Committee

the people of Alagoas. In turn they received gifts from the experience.

It was very clear to me when Fr. Les was residing at my house in Saskatoon that he had become part Brazilian, and this is the case for all the missionaries.

The Mission has also educated the whole diocese of Saskatoon about what it is to be part of a universal church, to be a small part of God's great design for the world and all peoples.

Through the Mission we have learned at our very depths that we have brothers and sisters in Brazil. As Fr. Les says, our diocese needs the mission more than the mission needs us.

The single memory most deeply pressed into my mind was that of accompanying Sr. Marie-Noëlle and two local parishioners to visit a slum area above São José da Laje.

The area has increasingly come under the thumb of drug lords and gangs, which has made life even more difficult for the local residents. Sr. Marie-Noëlle had been cautioned not to visit the area, but wanted me to experience ministry to the people there.

Sr. Marie-Noëlle and the women went without fear into the slum, and went from home to home visiting people, giving hugs of support, asking how their families

are doing, bestowing dignity by their affectionate presence. It was an extraordinary experience to see these good women bear Christ and bring his presence to others.

The Holy Spirit has been at work at both diocesan ends of this Mission, and it has been a source of life and blessing.

We will do well later this year to celebrate what has been lived over these past 50 years, to give thanks to our missionaries as we welcome them back to their other home, and to prayerfully discern how we will continue to live this covenantal relationship with the people of the Archdiocese of Maceió.

## Relationships and care continue

By FR. EMILE APRIL

In the years since my return from the Brazil mission in 2001, I have tried to continue a relationship with the people of the parish of União dos Palmares by visiting every two years.

My visit in August of 2010 focused on the impact of the terrible flood at the end of June of that year. On my return there in 2012, I witnessed the efforts of the Archdiocese of Maceió to deal with the problem of women who had given birth during the aftermath of the flood. A project called *Bemvindo Bebe* was created, toward which the diocese of Saskatoon, in a

spirit of solidarity, contributed substantially.

This year, my visit was principally to renew friendships and express a continued interest and care for the people of União dos Palmares, where the diocese of Saskatoon supported a mission for almost 40 years, from 1964 to 2002.

During my recent visit to the people of União dos Palmares, there were a number of highlights. One of these was when I met Padre Clerinaldo, the new pastor of the parish — a wonderful man who is not only filled with missionary zeal in supporting the small communities that make up the

parish, but who is also very aware of the need for transparency with regard to the use of resources (something that had been lacking in the early period following our departure from the parish in 2002).

Another important visit I made was to the family of a young lady who lives in the district called Padre Donald — named after Fr. Don Macgillivray (a priest from the diocese of Saskatoon who served for many years in Brazil). Maria suffers from severe arthritis and other disabilities; she is unable to speak, but her big smile was enough for me to see how happy she was to see us. Since the last time I had visited her, some parishioners had obtained a wheelchair for her, something for which she and her family are very thankful.

Padre Aldo, an Italian missionary priest who had worked in another parish of the archdiocese of Maceió while we were in União dos Palmares many years ago, had also returned to Brazil for a visit while I was there, so I was able to connect with him as well.

The main purpose of his visit this time was to be with a Brazilian friend who is dying of cancer. It was wonderful for the two of us to meet and remember old times when we had worked together on a diocesan committee for land reform. That evening, both he and I were invited to a supper with some other people who had worked with us at the diocesan level during those years.

One advantage that we priests have when we return to the mission for a visit is being invited to celebrate Mass with communities in various areas of the parish. It gives us an opportunity to meet many people at once and to be invited into some of the homes. One area whose



Fr. Emile April visited this family in the district called Padre Donald — named after Fr. Don Macgillivray. Joy and suffering are inseparable.

people have invited me to celebrate Mass each time I go to Brazil is a farm area called Pindoba. It is a beautiful site with all kinds of fruit trees like banana, pineapple, coconut, mango, jaca, orange, etc., but the best part is that the people are overjoyed at seeing us again.

In União dos Palmares itself, I caught the last few days of a ten-day festival in honor of St. Mary Magdalene, the patron saint of the parish. The main event is the procession on the afternoon of Feb. 2. About 20,000 people follow the procession and another 10,000 line the street to watch it go by.

The sights and sounds of this event are absolutely fabulous. There are usually about twenty floats with statues of saints, plus fireworks, people singing, people waving, people in long black dresses or robes fulfilling their promise to a saint, people taking pictures, and dogs weaving in and out. The procession lasts about two hours for those who follow it and about half an hour if you just watch it go by.

The one big highlight of my visit had to be the week that Bishop Don Bolen of Saskatoon joined us.

He fit right in with the people and they loved him. Bishop Don was only able to spend a little time in União dos Palmares, but we did manage to celebrate Mass with the people on a Monday evening. The church was packed.

The remainder of Bishop Don's week was spent visiting the missions where the religious sisters of the Saskatoon diocese are still working. First was São José da Laje with the two Sisters of Mission Service and then Ilha/Island de Santa Rita, near Maceió, where we joined the two Ursulines of Bruno.

Back home now, when people of St. Philip's parish ask me “How was the trip?” I start by saying that the weather was too hot for my body — but then I quickly add that I had a wonderful time; it was partly holiday and partly an effort to maintain a continuing missionary presence in Brazil.

As the missionaries prepare to leave Brazil, it is very encouraging to see and hear what fond memories the Brazilians keep of the 50 years of having a Saskatoon mission team among them.



Sr. Claire Novecosky, Bishop Don Bolen and Sr. Jeannine Rondot (l-r) set out on the water during a recent visit by the bishop to Brazil. One reason for the visit was to discuss how the relationship between Brazil and Saskatoon can continue to be nourished after the four missionaries from Saskatchewan return home. “Lord, when you came to the seashore you weren't seeking the wise or the wealthy, but only asking that I might follow ... Send me where you would have me... I will remember that you are with me” — these words from the hymn *Pescador Des Hommes* by Cesario Gabarain speak to the experience of the Mission in Brazil and also in Saskatoon, and the challenge of letting Jesus steer us in new directions.



# Four profess temporary vows as Benedictines

By Fr. Paul Paproski, OSB

Four novices at St. Peter's Abbey in Muenster entered a new stage in their monastic journey, April 12, when they made their profession of temporary vows in Sts. Peter and Paul Church before Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB, the monastic community and friends and relatives.

The novices have now entered the juniorate, a period of discernment covering three years. The juniorate is the final stage of four and a half years of formation before final or solemn vows.

During the celebration, Novecosky described visiting *Fazenda da Esperança* or Community of Hope, a drug rehabilitation centre in Brazil. He asked the 40 young men in that

program what they felt was the most difficult part of their rehabilitation. Everyone agreed the most challenging struggle was community life, he recalled.

The Community of Hope rehabilitation program has a similarity to monastic life, in the way that it strives to bring a conversion of life in a community setting through prayer and work, Novecosky said.

"There are many ways to seek God, whether through marriage, family, the single vocation, but the monastic way is life guided by three pillars which are very similar to the Community of Hope," the abbot commented.

Monastic life is grounded in vows which include: stability (living in one community); conversion to a monastic way of life (daily change); and obedience (to the Rule of St. Benedict and the abbot). The juniors will be making a commitment to a new life that is centered in love, he said.

The four juniors first entered the monastery in September of 2012 and lived as candidates until March 2013, when they became novices for one year.

The youngest, **Br. Stephen (Linden) Predy**, 20, is originally from Saskatoon. He entered St. Peter's Abbey after studying religious traditions for one year at the University of Saskatchewan through St. Thomas More College.



Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB, with four juniors who made their profession of temporary vows, April 12, 2014 at St. Peter's Abbey in Muenster. They include (l-r): Brother Damian Weber, Brother Benedict van Ginkel, Brother Dominic Leo and Brother Stephen Predy. - Photo by Fr. Paul Paproski, OSB

**Br. Damian (Christopher) Weber**, 37, comes from Hanover, Ontario. He completed a year of studies in theology at the Seminary of Christ the King in Mission, B.C. He resided in the diocese of Antigonish, Nova Scotia, where he lived and worked at Our Lady of Grace Monastery, doing maintenance and assisting in the retreat house.

**Br. Dominic Leo**, 43, was born in Bangalore, India and later moved to Vancouver. He worked as an Information Technology (IT) technician and computer programming analyst in Vancouver. He spent two years of seminary at the Benedictine monastery at

Westminster Abbey in Mission, BC.

**Br. Benedict (Peter) van Ginkel**, 51, is from Winnipeg. He is a musician and taught music in Winnipeg.

The ceremony for profession of temporary vows began with Abbot Peter asking the novices what they wanted of God and his holy church. They responded with, "We ask for the mercy of God and for the grace to serve him faithfully in this community."

The abbot and monastic community responded with approval to their request.

Prior to the ceremony, the novices wrote prepared statements (formulas) seeking entrance into

temporary profession. During the celebration, each read his statement out loud and then signed it on the altar of Sts. Peter and Paul Church.

A traditional part of the ceremony for profession of temporary vows is the singing by the juniors of the "suscipe," a prayer of openness to God's love and hope.

The abbot then presented the juniors with the Rule of St. Benedict and their monastic hoods saying,

"Put on this clothing as a sign of your consecration; may you keep in your heart that dedication to the Lord which this habit outwardly proclaims."



**Next step: Deacon**  
Diocesan seminarian Greg Smith-Windsor will be ordained to the transitional diaconate at 7 p.m. Friday, June 27 at St. Patrick parish in Saskatoon, as the next step on his journey to the priesthood.

Vocations  
and the Education  
of Future Priests  
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ANNUAL APPEAL



Ed Gibney

## Gibney studying at seminary in Rome

By KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI

A lifetime of strong Catholic roots, service as an active member of the Knights of Columbus and a career as a sculptor slowly but surely placed a call to discern the priesthood before Ed Gibney.

In September 2013, Gibney began studying at the Pontifical Beda College in Rome, an English-language seminary with roots in the United Kingdom and a focus on later-in-life vocations. This is also where Brother Cosmas Epifano, OSB, of St. Peter's Abbey in Muenster is studying for the priesthood.

His studies have included scripture, theology, spirituality, pastoral theology, liturgy, philosophy, human development and church history. "The College has a very balanced structure of intellectual, spiritual, pastoral and human formation," Gibney notes.

Bishop Donald Bolen encouraged Gibney to attend the seminary in Rome, maintaining that for an artist, the beauty and history of the "Eternal City" would be an inspiration.

Born in Canora, SK. in 1962, the son of the late Hubert and Adeline (Duncan) Gibney, Ed

Gibney recalls growing up in a family grounded in faith and love of the Church. His prayer life and commitment began to deepen when he was elected to the Saskatchewan Knights of Columbus state board some 12 years ago, serving on various positions over the years, before finally serving a two-year term as State Deputy.

"I wouldn't say there has been a flash of lightning or anything. It has been a steady call to discern," he said in an interview before leaving for the seminary. Find the complete interview online at: [www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/news](http://www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/news)

## Parents of priests and seminarians gather for friendship and support

By DENISE HOUNJET-ROTH

In the last few years, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon has been blessed with a good number of vocations to the priesthood.

But there are no magazine articles, no pamphlets, no books or workshops for the family preparing to have their son ordained to Holy Orders. There are support groups for just about everything, but none for parents who have sons as seminarians.

So, it is no wonder that MOPS (Mothers Of Priests and Seminarians) was born about three years ago when Maureen Young (mother of Fr. Geoffrey Young) and I (mother of Fr. Gregory Roth) were visiting at a local coffee shop.

Shortly thereafter, Maureen Smith-Windsor (mother of seminarian Greg Smith-Windsor) joined the group and MOPS was becoming more than just a passing idea.

We would meet on a regular basis and talk about what it is like having a son as a priest, a deacon and a seminarian. We would discuss experiences, be a support to one another and share a lot of laughs.



Standing in back row (left to right): Maureen Smith-Windsor, Kent Smith-Windsor, Cathy Chatlain, Harvey Chatlain, Louis Roth, Dan Sautner, Maureen Young, Joe Bayda, Jerald Young, Susan Jacobucci, Mario Jacobucci, Jim Penna, and Jim Ramsay. Seated in front row (l-r): Madeleine Yasinski, Dave Yasinski, Denise Hounjet-Roth, Jeanne Syrenne, Madeline Schroh, Barbara Blom, Marion Penna, and Melanie Ramsay. Photo courtesy of Denise Hounjet-Roth

The first organized MOPS event was held during Christmas 2012 at the Young home, with fathers of priests and

seminarians also present. The group had grown to include other parents, and so that evening POPS – Parents of Priests and

Seminarians – was born. It was a great evening of fellowship, food and refreshments.

The second gathering of POPS took place at the Roth residence on Dec. 15, 2013. The group now included parents of any priest serving the Saskatoon Diocese, parents who live in Saskatoon and have a son serving within an order such as the Oblates of Immaculate Mary and Companions of the Cross, and parents who have a son serving the Eparchy.

Present at this gathering were parents of seminarians, parents of priests, parents of a bishop and parents of an archbishop. Harvey Chatlain (father of Archbishop Murray Chatlain) led the group in a prayer of grace and after enjoying a delicious lunch, the parents shared their stories.

It was a wonderful afternoon of joy, thanksgiving and getting to know one another. We look forward to many more gatherings!

POPS exists for support, fellowship and fun. We thank God for the gift of our sons and pray for a plentiful harvest of vocations to the priesthood.



# Chrism Mass 2014

An annual celebration of diocesan unity was held on Monday of Holy Week April 14, 2014 at the Cathedral of the Holy Family in Saskatoon, with hundreds of parish representatives travelling from across the diocese to attend. The Chrism Mass features the blessing of sacred oils to be used in sacraments at Easter and in the year ahead, as well as a renewal of commitment by priests.



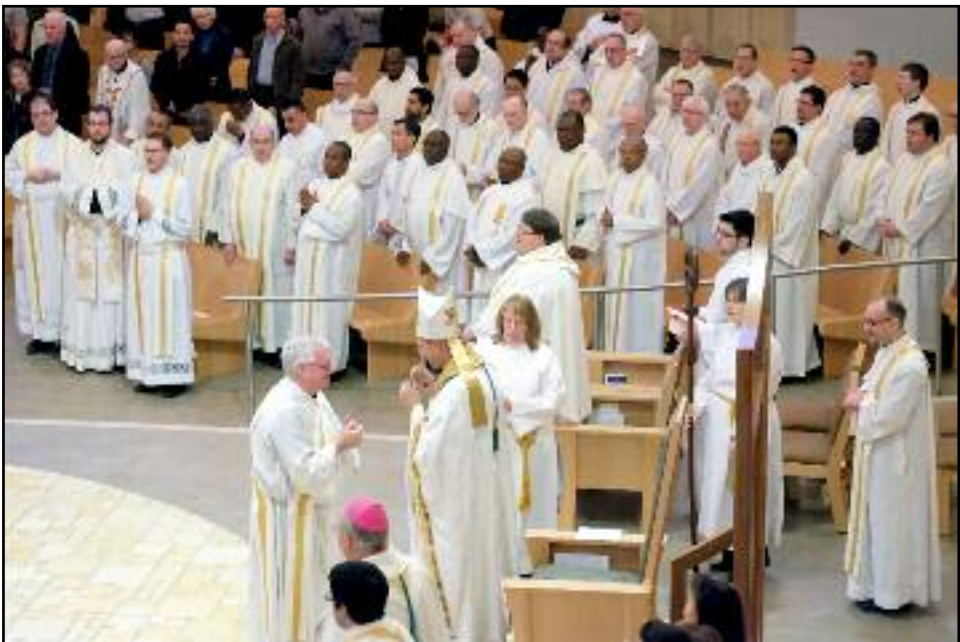
## Bishop Donald Bolen blesses sacred oils:

- **Oil of the Sick** - used in the sacramental anointing of the sick.
- **Oil of Catechumens** - for anointing at baptism.
- **Sacred Chrism** - during the Chrism Mass, the bishop mixes a sweet smelling balsam with the oil, and then all the priests present at the celebration join him in praying over the oil. Sacred Chrism is used at the celebration of baptisms, confirmations, ordinations and for the dedication of churches and altars. Being anointed with oil is a sign of the strengthening presence of Christ, "the Anointed One."



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Parish representatives from across the diocese received the oils.  
- Photo by Kiply Yaworski (All other photos by Tim Yaworski)



## Vocations and Diaconate Discernment

## Permanent Deacons:

## Living out a call to service



## Priestly inspiration

As a child in Nigeria, Fr. Iheanyi Enwerem, OP, was inspired by the example and service of a happy, dedicated priest. In a presentation at Congress Days in the deaneries, the pastor at St. Michael and St. Peter the Apostle parishes described the impact that Fr. Thomas Cunningham, CSSP, had on his life and vocation.



## Ministry of priests

Fr. Matthew Ramsay, pastor at Kerrobert, Major, Dodsland and Luseland, reflected on priesthood during Congress Day. "Priesthood is not about me... it is not something we can do on our own," he began, describing how priests are called to build up the Church through prayer and service, and to act in the person of Christ, sacramentally and as a witness in the world.



## Benedictine brother

"I found a yearning for something more in life; this searching, this conversion encouraged me to deeper encounters with God, people, and creation," said Brother Basil Schaan, OSB, a Monk at St. Peter's Abbey in Muenster, during presentations at three diocesan Congress Days in the Deaneries. He described his own vocation walk, moments along the way of discerning his call and living it out in the Benedictine charism. "The vow of the monastic way of life means for me conversion, changing into a better or more perfect disciple."

BY PAUL LABELLE, DEACON

My name is Paul Labelle and I am a permanent deacon. I am married to Linda and we have four adult children. Next December it will be 30 years since my ordination as a permanent deacon. When I think about it, it really doesn't seem that long!

I am currently incardinated in the diocese of Sault Ste. Marie, but presently living in Saskatoon. That simply means that canonically speaking I am still "attached" to the bishop of the Sault Ste. Marie diocese in Ontario and my service has not yet been transferred to the diocese of Saskatoon.

In Acts 6:2 we read: "the Twelve called a full meeting of the disciples and addressed them, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the word of God so as to give out food; you brothers, must select from among yourselves seven men of good reputation, filled with the Holy Spirit and with wisdom; we will hand over this duty to them and continue to devote ourselves to prayer and to the service of the word'. The whole assembly approved of this proposal.... They presented these (seven) to the Apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them."

This passage is at the heart of the diaconate.

I can tell you, as a deacon, it is one of the most humbling passages of scripture. I think any of us, who would hold ourselves in the light of these words, would find ourselves wanting. I know I do. However, it is the first reference of when others were specifically selected to serve the new Christian community, and is acknowledged as the moment when the "Diaconia" or "Order of Service" was instituted.

This passage also contains two primary principles that are essential when considering the permanent diaconate.

The first is that the leaders of the Church, or diocese, recognize a need that has to be addressed.

The second, equally important, principle is the involvement of the community in the selection of candidates to the diaconate.

There is no question a person



Paul Labelle is a permanent deacon who recently moved to Saskatoon.

may feel a call, however if that call is not at least confirmed by the community as a call to the diaconate then it is most likely a strong desire to serve the community in some way – but is it a call to Holy Orders?

Another important principle is the support and understanding of spouse. Our marriage has been an integral part of my diaconate. Linda and I have often said that our marriage has been ordered holy.

All through my time as a deacon she has been my primary support and collaborator. She has had to make allowances and sacrifices so that I could minister to the people and communities we have been involved with. She has been my sounding board and my reference library. Believe me, she is a lot smarter than I am! She has listened quietly as people have thanked me and congratulated me for a job well done, when she has had a major hand in whatever it is they have been referring to. I cannot stress enough the importance the commitment of a spouse has to the diaconate. I have been blessed with such commitment from my wife, Linda.

The order of deacon really involves three areas of ministry.

There is the **Diaconia of the Word**. In accordance with the General Instructions on the Roman Missal: "It is for the deacon to proclaim the gospel and preach the Word." Canon 764 states: "Deacons have the faculty to preach everywhere, in accordance with the conditions established by law." In his address to priests, deacons, religious and seminarians in Montreal Sept 11, 1984, Pope John Paul II said: "By their preaching, deacons participate in the priestly ministry."

I have been fortunate in that I have had the opportunity to act as deacon in several parishes. In some cases I was assigned to the parish by the bishop. In others, the priest came into a parish I was already in. This second scenario sometimes proved awkward but with dialogue and fraternal care we always managed to work things out.

I also was privileged with being able to preach the Word in those parishes. I call it a privilege, but that doesn't mean it wasn't scary! To be called to stand before a community and break open the Word of God is an awesome thing and a great responsibility!

Nine vocation reflections were presented at Congress Days in the Deaneries as part of a diaconate discernment process (see article on front page). Videos of all the presentations mentioned on Pages 16-17 can be viewed online at: [www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/videos](http://www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/videos)

Presenters were: Bishop Donald Bolen; Fr. Iheanyi Enwerem, OP; Deacon Paul Labelle; Sr. Cindy Lewans, PM; Mark and Darcie Lich; Fr. Matthew Ramsay; Gertrude Rompré; Brother Basil Schaan, OSB; and Deacon Bob Williston.

It takes training, prayer, preparation and yes, gift. Even then, sometimes the homily I wrote was different than the one I delivered! I have often said to myself, even in the middle of a homily, "Where did that come from?"

More than once people have told me how something I said touched them deeply. Often what they expressed seemed to me to have nothing to do with what I thought I said or meant. I knew it was the presence of the Holy Spirit shining through a broken vessel.

There is also the **Diaconia of the Liturgy** or, ministry at the altar. The Catechism of the Catholic Church quotes Canon 835 and says: "According to the tradition of the Church and the provision of law, deacons assist the bishop and priests in the celebration of the divine mysteries."

This means, among other things, the deacon functions alongside the priest at the celebration of the Eucharist. There are parts of the Mass that are the duty of a deacon, when present, but the important thing for a deacon to remember is we are there to celebrate the presence of God, not to impose our "rights."

Service to the altar also gives a deacon the faculty to celebrate baptisms, weddings and funerals. These are opportunities to reach the people of God: sometimes the only opportunity we, as the Church, get. They are sacred moments and not to be treated lightly or with disrespect. When people come forward they have been called and motivated by God.

I have officiated at weddings where mothers and daughters have fought through the rehearsal; where I have had to politely ask a photographer to come down off the altar table; where sometimes it feels like a zoo. But always there has been someone come up to me afterwards with sincere thanks; someone who has had a look of reflection in their eyes; someone who God has given me the privilege of seeing that God has touched them through me.

Canon 530 states the parish priest, "enjoys the particular right of baptizing those entrusted to his pastoral care," but with the permission of the parish priest, "or the presence of necessity," a deacon can baptize.

These opportunities have been a complete joy! From the family who brought their adopted refugee child; to parents who brought three or four children of different ages at the same time, because they had joined our community through RCIA; to the frazzled parents of multiple births; to the many parents who fretted as I held their child in my

extended arms in procession around the church, (they called it the "Lion King" thing) – It has all been complete joy.

Finally there is the **Diaconia of Charity** – that is charity in the sense of caring. Although no more important than the other two, this area of diaconal service is where the deacon is particularly suited to serve.

The "Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons" states: "Their authority is a service of charity which seeks to help and foster all members of a particular Church, so that they may participate, in a spirit of communion and according to their proper charisms, in the life and mission of the Church." #37 *The Juridical Status of the Deacon*.

It goes on to say: "Thus, in the prayer of ordination, the bishop implores God the Father that they may be 'full of all the virtues, sincere in charity, solicitous towards the weak and the poor, humble in their service' (# 147).

Without a doubt this is the one area of service that I have found most fulfilling, humbling, and full of gift.

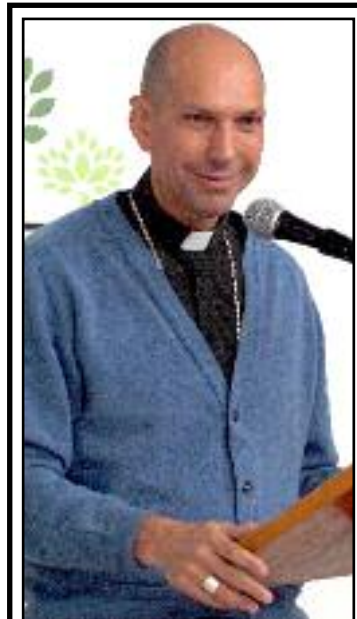
In my working life I was a trade union representative. As deacon, I have been challenged to stand for the right to life in some pretty hostile debates; I have been called to proclaim invocations at international conventions and watched while hundreds of people grew quiet to reflect on the important work of justice they were involved in; and, in spite of proclaiming that I couldn't offer absolution, I have listened to many people confess their fears, weakness and sinfulness, sometimes in bars! But believe me, I have been humbled by the openness of these hurting souls and felt graced with being present on such holy ground.

As I said earlier, I have also been fortunate to be able to serve in several parishes. Sometimes it seemed that we were not always completely successful, but there have also been times where "swords have been hammered" at least into tools for building a new worship space.

I have been present when a parish that seemed at the end of its life was reborn to new life and flourished.

I have seen a neighbourhood reconnect its church and school to develop a breakfast program for local children; not only for children of the Catholic Church and school, but the whole neighbourhood.

I have been present and had a hand in much, but only as a vessel. Many times I have stood back and said, "Wow! What a gift to be here!"



## Vocation of bishop

Bishop Donald Bolen gave his vocation testimony at Congress Day in Humboldt March 8, as well as at the earlier diaconate discernment Congress Days on Jan. 25 in Kindersley and Feb. 1 in Saskatoon.



## Vocations and Diaconate Discernment

# Roots of restoration of diaconate lie in Dachau death camp, describes Deacon Bob Williston

BY BOB WILLISTON, DEACON

Most people might think the restoration of the permanent diaconate began at the Second Vatican Council.

It actually can be traced as far back as the Council of Trent (1545-1563). However, it took the gathering of bishops at Vatican II in the 1960s to finally attend to the possibility of the permanent diaconate being restored as a stable Order of the Catholic Church.

However, many are not aware of what infused the Second Vatican Council to reintroduce this role in the church.

It actually began with the arrest and imprisonment of some 2,600 Catholic priests in the Dachau death camps under the Nazis. During World War II, one out of every 25 deaths at Dachau was a priest.

These priest prisoners were kept in Cellblock 26, known as “Der Priesterblock.”

For some unknown reason, they were permitted to have Mass daily, and even kept the Blessed Sacrament in their block. It was there that the priests began talking about the future of the Church after the war. How could the Church lead with so few priests available to such a deeply wounded flock?

One answer, they felt, would include bringing back an ancient order of service – the permanent diaconate. After the war, some of the surviving priests formed what they called “Diaconate Circles.” They believed the Holy Spirit was calling for a re-institution of the permanent diaconate.

These Diaconate Circles included many lay people and clergy who were dedicated to circles of prayer, service, and charity. Among the notable members of this discernment group were: Fr. Otto Pies, Fr. Wilhelm Schamourill and Fr. Karl Rahner.

Eventually, they presented to the Holy Father and the Church Fathers of the Second Vatican Council their discernment.

This movement gave new weight to the considerations of renewing the permanent diaconate. But it also calls us to attend to one of the ways that the Holy Spirit was guiding the council in making such a radical change in ecclesiology.



**Permanent Deacon Bob Williston is serving as Parish Life Director in parishes at Leader, Lancer, Prelate and Eatonia, as well as pastoral associate at Burstall, Fox Valley, Liebenthal and Richmond.**

took on a role of leadership there.

Most especially, the provincial of the order saw the benefit if I were to apply to then-archbishop of Regina, Rev. Peter Mallon, to consider me for ordination to the diaconate.

This whole process went much more quickly than I could have imagined, as my theological training had already been complete with my having earlier attained a Master of Divinity degree. My many years of experience both on the mission team and as a parish lay minister meant that I – along with Joe Lang – were “fast-tracked” for one year of formation before ordination to the diaconate.

During this year, there was a great deal of consultation with the priests of the archdiocese of Regina, the archbishop, our formation directors, and for me, the people of St. Joseph’s parish, who were very encouraging and positive.

Added to this discernment process were the many conversations we shared with our wives and families. Though the children were young, they became a part of the process as well.

I have to say that when Deacon Joe and I were ordained at Holy Rosary Cathedral on Sept. 3, 1999, the supportive voices of the

archdiocese were etched on my soul, especially as we lay prostrate on the floor and the community sang the Litany of the Saints. To this day, tears well up in me every time I hear that version of the litany. It is the voice of the whole church like giant waves rolling over you as you lie there on the floor. There’s a good reason why they put you on the floor first – because you would end up there eventually! Wow, what an experience of Church!

### Ministry as deacon

Life and ministry did change after ordination. The best way for me to describe the difference is that my evangelizing as a layperson was evangelizing “through the Word”. Now as a deacon I was able to evangelize through both Word and sacrament.

I suppose a good example of this was when I would help to prepare a couple for the sacrament of baptism or marriage as a lay person, I was able to walk with them to the actual service, and then watch as a priest took over the sacramental role of presiding.

As a deacon now, I am able to see the whole process through from preparation to celebrating the ritual itself. I am much more able to speak about the meaning and message of friendship with Jesus and his Church at the very event that we are celebrating.

Their “receptivity” is often much more heightened when someone who has come to know them is speaking to them about faith, rather than someone who has not made that mutual journey.

We live in a sacramental Church. People have times throughout their lives when they call upon the Church for these “sacramental moments” – birth, initiation, marriage, death – all opportunities for the Church to offer an invitation for a deeper relationship with the Lord.

While much of this preparation is done by lay ministers, and will continue to be done by them in community, there are times of heightened awareness when clergy, priests, deacons or even bishops teach, form and instruct from the “sacramental post” of the actual event. The integrity of their

message often relies on a bond of friendship that they have formed with those who are entering into a sacramental commitment.

The receptivity of those receiving sacraments poses a wonderful opportunity for inviting them to become a more committed Catholic Christian.

I feel grateful and uniquely positioned to teach the Word of God, sanctify through the sacraments, and help lead the community in its religious life.

There are many unanswered questions about the permanent diaconate but these will only find resolution by living through them, trusting the Holy Spirit will properly form those who have been called to this order.

As Adam said to Eve as they were leaving the garden: “My dear, we are entering a time of transition.”



### Religious Life

**At Congress Day, Sr. Cindy Lewans of the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary spoke about the call to religious life, with its focus on prayer, simplicity of life, self-offering and living in community. “My deepest joy has been companionship others through hard times, to discover God and meaning in the midst of suffering,” she said.**

## Vocation: call to discipleship in single life

As part of a Congress Day process of discernment in the diocese, Gertrude Rompré, reflected on the meaning of vocation in her life as a single person living the call of discipleship.

Among her observations:

- “My favourite definition of vocation is that of Frederick Buechner. He writes that vocation is that place ‘where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.’ ....That has always been my experience of vocation. The way I see it, being single is a consequence of my following my calling rather than my vocation in itself.”

- “I have always experienced a deep sense of calling in my life and have tried my best to respond to those callings.”

- “As much as I am called to be a disciple, I am also called to be part of a community of disciples. I may be single, but I am deeply connected.”

- “In being called to be a disciple, I have also been called to lay ecclesial ministry. Again, I know that many people share that calling – some are married, some belong to religious communities – but I happen to live out that calling to ministry as a single person.”

- “We are never called to something for nothing. The call to ministry has been wired into my very being, and following that call has done nothing but give me life.”

Find videos of presentations by Gertrude Rompré and other Congress Day speakers at: [www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/videos](http://www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/videos)



**Gertrude Rompré, Director of Mission and Ministry at St. Thomas More College**

### Ordination as deacon

Through my association with the Redemptorists, entitled as a “Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer,” I enjoyed a full life of service to God’s people, evangelizing through retreats, parish missions, and utilizing the gift of music to aid in this proclamation.

For 27 years I travelled across Canada in this role as a missionary. It was a fruitful, positive and challenging experience of ministry in the church. I always credited the Redemptorist Order for providing me with such a life-giving and collaborative ministry.

In 1997, with the shortage of priests beginning to press in on the Redemptorist commitments, it was decided that I would be of tremendous help to their parish ministry (immediately at St. Joseph’s parish in Moose Jaw) if I



**Mark and Darcie Lich and their children Shannon, Scott and Monica Grace: finding God in the every day stuff of marriage and family.**

## Vocation of marriage: a challenge to live in a way that expresses God’s love in the world

Mark and Darcie Lich of St. Patrick’s parish in Saskatoon were among those reflecting on vocation during three Congress Days held across the diocese Jan. 25, Feb. 1 and March 8.

The couple reflected on their call from God to grow in holiness through the sacrament of marriage, describing how their understanding of their vocation has evolved over the past 15-plus years of marriage, and sharing their walk with God as a couple and a family.

Here are a few of their insights:

- “As a particular way of following God, our vocation challenges us to live our marriage in a way that expresses God’s truth and love in the world; it is a call to a life of holiness and service within our own relationship and with our family.”

- “Christian discipleship means a life of service, surrender, and sincere self-giving, with no other end than what is good for the other.”

- “We have been challenged to grow,

through grace, into what we already are: an image of Christ’s love for his Church.”

- “Sometimes, we forgot how our vocation called us to serve each other.... We forgot that in order to be life-giving to others, we had to be life-giving to each other, first.”

- “Although we find blessing in sitting down together every night at the dinner table, attending church on Sunday, and saying bedtime prayers, we have discovered that there is sanctification in sleepless nights with feverish toddlers; homework at the kitchen table; laundry piled on the deep freeze; and fighting over the remote control.”

- “We have been called to holiness and service in our relationship with each other, with our community, and with our children, and we do our best to model God’s love through teaching and example. As we do so, we live in the hope and light of God’s kindness, mercy, and generosity, and trust in his infinite love.”



Vocations and Discernment

Young women find affordable rent, community, and spiritual enrichment at Discernment House

Discernment House in Saskatoon offers a unique housing and faith experience to young women. blessing that I found out about this house. Not only did I mature as a person, but my faith and love for God grew within my heart.”

Located in the University of Saskatchewan neighbourhood, Discernment House is the home of the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary. Each year they open their doors to young women seeking affordable rent, an experience of community, a homey atmosphere, and opportunities for faith growth through prayer, reflection, spiritual direction and service.

Yvonne Dutallas is a university student majoring in anatomy and cell biology. “I am from Calgary and I moved here to continue my studies and be independent from my parents,” she explains. “I found out about the house through an unexpected encounter with a stranger in a restaurant when my family and I visited Saskatoon.”

The blessing of having a place to stay brought other blessings, she notes. “With regards to my faith at that time, I wasn’t much of a believer in God. He wasn’t real for me and I never really placed an effort into nurturing my faith,” Dutallas admits. “It was indeed a

The experience of community has been positive, says Dutallas. “We share colourful memories together and console each other during hard times. The community is a good support when journeying through personal faith and academics. I have never regretted staying in this house and I love the Sisters so dearly – and all my roommates!”

Mariel Marciniak moved into Discernment House in January, after travelling to India with Face to Face Ministries. She is currently studying social work at the U of S.

“Living at the Discernment House has been a great way to continue to my faith formation through community life, the sacraments, and spiritual direction while study at the university.”

Ava Tomasiwicz moved to Saskatoon to continue her arts degree, and purposefully sought out Discernment House as part of “spending a year living a routine more rooted in Christ and to deepen my understanding of what it means



Discernment House is home to several young women each year.

- Photo submitted

to be Catholic.”

She adds: “It has not been in vain; this year I learned about my faith, enjoyed the structure of daily prayer, and discovered more about myself through the guidance of my spiritual director.”

“Without a doubt, this experience has shaped my life, and will continue to influence my choices once I leave this environment. It has truly been a

blessing to spend a year at the Discernment House.”

Joahna Digal says that choosing to live at Discernment House was one of the best decisions she ever made. “I was an overseas applicant when I applied to the live-in program offered by the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary and was fortunately accepted.”

The first-year international student at the U of S is originally

from the Philippines. “Coming to a strange country alone at a very young age with no idea of what Canadian lifestyle could be, can be very hard, but ... the sisters are very supportive and helpful in all of my needs. I really am so grateful to be accepted and be part of their community.”

Digal has only been at Discernment House since January, but she has already been affected by the experience.

“I feel it not only transformed my life but also it has already touched my heart. In living here, I learned that there is something so good about silence. Silence enables me to reflect about life, experience prayer and most importantly it helps me build a closer relationship to God... I am looking forward to what more this program can give me in terms of my spiritual needs and personal growth,” she adds.

The Sisters of the Presentation of Mary are now taking applications for September 2014. For more information contact: Sr. Evelyn Nedelec or Sr. Lucie Hamel at (306) 244-0726 or e-mail: sk.dhouse@gmail.com or see: www.presentationofmary.ca



Discernment retreats for young men and women are held several times a year at Discernment House in Saskatoon.

- Photo submitted by Sisters of the Presentation of Mary

Local discernment retreat provides desired direction

By Francine Audy

Several years ago, I set a goal to walk the Camino de Santiago in September 2014, just before my 50 birthday. I desired to walk the historic pilgrimage trail in France and Spain as a way to take time to actively reflect on what God’s will is for my next 50 years.

God has shown himself faithful in my life beyond all reason, and proven to me abundantly that “I should not fear, because He is providing” for my need. This has brought me to undertake the big task: to let go of my will, my agenda, and put God and his will for me first.

I first met Sr. Evelyn Nedelec, PM, two years ago, when I participated on another walk: a Hike and Pray weekend in June 2012. Since then, Sr. Evelyn invited me several times to participate in “Discernment Weekend I, Personal History” held in October and January of each year at Discernment House, 851 University Drive, Saskatoon, operated by the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary.

Each time, I either forgot about the discernment weekend, or thought: “I am too old for this!”

However, in November 2013, a discussion at work gave the impression that my employment might be precarious. Prompted to think about life priorities, I contacted the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary to see if they were still accepting people for the discernment retreat starting the next day. I was told to “come with the intent of entering into a journey with your life and the spirit.”

The retreat Jan. 10-12, 2014 at Discernment House was led by Sr. Lucie Hamel, PM; Fr. Mark Blom; and Fr. David Purcell, CSsR, with 11 participants. Most were under 30 years old; I was the oldest participant.

It was an intensive retreat with a lot to reflect upon. Our three leaders introduced various methods for discernment. Then, the work began. We collected data/facts on our life through an abundance of questions in eight categories.

We reflected, prayed, revisited our answers and dug some more. Finally, we brought all that information and reflection together by articulating a personal “Spiritual Positioning” – a kind of mission statement for life.

We also learned the importance of letting go. First, we must let go of the most positive/influential event in our lives, so we can welcome what God wants to give us now, without still being mesmerized by what has gone before. Secondly, we must let go of the most negative event in our lives, so we can regain peace.

The weekend ended with each of us creating a Mandala for our “God moment.” A mandala represents unity, infinity. Like playful children we all drew a mandala – this allowed us to access something that can be unconscious.

My mandala was entitled “Let go of safety, Let God guide me.”

At the end of this weekend retreat, I realised that I do not need to walk the Camino anymore, because I have reflected on God’s will for my next 50 years in a packed 2.5 days, without blisters and at a truly bargain price.

My dream now is to bring together a group of 10 to 15 mature adults and ask the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary to provide this same retreat.

It could be a great activity for a group of Lay Formation alumni, people from various pastoral parish councils, or members of the Catholic Women’s League. If this idea is of interest please contact: Francine\_audy@live.com



World Day of Consecrated Life

On the eve of the feast of their founder, Blessed Marie Rivier, the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary in Saskatoon hosted a come and go social event, followed by solemn vespers, to mark the World Day of Consecrated Life Feb. 2. Among the consecrated religious attending were (back, l-r): Sr. Lucie Hamel, PM, Sr. Teresita Kambeitz, OSU, Sr. Bernice Daratha, OSU, Sr. Dolores Buisière, FDLP, Sr. Charlotte Beler, OSU; and (front, l-r): Sr. Alice LeStrat, FDLP, Sr. Evelyn Nedelec, PM, Sr. Magdalen Stengler, OSU, and Sr. Cindy Lewans, PM.

- Photo by Francine Audy



## 13th annual Marriage Appreciation Banquet

# Marriage: a good return

BY BLAKE SITTLER

The 13th annual Marriage Appreciation Banquet and Dance was held March 22 at Holy Spirit parish in Saskatoon.

This annual event is held to give thanks for the many couples and priests who participate in any form of marriage preparation or enrichment across the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

Harry and Judy Strauss were the keynote speakers, addressing the theme of "Marriage: A Good Return."

The title of their talk came from the Book of Ecclesiastes 4:9: "Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor."

Bishop Donald Bolen presided at Mass to begin the evening, and he introduced the keynote speakers at the banquet that followed. Bolen described Pastor Harry Strauss, an associate pastor at Forest Grove Community Church, as a pioneer of ecumenical relations in Saskatoon.

"We have high regard for you Catholics...and for your Pope," said Harry. "He is capturing the

attention of the world with his lifestyle."

"Your celebration of marriage as a sacrament serves as a perpetual reminder of the sacredness of marriage... your [Engaged] Encounter weekends and your 2010 marriage conference were stimulating and inspiring," he added.

Harry and Judy shared five returns that they receive from marriage: companionship, better communication skills, intimacy, children, and spiritual oneness.

"We have a regular date night where we go for walks or bike or just go out for fish and chips. The best kind of Facebook is over candlelight dinner," Harry said.

They highlighted how a couple must plan for success in order to ensure the return of marriage is best.

For Harry and Judy this includes not putting themselves in the wrong place in the wrong time with the wrong person in order to avoid falling into an adulterous relationship. "This may sound conservative in this day and age," said Judy, "but it works."

The Office of Marriage and Family Life is supported by the



The couple referred to a study on conflict in marriage that said that 69 per cent of arguments in marriage are over perpetual problems. The interesting correlating statistic is that both the couples who remained married for a lifetime and those who divorced had the same rate of problems that persist through the whole marriage.

"So what is the difference between happily married couples and those who end up divorced?" Harry asked. "The capacity to manage those perpetual problems with communication skills (is) the key piece."

Judy noted that some of their communication skills have improved through counseling.



Judy and Harry Strauss were guest speakers at the 2014 banquet.

- Photo by Blake Sittler

"I can't change Harry," Judy said, "but I can choose how I react to him. Through counseling I realized that when conflict arises, it is not the two of us battling each other, it's that we have a problem that we need to solve together."

The couple spoke of the importance of sharing affirmation and prayer on a daily basis. The discipline in their marriage forces them to think about sharing some part of their inner life with their spouse. It also allows them to stay on top of any issues that may be

bothering them on a regular basis rather than letting them pile up.

Harry addressed the final return of their marriage with another line from Ecclesiastes: "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves, but a cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

"There is a strength between Judy and me that is God...when spirituality is cultivated in a marriage, the strength of that marriage is multiplied," Harry said.

## Support for those grieving the death of a spouse

"From Mourning to Dawn" is an eight-week grief program designed to offer healing, encouragement and prayerful support for widows and widowers.

Offered through the Diocesan Marriage and Family Life office, "From Mourning to Dawn" is held at the Catholic Pastoral Centre in Saskatoon in the spring and in the fall of the year, and is open to those who have experienced the death of a spouse within the past two months to two years.

"With a few exceptions, husbands and wives who live out their marriage vocation will at some point be left to mourn the death of their spouse," notes coordinator Elan Ehresman. "Although we know this is inevitable, we can never be fully prepared to face all the challenges the loss of our life partner brings."

Since the first group met in September 2012, four grief groups (24 individuals) have embraced this journey. Groups have reunited for ongoing support after several months, and at Christmas all four groups



Facilitator Dianna Knaus leads a session at a recent "Mourning to Dawn" support group gathering for widows and widowers.

- Photo by Kiply Yaworski

came together to share their spirit of renewed hope and purpose.

Using the video series, "From Mourning to Dawn", facilitators – who have also experienced the death of a spouse

– engage with participants on a journey of transformation and healing. As participants share their grief experience and their pain, they receive emotional, physical and spiritual support in a safe, non-threatening environment.

The program provides information about what grief is and how it may affect us, as well as providing an opportunity to work through emotions, adjustments and issues that arise for the widow/widower. Participants, understanding that grief is normal, have permission to grieve, and are invited to explore their grief responses in a respectful, confidential, non-judgmental forum, says facilitator Claire Hawkins.

The eight-week journey is only the beginning of a new chapter, but the lives of the participants and facilitators alike, are often empowered and enriched by the support and shared experience of the group, according to the program facilitators.

"There is strength in knowledge and in knowing we do not walk this path alone, but that others are ready and willing to encourage us as we begin to set some new goals and directions for our lives," says facilitator Dianna Knaus. "While obtaining help for oneself, the opportunity to help someone else often gives participants a sense of self worth and purpose. Through this process, the growth and transformation

becomes a reality in the life of each hurting person."

Comments from program evaluations include:

- "I learned to express my grief and that it is a process to work through. I truly enjoyed the other members of the group – very caring and understanding."

- "Very helpful! I had read and researched grieving prior to the program but never fully understood it until going through the program. The sharing of our experiences with others that understand was especially helpful."

- "Difficult to express what has happened to me but whatever happened – it is good."

- "It was nice to be able to get out and spend time talking and listening with others experiencing the same type of loss."

- "It was helpful with hearing everyone's experiences and knowing I am not alone with my thoughts and feelings!"

- "It brought comfort, understanding and friendship with the whole group that understood this hard time in our lives."

- "I enjoyed sharing with this group and listening to other people's stories. It was nice to have some people closer to my age. The facilitators gave me so much inspiration and hope for my future."

- "... more than I expected. The course that was followed was a good one. As time goes on, my comments and sharing will likely change to some degree. My emotions are still very raw."

- "The program was helpful. The facilitators were willing to share, thus allowing us the participants also to open up and share. The program gave each of us an idea where we were on our grief journey and gave us hope in our journey."

- "I learned about grieving and (how) only you can do it. Everyone grieves differently. Know that you are not the only one."

For more information about the widow and widower support program "From Mourning to Dawn" contact Elan Ehresman, diocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life, at: (306) 659-5839 or e-mail: [cic.elan@saskatoonrcdiocese.com](mailto:cic.elan@saskatoonrcdiocese.com)



### Precious history protected

Archives of the Ursulines of Prelate were recently transferred to the Diocesan Archives stored at the Catholic Pastoral Centre in Saskatoon; (l-r): Chancellor Reb Materi; Sr. Magdalen Stengler, OSU; Sr. Lucy Palm, OSU; Sr. Anne Lewans, OSU; Andy Praksas and Diocesan Archivist Margaret Sanche. Seven congregations of women religious will be placing their historical records in the long term care of the Diocesan Archives at the new Cathedral and Catholic Pastoral Centre.

- Photo by Kiply Yaworski



Christian Initiation and Catechetics



With the help of parishioners at St. Mary's parish in Richmond, the Little Angels purchased and wrapped gifts for less fortunate children.  
- Photo submitted by Little Angels group, Richmond

Richmound children learn about Jesus while also having fun together in group

By ALICIA HELLMAN AND TAMMY SOVERAN-WELTE

Richmound's Little Angels began Oct. 5, 2013.

The small but mighty group includes six children: Brock Schell, Hunter Glass, Nevan Tucscherer, Nevaya Hellman, Patience Hellman and Tayler Soveran-Welte along with two leaders: Alicia Hellman and Tammy Soveran-Welte.

The Little Angels group gets together twice a month on Wednesday mornings from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. at one of the leader's homes.

The reason we meet at the home is we want to teach the children that Jesus is everywhere not only in church. Although the purpose is education when we get together, we also try to make it fun.

The first class was about coming

together and uniting as a group. Each of the children created an image of their own hand and decorated it. Then the hands were all joined together. This is now the focal point of our circle as we pray.

Throughout the Christmas holidays, the children had the opportunity to go around and collect money at Mass at St. Mary's parish in Richmond.

Not only were the children very excited about this, but it also brought smiles to many of the church members. One parishioner observed how nice it was to see so many children at Mass.

With the money they collected, the children went and bought toys for local children who are not as fortunate, as well as purchasing enough food to make nine baskets full

of food for community members in need.

Another highlight for the Little Angels group was a field trip to visit Fr. Hoang Nguyen. Fr. Hoang had the children gather in a circle and allowed the children the freedom to ask questions. Throughout the process, not only did the children learn, but we as leaders learned a lot as well. Overall, the children had a fantastic time and enjoyed Father's company and his creative origami.

The time that we have with the children may be short, but when we come together as a group we are on a mission to spread love and happiness any way we can.

The children are taking what they have learned into their homes and passing on their knowledge of Jesus to their parents and siblings.

RCIA process helps baptized Catholic take up her faith

By KYLA BRIETTA

*Editor's note: Baptized as an infant, Kyla Brietta joined the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults – RCIA – at Holy Spirit parish in Saskatoon in 2012, and was confirmed and received her first Eucharist at last year's Easter Vigil in March 2013. She recently finished her first year of studies at St. Peter's College in Muenster.*

I received the sacrament of baptism at St. John Vianney in Walnut Creek on Dec. 28, 1996. There began my Christian initiation – the start of my journey in the Catholic faith. While my journey began in 1996, the road to becoming a full Catholic was far from over.

From moving, attending and not attending various schools and parishes, it has been a long wait.

Being present in a Catholic Church has always been as natural to me as breathing, or, indeed, coming home.

There was always a draw within my heart to join fully into the Catholic Church, yet

never was the feeling as strong in me as it was in Grade 8.

Going to Georges Vanier Catholic School in Saskatoon meant a long walk to reach the neighbourhood church, a trip that was taken at the beginning and the end of each school year. At the end of Grade 8, the trip happened on a hot day. So many blocks ahead on the road, and I was excited beyond words that I was going to get to go to church, and also that I would be singing with the choir. This great joy awakened a desire within me to go every Sunday.

Alas, the wishes of a 13-year-old with so very little understanding of the way to church remained unsatisfied for many years. Every time I did get to go to church, I recognized that I was missing something: the more-than-just-symbolic body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, even more was I missing out by not attending church at all, going through a rocky three years of high school – some of the most difficult years of my life.

Often I took refuge solely in God's gift to me: writing. By my Grade 11 year, it had become abundantly clear to me that prayer alone was not enough to satisfy my soul.

During the Easter Vigil of 2012, I witnessed two members of RCIA become full Catholics – a moment of recognition for me. Although I had no idea what RCIA was, or how I could become a part of it, my heart's yearning to attend Mass and become a full member of the Church was reawakened.

At 16, I knew that I could walk this journey on my own, and that I could wait no longer to achieve this desire.

At last in September 2012 I began attending weekly Masses. Although I thought myself far away from receiving my sacraments, one day as I brought home the bulletin, my Mum pointed out the section on joining RCIA. She contacted the church after talking with me, and the rest is a blur. I am so blessed to have received this opportunity to journey through RCIA in 2012-2013.

Throughout those seven months I met so many people, whether they had journeyed through RCIA themselves, grew up Catholic, or were joining the faith alongside me. Each Monday night, meeting with Arch McKay, the facilitator of RCIA, the other candidates and catechumens, as well as sponsors and relatives has brought me so much fresh knowledge and perspective on the meaning of being Catholic. Some nights, our fellowship and community was also blessed with the presence of Fr. Geoffrey Young, the associate pastor of Holy Spirit at the time, who often added insights to our discussions.

At the Christmas Mass in 2012, I joined the parish youth choir as part of my ministry in the Church. It has been wonderful to grow with that community alongside the one that I found at RCIA.

In the final weeks of preparation to receive the sacraments, Arch suggested choosing a patron saint for confirmation. After much reading and deliberation, I chose St. Rita of Cascia, patroness of impossible causes. This decision did not come easily, as the stories of many of the saints indeed captured my attention. Yet it seemed appropriate to choose St. Rita since I had thought that it would be impossible for me to receive my sacraments before I turned 18, and given that my Catholic grandmother's middle name was also Rita.

I attended a retreat at Queen's House with the RCIA fellowship on March 23, 2013, led by Sharon Powell. It was a great experience to reflect on the Easter Vigil readings together. After lunch Fr. Geoffrey dropped by so that we could celebrate our first reconciliation. The liberty I felt after the retreat went into a poem ("Our Prayer") and has stayed with me ever since.

At last, the Easter Vigil! On my wrist, I wore the rosary bracelet, gifted to me by my godmother, Aunt Irene. A friend, Lia, supported me in coming to the Mass, along with my mother, sitting directly behind me and my sponsor Dawn.

After the Liturgy of the Word, the Litany of the Saints began, and everyone from the RCIA group followed the family of the children being baptized out to the baptismal font: we witnessed the blessing of the holy water, as well as the baptisms of the two young girls.

When we returned to our seats, my excitement turned to nervousness.

"Suddenly, I feel so unprepared," I whispered to Dawn. "You can do this," she said.

Arch called each of the candidates to stand at the front, one by one. We all proclaimed: "I believe and profess all that the Holy Catholic Church believes, teaches, and proclaims to be revealed by God."

At this point we were joined by our sponsors and godparents (Dawn agreed to be both sponsor and a "God-friend" for my confirmation), and we went forward in turn to receive the sacrament of confirmation.

Fr. Geoffrey said a blessing over me, applying chrism oil to my forehead, to which I replied, "Amen."

Dawn's hand remained strong on my shoulder as Fr. Geoffrey extended his hand. "Peace be with you." "And with your Spirit," I responded.

When all the confirmations were complete, the congregation stood and welcomed us into their community.

During the offertory hymn, I joined others from RCIA to bring forth the gifts. When I returned to my seat, all I could think was, "Wow, this is it."

I think I was still dazed from the experience of the whole night, when I received my First Communion from Fr. Geoffrey. The enormity of what I had just received only hit me moments after, as I stepped forward to receive the Blood of Christ.

After the Mass, and receiving many congratulations, I ran into one of the altar boys, Zach (who is discerning priesthood). He gave me a congratulatory gift of a rosary from the Holy Sepulchre. I then found Fr. Geoffrey by the baptismal font and he blessed both my rosary bracelet and the rosary from the Holy Sepulchre.

As I reflect on Holy Week and the Vigil, I see that I have been so blessed, especially this past year, with friends and family, the community, as well as now the gift of the Holy Spirit. I look forward to continuing my journey through the Mystagogy and beyond.

Join the

Miscarriage Awareness Committee

for the Blessing of the

Tree of Hope

Sunday, June 22, 2014

6:30 p.m.

Queen's House grounds  
601 Taylor Street West  
Saskatoon

Parents, siblings, grandparents and all others affected by miscarriage, recently or long ago and anytime in between, are invited to attend.

We will gather in prayer to remember our babies, precious family members, that we have lost through miscarriage.

The celebration of life will continue with fellowship following the ceremony.

For more information contact Shannon Granger at (306) 955-0089

The Miscarriage Awareness Committee is funded through the Bishop's Annual Appeal

Christos Anesti!



## Christian Initiation and Catechetics

## Setting hearts ablaze for a life-long faith

BY FRANCINE AUDY

Formation that nurtures and inspires committed, lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ within a Christian community is the goal of catechesis for every age and in every setting, participants heard Feb. 7-8 at a workshop in Saskatoon.

Organized by the diocesan Christian Initiation and Catechetics (CIC) office, the *Setting Hearts Ablaze* workshop was facilitated by Diana Macalintal and Nick Wagner, a married couple from San Jose, California with extensive experience in liturgical and parish ministry. They are co-founders of Team RCIA and experts in ways to implement and enliven the catechumenate process.

The Church's 1998 general directory for catechesis states that RCIA – the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults – should be the model for all catechesis, said Wagner.

"The first reason why RCIA is such an important model for formation is that it just plain works," he asserted. "It's the way that Jesus taught."

The RCIA process is gradual and takes place within the community. It is grounded in the paschal mystery of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, involves conversion, and embodies good "adult" learning principals focused on the individual situation of each inquirer or catechumen, described the facilitators.

Those are characteristics of RCIA that ministry leaders, catechists and evangelists in every parish ministry can use as a model for all that they are doing, the couple asserted.

"Start believing that we are initiating every day of the year," stated the Team RCIA presentation.

"Move the process outside the team and into the community... begin sharing your personal experience of the paschal mystery and move from imparting knowledge to entering into intimacy with the person of Jesus."

It is important to pay attention to each person, recognizing that their faith journey varies according to the many forms of God's grace, the free cooperation of the individual, the action of the Church, and circumstances of time and place, summarized the facilitators.

Sharing experiences of the Risen Christ in the Mass, in breaking open scripture, in daily life, and in peak experiences is part of the ongoing formation of disciples, they said, describing "event-based catechesis" involving the recollection and reflection on an event, which leads to catechesis, connection and conversion.

Using the scriptural passage about the disciples on the road to Emmaus from the Gospel of Luke, Macalintal and Wagner modeled the process, leading the group



Representatives of parishes from across the diocese of Saskatoon and beyond participated in the Saskatoon workshop about forming lifelong disciples. - Photo by Kiply Yaworski

through a reflection of that Biblical account as a summary of the catechetical process. Just like Jesus with the disheartened disciples in the Emmaus story, this involves walking with people, accepting where they are in their journey, accompanying them and listening to their hopes and fears, before gradually using scriptures, liturgy and the journey itself to bring them to a point of recognizing and encountering the Risen Lord – with "hearts burning within us" – prompting a new direction for their journey, one that leads ever closer to Jesus and to the Christian community.

This is a process that will enrich every kind of faith formation – whether in RCIA, in sacramental preparation, catechism classes, youth ministry or other parish or diocesan ministry or outreach, the gathering heard.

The vision for the workshop – and for catechetics and faith formation in the diocese of Saskatoon – recognizes the "need to use the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults as a model for all parish formation," said Michelle Sieben, one of the CIC coordinators in the diocese of Saskatoon who organized the conference.

It is a vision of faith formation that was close to the heart of the late Msgr. Michael Koch, who introduced it to Sieben and others in the diocese. Sieben also described discovering the Team RCIA website created by Macalintal and Wagner. "I discovered their vision," she said, and "wanted to share that vision with the whole diocese."

Encountering the concept has proven to be her own "road to Emmaus" experience, said Sieben.

"My heart has been burning with this vision ever since." Finding practical ways to implement the concept in parishes is the challenge that the workshop hopefully helped to address, she added.

The goal was "to give those in ministry a new and fresh idea to work with, because what we are doing now does not seem to be working," Sieben said.

Questions and challenges raised by participants during the workshop included: "How do you make this (gradual process) work for typical parishioners who don't like committing to lengthy stuff?" and "How do

you encourage a catechumen to become an involved member of the community without it seeming that it is a rule or a directive?"

Another participant wrote: "How do we begin to recognize the story (of the paschal mystery) in our own lives?" while another identified the challenge of moving away from "imparting knowledge" to "intimacy with Jesus."

Finding creative ways to implement the RCIA principles for children's catechesis, and how to determine what each individual needs from the initiation or formation process were other questions raised by participants.

The workshop included a working session to design and plan a catechetical session that involved the parish community, using real events recorded in local parish bulletins.

Near the end of the workshop, participants identified a number of insights and priorities. One person pointed to a need to involve the "whole parish in catechesis," so "evangelization occurs for all." Another stressed that the "recognition of Christ takes attentiveness."

Another long-time catechist reminded those involved in faith formation efforts (with adults or children) that "we may not see the fruits of the seeds we've sown right away." So it is important to "be patient and let God work on His time," she said.

Nick Wagner first got involved with RCIA when serving in campus ministry in the 1980s. "Later, I studied the history of the catechumenate in graduate school at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota," he said.

The workshop presented in Saskatoon is part of TeamRCIA's ongoing effort to "help parishes form Christians for Life," Wagner said.

"We developed an RCIA Institute to take to parishes in North America, and the diocese of Saskatoon was one of the collaborators in helping us develop that." In planning the workshop, diocesan CIC coordinators asked for something broader than just RCIA, he noted. "So we worked with them to customize an event that met the needs of the diocese."



Michelle Sieben of the diocesan Christian Initiation and Catechetics (CIC) office is enthusiastic about the RCIA process as a model for faith formation and catechesis. - Photo by Kiply Yaworski

Diana Macalintal, is the director of worship for the diocese of San Jose. Holding a Master of Arts in Theology, she has served as a liturgist, music director and catechumenate coordinator in campus, parish and diocesan ministries for over 25 years. Both Macalintal and Wagner have written numerous articles, and Wagner is the author of several books related to RCIA.

Some 55 participants came from about 12 city and 20 rural parishes, with a group from Winnipeg also attending the Feb. 7-8 *Setting Hearts Ablaze* workshop.

Earlier on Feb. 7, Macalintal also facilitated a day-long diocesan music workshop for 45 participants focused on the *Music of the Triduum*.

Sieben said feedback for the diocesan events held at St. Anne's parish in Saskatoon was extremely positive. She said that her own most memorable memory of the CIC workshop was an evening prayer experience based on the Road to Emmaus.

For more information, visit the TeamRCIA.com website or contact the CIC team at the Catholic Pastoral Centre in the diocese of Saskatoon by calling (306) 242-1500 or e-mailing CIC team coordinators at:

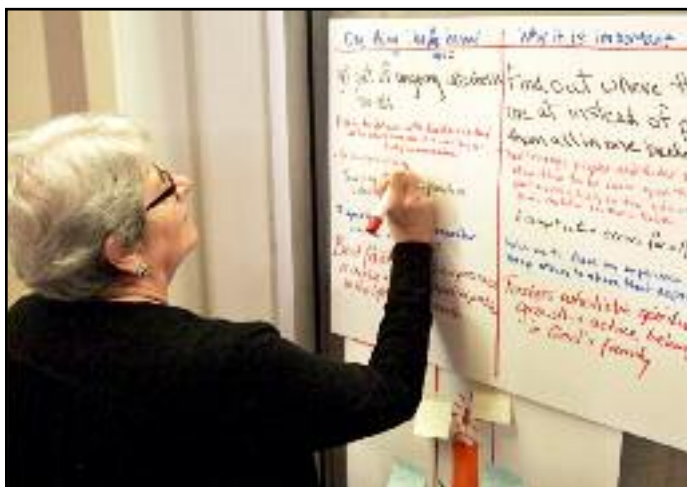
cic.michelle@saskatoonrcdiocese.com  
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Nick Wagner and Diana Macalintal of Team RCIA facilitated the workshop. - Photo by Kiply Yaworski

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Eileen Provost of St. Mary's parish in Saskatoon provides feedback during one workshop session. - Photo by Kiply Yaworski



Diana Macalintal presented a music workshop focused on celebration of the Triduum. The music workshop was held during the day Feb. 7, just before the CIC conference Feb. 7-8 at St. Anne's parish in Saskatoon. - Photo by Tim Yaworski



# Youth ministry conference: Mercadante stresses authentic relationships and need for Jesus

By KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI

Youth ministry leaders gathered at the Cathedral of the Holy Family in Saskatoon Jan. 17-19, 2014 for a national conference filled with information and formation, affirmation and celebration.

The Canadian Catholic Youth Ministry Network (CCYMN) conference focused on the theme “@home” and included keynote talks by Frank Mercadante of Cultivation Ministries; by Bishops Albert Thévenot, Bryan Bayda and Donald Bolen; and by Masson Normand of Pulse; as well as a range of breakout sessions, personal testimonies, prayer experiences and social events.

In the face of declining church attendance, it is vital to evangelize effectively, even though the words “youth evangelization” often inspire much fear and trepidation, said Mercadante. “Evangelization is simply sharing the incredible deal we have in Jesus.”

This generation of “millennials” (born between 1982 and 2002) grew up immersed in technology and social media, and value authenticity, honesty, interaction and experience, he said. They do not respond to guilt trips or attractive programming. Rather, this generation of youth are seeking relationships and meaning.

“Today’s young people are looking for community in the

church. They don’t want to simply go to church and go through the motions,” Mercadante said. “They want to know that they have authentic relationships with the people around them. They want a place where people know them by name.”

The current generation of teenagers is closer to their parents than many previous generations, and parents are a big influence on their spirituality, said Mercadante. “Youth ministry has to move toward parent ministry,” he stressed.

He recommended that youth ministers invest a third of their time to recruiting and training parents and other adult leaders who can serve as significant adults and mentors in the lives of teens and young people. “There is a correlation between dropping out and not having a personal connection.”

Youth are hungry for acceptance for who they really are, he added. “They want relationships to stand on their own: they want to know that you love them because you love them... even when they disagree with you.”

Millennials grew up feeling special, in an era of reality television and participation trophies.

“A special generation wants a special purpose in life,” he noted. “The truth is that we are not over-



Youth ministry leaders from across the country participate in prayer at the Cathedral of the Holy Family during the national CCYMN conference Jan. 17-19 in Saskatoon. - Photo by Kiply Yaworski

challenging our young people out of the church. We are boring them out. We have to engage their imaginations and plant seeds for great dreams, to bring the kingdom to the world around them. This is a generation that will respond when we give them a vision.”

Mercadante also noted the many stresses youth are experiencing today. Introducing practices such as contemplative prayer should be part of youth ministry, he said.

“Millennials connect on brokenness,” he added, stressing the power of the fundamental gospel message: “we are messed up, we need Jesus.”

Response to CCYMN’s event in Saskatoon was enthusiastic.

“CCYMN was one of the most amazing experiences I’ve ever had at a conference. To make a professional grade national conference feel like home is a nearly impossible feat, but CCYMN pulled it off... It was a truly God-filled weekend,” wrote one participant.

The “@home” theme reflected the importance of making authentic connections in youth ministry and in all evangelization, said conference committee member Colm Leyne, coordinator of youth ministry for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

“Faith is about finding one’s true home. We want to ensure those connections happen in our ministry, that we are creating communities that are truly hospitable and caring, where youth feel a sense of belonging,” said Leyne.

Organizers also wanted to give participants a taste of Saskatchewan hospitality and culture, and the weekend included an Aboriginal prayer experience, a visit to the Ukrainian Catholic shrine of the Venerable Nun Martyrs Olympia and Laurentia, as well as celebration of Theophany and the

Great Water Blessing at St. George Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral – as well as a dance.

Prayer was an integral part of the weekend, with praise and worship sessions opening the conference and continuing throughout the weekend, as well as ongoing Eucharistic Adoration in the cathedral’s Queen of Peace chapel.

The gathering also coincided with annual general meetings for CCYMN and for the Western Canadian Association of Catholic Youth Ministers (WCACYM).

Youth Ministry is supported by the





Praise and worship during a Kids’ Purity Rally Feb. 22 in Saskatoon, organized by the Pure Witness team. - Photo by Laura Rice

## Pure Witness Ministries winds up year of events; recruiting young adult leaders

By LAURA RICE

Pure Witness Ministries hosted a Catholic Dinner Theatre March 2 in Saskatoon, featuring a variety of the music, comical skits and dramas that their team takes into schools and parishes as they travel across Western Canada proclaiming the gospel to youth and families.

Various members of the community, including Bishop Don Bolen, spoke about the positive impact that Pure Witness has been making in the lives of youth and families.

This year, seven young Catholic adults have been working as missionaries to promote the message of challenging Catholics to set Christ at the heart of their lives, putting on

local events within the diocese of Saskatoon for youth and families, as well as ALIVE Retreats (“Always Living In View of Eternity”) in schools and parishes throughout Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C.

Local events are wrapped up for this school year, but watch the website [www.purewitness.com](http://www.purewitness.com) for dates and locations of events beginning in September.

YEP (Youth Evangelization Program) runs once a month, six times a year, for students in grades 8 to 12 from across Saskatchewan. YEP is a fun-filled day with praise and worship, games, talks, and fellowship for Catholic youth who want to grow in their faith.

ReConnect events are also put

on throughout the year for families to gather together as a community, celebrating the rich Catholic culture through a variety of events such as dances, adoration nights, variety nights and more.

A choral program started this year, which brings together youth ages 4 to 18 every Monday night to learn music, share faith, and to increase participation in the liturgy of the Mass, while growing in fellowship and having fun.

Pure Witness is seeking dynamic, committed young Catholic adults who want to offer a year of their lives in missionary service to the Church. For more information check out the “Join” page at: [www.purewitness.com](http://www.purewitness.com)

### Youth Ministry Events

**Rock the Mount 2014 Saturday, Aug. 16** - an inspiring and fun Catholic youth/family all-day outdoor event at Our Lady of Mount Carmel shrine 20 miles west of Humboldt, SK. with music and speakers, and Mass on the picturesque Mount Carmel hill with Bishop Don Bolen. Find out more at [www.rockthemount.com](http://www.rockthemount.com) Like us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/rockthemount>

**FacetoFace BUS TRIP 2014**- FacetoFace Ministries is taking youth (grades 9 to 12) on a nine-day Bus Trip Pilgrimage **July 23-31** to St. Paul, MN, USA. Includes participating in a weekend Steubenville Conference with 2000 other Catholic youth, two days of service work around St. Paul and Fargo, visiting an amusement park, and much more. This trip will change your life! Chaperones 21+ are needed as well. For more information go to [www.f2f.ca](http://www.f2f.ca), call Erin McQuaid at 306-716-7729, or e-mail: [bustrip@f2f.ca](mailto:bustrip@f2f.ca)

**Youth ministry seminars** - Western Canadian Association of Catholic Youth Ministers (WCACYM), will be offering courses this summer which pertain to **Pastoral Care of Youth (Teens)** facilitated by Anne Walsh. WCACYM Summer Seminars will take place at Queen’s House of Retreats in Saskatoon, **July 19-25**. The course Pastoral Care of Youth will be held **July 24-25** (two days). Check out “Summer Sem” information at [www.wcacym.ca](http://www.wcacym.ca) or call WCACYM summer seminar coordinator Sr. Maybelle dela Cuz at: (306) 682-2106, or e-mail: [wcacym.summerseminar@yahoo.ca](mailto:wcacym.summerseminar@yahoo.ca)

Life and Family Week May 12-19

**Diocesan Date Day: Saturday, May 17**

When was the last time you went on a date with your spouse?

Plan to spend the day and evening doing something fun together (perhaps one chooses a morning activity– like shooting gophers or spending a leisurely time over coffee – then the other decides how the two of you will spend the afternoon – In the evening, prepare supper with each other or go out to a local cafe. The date does not have to be complicated or expensive.).

Then, register whatever you did for your **Diocesan Date Day** at: [codirector@saskatoonrcdiocese.com](mailto:codirector@saskatoonrcdiocese.com) or call: (306) 242-1500 or toll free: 1-877-661-5005 and **your name will be entered into a draw for a night at the Temple Garden Spa in Moose Jaw.** For more details check out the website at: [www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/dateday](http://www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/dateday)



# The Joy of the Gospel

By KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI

The words and spirit of Pope Francis were explored during three sessions held in the diocese of Saskatoon in Lent 2014.

Evangelii Gaudium – or *The Joy of the Gospel* – an apostolic exhortation written by Pope Francis, was the focus of a diocesan Foundations: *Exploring Our Faith Together* series held at St. Paul's Co-Cathedral in Saskatoon March 19, March 26 and April 2.

Issued Nov. 24, 2013 on the Feast of Christ the King, *The Joy of the Gospel* grew out of the work of a 2012 bishops' synod on evangelization.

The five chapters of *The Joy of the Gospel* are dedicated to the Church's missionary transformation, the crisis of communal commitment, the proclamation of the gospel, the social dimension of evangelization, and becoming "spirit-filled evangelizers." Written around the theme of Christian joy, the document emphasizes rediscovering the original source of evangelization for today's world and offers a map for the Church's pastoral mission.

Series facilitators Sr. Teresita Kambeitz, OSU, and Fr. Bernard de Margerie journeyed through *The Joy of the Gospel* with the near-capacity crowd that filled the parish hall for all three evenings.

The two speakers alternated their presentations throughout the series, with Kambeitz using visuals and familiar examples to bring the message of the exhortation close to home, and de Margerie examining the meaning, impact and repercussions of the pope's vision for the faithful.

Kambeitz pointed to three key words that summarize the document: encounter, periphery and priority.

Central to *The Joy of the Gospel* is the encounter with the risen Christ, who "is presently alive, powerfully active and personally near," she stressed. "We are talking about a living Christ who is with us in

our midst." The encounter with Christ is the "dynamite" of the gospel, like falling in love, that transforms us and sends us out with energy and enthusiasm, Kambeitz said.

As for the word periphery, "Pope Francis urges us to go out of our comfort zone into our discomfort zone and go to the periphery, to the edge," she said.

In taking that encounter with Christ and moving to the periphery, the priority for Pope Francis is the poor, said Kambeitz.

The document provides inspiration, raises questions and poses challenges for every Catholic Christian and for the Church, said de Margerie.

The call to missionary conversion and the call to personal and ecclesial renewal cannot be deferred, according to the document. It also provides an awareness and reflection about the realities of today's evangelization field: "To what movements in society do we say no, and to what signs of the times do we say yes?"

*The Joy of the Gospel* also deals with temptations that face pastoral workers (to neglect the mission and focus on maintenance for instance), as well as addressing the influence of the Church in society, and the call to eliminate the structural causes of poverty, de Margerie cited.

At the heart of Pope Francis' message about evangelization is the fundamental role of the first announcement of the gospel or the "kerygma," de Margerie stressed, quoting from Paragraph 164: "This first proclamation must ring out over and over: 'Jesus Christ loves you: he gave his life to save you and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.'"

He continued: "Nothing is more solid, profound, secure, meaningful and wisdom-filled than that initial proclamation. All Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into the kerygma."

That personal and powerful experience and witness to God's saving love is what is



Sr. Teresita Kambeitz, OSU, and Fr. Bernard de Margerie led the diocesan Foundations: *Exploring Our Faith Together* sessions on *The Joy of the Gospel* written by Pope Francis.

- Photo by Kiply Yaworski

most needed today according to Pope Francis, said de Margerie. "Have our people learned that primary, good news? That news of God's saving love?"

The Pope calls for presenting the gospel message in a spirit of approachability, patience and warmth, ever ready to dialogue and to welcome, rather than "hammering with judgment," said de Margerie.

As for the social and communal repercussions of that kerygma message of God's all-powerful, merciful, saving love, Pope Francis insists upon the importance of inclusion of the poor in society and among God's people, said de Margerie.

Again he quoted from the document: "Only this will ensure that 'in every Christian community the poor feel at home. Would not this approach be the greatest and most effective presentation of the good news of the kingdom?'"

*The Joy of the Gospel* includes an examination of conscience for Christians and for society about matters of the economy,

justice, the common good and the needs of the poor, de Margerie described, walking through key paragraphs.

It is not enough to simply read *The Joy of the Gospel*, but we are called as individuals and as Church to grapple with its challenges, he said.

"Then we can begin to give an answer to the question of what we should do about it in our lives, in our parishes and our diocese," de Margerie said, describing the new papal document as a gift to the Church. "Now how can the big bodies in the church apply *The Joy of the Gospel*?" he queried.

De Margerie strongly encouraged listeners to continue to wrestle with the document, to read it carefully and let it sink into their hearts and minds.

Available from booksellers (such as Universal Church Supplies in Saskatoon) in printed form, *The Joy of the Gospel* can also be found on the Vatican website at: <http://www.vatican.va> by clicking on the link to "Apostolic Exhortations".

## Prayerfully preparing for Easter

By KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI

In a three-part Lenten series offered by the Foundations: *Exploring Our Faith Together* office of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, facilitator Gisele Bauche explored the nature of spirituality and different kinds of prayer.

Each of the three sessions at the Cathedral of the Holy Family included a focus on the gospel reading from the Sunday before: the profound readings from the gospel of John found in Lent during the Year A cycle of readings, and which are used during the scrutiny Sundays for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), including the stories about the Samaritan woman at the well, the healing of the man born blind, and the raising of Lazarus. Each evening in the series concluded with prayer, using forms such as Taizé prayer, meditation and Lectio Divina.

"There is a hunger in our world for stillness, and a great desire to deepen our prayer life," said Foundations coordinator Sharon Powell about the decision to again offer a Lenten series with a prayer focus. Powell noted that in the RCIA process, Lent is a time of purification and enlightenment that prepares the elect for their baptism at the Easter Vigil. For the entire parish, Lent is also a prayerful preparation for the Easter renewal of baptismal promises.

During the series, Bauche discussed the nature of spirituality, which includes a profound need to take time out for solitude and prayer.



Gisele Bauche led the Foundations Lenten prayer series.

- Photo by Kiply Yaworski

"We need air, we need food, we need sleep – but close behind those, we need solitude. We need prayer."

She described the importance of "holy listening" in our spiritual journey, which she said involves "listening with the ears of the heart." Bauche urged her listeners to take time out to be present to others and to strive to live in God's presence.

"The fundamental message is that human life is the home of God," she stressed. "We must be able to experience God in our ordinary lives, knowing that in the ordinariness of life, God is there," Bauche said, adding that it is a mistake to try and compartmentalize our experience of God, and confine God to only one specific area of life. "The truth is that God is not far from you or I."

Another element of spirituality is God's call to do small things with great love, said Bauche, quoting Mother Teresa.

This becomes manifest in our connections with others – "in a handshake, in kindness to another person, being present to another who needs us," listed Bauche. "We receive in our giving, more than we ever give."

Finally she stressed the profound spiritual impact of nurturing an attitude of gratitude and thanksgiving, quoting Meister Eckhart: "If the only prayer we remember is that of gratitude, it is enough."

The final session April 7 included a reflection on the simple and beautiful story about the raising of Lazarus. The gospel reveals Jesus in the fullness of his humanity, deeply affected by the death of his beloved friend, she pointed out.

"The story is also about each one of us. Jesus comes to cause us to rise up, to become fully alive," said Bauche. "He is ready to come to the areas of our lives that are in the tomb; areas of shadows... Jesus calls you and I out of the tomb which we carry within us. We hear him call us to come out, and the command we long to hear for ourselves: 'untie him and let him go.' That is the truth of our faith: that Jesus really does set us free."

(The diocesan adult faith formation office of Foundations: *Exploring Our Faith Together* is supported by the Bishop's Annual Appeal.)



Conference speakers Dr. Peter Fitch, Bishop Don Bolen and Dr. Robert Stackpole at St. Therese in Bruno.

- Photo by Francine Audy

## Divine Mercy Conference held

By FRANCINE AUDY

The 5th annual Divine Mercy Conference was held March 6-9 at St. Therese Institute of Faith and Mission in Bruno, SK, involving some 90 participants, including students, clergy and visitors.

The theme of this year's Lenten conference was "*Flames of Mercy, Learning to Suffer Well*."

Bishop Donald Bolen opened the 2014 conference talking about creation, covenant, incarnation and resurrection – themes of salvation history that are illustrated in the stained glass of the diocesan cathedral.

Keynote speaker was Dr. Peter Fitch, author of *Learning to Suffer Well* and dean of ministry studies at St. Stephen's University in St. Stephen, New Brunswick.

Fitch presented a pastoral application of the main theme, including talks about learning to suffer well; the heart and the skills of a healer; learning to pray well; ways to break sins, habits, and

addictions; and the glory of God in all of life.

His sessions were packed with abundant examples easy to relate to and the participants were invited to join the conversation.

Dr. Robert Stackpole – who is now the Assistant Director of Formation at St. Therese Institute, as well as the Director of the John Paul II Institute of Divine Mercy – presented academic and theological background on the theme, with presentations on divine revelation, on the problem of evil, and on redemptive suffering.

The conference offered abundant periods of prayer including the communal rosary; the Chaplet of Divine Mercy; praise and worship sessions led by the students of St. Therese; and adoration and benediction led by conference chaplain, Rev. Ephraim Mensah of St. Augustine parish in Humboldt.

Many priests from the area were also on hand to provide the sacrament of reconciliation.



## Queen's House offers hospitable space for meeting, planning or celebrating

BY BRENDAN BITZ

Queen's House continues to be a place where our community gathers and the many faces of conversation, reflection, faith and spirituality are able to connect in a spirit of hospitality and welcome.

Many expressions of faith and community continue to find a place at Queen's House. Here individuals and groups can share, be strengthened and celebrate their work in the world.

To this end, please consider Queen's House as a setting – to meet, to celebrate, to plan, to worship and to learn.

Upcoming opportunities of note:

• **Diarmuid O'Murchu** presents his retreat on "*Reading the Signs of the Times in*

*Our Rapidly Changing World*" **June 16-18**

• **Bob McKeon** presents on "*Social Justice and Spirituality*" **June 21**

• **Fr. Joseph Schnier** offers a five-day Ignatian Retreat **July 1-6**

• **Marg Copeland and Fr. Paul Fachel** present a Centering Prayer Retreat **July 11-13**

• **Fr. Ron Rolheiser** will share "*Fear and Her Many Children – Exploring the Roots and Origins of Religious Fear*" **July 14-17**

Queen's House is located at 601 Taylor Street West in Saskatoon, on the east bank of the South Saskatchewan River.

For registration or other information call (306) 242-1916 or visit the website at [www.queenshouse.org](http://www.queenshouse.org) to review programs, event opportunities and offerings.



### "A Blessing, Not a Burden"

Facilitator Mary Deutscher (*left*) speaks to one of the small groups engaged in discussion at an evening reflecting on the importance of providing loving, quality care to the elderly, sick and dying. "A Blessing, Not a Burden" was held Nov. 19 at Samaritan Place, organized by the Catholic Health Association of Saskatchewan (CHAS) and the diocesan Justice and Peace office to address myths and misconceptions about palliative care and other end-of-life issues. Speakers included Sandra Kary, executive director of CHAS and vice-chair of the Saskatchewan Hospice Palliative Care Association. "Palliative care actively enhances the quality of life," Kary stressed. Palliative care does not only take place in hospital but can happen in other settings: at home, in a residential hospice or care home, she noted. Speaker Gordon DesBrisay then described his experience "as a passenger on three palliative journeys" – walking with his father, his wife and a friend through sickness and death. He described how he and his wife used the website [www.caringbridge.com](http://www.caringbridge.com) to keep family and friends connected and up-to-date during his wife's illness. Mary Deutscher of the diocesan Justice and Peace Commission concluded the evening, addressing the issue of euthanasia.

- Photo by Kiply Yaworski

## Summer program in ecumenical studies

The Prairie Centre for Ecumenism will launch a new Program in Ecumenical Studies and Formation June 24-27 in Saskatoon.

This is a three-year program dedicated to forming Christians in the theology, history and practice of ecumenism within the churches of Canada and abroad.

Anyone who wishes to increase their knowledge of the ecumenical movement for greater participation is welcome to attend. The program assumes no prior theological training and will be offered during the final week of June each summer.

During this first year of the program, seven modules will be presented, including topics such as:

- "Biblical Foundations of Ecumenism"
- "Spiritual Ecumenism"
- "History of Ecumenism"
- "Principles of Ecumenical Theology"
- "Mapping Ecumenism"

An integration session will be held to wind up the four-day course.

The second and third years of the

program will continue with advanced modules dedicated to themes such as ecumenical dialogues (theory, attitudes, methods and discussion of actual dialogues); the practice of ecumenism in common witness and mission; ecumenical covenants; ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue; cultural issues; ecumenical courtesy; ecumenical leadership; inter-church families; challenging issues (Eucharistic sharing, sexuality and gender, petrine ministry); ecumenism and social justice; and religious freedom.

The first year of the program will begin Tuesday, June 24 with afternoon registration and an opening session, followed by dinner and evening worship.

Continuing each day until Friday, June 27, the first year of the program will conclude with an afternoon integration session and closing workshop.

For more information contact Dr. Darren Dahl at [director@pcecumenism.ca](mailto:director@pcecumenism.ca) or visit the website at [www.pcecumenism.ca](http://www.pcecumenism.ca)



### Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Rev. Amanda Currie of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Rev. Dr. Sandra Beardsall, Professor at St. Andrew's College (United Church of Canada), Saskatoon Catholic Bishop Donald Bolen and Nick Jesson, ecumenical officer of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon and the Bishop's Assistant for Ecumenical Relations (*l-r*) were all members of the Canadian team that prepared Week of Prayer for Christian Unity materials for 2014, which were used round the world, including in Saskatoon prayer services Jan. 19-26. The four members of the writing team were on hand for an introductory workshop about the Week of Prayer theme "Has Christ Been Divided?" and a process for the discernment of ecumenical gifts held Jan. 18 at St. Philip Neri parish in Saskatoon. Fr. Bernard de Margerie preached at the Week of Prayer opening Jan. 19 at Mount Royal Mennonite Church, while Beardsall preached at the closing service Jan. 26 at Knox United Church. The closing included "an ecumenical exchange of spiritual gifts" – a symbolic liturgical gesture of communion and diversity between Christian traditions, with symbols signifying particular gifts that could be shared and received by the whole church.

- Photo by Kiply Yaworski



### Diocesan CWL Council

At the 79th annual diocesan convention of the Catholic Women's League, hosted by the council at St. Mary's parish in Fox Valley on April 28, a new diocesan CWL executive was elected. Find the complete story about the diocesan convention on the news site at: [www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/news](http://www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/news)

- Photo by Kiply Yaworski

## CWL offers "Catch the Fire" – and adds "S'mores"

"Be who you are meant to be and you will set the world on fire!" said St. Catherine of Sienna. That is the inspiration behind a Catholic Women's League (CWL) leadership training program entitled *Catch the Fire!*

The Saskatoon Diocesan Council of the CWL has trained presenters who are ready and willing to share *Catch the Fire!* with local councils.

Contact Frances Stang, president of the diocesan CWL council for more information about hosting

a workshop: (306) 753-2059 or e-mail: [frances.stang@gmail.com](mailto:frances.stang@gmail.com)

An overview of the *Catch the Fire!* program can be found online at: [www.cwl.ca](http://www.cwl.ca) under "Resources."

*Catch the Fire!* is designed to help CWL members "love the League, feel the sisterhood and experience the joy of being a League member."

As a follow up to *Catch the Fire!* another new program is also being launched, entitled *S'mores*.

"Many people recognize a S'more as a special treat, a decadent

dessert or that sweet morsel that comes at the end of a campfire night. For us in the League, a S'more is something special that comes after *Catch the Fire!* – like dessert," says Barbara Dowding, CWL national president-elect.

*S'mores* are a collection of workshops intended to empower and energize League leadership, as "the next step for those who expressed a desire to take their knowledge and understanding of the League to another level," said Dowding.



### BUILDING THE CHURCH, LIVING THE GOSPEL

By Margaret F. Sanche, author  
Daniel J. Classen, photographer

*Designed and typeset by Donald Ward  
With an introduction by Bishop Donald Bolen*

Photographs and descriptions of 99 parish churches and worship spaces in our diocese (including three present and past cathedrals)

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Also Available: *Transfiguring Prairie Skies:  
Stained Glass at Cathedral of the Holy Family*  
by Bishop Donald Bolen and artist Sarah Hall; Price: \$25



# Ouverture officielle du Centre paroissial Sts-Martyrs-Canadiens

Mgr. Don Bolen a béni le nouveau Centre paroissial Sts-Martyrs-Canadiens le dimanche 6 avril 2014, après avoir célébré la messe avec l'abbé André Poilièvre et l'abbé Bernard de Margerie.

Le programme comprenait: maître de cérémonie: Raymond D. Lepage; mots de bienvenue de Ron Sirois, président du Conseil paroissial Sts-Martyrs; bénédiction par l'abbé André Poilièvre; un mot de la porte-parole des Filles de la Providence, Soeur Dolores Bussière; une réflexion par l'abbé Bernard de Margerie, puis quelques mots de la porte-parole du Comité de construction du Centre Dorothée Gaudet-Cousin.

«Ça prend toute une paroisse pour bâtir un centre paroissial» a déclaré Dorothée Gaudet-Cousin, paroissienne, membre des comités de construction, de finance, et de prélèvement de fonds.

Elle a présenté un bref historique du nouveau centre paroissial:

**2003** - Fin de la rénovation liturgique de l'église... rêve de l'abbé Bernard. Merci de votre engagement à ce projet, l'abbé, projet si bien réalisé... elle est très belle notre église et nous en sommes très fiers!

**2004** - Début des discussions portant sur une nouvelle salle paroissiale rattachée à l'église.

**2005** - Premier vote sur une nouvelle construction... pas assez d'appui des paroissiens... mais les besoins sont toujours là avec une salle vieillissante et nécessitant de réparations majeures.

**2006 à 2007** - Réflexions et délibérations portant sur les rénovations importantes à faire à l'ancienne salle versus la construction d'une nouvelle.

**2008** - 2e vote sur la construction = 76% en faveur!

**2009** - Planification de la nouvelle salle.

**2010** - Embauche (provisoire) de la firme d'architectes AODBT.

- Suite de la planification avec un Comité consultatif de paroissiens et paroissiennes – une vingtaine – qui ont beaucoup contribué à divers secteurs du nouveau centre: bureaux, cuisine, sacristie, salles de rangement, salle multi-fonctions,



- Photo par Kiply Yaworski

etc. «Merci à vous tous pour vos idées et votre précieuse contribution.»

**2011** - Vente de l'ancienne salle et des 3 lots pour la somme de 605 000\$ à Maxi's Excavating de Saskatoon... un très gros merci à Vince et Glen Dziadyk.

- Ce terrain et cette salle avaient été achetés au début des années '80, grâce en

grande partie, aux efforts et à la vision de Marcien Gaudet, paroissien à ce moment-là, – ce qui nous permet aujourd'hui les finances pour nous donner ce centre paroissial!

**2012** - Déménagement du presbytère et préparation du terrain.

**2013** - Début de la construction avec Carmont Construction.

**2014** - Nous voilà! «Voilà ce que l'on s'est donné comme paroissiens!»

«Je voudrais vous dire que le projet est le résultat d'absolument tous et chacun – dans un grand esprit de collaboration, de générosité et d'engagement à notre paroisse» dit Gaudet-Cousin. «Soyons en fiers! Merci à la Providence! Merci à tous! Et félicitations!

## New parish centre officially opened with joyful celebration

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

Saskatoon's Francophone Catholic parish marked an historic milestone April 6, joyfully celebrating the official dedication of a new parish centre attached to Sts-Martyrs-Canadiens church.

The new parish centre, which includes a hall, offices, a state of the art kitchen, a sacristy, storage rooms, and a multi-function room, takes the place of a parish hall located a few blocks away from the church building. The old hall property was sold for \$605,000 to Maxi's Excavating in Saskatoon.

Bishop Donald Bolen presided at Mass with Priest Moderators Fr. Bernard de Margerie and Fr. André Poilièvre, before the parish community moved into the new parish centre for the blessing. Bolen walked through the hall, which was packed with

parishioners and families gathered for the official dedication, a catered meal and a program of speakers.

Master of Ceremonies Raymond D. Lepage introduced Ron Sirois, president of the parish council, who welcomed everyone to the celebration. The program also included reflections by de Margerie, Sr. Dolores Bussière and Dorothée Gaudet-Cousin.

Gaudet-Cousin provided a brief history of the parish centre project, describing how discussions about a new hall began after a 2003 renovation of the church building. The land and the hall itself had been purchased in the early 1980s, thanks to the efforts and vision of parishioner Marcien Gaudet, the gathering heard.

A vote was first held about the proposed

construction project in 2005, but there was not enough support to go ahead.

In the years that followed, reflections and deliberations continued about the need for repairs and renovations of the old off-site hall versus construction of a new building attached to the church.

Another vote was held in 2008, this time with 76 per cent in favour of proceeding with construction of a new parish centre.

In 2012 the site was prepared, with construction starting in 2013.

An advisory committee of parishioners assisted in planning and recommendations for various parts of the new centre, and many others helped with various aspects of the project, described Gaudet-Cousin, thanking all those who helped with the project or donated in any way.

## St. Thomas More College expansion opens on university campus

By JACQUIE BERG

For more than 75 years, the Catholic college on campus, St. Thomas More (STM), has been offering University of Saskatchewan students a unique alternative when selecting courses in Arts and Sciences and engaging in the college experience.

“By providing an intimate scholarly setting within the University of Saskatchewan, students are given access to the best of both worlds: exposure to the dynamic intellectual stimulation of a large, thriving research-intensive university, while being a member of a much smaller academic community that is equally stimulating in terms of promoting intellectual, personal and spiritual development,” says STM president, Terry Downey.

Offering over 200 arts and science courses, St. Thomas More College has its own student services department, campus ministry team and student union, an outstanding cafeteria (Choices), renowned student club (Newman Centre), theatre club (Newman Players) and glee club (Newman Sounds). STM also houses its own library, galleries and a chapel celebrating both Roman Catholic and Byzantine liturgies.

In the fall of 2012, STM launched an ambitious \$6-million *Creating More* campaign which incorporated plans to expand its existing building along College Drive and establish an Endowed Chair in Catholic Studies.



A view of the STM expansion along College Drive. - Photo by Jacquie Berg

The campaign launch was immediately successful with several major donations received, allowing STM to proceed with construction. The first classes were held in the new addition this January. The expansion was officially opened in a celebration April 11.

The project added 20,000 square feet to the federated Catholic college, with new and renovated space including classrooms and offices, research space and student study areas. It was the first major addition to the college since 1967.

“We have 350 new student seats, which increases capacity by almost 75 per cent,” reports STM's chief financial officer and director of administration, Derrin Raffey.

The additional space is crucial because, while there are 2,000 students enrolled through St. Thomas More College, the number of individual course enrollments is almost 8,500. “Previously we had space for only 50 per cent of students taking classes through the college. The other 50 per cent had to take place at other buildings on

the U of S campus. That created confusion as to what really was an STM course.”

The other major improvement is more quiet study space and more social space. “STM now has a 1,000-square-foot, dedicated study space with four break-out rooms and built-in audio visual. The atrium itself offers 2,000 more square feet of informal study space that also serves as quiet space and can be used 365 days a year,” he says.

New construction also included improvements to technology in classrooms along with opportunities for remote or distance learning opportunities.

There are two notable money-saving features incorporated in the new addition, Raffey adds. “LED lighting and automated controls will see STM save \$25,000 a year in electricity costs. The addition also allowed us to build our own heating plant, independent of the university's heating system, providing another \$75,000 in savings annually.”

Downey notes the results of the *Creating More* campaign's other initiative – the Chair for Catholic Studies – are equally positive.

“The Leslie and Irene Dubé \$1-million endowment will support scholarship and research related to Catholic teaching and tradition, foster Catholic education, and promote ecumenical dialogue and awareness of other faith traditions. It will serve as intellectual leadership for STM and the broader Catholic community.”

“The Chair has already sponsored a number of lectures and conferences each year,” he reports. “Once the endowment is built, we'll have a person fill the position but for right now we're using it to attract excellent speakers and events for the community.”

Dianne Anton, development officer said the campaign has so far raised \$4 million of the \$6 million goal. “We've had great support and some extraordinary individual donations. This allowed us to proceed with the expansion and the Chair in Catholic studies before the campaign was concluded.”

Anton adds that staff and faculty of St. Thomas More College were also very supportive of the *Creating More* campaign. “The majority of our staff and faculty have generously contributed to the campaign which shows they are committed to STM and ensuring excellence in teaching opportunities for students.”

Anton reminds the community that the campaign is not over. “We wanted to raise \$2 million for the

Chair and \$4 million for the building, so we're still a little shy of the goal.”

### Official opening

A number of special guests brought greetings at the official opening of the new building April 11, including Bishop Donald Bolen.

“Through the prayers of St. Thomas More and St. Basil, may this college help our community in the knowledge that our work is not an end in itself, but must find application for the good of humanity,” prayed the bishop.

Treaty Commissioner George Lafond welcomed those gathered for the grand opening program to Treaty 6 territory. He noted the importance of spirituality and learning at STM and in the lives of First Nations people.

“We must close the gap between Catholicism and First Nations spirituality. They must be bound together,” Lafond said, before presenting a work of art to STM president Dr. Terrence Downey to demonstrate reconciliation and spiritual connection.

Ilene Busch-Vishniac, University of Saskatchewan president and vice-chancellor, welcomed the expansion and its contribution to the entire campus, and described the value of the university's relationship with the Catholic college. Provincial minister of advanced education Rob Norris brought greetings from the premier.

For information on STM or the campaign visit: stmcollege.ca



# New salary grid implemented across diocese

A new salary grid was implemented March 1, 2014 for the employees of the diocese of Saskatoon, both in parishes and at the Catholic Pastoral Centre.

The new grid will mean higher salaries for pastoral workers, administration and custodial staff. Increased salaries for priests will also be gradually implemented over the next five years.

In early 2013, Bishop Donald Bolen asked a sub-committee of the diocesan Salary and Benefits Committee to review the diocesan salary grid and to propose revisions.

"Since I arrived as Bishop, and in conversation with Bishop Albert (former Saskatoon Bishop LeGat), salaries have been an important topic of dialogue and a pressing concern," says Bolen.

Since the early 1990s, the diocese has provided a normative salary grid for lay pastoral employees. That salary grid has been adjusted for cost of living and annual raises for some 20 years. In recent years it became apparent that the grid had fallen behind, as salaries began to affect retention rates and morale among employees.

"We have a dual responsibility when it comes to employing people in the Church," says Leah Perrault,



**Pat Clarke was chair of the salary grid sub-committee.**

- Photo by Kiply Yaworski

director of pastoral services for the diocese.

"The gospel makes it clear that ministry is not primarily about money, but rather it is a response to God's call. Those who feel called to work for the Church are not going to earn the same kind of money that they could make in other industries. At the same time, however, the social justice teaching of our tradition reminds us that employers are called to pay just and living wages to those who labour."

Over the spring and summer of 2013, the sub-committee assessed

North American, national and regional trends in church compensation for employees, trying to balance both the need to increase salaries and the often-declining revenue bases of parishes.

Holy Family Cathedral Administrator Patrick Clarke chaired the sub-committee.

"Our sub-committee worked diligently through the entire process to hold two gospel values in tension, namely: the dignity of the human person and our responsibility as employers to honour that dignity by paying a just wage and at the same time, that those of us who feel called to work in Christ's church would do so in a spirit of generosity knowing full well that we will not be rewarded in the same fashion as those who work in the corporate world," says Clarke.

"I believe the grids, although not perfect, do a good job of honouring both of these values," he says.

Through the fall of 2013, pastors, parish life directors, staff and parish finance and pastoral council members across the diocese were asked to provide feedback on the committee's first draft of the salary grid at Congress Days in October and during a series of meetings held across the diocese in late November.

As a result of that consultation, the committee added two new grids to the original pastoral salary grid, one for custodial and maintenance staff and another for administrative and bookkeeping staff.

In January, the proposed grids went to the Diocesan Finance Committee and the Administrative Council, where final changes were made and the grids were approved. All three grids went into effect March 1, 2014.

At the same time, the Council of Priests underwent a review of national clergy salaries, and recommended that the diocese work to increase priest salaries as well. The clergy are not tied to the same grid as lay employees, but had also fallen behind.

"The new salary is still below the national average," says Rev. Pius Schroh, the chair of the Priest Personnel Committee, "but it is closer to that of other dioceses our size."

The priests' salary adjustments will be implemented gradually over the next five years, to minimize the impact to parish budgets.

All of the new grids will place additional financial pressure on parishes and the diocese, and that is not something that the bishop is taking lightly.

"For many of our parish communities, additional expenses are worrisome," acknowledges Bolen.

"The new grids have 21 steps, both to move us gradually towards higher salaries, and to allow our parish pastors flexibility in being prudent with financial and pastoral resources," he says.

"I have strongly encouraged the parishes and the diocese to move toward gradual implementation, while at the same time we all work diligently to develop strong and forward-thinking stewardship planning. There are many rising expenses for all of us, and we need to be careful not treat our employees as though their salaries are a fixed expense, when other bills rise with inflation," says the bishop.

Where parishes are struggling, the Catholic Pastoral Centre is prepared to offer support through the finance office, the stewardship office of the Catholic Foundation, and through pastoral services, notes Perrault.

Parishes struggling to make ends meet are being encouraged to work creatively and faithfully in their own setting and with the diocese to ensure that parish life is vibrant and healthy today and into the future, she says.

## Grateful for tax season as a time to count blessings

By JOCELYNE HAMOLINE

I am grateful when the tax season comes. First of all, my Dad taught me that when we pay taxes, it is a sign that we have been blessed by God with an income: so this is a time to give thanks for the previous year and the gift of having a job and an income. A second reason I am grateful at tax time is that I manage my finances to ensure that I always receive a refund – this becomes a source of funds that I can use to invest, pay off a bill, save, use to help someone else and/or have a bit of fun.

Are taxes a form of charity? A significant percentage of our taxes are used for what could be considered charitable purposes: social services, housing assistance, public healthcare and public education, to name a few. Historically, many of these services were provided by the church, often through religious congregations or orders of priests, monks or sisters. However, that still left many

needs unmet, and gradually over the years, governments began to tax citizens to redistribute wealth as a way to provide these important services for the sake of the common good.

Even so, the needs of our society continue to exceed what governments are able or willing to support. Additional personal "charity" is still required to fill in the gaps, to support and improve our society, and to share our blessings with others.

In Jewish law and tradition, tithing (contributing 10 per cent of one's income) became a shared levy to support the poor and provide for other religious needs (the church). Jewish law calls upon the faithful to sacrifice some material trimmings or personal indulgences for the sake of the greater good. This includes personal charity that goes far beyond paying taxes.

Nor does simply paying taxes develop the personal virtue produced by charitable giving.

In order to become aware of the sorrows and misery of the poor, of those afflicted with illness, or those hurt by injustice, one must take personal initiative and interest. Charitable giving, at its core, fulfills the discipleship call to follow the teachings of Jesus and to live a life of stewardship. Ultimately, no obligatory obedience to pay taxes to the government can excuse us from this greater responsibility.

The discipline of charitable giving is a place where our private spiritual lives meet the world's very public needs. When we give away money, we are not only helping institutions and people; we are also transforming ourselves, turning from selfishness, and focusing on others. Every time I give to my church or another charity, I know that I am fulfilling an inner need or calling, participating in a discipline I badly need: a discipline that will break me of my selfish habits, a discipline that will teach me

the difference between wants and needs, a discipline that reveals my truest security does not lie in the accumulation of wealth.

I am grateful that tax time provides an annual opportunity to examine my spending – and more importantly my charitable giving. Tax season has become a time for me to ask the question: "Lord, what changes must I make in my spending and my giving?"

Years ago, I decided to make "giving back to God" a priority above all my other spending. I realized that everything that I have belongs to God.

In gratitude, I am called to show my gratitude by how I act as a faithful steward of the finances God has given me. I strive to be generous in giving to my church (parish and diocese) and other charities that live out the call of the gospel, prayerfully discerning those that God has put on my heart to support and sponsor.

When you complete your tax return, pay your taxes or receive a refund, I encourage you to pray and to give thanks to God, and ask for his guidance with your budget. What charities will you sponsor this coming year? Are you called to increase the percentage of your net income that goes to charitable giving? Trust in God to look after all your needs. In God's spiritual economy, when we give with generous and joyful hearts God promises to care for us.

Wherever you are in your charitable giving to our faith communities and other charities, look to God and perhaps try to increase your giving by half a percent or one per cent for the next 12 months.

Scripture tells us that God honours generous giving:

- God will pour down blessings without measure (Malachi 3:10);
- A generous person will be enriched and receive generously back from God and others (Proverbs 11:24-25);
- God will provide every blessing in abundance, and generosity will produce thanksgiving to God and be a blessing to others (2 Corinthians 9:8, 11).

Now is the time to trust, believe and to act.

For more information on generous living, stewardship and promises of God; contact Jocelyne Hamoline, Major and Planned Giving Officer, at the Diocese of Saskatoon Catholic Foundation at (306) 659-5849 or: jhamoline@dscatholicfoundation.ca

## Library introduces children's story time

By KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI

A weekly children's story time at the Msgr. Michael J. Koch Library at the Catholic Pastoral Centre was introduced this fall.

Every Thursday morning children and their caregivers arrive at the second floor of the diocesan Cathedral of the Holy Family in Saskatoon to listen to stories read by volunteers. Depending on the storyteller, the half-hour session might also include crafts, fingerplays, songs, or show and tell – as when Bishop Donald Bolen showed children his mitre, zucchetto, and staff.

Story time concludes with snacks and socializing. Visitors are also welcome to look around the diocesan Resource Centre and borrow faith enrichment materials.

It has been a year of transition for the Msgr. Michael J. Koch Library, with a cut in staff hours and a greater reliance on the generosity of volunteers to keep the library going, notes part-time library coordinator Sharon Leyne. A self-check out system has also been introduced.

The Resource Library offers a range of faith enrichment materials, including books,



**Bishop Donald Bolen was one of the guest readers at library story time this winter.**

- Photo by Kiply Yaworski

periodicals, CDs and DVDs. The catalogue can be searched at: [www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/library](http://www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com/library) and a book return box is available near the building elevators to return materials after hours.

Msgr. Michael J. Koch is open Monday to Thursday from 9 a.m. to noon and from 1 to 4:30 p.m. on the second floor of the Cathedral of the Holy Family. For more information e-mail Sharon Leyne at: [library@saskatoonrcdiocese.com](mailto:library@saskatoonrcdiocese.com)

**Msgr. Michael Koch  
Resource Library  
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# Youth gain insights into faith and history during Holy Land trip

During this year's February break, a group of young people and their families from Saskatchewan, Ontario and British Columbia were part of an unforgettable trip to the Holy Land.

The experience began when Brad and Rhea Johner of Saskatoon decided they wanted to take their family on a meaningful trip before their children started leaving home. However, their five sons were not interested in a typical trip to Disneyland, or to the beaches of Hawaii or Florida, reported Rhea.

Seeking something more, they joined a number of other families on a trip to the Holy Land, after connecting with Fr. Kenneth LeBlanc, LC, of Oakville, Ontario, a spiritual director with the Regnum Christi lay movement.

"Fr. Kenneth takes a group of pilgrims each year in May to the Holy Land. Because there were so many families (and one farmer!) we asked him if he could possibly go during our February break. He was more than happy to accommodate us," said Rhea.

The group of 45 travellers included 31 participants (five families) from Saskatchewan, as well as three participants from B.C. and 11 from Ontario.

Departing from Toronto, the group landed in Tel Aviv and travelled north to the Sea of Galilee where they spent three nights at the Mount of Beatitudes Guest House run by the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

"We did many things here in this part of Israel, such as sail on the Sea of Galilee, visit Capernaum (home to many apostles, where Jesus taught and healed Peter's mother-in-law) Nazareth, Cana,

Mount Tabor, the site of the miracle of the loaves and the fishes and the new excavation site of first century Magdala," described Rhea.

"We then headed south to Jerusalem where we stayed at the beautiful Pontifical Institute Notre Dame of Jerusalem Centre, run by the Legionaries of Christ, located just outside the Old City Wall of Jerusalem. Here we did many local tours including visiting the Mount of Olives, Calvary, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Western Wall, St. Anne's Church and the Pools of Bethesda," she said.

"We walked and prayed the Way of the Cross, walked on the old city walls and visited many other significant churches."

The group also went on many day trips, including visits to Bethany, Bethlehem (where they visited an orphanage), Jericho, the Mount of Temptation, the Jordan River, Masada and the Dead Sea. Each day, they celebrated daily Mass at sites that included the Shepherd's Cave, Calvary and the Holy Sepulchre.

Several of the young participants from Saskatoon recently described highlights and the ongoing impact of the trip:

"This pilgrimage was the most amazing experience of my life! Being where Jesus once walked was absolutely incredible and I will cherish the memories forever," said An Smith, 15.

"I'll remember this trip because we learned more about Christ. Going on this trip was a good thing because I understand the Bible more. My favorite part was being with family and friends," said Grace Smith, 11.

"Our trip to Israel was a deep spiritual awakening and revital-



Sixteen youth took part in a trip by Canadian families to the Holy Land during the February 2014 school break, led by Legionary priests, Fr. John Gannon, LC, and Fr. Kenneth LeBlanc, LC. - Photo by Brad Johner

ization for me. Becoming immersed in the culture and history of the Holy Land and walking the same paths Our Lord walked, really brought everything I'd learned and experienced about our beautiful faith to new life," said Kate MacLennan, 16.

"It was an amazing spiritual experience that touched me on so many levels. I still can't believe that I walked in Jesus's footsteps and that I got to do it surrounded by so many people that I love" said Elle MacLennan, 14.

"It was amazing to spend time with family and friends and to connect more deeply with our faith. Visiting the orphanage was, for me, a very powerful experience. I know that it will inspire me to do great things in my life," said Sophia MacLennan, 13.

"Going on the trip to the Holy Land was life-changing. It just made everything about our faith mean so much more. It was one of the best trips of my life," said Vivian MacLennan, 11.

"Since we have been home, every Sunday's gospel has been set in a place we visited. Mass will never be the same," said Lucas Johner, 20.

"This was the most amazing journey I've ever experienced. From visiting the most beautiful and significant churches in the world, being where Jesus taught and lived, to brightening up an orphanage with a couple of soccer balls – I've learned so much ... and it has forever changed me. I am so thankful for everything," said Jesse Johner, 18.

"The best part of the trip was seeing where everything in the Bible took place. It was mind-blowing to see where Jesus was born, where he died, where his tomb was," said Quinn Johner, 16.

"Now that I have been there, the gospels make more sense to me and I understand my faith a lot more. It was so cool to go to the places where the scenes in the gospels took place. I now have those images in my head forever," said Matthew Johner, 12.

"Seeing where Jesus was born, playing with the kids at the orphanage and floating in the Dead Sea were my favorite parts," said Aidan Johner, 9.

"For me, everything about Israel was beautiful and incredible. The food was amazing and I found that it answered many of my questions

that I have always had about our faith and the Bible. Through this experience, the Lord ignited this fire in my heart that inspired me to go deeper in my relationship with Christ and to learn more about Him," said Emma Lepage, 16.

"Visiting Israel was an amazing experience and helped me become closer to Christ. It helped me put all the pieces together and really understand what happened in the Bible and in our history," said Kelsey Lepage, 14.

"I thought the group was really good and fun. My favorite part was going to the Dead Sea because instead of swimming you could just float and relax," said Mason Lepage, 11.

"Jordan River, Masada and the Dead Sea – that was a good day," said Simon Jasieniuk, 20.

"The best experience of my life. I learned a lot," said Kirk Winter, 18.

Since returning, trip participants have given a number of presentations about their experience to interested groups. To arrange a presentation or to learn more about Fr. LeBlanc's pilgrimages, contact Rhea Johner: (306) 978-8288.

## Upcoming Events

**St. Paul's Hospital Community Days** - 11 am, Wednesday, **May 28** on the front lawn at SPH, Saskatoon.

**100th anniversary of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Vanscoy** will be celebrated **June 22**, starting with Mass at 11 a.m. with Bishop Don Bolen, followed by a pancake breakfast and a short program in the Vanscoy Circle Hall. All are welcome.

**St. Paul's Hospital AGM** 11 a.m. **June 25** at SPH G30.

**Rock the Mount** - a fun and inspiring all-day Catholic event Saturday, **Aug. 16**, with speakers, music, activities for children, Mass with Bishop Don Bolen and more. Held at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Shrine just north of Carmel, SK. For more details, map etc. see: [www.rockthemount.com](http://www.rockthemount.com)

**The Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools Foundation 19th Annual 'Share the Spirit' Golf Classic** presented by Edward Edwards McEwen Architects and hosted at The Willows Golf Course, Tuesday, **Aug. 19**. Proceeds allow the Foundation to support and enhance the Catholic identity of all students who attend school in the Greater Saskatoon Catholic School Division. To enter or to be a sponsor, contact (306) 659-7002 or e-mail: [catholicschoolsfoundation@gscs.sk.ca](mailto:catholicschoolsfoundation@gscs.sk.ca)

**Mission Week at St. Paul's Hospital Oct. 14-17**, including a commitment ceremony 11 a.m. Oct. 17 at 3rd floor chapel, for employees to re-commit to core values of St. Paul's Hospital.

**Mission Sunday, Oct. 19** - Watch for details about a celebration marking the 50th anniversary of the Brazil Mission.

**On Holy Ground – Where Catholic Health and Education Serve** will be held **Oct. 24-26** at Sheraton Cavalier Hotel in Saskatoon, presented by Catholic Health Association of Saskatchewan (CHAS) and the Saskatchewan Catholic School Boards Association (SCSBA). Keynote speakers are **Fr. Tony Ricard**, a priest from New Orleans, a campus minister, theology teacher and popular speaker, and **Dr. Matthew Sleeth** author of 24/6: Prescription for a Healthier, Happier Life. Plenary presentations have both an education and a health focus. For more information or registration (\$225 before Sept. 30) contact CHAS, 1702 - 20th Street W. Saskatoon, S7M 0Z9, Phone: (306) 655-5330 E-mail: [cath.health@chassk.ca](mailto:cath.health@chassk.ca)

**W.F. Mitchell Bioethics Seminar Nov. 13** at St. Paul's Hospital in Saskatoon, presented in the recently-opened Pylypchuck Hall at SPH. Keynote speaker will be ethicist Margaret Somerville.

## Pilgrim journeys: get to know Canada or explore the world

Atlantic Canada and Quebec during fall foliage 2014 is the focus of a travel program recently announced by Fr. Ralph Kleiter, Ministry to Tourism in the diocese of Saskatoon.

The 'Getting to Know our Canada' program begins with Newfoundland and Labrador, Sept. 10-20, 2014.

The next optional destination will be Nova Scotia with a focus on Cape Breton Island. Prince Edward Island is a gem and is always a highlight. The time in the Maritimes will be concluded with a 24-hour VIA Rail experience from Halifax through New Brunswick to Montreal.

The program also offers a chance to spend time in Quebec, says Kleiter. This year celebrates the 350th anniversary of the founding of the church in Quebec with a focus on leaders Saint Francois de Laval (the first Bishop) and Ursuline sister, Saint Marie of the Incarnation (Mother of Canada). Pope Francis recently declared both of them saints. To mark the 350th anniversary, a special pilgrim's 'Holy Door' has been

established at the Notre Dame Cathedral Basilica in Quebec City.

The Quebec travel program will conclude with a view from the Gulf of St. Lawrence aboard a seven-day cruise sailing east as far as Saint-Pierre and Miquelon (French islands) and then up the Saguenay River to enjoy fall colours as well as ports rich in wildlife such as seals and whales. It is a chance to relate to sights first experienced by the early French explorers and settlers who arrived to encounter our First Nations and our Canada.

All programs on the Atlantic-Quebec journey will run back to back. Individuals choose what portion works best with their schedule and their budget. "Get to know our Canada" by contacting Kleiter for details and early booking savings: [kleiter@shaw.ca](mailto:kleiter@shaw.ca) (306) 244-3747

### Travel as enrichment

Kleiter urges retired Canadians and "Snowbirds" who long to spend winter in southern climes to consider extended

travel ventures while health and mobility are good and insurance premiums reasonable.

"Get to know more of this wonderful world. Too often 'Snowbirds' and others just dream about these destinations," he urged, pointing to two 2015 programs that can be extended to include other destinations as well.

Winter 2015 will begin with a cruise that 'Bridges the Americas', from Miami through the Panama Canal to Lima, Peru, he announced. The land programs will reveal ancient mysteries, such as those at Machu Picchu and the Peruvian Amazon Basin, he said.

During the autumn of 2015, Kleiter will offer his 23rd Pilgrim Journey to Biblical Lands – a program that he says will feature much more than simply a pilgrimage to the traditional holy sites. "It will give a wonderful focus as people grow in their retirement," he said.

Contact Fr. Ralph Kleiter for details, suggestions and early booking savings at (306) 244-3747 or [kleiter@shaw.ca](mailto:kleiter@shaw.ca) or see: [www.pilgrimjourneys.ca](http://www.pilgrimjourneys.ca)

## Kerrobert parishioner assists poverty-stricken people of Cuba

For Assumption of Mary parishioner Joe Kurtz of Kerrobert, a trip to Cuba is not about relaxing at a beach resort – rather it is a chance to meet and help people living in poverty and dire circumstances.

In a dozen trips to Cuba in recent years, Kurtz has sought out ordinary people and helped to fund small business enterprises, and assisted residents in finding housing, undertaking renovations, and meeting a range of other needs.

In a recent feature article in the Kerrobert Citizen local newspaper, Kurtz acknowledged the help of the community in reaching his goals to help more people in Cuba. For one recent trip, 26 individuals from around the province donated goods and money, including sponsoring fund-raising events. "It's not just me," the retired teacher told the local newspaper. "There's a lot of people who support" this grassroots effort to help those in need. Kurtz plans to return to Cuba again later this year.



- Photo by Kiply Yaworski

## Discerning God's call to do more

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- Photo by Tim Yaworski



- Photo by Kiply Yaworski



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