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Coordinator of
Youth Ministry*



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*St. Columba's
Church
Opens on
Burnside Road*



The Diocesan Messenger

A Publication of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria

December 2012

The Domestic Church: Keeping the Presence of Christ in Christmas

by Keefer Pollard, Principal, St. Andrew's Elementary School

Often we may think of the church as a group of strangers, acquaintances and some good friends with whom we gather each Sunday to praise God, hear His word and join in the Eucharistic meal. But when members of a family gather in the name of Christ, they are also a manifestation of the Church and this manifestation is sometimes called the "Domestic Church."

How can the leaders of the Domestic Church create an environment where it can flourish? One of the main ways is to create rituals of family prayer. Advent and Christmas is a wonderful time to do this, and can tap into the natural excitement evoked by the holiday season—for children and adults. Four events throughout the Advent/Christmas/Epiphany cycle lend themselves especially well

to creating family prayer: lighting the Advent Wreath; decorating the Christmas Tree; the Blessing of the Christmas Crib; and a House Blessing at Epiphany. These four opportunities create prayer space and remind us of the presence of Christ throughout the season.

Each ritual can be preceded by singing an appropriate hymn (such as *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*, *O Christmas Tree*, *Away in a Manger* or *We Three Kings*). You might wish to sing one or more verses to begin and one or more to end. Playing the songs from a CD or iPod would set the tone nicely also, especially if you sing along. Perhaps let the children choose the songs!

Blessing the Advent Wreath

The first Sunday of Advent begins with its anticipated Mass Saturday evening at Vespers (around 5:00). If you light the wreath with your family then, the wreath lighting at church will be more meaningful. You can also use this or another prayer daily during Advent. Let the children take turns lighting the candles. Gather the family around the Advent wreath with its three purple and one pink candle. Have one child light the first purple candle (pink is the third). Everyone can stretch their hands over the wreath and the leader prays or all pray together:

*By day and by night
And through every season,
You watch over us, Lord.*

*We praise you for this Advent wreath.
It is the evergreen crown
Of your royal people
And it shines with the promise of eternal
victory.*

*By the light of this wreath
We shall wait in patience for your Son,
Our Lord Jesus Christ
Who comforts our fears
And brings hope to the world.*

*All glory be yours
Now and forever
Amen.*

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Angels proclaim the Good News

Church Invites Catholics to "Come Home" This Christmas

by Greg Van Dyk

This December, the Archdiocese of Vancouver launched a new campaign called *Catholics Come Home*, a project that uses creative television commercials to encourage lapsed Catholics to reconsider the Catholic faith and come back to church.

From December 14 to January 20, 2013, the commercials will air on major stations throughout the Archdiocese of Vancouver and the Diocese of Victoria close to 1,700 times.

"The first time I saw the longer one, *Epic*, I admit to tears in my eyes," said Vancouver Archbishop J. Michael Miller in a recent speech. "Just thankful to God for calling me to the Church and grateful for all that He accomplishes through Christ in her," he said.

The impressive ad campaign is the work of *Catholics Come Home, Inc.*, an Atlanta-based non-profit organization founded by Tom Peterson, a man who began the group after rediscovering his own Catholic faith at a men's retreat.

"I am delighted that Tom Peterson, the founder of this great work, has taken us under his wing," said Archbishop Miller.

Catholics Come Home commercials have reached over 50 million viewers in 35 different dioceses throughout the United States, although this is the first time the campaign has come to Canada. According to participating US dioceses, the commercials have helped over 350,000 people come home to the Catholic Church, and increased Mass attendance by around 10 percent.



Catholics Come Home ad campaign starts December 14

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Read about the 2nd Annual Diocesan Conference on page 12

Appeal in Action



by Mike Patterson, Appeal Coordinator

Appeal in Action Report to November 30, 2012

Thank you and blessings to all parishioners who have supported the *Journey of Hearts & Hands* appeal to date. Your generous and sacrificial gifts are greatly appreciated. Please know that they will have a genuine impact on building up your parish and the Diocese. And this is a reminder to parishioners who have not yet made a gift to the Appeal that there is still time before the end of the calendar year to participate. Gifts made before January 1, 2013 will be eligible for a charitable tax receipt for 2012. If you need pledge forms please ask at your parish office.

Your support of the *Journey of Hearts & Hands* appeal has enabled the pastoral priorities of both your parish and Diocese to be supported and will further the unfolding of our Diocesan Pastoral Plan. Your gift and commitment to our *Journey of Hearts & Hands: Forward with Courage* appeal will allow our goals to become a reality. Even more importantly, your example is an encouragement to all of us and is a witness to discipleship in Jesus, Our Lord. Being a good steward of the many gifts we have all received will lay a solid foundation for future generations of Catholics in our Diocese.

Gifts and Pledges Received

Summary of pledges to December 5, 2012:

- More than 2,100 gifts and pledges have been made to date.
- **We have achieved and surpassed our overall Appeal goal of \$750,000!**
- Almost \$200,000 has been identified for parish priorities surpassing the Appeal goal of \$150,000!
- 24 parishes have received more than 60% of their parish goals to date!
- Parish and Diocese totals are published regularly in Sunday bulletins.
- Final numbers will be seen in *The Diocesan Messenger* in the New Year!

Stewardship in Scripture: Your Light Must Shine Before Others

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lamp stand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.

(From Jesus' *Sermon on the Mount* – Matthew 5:14-16)

Support of First Nations Ministries—St. Ann's Parish Duncan

One example of the Appeal in action is the First Nations Ministry among the Cowichan people at St. Ann's parish in Duncan. The Catholic Church has had a relationship of service with this community stretching back into the 19th Century. Support from the Diocese through the Appeal comes in the categories of salaries, benefits, housing, travel and programs. The parish is served by Fr. Joe Prakash and two sisters from the Philippines. Sr. Maria Elisa Lavarias and Sr. Maria Rosviminda Ochoa are members of the Congregation of the Religious of the Virgin Mary (RVM). These three and a dedicated group of lay leaders minister to the Cowichan people at St. Ann's and the mission churches on Penakut Island and Nanaimo reserves. Services include the Sacraments as well as hospital and home visits, catechism classes, Legion of Mary and regular contact with First Nations Elders.

The Appeal also supports a mission on the West Coast by Fr. Scott Whittemore out of Ucluelet and Tofino to St. Lawrence Church and the community of Ahousat.



Stewardship and Christmas: Turning the World Upside Down

For women in the ancient world, motherhood was prized and desired above almost all else. Sacred Scripture tells of many women who pleaded with God to let them conceive. From Sarah, the mother of Isaac to Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, the Bible is replete with women who finally, in their old age, were granted the gift of motherhood for which they had begged God. How marvelously significant it is, then, that in the town of Nazareth those many years ago, a young girl named Mary, unmarried and probably feeling altogether unready for motherhood, was visited by an angel who delivered God's plea: would she give God a child?

Mary's response is a model par excellence for all those who aspire to be good stewards: “Behold, I am the Lord's servant. Let it be done to me according to your word (Lk. 1:38).”

And so the real mystery and beauty of Christmas is delivered: God turns the world upside down. In the words of the Magnificat, Mary proclaims the hope of every good steward: “My soul magnifies the Lord (Lk. 1:46).” He has dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart, lifted up the lowly, filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. Here is a new understanding of the God who desires not our begging and our pleas, but our ‘yes’ to God's invitation to be active stewards in his plan of salvation. For the Christian steward, the consumerism, the gaudiness, the excesses of our cultural Christmas can be overcome by answering the call to live simpler lives, to use less, to feed the poor, to quiet ourselves in stillness rather than grow louder in frenzied activity.

In her book *The Vigil: Keeping Watch in the Season of Christ's Coming*, Professor Wendy Wright from Creighton University writes: “The ancient desert dwellers of our early Christian communities tell us that the surest way into the heart of God is to be still. In being still we learn to be attentive to the vast and hidden stillness that permeates all things.”

In a world which prizes and desires wealth above so many things, the Christian steward finds in the stillness the true hope which lies at the heart of Christmas. Christ has come, and he comes again and again, and finally in the end, Christ comes. Once again, God implores us to receive this child in the stillness of our hearts, and respond to his call to transform the world's values – to turn the world upside down.

~ International Catholic Stewardship Council ✂

Camp Homewood 2013

February 1st – 3rd



Cost: \$135.00 per participant

**this includes all food, accommodation and activities

DANNY BROCK and the St. Andrew's High School Team

“Danny's Team” will be returning once again as Retreat Leaders to share their stories, skits and love of the Lord ... plan to join us for this awesome weekend and we will show you a still more excellent way! (1Corinthians 12:31)

For more information, contact one of the Diocesan Retreat coordinators: TERRI-ANN WYNANS (wynans@shaw.ca) 250-724-5465 or BONNI ROSET (broset@telus.net) 250-923-4299

Sponsored by St. Patrick's Parish, Campbell River and Notre Dame Parish, Port Alberni, with financial support from the Catholic Foundation of Vancouver Island.



Pastoral Plan Update

by Jim O'Reilly, Office of Religious Education

Youth Ministry has consistently been identified as a concern for our parishes and as such is reflected in our Diocesan Pastoral Plan as a Core Priority.

In response, the Diocese of Victoria is pleased to announce the appointment of Ms. Kelly Bourke who will be working as the Campus Ministry/Youth Ministry Coordinator to work with our youth. I recently had the privilege of interviewing Kelly.

Could you share a bit about your journey and what actually brought you to work in Catholic Youth Ministry?

Growing up in Lethbridge, Alberta I was involved in parish Youth Ministry and city-wide peer retreat programs. This continued from High School through to involvement with Youth Ministry programs at the University of Lethbridge. I really wanted to be able to do this full time, and wondered if I could make a career of it. I wanted to be able to work in the school system and wondered what that might look like.

I did in fact get work with the Lakeland Catholic School District coordinating School Chaplaincy working with six parishes and three schools.



Jim O'Reilly and Kelly Bourke

You have a variety of interests: Art, Spirituality, Psychology, Liturgy and Theology. How do these contribute to your work with youth?

I see Art, Psychology, Liturgy and Theology all connecting us to the richness of life. Spirituality connects the Arts with the spiritual life of the individual, helping to reveal to them who they are and who they are becoming. Art also serves as a tool for connecting us to, and discovering elements of, our particular personality, opening things up for us. I have found that Art, Spirituality, Psychology, Liturgy and Theology all form a rich and important life foundation. Youth Ministry naturally flows out of such a foundation.

Youth often get “bad press.” What do you see as the “gifts” youth bring to our parishes?

We hear Youth as the Future but Youth is also Now. In the Church we mark entrance into the Adult Community through Confirmation. How are we helping youth to take up their roles as adults in the Church, helping them to play an energizing role in the Church? Youth bring a certain passion for life, a prophetic energy. With their keen sense of justice they can help us because they ask why the world is the way it is, and question what to do about it. They remind us that a rich Faith is one that questions in order to come to know and grow. Youth also represents a moving dynamic for the Church in the sense that the energy of youth sharing the faith with other youth will bring life to the whole faith community

What do you envision to be your main areas of focus in working with Catholic youth in the Diocese of Victoria?

I seek to empower youth to respond to the needs of the Church as a key partner in ministry. I would like to assist youth in the integration of faith and spirituality in life, to see God in all things, and to allow that awareness to impact their choices, big and small. I also want to listen and learn about the Church here, both in terms of hopes and frustrations.

We are very excited to welcome Kelly to the Diocese of Victoria and appreciate the unique gifts and wealth of experience which she brings to Youth Ministry. We look forward to opportunities when we can introduce her to the various member of our Diocesan family. ✠



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More Courageous Conversation

by Jean Allen

“We are a resurrected people and we live in hope.”

Statements like this could be heard from many who attended workshops presented by Sr. Nuala Kenny SC, OC, BA, MD, FRCP, Professor Emeritus, Dept. Of Ethics, Dalhousie University. A retired pediatrician, Sr. Nuala is recognized as one of Canada’s leading experts on the sexual abuse crisis. However, it is not her academic qualifications that fill people with hope. It is her compassion, wisdom, refreshing honesty and her palpable love for the Church that stirs hearts. Having previously spoken to parishioners of St. Joseph the Worker parish in Victoria, Sr. Nuala was invited back by Bishop Richard Gagnon to give workshops in that parish and at Christ the King in Comox. Bishop Richard also asked her to lead a Clergy Study Day for priests of the Diocese.

Sr. Nuala has been involved in the abuse crisis since the 1980s. True to her medical background she insisted on a correct diagnosis of the deeper problems rather than just symptomatic treatment of the problem. Her message is not only for victim-survivors of abuse or for parishes devastated by a sexually abusing priest; she speaks to the whole Church.

Sr. Nuala’s diagnosis is that the Church is fundamentally ill and therefore the whole Church must become responsibly pliant to taking the necessary steps toward healing. Though Pope John Paul II said that the abuse crisis “is a contradiction to the teaching and witness of Christ,” Sr. Nuala doesn’t believe that the acts of only a few have created this contradiction. “The entire church is in desperate need of a deep spiritual conversion and the first step is to talk about it,” said Sr. Nuala. She is convinced that denial or believing that it’s someone else’s problem will only maintain a disordered culture that allows abuse to occur. She quotes Jewish theologian, Abraham Heschel, “... some are guilty but all are responsible.”

In the past year, Sr. Nuala has taken her message across Canada, speaking not only to laity but also to priests and bishops. She has held workshops in parishes where the abuse crisis has left everyone devastated. She has spoken at Canadian Catholic Women’s League conferences. She has addressed the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops as well as the National Federation of Priests Council. She participated in the European Society for Catholic Theology Symposium in the UK and was interviewed for Vatican Radio.

Always, she speaks candidly of the error of clericalism but also states that the laity contributes to the problems through passivity. Sr. Nuala pointed out the simple yet profound truth that ministry, ordained or not, is about caring for each other with the respect due to all as baptized followers of Christ. She reminded us to do for others what Christ does for us. Though her message is challenging, her ability to communicate with humility and humour leads clergy and laity to hope and relief rather than condemnation and guilt.

Sr. Nuala’s book *Healing The Church: Diagnosing And Treating The Clergy Sexual Abuse Crisis* was recently published by Novalis (ISBN 978-2-89646-470-8, available in Catholic bookstores and online). This workbook contains the information given in her workshops and is designed to facilitate discussions critical to the Church’s healing. Fr. William Hann of St. Joseph the Worker in Victoria will be using the book as a Lenten reflection tool in order to carry on the discussion begun at the workshop. He is hopeful that other parishes in the Diocese and across Canada will do the same.

Meanwhile, Sr. Nuala continues her ministry. “If you ever have an opportunity to hear Sr. Nuala,” says Fr. Hann, “you should not hesitate or wonder if the topic of her message is for you. If you are a Catholic, it is for you and you will never be the same.” ✠



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For information about the Knights of Columbus in your area please contact your parish office or visit our web site at:

www.kofcvictoria.bc.ca

Pastoral Itinerary

Bishop Richard Gagnon

Calendar of Events

All events are in Victoria unless otherwise noted

December 2012

- 18 Mass (10:30 am), Mount St. Mary Hospital
- 24 Christmas Eve Mass (11:00 pm) St. Andrew's Cathedral
- 25 Christmas Mass (11:00 am) St. Andrew's Cathedral
- 30 Mass (11:00 am) St. Andrew's Cathedral, Feast of the Holy Family

January 2013

- 1 Mass (10:30 am), St. Andrew's Cathedral, Feast of Mary, Holy Mother of God
- 10 Clergy Day of Reflection
- 11-13 Assembly of Western Catholic Bishops Retreat, Westminster Abbey
- 29 Mass (10:30 am), Mount St. Mary Hospital
- 30 Council of Priests, Duncan

February 2013

- 2 Diocesan Youth Conference, Camp Homewood
- 6 CCSA Students "Dish with the Bish" UVic Student Union Building, 6:30 pm
- 9 Respect Life Ministry Banquet & Show, St. Patrick's School
- 13 Ash Wednesday Mass (7:00 pm) St. Andrew's Cathedral
- 17 Rite of Election (11:00 am) St. Andrew's Cathedral
- 19-20 CCCB National Liturgy Commission, Ottawa
- 21 Clergy Day of Reflection
- 22 Parish Staff Retreat, St. Patrick's Centre, Victoria
- 23 Catechist Retreat, St. Patrick's Centre, Victoria
- 23 Mass (5:00 pm) Knights of Columbus 4th Degree Exemplification, St. Andrew's Cathedral
- 25-
- Mar 1 Assembly of Western Catholic Bishops, Edmonton

March 2013

- 3 Mass (11:00 am) St. Andrew's Cathedral
- 6 Council of Priests, Nanaimo
- 12 Mass (10:30 am) Mount St. Mary Hospital
- 24 Palm Sunday Mass (11:00 am) St. Andrew's Cathedral
- 26 St. Andrew's Cathedral: Chrism Mass (7:00 pm)
- 28 St. Andrew's Cathedral: Holy Thursday Mass (7:30 pm)
- 29 St. Andrew's Cathedral: Good Friday Service (3 pm)
- 30 St. Andrew's Cathedral: Easter Vigil (8 pm)
- 31 St. Andrew's Cathedral: Easter Sunday Mass (11 am)

World Youth Day 2013

Unfortunately, we have not received enough registrations to warrant a World Youth Day group trip to Rio in July 2013. Consequently, the Diocese of Victoria will no longer be coordinating a Diocesan pilgrimage.

All youth who are interested in attending are encouraged either to connect with the Archdiocese of Vancouver (www.rcav.org/OYYAM/WYD_2013_Information) or speak to our booking agent, Chris Dube (CDube@dubetravel.com), to make your own travel plans.

Thank you for your understanding.

December

See page 24 for the schedule of Christmas and New Year's Masses

- 16 **Our Lady of the Rosary:** Annual Christmas Party. Admission is free but your spot needs to be reserved. Please contact the Parish Office to book your ticket: olor@shaw.ca or (250) 478-3482 .

January

- 7 **St. Joseph the Worker, Victoria:** 7 – 9 pm *Catholicism* series by Robert Barron, 10 Sessions (held in the Church proper). *Catholicism* is a groundbreaking documentary film series and multi-media study program. The ten, 60-minute DVD episodes take viewers around the world and deep into the Faith, spanning over 50 locations in 15 countries.
- 15 **St. Joseph the Worker, Victoria:** 7 – 9 pm *Catholicism Come Home*, 6 Sessions (in St. Joseph's School Library). Do you believe that you have burned too many bridges and have reached the point of no return? These sessions offer an opportunity for people to explore that inner tug to come Home.
- 15-23 **St. Joseph the Worker, Victoria:** 6 pm, Christmas Novena Masses
- 18 **Development & Peace Winter Meeting:** All are welcome to join us from 7 – 9 pm at St. Joseph the Worker parish in Victoria (753 West Burnside Road) in the parish hall for the winter meeting. For more information, contact Sr. Marina Smith, (250) 386-3663. This continues on the 19th.
- 19 **Development & Peace Winter Meeting:** All are welcome to join us from 10 am – 3 pm at St. Joseph the Worker parish in Victoria (753 West Burnside Road) in the parish hall for the winter meeting. For more information, contact Sr. Marina Smith, (250) 386-3663. This continues from the 18th.
- 20 **St. Elizabeth's, Sidney:** 11:30 am – 1 pm, Knights of Columbus Pancake Breakfast, in the Kitchen & Hospitality room. For more information email coordinator@spparish.com.
- 23 **St. Joseph the Worker, Victoria:** 7 pm, Special Mass for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

February

- 19 **St. Joseph the Worker, Victoria:** 7 – 9 pm, *Healing The Church*, 5 Sessions (in St. Joseph's School Library) "Only by examining carefully the many elements that gave rise to the present crisis can a clear-sighted diagnosis of its causes be undertaken and effective remedies be found." Pope Benedict XVI, 2010 Pastoral letter to the People of Ireland.

Upcoming Events

Spain & Portugal 2013, May 24 – June 8
A FEW SEATS LEFT! Beginning in Barcelona, visit the beautiful sites of Montserrat, Valencia, Madrid, Avila, Puebla de Sanabria, Santiago de Compostela, Oporto, Fatima, Lisbon and more!!! Enjoy your trip in an air-conditioned coach with professional guide & driver. We will celebrate Holy Mass daily at many famous cathedrals and religious sites with Fr. Shayne Craig as our Chaplain. If you would like to receive a detailed itinerary & pricing information, please contact Denise Buckley (Tour Leader) at two-bucks@shaw.ca or call 250-339-1807.

Miscellany

Wednesdays
St. Patrick's Victoria: Moms & Tots group. Come together with the moms of St. Patrick's Catholic Church (2060 Haultain Street, Victoria) for faith, fellowship and laughter. We discuss everything from two-year-old tantrums, to the dignity of women, to faith in our families and back to potty training. We meet at 9:30 am on Wednesday mornings; childcare is provided. Contact Bonnie at (250) 213-4984 or koalabear_writer@yahoo.ca for more info.



Fridays

Our Lady of the Rosary, Victoria: 9:30 – 11 am, Moms & Tots Group. All mothers with children 6 years and under are welcome. For more information contact Rosemarie Urbanson at (250) 391-6618; no registration is required.

Saturdays

Our Lady Queen of Peace, Victoria: Traditional Latin Mass at 10 am (except December 24).

Sundays

Our Lady Queen of Peace, Victoria: Traditional Latin Mass at 12 noon with Gregorian Chant and Sacred Hymns.

Our Lady of the Rosary, Victoria: Religious Classes for Children and Preparation for First Communion and Confirmation for children from Kindergarten to Grade 6. 9:40 am – 10:25 am every Sunday. For more information contact Marie Peeters at (250) 542-4483.

Our Lady of the Rosary, Victoria: Holy Families Group on the last Sunday of every month. This is an opportunity for married couples to share their faith and discuss marriage and family concerns in an authentically Catholic setting. And there's a potluck dinner! For more information contact Bonnie Landry at (250) 743-1982 or email onthisrock@shaw.ca.

To have your event included in the Diocesan Calendar of Events on the website, please email the details to editor@rcdvictoria.org



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Island News & Events



Local Filipino-Canadian Catholic Choir Active Since 2003

by Ben Rivera and Norma Samson

The Victoria Filipino-Canadian Catholic Choir (VFCCC) of Victoria BC was formally organized in 2003 by the Management Committee of the Victoria Filipino-Canadian Seniors Association (active from 2003 to 2008) under the leadership of Mr. Ben Rivera, with the encouragement and consent of Fr. Vince Borre, and the assistance of other Filipino priests in the Diocese of Victoria including Fr. Oscar Paraiso and Fr. Alfred Alilio, among others. Fr. Vince, spiritual director and main celebrant, recently relocated to Victoria, which makes him more accessible to the Filipino community's religious needs.

Formally approved by Bishop Raymond Roussin in December 2003, Masses are said in *Tagalog*, the Philippine national language, for the yearly celebration of the following: Feasts of St. Joseph in March; *Flores de Mayo* and in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary in May; Our Lord of Pardon in July; Feast of San Lorenzo Ruiz (First Filipino Saint) in September; All Souls Mass in November; and *Misa de Gallo* (Christmas celebration) in December. These Filipino Masses are celebrated at St. Patrick's Church at Haultain Street, District of Oak Bay, usually at 4 pm.

Mrs. Seny Narciso, Choir Director, selects the songs for the special Masses while Mrs. Norma Samson, Liturgy Coordinator, takes care of booking the church and hall, assigning servers and readers, and preparing materials needed for the Masses. There is a potluck or bake sale after each Mass, and where possible Christmas carolling during the holiday season to raise funds for the needs of the Choir's Mass events. As part of its charitable commitment, the Choir makes every effort to send help to victims of calamities (like typhoons and floods) and participates in ANCOP fundraising for housing and educational needs of the poor in the Philippines. ✂



Celebrating the Life of Victoria Brambly

by Lidia Flora

Late at night when I have some quiet time, I watch *RAI International*. It takes me back to my youth in Italy. One of the shows I like is *Le Regine* because it has to do with famous women in cinema and the fashion industry, highlighting their beauty, their successes and their private lives.

Last week I could not help making a connection to one of our own *Regina*. Over the years our parish, Christ the King in Courtenay, has had many amazingly wonderful women who served people in our community silently with beauty and grace. One of these was Victoria (Vicki) Brambly.

Vicki was born in Sussex, England in 1946 to Michael and Elisabeth Smith and moved at six months of age to Brazil, where she and her five younger siblings were raised.

Vicki married her husband Mark in England in 1968, living in Japan, Hong Kong and Australia before settling in the Comox Valley in 1983. It was here they raised their five children, Katherine, Kristopher, Josephine, Elizabeth and Nicola.

The church was filled to the brim at her memorial service Thursday, November 8, 2012. Vicki's courage alone deserved all the respect she received: you see, before it was "fashionable" she would go to an abandoned hotel whose residents were struggling with addiction, to give them food, clothes and help in any way she could. I told her how I admired her courage: you could not get me to go even with an escort, but she would determinedly go by herself. She also helped many in other circumstances too: victims of domestic violence who had nowhere to live, runaway teenagers and other persons with needs. Service to these members of society was all part of her extraordinary Christian faith.

From the time she moved to Courtenay in 1983 her demeanor and looks never changed. She greeted everyone with a smile, long hair up in a beautiful bun, large pearl earrings graced her lobes, and she always a scarf around her neck the way only English people can. With her white blouse tucked inside a slender waist and classic jeans—wow. A husband, five children, and countless others who benefited from her grace and beauty: this was our Vicki. Now you understand why she reminded me of *Le Regine*: she definitely was a Christian *Regina* of great faith. ✂



Church Invites Catholics to "Come Home" This Christmas

Continued from Page 1

Archbishop Miller noted that many Catholics do not regularly attend Mass, and hopes that this new campaign will encourage them to rediscover their faith.

"I would estimate that a quarter of a million baptized Catholics among us are no longer practising their faith with any regularity," he said. "Here is the challenge for you ... to welcome them back with open arms to Christ who is their life."

Although the Archdiocese of Vancouver funds the campaign, the Diocese of Victoria will also participate in the project, as many Vancouver Island residents will view the commercials as well.

"My hope is that in each and every parish on Vancouver Island we have people who come back and explore, are welcomed, invited, reconciled, healed, nourished, and participate in the life and mission of the Church," said Fr. William Hann, the Episcopal Vicar for Evangelization in the Diocese of Victoria.

Bishop Richard Gagnon met with about 15 diocesan priests last month to discuss the plan of action in the Diocese of Victoria, in order to best welcome Catholics who have been away from the Church. Fr. William is spearheading many of the local initiatives related to the campaign.

"We need to listen to their story," said Fr. William about people coming back to the Church. "We have to be hospitable."

Fr. William plans to engage his parish, St. Joseph the Worker, directly with the *Catholics Come Home* campaign.

"For each Sunday of Advent I'm showing one of the commercials," he said, noting the effectiveness of the commercials. "I think they touch the heart ... I know they will have an impact."

Fr. William is also preparing to welcome back Catholics into his parish. Starting in January of 2013, St. Joseph the Worker Parish will be offering a *Catholics Come Home* course, giving people who have been away from the Church an opportunity to rediscover their faith in a welcoming environment.

Charlie Allen, a parishioner at St. Joseph the Worker, will be involved in the course, and hopes that Catholics will accept the invitation to renew their faith in Christ and His Church.

"I think that this will be an effective instrument because it is God who is at work in the minds and hearts of Catholics who have been away from the Church, some for many, many years," he said. "Most of those who return say they returned because 'you asked me'."

Allen also hopes that Catholics who have issues with elements of the Church will be open to discussion, and take this opportunity to learn more about the faith.

"I hope that many Catholics who are not practising for whatever reason will be willing to at least contact us and discuss their issues before closing the door for good," he said.

Fr. William stressed the fact that the *Catholics Come Home* campaign should only be an addition to evangelization throughout the Diocese, and invites Catholics to share their faith with others this Christmas season.

"I encourage people who read this article to reach out to their sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, neighbours and friends, who they know are Catholic, and engage them," he said.

Fr. William is confident that the *Catholics Come Home* campaign will reach those who are looking for answers in life, and will be effective in bringing them back to the Church.

"People are searching and seeking, and we have it," he said. "We have the answer: Jesus Christ. And they can come home to Him."

For more information, or to view the commercials, visit CatholicsComeHome.org. ✂



Pilgrimage to Rome— Canonization of Kateri Tekakwitha

by Sr. Lucy DuMont SSA

“We have a saint!” Sr. Kateri Mitchell of The Sisters of St. Ann, herself of the Mohawk Nation, proclaimed to hundreds of people at a festive dinner following the canonization of Kateri Tekakwitha on October 21, 2012.

Kateri Tekakwitha was among the nine persons canonized by Pope Benedict XVI at St. Peter’s Square. Over 1,000 North American First Nations people, as well as non-native sisters, priests and friends associated with them, travelled to Rome for this event.

In 2006 Sr. Kateri Mitchell was invited to pray with five-year-old Jake Finkbonner of the Lummi tribe of northwest Washington. Jake was in the Seattle Medical Center dying of a flesh-eating bacterial disease. Sr. Kateri placed a relic of Kateri Tekakwitha on the boy, and with the others gathered there, prayed for his recovery. The boy was subsequently healed and this event was declared a first-class miracle. Sr. Kateri together with Monsignor Paul Lenz, Vice-Postulator of the cause of Kateri Tekakwitha worked unceasingly to have the miracle recognized and thus have Kateri declared a saint.

As two of the many Sisters of St. Ann who have worked with First Nations people, Sr. Sarah Comeau and I were proud to represent our community along with others from Western Canada. Kateri Tekakwitha is enshrined at St. Francis-Xavier Church in Kahnawake near Montreal and, because Sr. Sarah had sung with the Kahnawake choir while working with this Nation, she was invited to sing with the choir at the Canonization Mass. Sister Sarah also sang at the Masses on Monday and Tuesday when the hymns and Mass parts were sung in the Mohawk language. For all three occasions the First Nations peoples wore their native dress, which varied according to their respective Nation.

Besides the Thanksgiving Mass at St. Peter’s Basilica and Mass at Santa Maria degli Angeli, other events of the pilgrimage included a day at Assisi visiting the Basilicas of St. Francis and St. Clare, a tour of the Vatican museums and the Sistine Chapel, lunch at Castel Gandolfo, a reception at the North American College, a walking tour of Renaissance Rome and a farewell dinner in Marino.

Sr. Sarah and I felt privileged to celebrate with the numerous First Nations peoples the canonization of the first aboriginal woman of North America. Juan Diego of Mexico (canonized in 2002) was the first indigenous North American saint. ✠



Parishioners of St. Francis of Assisi Church in Tofino prepared and enjoyed a potluck supper to celebrate the canonizations of Pedro Calungsod and Kateri Tekakwitha. Both of the new Saints have special significant in the lives of the St. Francis of Assisi parishioners because of the large number of Filipinos in the parish, and because of the many First Nations people in this area.

AN
ANGEL
TO
COLOUR



Jenny Daniels Memorial Concert to Raise Funds for Africa

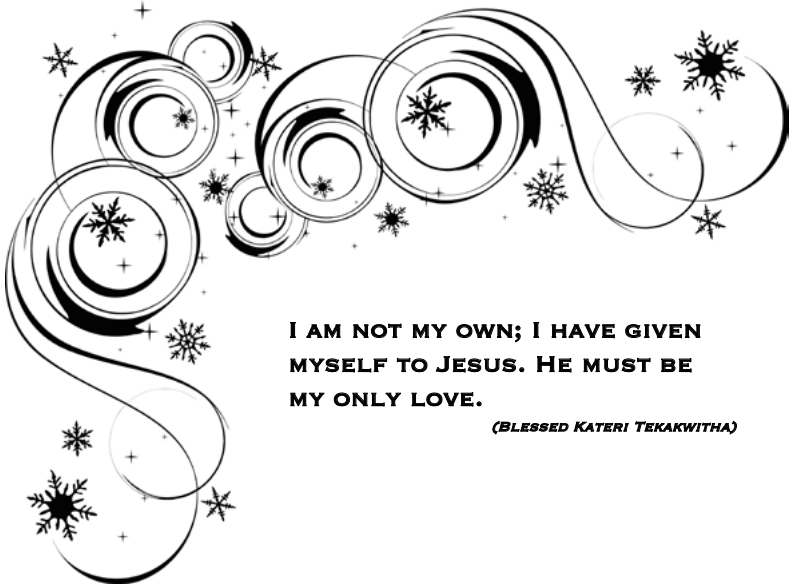
by Lorraine and Vic Parsons

The Arbutus Singers were featured at the Jenny Daniels Memorial Concert at St. Joseph the Worker parish on Wednesday, December 12 at 7 pm. All proceeds from this event went to support the Thembaletu children’s shelter run by the Daughters of St. Francis of Assisi in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The orphanage supports children who are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS.

This was the fourth year the Arbutus Singers staged this concert. There would have been a fifth but the first had to be cancelled because the date coincided with a severe snowstorm several years ago. The event has proven to be a very popular part of the Christmas season, with thousands of dollars raised through donation to send to Thembaletu.

This year, the concert was named to honour Jenny Daniels, a devoted supporter who worked in the St. Joseph office for several years, and who passed away earlier in 2012 after a valiant fight against breast cancer. Jenny, with husband Peter and their daughter, visited Thembaletu (which means “Our Hope” in Zulu) nearly three years ago and saw first-hand the work of the Sisters with children. Jenny and Peter are originally from South Africa and her family there lives very close to the orphanage.

The Sisters care for 25 – 35 children each year. Some are eventually placed with extended family, but others are there throughout much of their childhood. The children range in age from three months to their early teens. In addition to being fed, clothed and nurtured by the nuns, the children get extra assistance with their school work and life skills to help prepare them for the time that they have to go out on their own in the world. The Sisters also have an Outreach program through which they go out into the surrounding communities to educate communities on HIV prevention and to deliver food, blankets, other supplies and hope to people who are sick and who are in need. ✠



2013 TRIPS OF A LIFETIME SILVER TOURS PRESENTS

Pilgrimage to the Child Jesus of Prague and to the Divine Mercy

Chaplain/Spiritual Director: Rev. Fr. Glenn Dion
September 17-27, 2013 – 11 Days at \$3,688.00/person, double occupancy.
Includes air fare from Vancouver, Fuel Surcharges, Hotel Accommodations with breakfast & dinners daily, sightseeing, entrance fees, tips and much more.
Highlights: Czech Republic: Prague: Our Lady of Victorious Church(Child Jesus of Prague) Charles Bridge, Old Town, Our Lady of the Snow, St. Vitus Cathedral, Our Lady of Loreto Church, Mala Strana, Brno(St. James Church). Poland: Krakow: Divine Mercy Shrine, PJPII Centre, Wadowice, Wawel Hill, Mariacki Church, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Wieliczka Salt Mines. Auschwitz: St. Maximilian Kolbe, Czestochowa: Black Madonna, 14th Century Paulite Monastery at Jasna Gora.
WARSAW: Convent of St. Faustina, St. Stanislaw Kostka Church, Chopin Park, Palace on the Water, Old Town Market square, etc.

With 5 days Extension to Vilnius-Lithuania, & Frankfurt
17Sep-01Oct, 2013- 15 Days - \$ 4,322.00 includes all of the above plus an overnight in Frankfurt on the return. Highlights for the Extension: Church of the Holy Spirit(Divine Mercy original Image) Vilnius Cathedral, Gate of Dawn Chapel (Ostra Brama), Hill of Crosses, Franciscan Monastery, Shrine of Our Lady of Siluva

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The Sunflower—A Symposium on the Limits and Possibilities of Forgiveness

by Joan Ripley

☾☾ To forgive or not to forgive?

That was the question asked on Saturday, November 24 as over 40 current and former students of Dr. Patricia Rooke, PhD gathered at Our Lady Queen of Peace church in Esquimalt to discuss the matter posed in Simon Wiesenthal’s book on the Holocaust called *The Sunflower, On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*.

Wiesenthal, a Jew and later to become the famous Nazi hunter, was then a starving, exhausted and humiliated inmate of a concentration camp during WWII in Nazi Germany. He tells the compelling story of being singled out to come into a hospital ward and attend at the bedside of a young Nazi officer, Karl, who was blind and dying of his wounds. Karl, a lapsed Catholic, had come to understand that his actions against the Jews and that of the whole Nazi regime were criminal and sinful and he desperately wanted to confess his sins and receive absolution from a representative of the people whom he had so terribly offended.

Simon was incredulous at this situation but listened carefully to Karl’s story. However, while he seems to have been somewhat taken by Karl’s candor and apparent contrition, Simon was bound by his Jewish faith which forbade forgiveness in cases of murder and so he remained silent and never offered the desired forgiveness. Judaistic and Christian views of forgiveness and repentance come from different perspectives; this is the reason for the subtitle of Wiesenthal’s book: “the limits and possibilities of forgiveness.”

These perspectives are behind ongoing dialogue on the subject. In this workshop, it led to animated discussions and consideration of the Declaration of His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions called *Nostra Aetate* in 1965, of the historic visit of Blessed Pope John Paul II to the Synagogue of Rome in 1986 and also of Dabru Emet, A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity which acknowledged the efforts of Christians to improve relations with the Jewish people.

But the last word was Patricia’s who, in thanking us for attending, quoted:

☾☾ I am the God of infinite forgiveness! ✠



Marilyn Grant of Madonna House and Patricia Rooke share a moment at the Symposium as Caren Fitzgerald looks on

St. Columba Catholic Church, Anglican Liturgy Opens on West Burnside Road

by William Mears

Thursday, November 1, 2012 ended with a beautiful blue sky as the new parish of St. Columba celebrated an All Saints Day Mass with Fr. John Laszczyk. This is the first Anglican Liturgy congregation of the *Anglicanorum Coetibus*—Pope Benedict’s official permission of Anglican communities to become fully Roman Catholic—in Victoria. With the guidance of the Holy Father and Bishop Gagnon the new congregation has now transitioned from the grateful use of St. Jean Baptiste for a Sunday afternoon Mass to their own church on West Burnside Road between McKenzie and Helmcken. The 99-year old church will allow a Sunday morning Mass, and the full liturgical calendar to be celebrated.

The congregation and friends worked hard to prepare the former Anglican parish into a loving testament of the goodwill and direction Bishop Gagnon and Fr. Laszczyk have personally provided. Stations of the Cross, liturgical gifts of an altar, font, thurible, candlesticks and lectern have been received; and “chapel chairs” from a parish in England have been delivered and installed by the congregation. Weekly Masses have been provided every Sunday during the last year by Fr. Laszczyk, and starting on the Second Sunday in Advent (December 9) the parish will have the facilities to offer a full Anglican liturgical calendar throughout the year.

Former Anglican Catholic Bishop Peter Wilkinson was ordained on Saturday, December 8 at St. Andrews Cathedral, with three other priests to follow next year.

Veterans’ White Cross Placements

by Mike Bieling, Old Cemeteries Committee

Since 1926, local volunteers have followed a Cowichan Valley tradition of placing small white crosses decorated with poppies on the graves of Armed Forces Veterans and Peace Officers during the month of November.

Originally introduced as a part of an annual Armistice Day commemoration organized nationwide by the newly founded Royal Canadian Legion, this practice gradually gave way in most communities to Remembrance Day observations at cenotaphs and war memorials in city parks and downtown locations.

In some Cowichan Valley communities however, the original tradition continued with the support of local branches of the Legion and other volunteers, no doubt because together the two forms of memorial encompass and honour all of our veterans: the Remembrance Day cenotaph ceremonies emphasizing the memory of those who fell in service overseas, while the White Cross placements commemorate all those who served and returned home to the Cowichan Valley.

On October 27, members of the Mill Bay/Malahat Historical Society assisted the Old Cemeteries Society in coordinating this project along with representatives of the Royal Canadian Legion, a local cadet corp and elected officials.



Pictured are the placements at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Cemetery, Mill Bay, where a number of parishioners were on hand to witness the cross placements of approximately 35 veterans who have been identified. Other South Cowichan cemeteries at which crosses were placed include the Mill Bay United Church, St. John’s Anglican in Cobble Hill and the Shawnigan Community Cemetery,

Members of the parish and the public were invited to attend any of the cross placement ceremonies, or to visit a cemetery near them in which veterans’ graves are decorated with remembrance crosses, to see how this 85-year-old local tradition continues to honour the service and sacrifice of the South Cowichan Valley’s veterans. At most of these locations crosses remained in place until the end of November. ✠



Michael Birch, Fr. Peter Wilkinson and Don Malins at St. Columba’s on West Burnside Road.

CWL Fall Interim Report

by Caroline Keller, Victoria Diocesan Communications Chairperson

Victoria Diocesan Executive, Fr. Mel Bayron, Parish Council Presidents, and members of the Victoria Diocesan Councils gathered in Campbell River on October 3, 2012 to address Council business and concerns, attend a Spiritual Retreat given by Fr. Mel and Kathy Fadum, and renew old friendships as well as meet new friends.

Carol Kittleson introduced our new Spiritual Advisor, Fr. Mel, and Kathy Fadum, Diocesan Spiritual Development, who together facilitated our Spiritual Retreat, Walking on Holy Ground.

Kathy Fadum began our Spiritual Reflection with a time of silence: “God is speaking in the very quiet” and followed with an inspirational song, *Come and Journey With Me*.

Take off your shoes, you are on Holy Ground.

A reading was presented by Agnes Geiger based on *The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* from the Second Vatican Council Article #40—Love and serve deeply and fully.

Fr. Mel stated that based on the story of the rich young man in the Gospel of Matthew, we see the three stages of holiness:

1. Essential holiness—i.e., keeping the Commandments;
2. Detachment from material possessions; and
3. Following Christ.

Purification of sin and its effects in life is better accomplished sooner than later. Holiness is not an option for those who want to spend eternity with God—it is a requirement.

Contemplate the face of Jesus, embrace holiness with faith.

Embrace holiness with faith. The Year of Faith began October 11, 2012, on the 50th Anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, and will conclude November 24, 2013, on the Solemnity of Christ the King.

God told Moses to remove his sandals by the burning bush because he was on Holy Ground. We must pay attention to our “burning bush” attention-getters, just as Moses knew what God wanted him to know. We also have burning bush “ah-hah” moments in our lives that call us to become faithful and trusting in God’s ways. Personal stories were related that demonstrated how members have been made aware that God was showing them what to do. God is present in each and every one of us if only we pay attention. Kick off your shoes, become a child again and stop your busyness.

This is Holy Ground We’re standing on Holy Ground, For the Lord is present And where He is, is holy.

After Mass at noon, we met at a business lunch which gave Parish Standing Committee counterparts a chance to address with their Diocesan Chairperson any concerns that they might have. Following lunch, the General Meeting resumed during which a *Catch the Fire* presentation was made by Maureen Ingram and Kathy Weswick; it gave the assembled members an idea of what the program would entail. The *Catch the Fire* video was presented on the computer donated to St. Peter’s CWL by Lorraine Hamilton. For the next two years we will be able to participate in this program which will inspire women to join the Catholic Women’s League and grow in faith and love with us.

Members of Victoria Diocesan CWL trooped in and gave a rousing invitation to join them in June 6–8, 2013 for the Provincial Convention to be held at the Harbour Towers Hotel in Victoria. It promises to be a fun Convention. ✠



The newly elected Executive: Caroline Keller, Communications; Trudy Fiege, Legislation; Margaret Beardon, Life Member; Sheila Quinn, Community Live; Elizabeth Hoskins, Treasurer; Kathy Weswick, President; Daisy Mah, Past President; Blanca Stead, Organization/President-Elect; Dorothy Griffin, Resolutions; Maureen Ingram, Education and Health; Stella Cook, Christian Family Life; Connie Haffey, Secretary; Kathy Fadum, Spiritual Development; Fr. Mel Bayron, Spiritual Advisor.

The Presence of Christ in the CWL

by Roseanne Rowan (Parish), Caroline Keller (Diocesan) and Evelyn Rigby (Provincial)

CWL members across BC and the Yukon make great efforts to be a presence in the lives of people with needs throughout the year. Here are a few examples from around the province.

On Remembrance Day Nelson President Beth Bosch and her team held their turkey supper which was open to the public. 350 people, including many seniors, enjoyed an early meal topped off with delicious pies donated by parishioners.

One Council in Prince George combines an afternoon spiritual program of Advent readings with a potluck lunch, carol sing and “blind auction” for their elderly members and friends. Proceeds from the auction benefit Catholic Missions In Canada and other charities.

Filipino members in the Diocese of Vancouver invite other parishioners to experience their celebration of *Simbang Gabi*, an Advent Novena of Masses, each followed by food and fellowship.

In Whitehorse, members are planning to join with the Kinettes in “adopting” a family by personally delivering Christmas greetings and hampers.

Members in the Diocese of Kamloops continue their *Toonies for Teeth* project which helps the retired and persons with needs access dental treatment, while others collect mitts and scarves for homeless men and assist St. Vincent de Paul with its outreach programs.

Being a presence in our Victoria Diocese does not necessarily exclude presents! Our Lady of the Rosary CWL Council in Victoria has an ongoing project to support Cockrell House, which is a housing unit in their area for military veterans who have problems after returning from deployment. Each month the veterans are asked what they need, and members generously respond by bringing the required items to their meetings. In November, the request was for cleaning supplies, as well as bedding and towels. The Council enjoys this close connection with the Cockrell House residents and feels it is fulfilling a direct need.

St. Peter’s Council (Nanaimo) is one of several that give prayer shawls to members in need of comfort. The shawls, knitted or crocheted to a specific pattern with constant prayer, display colors holding special meanings. Approximately 120 have been given, not just in Nanaimo, but as far away as Ontario.

A traditional event in Campbell River involves the CWL President and Spiritual Development chairperson of St. Patrick’s Council, who visit their elderly members in care homes and present each with flowers, in appreciation for their previous work for God and Canada.

We thank God for the blessings He gives us, and for the ability to continue to serve people in our communities. ✠



L to R: Rony Gerritsen, Johanna Watson, Marg Butler and Diane James at the October 20 St. Peter’s Parish Council 75th Anniversary Luncheon



Victoria Association of Catholic Leaders Holds Inaugural Breakfast

by Liz Boyd

On October 30, 2012, the Victoria Association of Catholic Leaders (ACL) held its inaugural breakfast with 68 attendees at the Union Club. This new Association is for Catholic leaders and business men and women in the Diocese who are seeking support to consciously integrate their professional life with their faith and family responsibilities.

Based on similar groups operating in the Archdiocese of Vancouver and in the United States, the Association of Catholic Leaders was started by a steering committee headed by its chairman, Timothy Dumas and assisted by Fr. Dean Henderson, who was appointed the group's Chaplain by Victoria Bishop Richard Gagnon. The ACL provides a venue where Catholic professionals can gather for breakfast on a periodic basis and hear from speakers who will address how one can live "unity of life," where one's faith guides one's professional and personal responsibilities.

The ACL's first speaker was Bishop Gagnon who spoke on Catholic Leadership and the Year of Faith.

The Bishop opened his remarks by welcoming attendees and then quipped, "Now since we are meeting and having breakfast at the Union Club in downtown Victoria—an illustrious venue by any standards—I have decided to entitle my modest talk: *Don't drink your beer out of a bottle—use a glass!* He went on to explain:

As unusual as it may seem, this phrase was uttered by a person I knew very well towards the end of his life. If we put any weight at all on a person's last utterances, and I do in this case, then we have to take them seriously. He grew up largely on the streets of an eastern Canadian city having left home early, fought in the war, married and pulled himself up from the street and became successful in life both as a family man and in business. Many of his friends remained on the street in the same rut, in the same beer parlours and with the same habits since their youth. Towards the end of his life, dying of cancer, yet living his Catholic Faith more deeply, he told his children: Remember your dignity, have some class and self-respect, by using the words Don't drink your beer out of a bottle—use a glass!

Given that the Pope inaugurated the Year of Faith on October 11, the 50th Anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and the 20th anniversary of the promulgation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Bishop took this opportunity to encourage attendees "to persevere in our Faith along the way" of life being faithful to one's Baptismal calling regardless of one's state in life or career. He said, "Catholic Leadership is being faithful to our gift of Baptism and all the gifts that follow—in our marriages, religious vows, ordinations, [and] careers in the world." The Bishop encouraged all in attendance to embrace Servant Leadership, learned from Jesus Christ "who came to serve not to be served (Matt.20:28)." He said, "Catholic leadership is not merely a way of speaking but a form of living."

Bishop Gagnon cited the example of a member of government in Ottawa who upon learning that his granddaughter was pregnant and preparing for an abortion, passionately explained to her that he would do anything in the world for her and her child. In the end, the young woman, who did not practice any faith, "saw the sincerity in her grandfather" and was convinced to have the child. "Now this man is in his 70's and both he and his wife are raising a young boy," said the Bishop, holding their actions up as an outstanding example of Christian Leadership.

The Bishop spoke of Pope Benedict's Apostolic Letter introducing the Year of Faith, *Porta Fidei*, in which the Pope said that "often today, Christians simply take their Faith as a given and yet are more concerned about their commitment to social, cultural and political causes rather than the true reality of Faith in Jesus Christ and what Christ taught." The Bishop challenged attendees to live their Faith through love. "Christian Leaders, those called by their Baptism to serve one another and even the neighbour they do not know, are called to love not only with their emotions or with words, but entirely and concretely, in deed and in truth. Those who encounter Love are invited to allow it to transform every aspect of their lives—the New Evangelization is very much about this."

In his remarks, ACL Chairman Tim Dumas explained that the ACL will meet for three breakfasts annually and that the next meeting will be in February. "While the breakfasts will be the pillar of our association ... some groups in other cities have also formed Professional Faith Studies Groups, Professional Mastermind Groups and published Catholic Business Directories, so we will assess other initiatives in the future."

The ACL is open to any Catholic in a professional, business or leadership position on Vancouver Island. For more information, contact Tim Dumas at victoriabcac@gmail.com. ✕



Catholic and Anglican Schools Lead the Way with Food Collections

by Jamie Zwicker

Again this year, over 1,300 elementary school students from across the Island walked and supported the World Food Day Walk, collecting close to 7,000 pounds of food, and making Foodbank volunteers extra busy with their food hampers.

"It's great to see young students being involved in such a basic—and critically important—social justice event," says Grant Croswell, Manager of St. Vincent de Paul's Social Concerns Office on View Street. "This is where it all begins, where the 'rubber hits the road' in a very meaningful and practical way!"

In a typical classroom in British Columbia, up to four children in each classroom come to school hungry because their parents cannot afford enough food. "Things may be financially tight," says teacher Mrs. Brenda Bella, "but at St. Andrew's Elementary, we need to inform, and teach the children that every little bit helps. Nothing is too insignificant, no effort too small!"

Students and teachers were assisted again by Christ Church Cathedral School and their middle-school students from grades four and five. "We should be participating in walks and events such as this," says Ms. Marylee McKeown, Grade 8 teacher at Christ Church Cathedral School. "Besides being a great sister school (St. Andrew's Elementary), the Social Concerns Office—and many of the ultimate clients—are in our back yard. How can we not support them?"

Other Island Catholic Schools have also collected food for other Island communities: the Bread Basket in Duncan, Harvest House in Chemainus, and the St Vincent de Paul conference in Port Alberni. In each community, food collected from the community by the students stayed in the community.

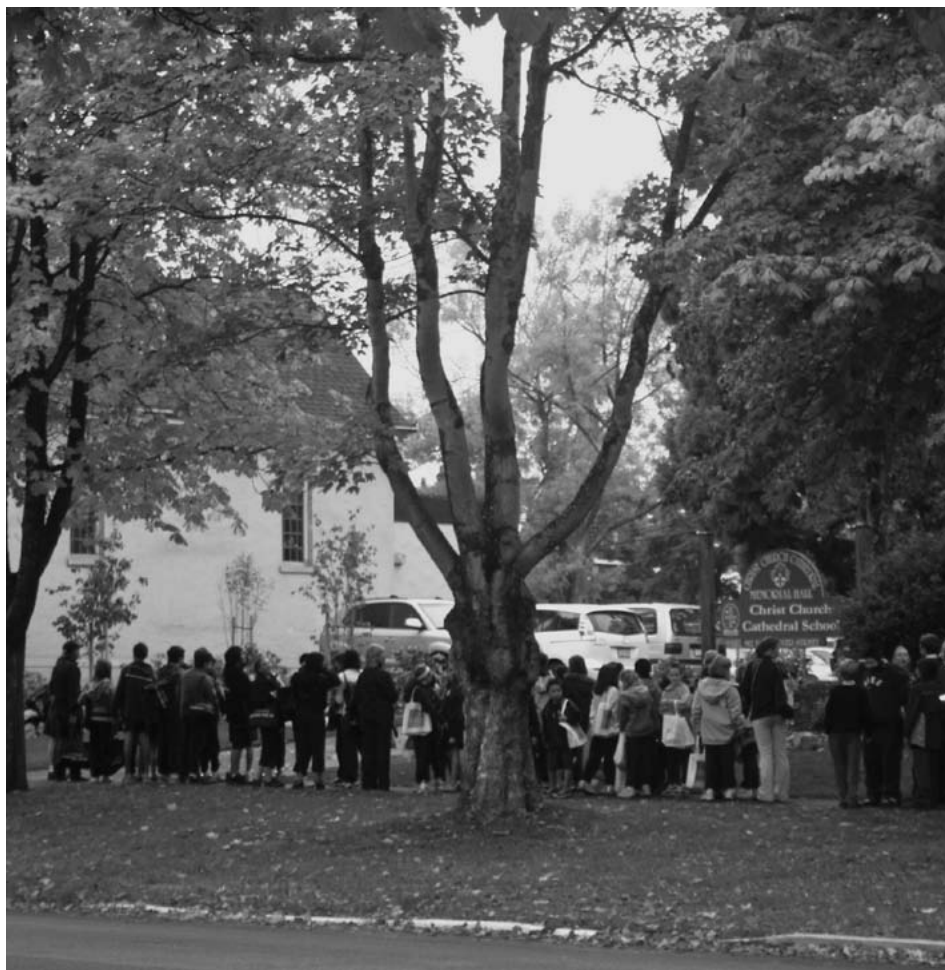
For St. Andrew's Elementary, a fixture on the corner of Vancouver and Pandora for nearly 150 years, it was a bittersweet moment. Students and teachers would be participating in the World Food Day walk—in the current fashion—one last time. Although several students from St. Andrew's Elementary will transfer to St. Patrick's Elementary next year, the majority will amalgamate with St. Joseph's Elementary for the 2013/2014 school year. This year St. Joseph's came to walk in solidarity with their soon-to-be classmates and friends and many a new relationship was made or strengthened.

"Many of the students know one another from interschool competitions or get-togethers," says Simon DiCasteri, Principal at St. Joseph's Elementary in Saanich. "We usually walk in our own neighbourhood, but our presence here today is intended as a sign of solidarity with the cause of the prevention of hunger, and also a hospitable way that we can show a hearty welcome to the students of St. Andrew's Elementary."

"I love this time of year," says Croswell, eagerly awaiting the students' arrival. "You see everyone pulling and participating together, and we get to show them what happens to their donations. Besides, you just never know," he says with a glint in his eye, patiently accepting a donation from a Kindergarten student, "perhaps there is a new Frederic Ozanam in our midst today." (Frederic Ozanam was the young, 20 year old Parisian college student who began what is now known as the St. Vincent de Paul Societies in post-Revolution France in 1833.)

All told, close to 7,000 pounds of food was raised by these seven schools: John Paul II Catholic (Port Alberni), St. Joseph's Elementary (Chemainus), Queen of Angels Catholic (Duncan), and locally St. Joseph's Elementary, St. Andrew's Elementary, St. Patrick's Elementary, and Christ Church Cathedral School.

We are encouraged to continue supporting the good works of our local programs, like the Social Concerns Office, at this time of year. We can never have too much (in this case, food) when you work with Christ present in the poor and most vulnerable. ✕



Island Catholic Schools



Catholic Schools Plan: St. Andrew's and St. Joseph's Amalgamation Proceeding

The Catholic Schools Plan and its vision for safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable Catholic Schools is well underway, says Schools Superintendent Joe Colistro. "We're pleased to be moving forward on the amalgamation of St. Andrew's and St. Joseph's Elementary Schools in preparation for the September 2013 school year."

To support the amalgamation, St. Joseph's Elementary will be upgraded to add classroom space, and make building improvements and seismic upgrades.

"Transition activities have begun and much is planned and still to do," says Colistro. Some staff from St. Andrew's Elementary have moved to new positions. School Councils from St. Andrew's and St. Joseph's will begin to amalgamate in January, and open houses are being held to help with student and parent orientation. Year-end celebrations are also being planned.

Colistro says, "There are many things to be done in making a transition of this size, and as always, the support of all our school families is greatly appreciated."

"Every effort is being made to make the transition as smooth as possible, and ensure that all our children continue to be well cared for and provided with exceptional learning opportunities in Island Catholic Schools."

Updates on the Catholic Schools Plan are available on the Island Catholic Schools website at www.cisdv.bc.ca by clicking on the Catholic Schools Plan logo. ✂



Implementing the Catholic Schools Plan vision for safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable Catholic Schools will see the amalgamation of St. Joseph's and St. Andrew's elementary schools (pictured here, L and R). Additional classroom space, building improvements and seismic upgrades will be made to St. Joseph's to support integrating the two schools.

Queen of Angels

by Brenda Hennig

During the Advent Season it is so important for our students to understand that giving of ourselves is the greatest gift that we can make.

At Queen of Angels Catholic School we try to instill this philosophy from a young age. Our Kindergarten students make a special trip to Waldon House to sing Christmas Carols with the seniors in the day program there. The seniors' eyes light up with excitement when they see the line of children walking across the field towards them. The students sing with and share a snack with the seniors and have a visit that is enjoyable for young and old.

This year our grade two students sang at the Cowichan Centre for the beginning of their Christmas Season and at the Duncan Light Up this year on November 30. They are so excited to give back to our community. Additionally, our grade three class collected *Operation Christmas Child* boxes.

All of these different experiences help reinforce the value of giving back to the community. We have many other projects that are ongoing in our school such as toques and mittens for the homeless, toiletries for Warmland House, food drives throughout the year and so on.

We will see a brighter future tomorrow by building the foundation of giving today. ✂

St. Patrick's School— Ora et Labora

by Deanne Paulson, Principal

As stated in the school motto, *Ora et Labora* (Pray and Work), students at St. Patrick's School are challenged to work towards making a difference in their community. 100% of the students participate in community service projects. Many of the service projects are much-anticipated annual events, including the Christmas Drive-Thru and Christmas Crackers.

The annual Drive-Thru takes place in the school parking lot before the school day begins. The atmosphere is festive with strings of twinkling lights, carol music and complimentary hot chocolate and apple cider. Staff and students gather to collect donations of nonperishable foods, new Christmas gifts, toiletries and warm clothing. The St. Vincent de Paul truck, bursting with goodies, delivers much-needed donations to Anawim House and St. Vincent de Paul.

Students start preparing for the Christmas Crackers project in October, when they donate wrapped sweets collected on Halloween. Parents supply the paper rolls, snappers, ribbons and wrapping paper and they oversee the production of the crackers. All the students in the school throw their energy into creating more than a thousand crackers, including a heart-felt hand-written message tucked into every one. The crackers find their way to the holiday dinner tables sponsored by the Open Door and the Downtown Christmas Dinner Organization. ✂



Intentionally Make His Presence Known

by Becky Wall, Grade 1-2 Teacher, St. Joseph's Chemainus

It's all too easy to fall into the holiday present trap. The moment the first Advent candle is lit at Mass, we adults rush to the nearest shopping mall on a quest to find the perfect gift for our children and loved ones—a new snowboard, a superhero action figure, or the latest iPad. I am equally guilty of doing this. However, I can't help but wonder if these gifts match our real intentions or the true meaning of Christmas.

This Advent season, students and staff at St. Joseph's School in Chemainus reflected on the perfect Christmas gift—Christ's love—and ways to intentionally make His presence known to the wider community.

During one of many service projects, students collected toques and scarves for their annual "Mitten, Toque and Scarf" drive for St. Vincent de Paul. This activity gave students and staff an opportunity to explore issues related to poverty and the many ways that they can share Christ's love with others during the holiday season.

Other activities included a class visit to La Rosa Gardens Retirement Home in Ladysmith, bringing Christ to the Ladysmith Light Up parade with one of the only "true meaning" floats in the parade, a choir performance at the Seniors Health Facility in Chemainus, and various fundraising initiatives to support Samuel, our child sponsored through Chalice Ministries. Through these projects, students learned more about the real gift of Christmas and discovered the true joy that is only found in Christ. ✂



St. Andrew's Regional High School

by Diane Chimich, Vice-Principal

Sharing our gifts and talents is an integral part of St. Andrew's Regional High School. Initiatives to make St. Andrew's students visible contributors to our local community have been multifaceted. For example, students have volunteered for various road races through the fall in support of charities. Through another project, Dageum, the child we sponsor through Compassion Canada, is now in his 8th year of school as we continue to provide the funds needed to ensure this.

Student Council provided an exciting "Fright Night" for all, which raised funds for the Kenyan community of Eor Ewuaso. During 2011 – 2012 we raised sufficient funds to build a well for this community; the goal this year is to support the sustainable food initiative in this area.

We have learned the Burnside/Gorge community is in need of assistance so we will be assisting with the Pancake Breakfast event in this community. Ongoing volunteering at Mount St. Mary Hospital, a local care facility, is an initiative that we are implementing this year.

Our students are passionate about assisting both locally and globally. They are truly making a difference and creating a change. ✂

School Retreats

by Simon Di Castri, Principal

Island Catholic Schools is a kindergarten-to-grade-12 Catholic education system, and we have been working hard over the last decade to promote the comprehensive nature of Catholic education so that parents view Catholic education the way they might view French Immersion—once started, it must be seen through to grade 12.

One way to promote the K-12 nature of our school system was the inauguration last year of annual grade-wide retreats for students in grades 5 – 7 in Victoria-area schools. One of the great strengths we have discovered with these retreats is the impact of the powerful presence of older St. Andrew's high school students on our grade 7s.

For the second year, St. Andrew's has provided student leaders from grade 10 to each of the Victoria elementary schools to assist with the retreat program, and it is clear that these high school students command attention and respect from our younger ones. Their service to the school system and their younger colleagues is remarkable, and really has to be commended.

High school student retreat leaders are in the thick of ice-breaker activities, leading dance party favourites such as the *Electric Slide*, the *Macarena*, the *Chicken Dance*, and the *Cha Cha Slide*, among others. However, the activity with the greatest impact on our students is the talks these high school students give. Focusing on friendship, integrity and being a gift of God to others, student retreat leaders share their life experiences with our kids, highlighting the promise and pitfalls of high school and adolescence. By their presence and willingness to give of their time and share willingly their insights to life's challenges, these high-schoolers provide an authentic Christian witness to their faith and their commitment of service to others, and it is a message that our kids hear loud and clear.

We are called in many ways to serve the Kingdom of God, and the high school student retreat leaders demonstrate that this can happen early, among youth for youth, setting a pattern for proudly professing our faith by the lives we lead, in the service of others. Congratulations to our high school student retreat leaders for the Christian leadership they provide—well done! ✂

John Paul II Advent Traditions

by Kathy Korman, Principal

The students and staff of John Paul II Catholic School have developed some favourite traditions around the Advent season.

Annually we have a Christmas concert that includes a bake sale, raffle, and a student leadership fundraiser. This year students in grades 6 through 8 are selling beaded figure brooches. All profits will be given to a village in Ecuador so that a well can be built for clean water. Last year 400 people enjoyed our concert.

Another project includes our annual hat, mitt and sock drive in support of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Our goal each year is to cover a tree with as much warm clothing as possible for people with needs in our community.

We also support the Festival of Lights which is a two-weekend display held at McLean Mill, a historic site in town. Various groups each take a building at the mill and decorate it with lights. Votes at \$2 each are cast for the favourite display. Our house always highlights our students and features a large Nativity scene. This year all proceeds will be given to the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Another event is the Festival of Trees at The Barclay, the local Best Western hotel. We have been given a \$500 sponsorship that will be donated to the BC Children's Hospital. We are decorating our tree with student-made paper ornaments that have a prayer written on the back.

Another way that we bring the "presence" of Christ is through our school choir which has been invited to sing at the hospital and local seniors' centre. Advent wreaths, Jesse trees and Nativity scenes are found throughout our building.

Together we prepare to celebrate the coming of Jesus. ✂





Open Wide the Door of Faith: Tools for the Journey

by Jim O'Reilly, Office of Religious Education – Photos by Keith MacKenzie

This compilation represents a few of the many encouraging comments received from participants at our Diocesan Pastoral Planning Conference *Open Wide the Door of Faith: Tools for the Journey*, held October 26-27 at St. Andrew's Regional High School.

We were very fortunate to receive a positive response from Sandy Prather to serve as our Keynote speaker. Sandy is the former director of Star of the North Retreat Centre who works locally, nationally and internationally teaching and facilitating in the areas of faith and spirituality. She holds a Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Alberta, and a Master of Theology degree from Newman Theological College. Of particular significance to the Diocese, Sandy serves as a member of the National Advisory Committee on Adult Catechesis, for the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, which developed *On Good Soil*. On Good Soil is the Canadian Bishops' national pastoral plan for adult formation.

Other key presenters included Phil Jennings from St. Edward the Confessor Parish in Duncan who masterfully utilized a gardening analogy to extrapolate key principles and tools from *On Good Soil* and showed how they can be applied to any parish setting; and Leah MacKenzie, Chief Financial Officer for the Diocese, and Leo Chaland, former Superintendent of Catholic Schools, who explained the "whys" and the "how-tos" of the Responsible Ministry Safe Environment protocol, connecting it to the inherent sacredness of our interpersonal relationships.

A very practical and inspiring document, *On Good Soil* has served as the blueprint for the implementation of our Diocesan and Parish Pastoral planning. Its introduction has also been timely in serving as a practical foundation and springboard for exploring the opportunities and the possibilities afforded by the Year of Faith.

Beginning with the more personal, the interior spiritual life, Sandy's opening theme explored Revelations 3:20, "Behold I stand and knock," and our invitation to respond to the blessings of our Baptismal Call by developing our experience of Encounter with God, discovering our gifts and growing through exercising them in service to others. She then moved us to an exploration of the *New Evangelization*, the Year of Faith and an examination of the practical role On Good Soil plays in anticipating, preparing for and living out these potentially life-transforming opportunities.

In addition to bringing *On Good Soil* to the "backyard" of our community experience, Phil Jennings led participants in parish/regional groups in a "hands-on" exercise taken directly from *On Good Soil*, testing the experience of parish pastoral planning against the lived reality of people from all walks of life. Participants encompassed a wide spectrum of parish life: pastors, parish pastoral council chairs and pastoral council members, teachers, those involved in ministry, as well as those whose main service is through their prayer life.

This year's Conference approach attempted to honour last year's feedback which called for more "face-to-face" discussion time. To that end, following the keynote presentations, the "break-out room approach" was abandoned and replaced with sessions just before noon and in the afternoon where participants were grouped at "parish tables" arranged in "regional pods" allowing for more in-depth discussion time.

Regional animators facilitated discussion in their "regional pods" by circulating among their "parish tables" and assisting participants in first assessing and creating an inventory of current pastoral activity and then exploring possible areas of future focus within the context of current parish pastoral plans. Parish pastoral council chairs were asked to bring copies of their parish pastoral plans which were to form part of the context for verifying the current situation as well as serving as a starting point for discerning future direction.

The resulting data from both discussions were recorded and submitted for discernment to the Diocesan Team as a critical means of informing on-going diocesan pastoral planning with actual grass-roots experience and ideas. This data will also be returned to Pastors and their Parish Pastoral Councils to provide another perspective with fresh thinking for their own parish pastoral planning process. ✕

It challenged me to be brave, even though I found the prospect of undertaking more responsibility in my area daunting.

It ignited my faith.



We are struggling as a parish and connection to the larger whole is encouraging.

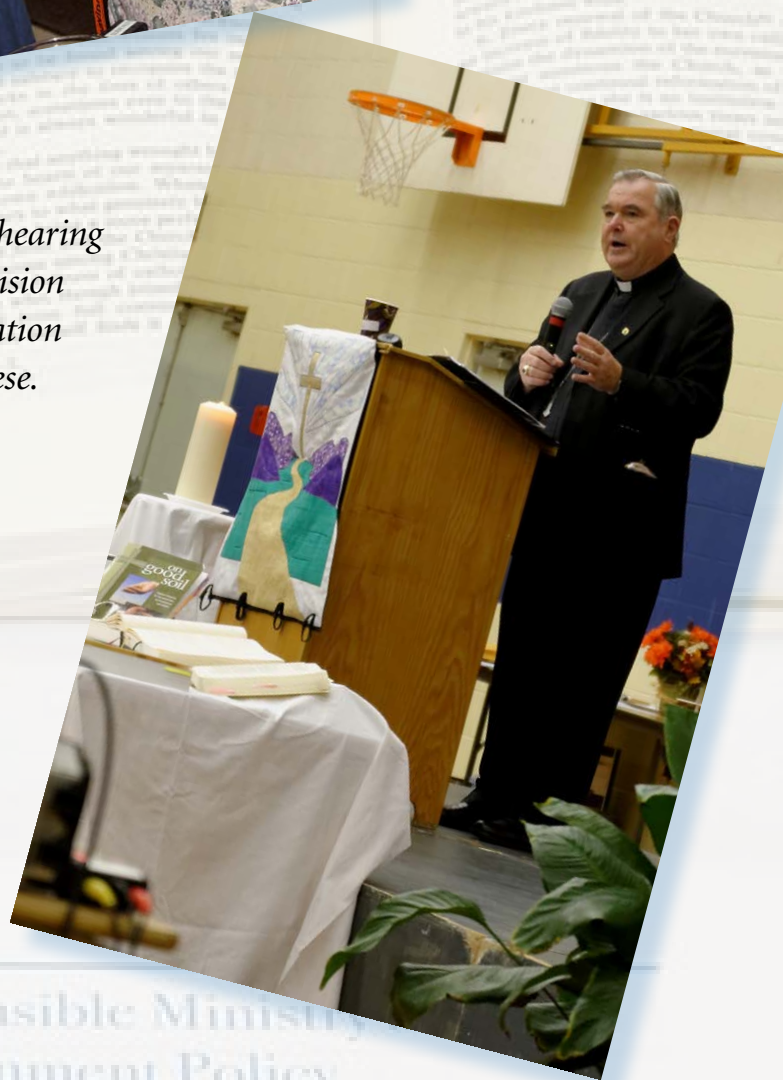
It encouraged me to dedicate more of myself to the First Nations.

Sandy Prather's excellent presentations effortlessly unpacked On Good Soil and carried it to a level that was easily understood.



*It really clarified
what the Diocesan Plan
was all about.*

*We appreciated hearing
the Bishop's vision
for evangelization
in the Diocese.*



Responsible Ministry Environment Policy

What You Need to Know

The Diocese of Victoria

*I am a new Parish
Chairman and it
gave me a good insight to
the Diocese overall.*

*It gave me ideas on
how to evangelize my
loved ones.*



Blessing the Christmas Tree

In my childhood, we did not put up the tree until December 22 because otherwise it would dry out by New Year’s Day. To fully experience the symbol of light, in conjunction with the Advent Wreath, you could set it up on the 24th and allow the blaze of light to herald the new birth. Personally, I set up the tree on the first Sunday of Advent, but only decorate it with lights and a star, saving the tree decorations until sometime between December 21 and 24, when I have a free evening and can make a little celebration of it. However and whenever this works for your family, don’t forget to use this symbol to remind your family of the spiritual presence of Christmas. Before lighting it for the first time, gather the family around the tree. Everyone can stretch their hands over the tree and the leader prays or all pray together:

*God of Adam and Eve,
God of our ancestors,
We praise you for this tree.
It stirs a memory of paradise
And brings a foretaste of heaven.*

*Send your Son,
The flower of the root of Jesse,
To restore your good earth
To the freshness of creation.*

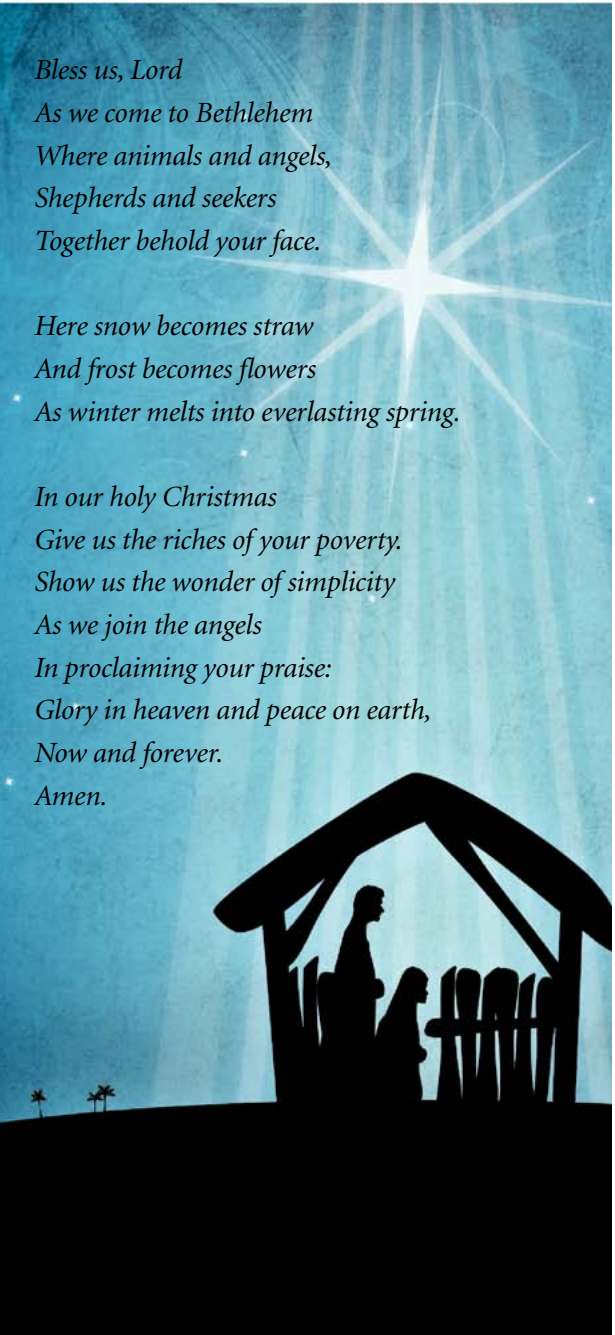
*Then every tree of the forest
Will clap its hands
And all creation will bless you
From these shining branches.*

*All glory be yours
Now and forever.
Amen.*



Blessing the Christmas Crib

Every home should have a crèche or manger scene to balance the secular focus of society’s celebration of Christmas. You may wish to set the scene up as early as the first week of Advent and add statues as Christmas comes nearer. Save the Baby Jesus for Christmas Eve or Christmas morning. Have a child, perhaps the youngest, place the Baby Jesus in the manger. Everyone can stretch their hands over the manger scene and the leader prays or all pray together:



*Bless us, Lord
As we come to Bethlehem
Where animals and angels,
Shepherds and seekers
Together behold your face.*

*Here snow becomes straw
And frost becomes flowers
As winter melts into everlasting spring.*

*In our holy Christmas
Give us the riches of your poverty.
Show us the wonder of simplicity
As we join the angels
In proclaiming your praise:
Glory in heaven and peace on earth,
Now and forever.
Amen.*

Epiphany Blessing of the Home

Another way to highlight the presence of Christ during the holiday season is to continue to celebrate Christmas for the full 12 days which start Dec. 24/25 and continue to January 6: Epiphany. Gather the family at the front door and write 20 + C + B + M + 13 above the door in chalk. This is the century (20) Caspar, Balthazar, Melchior (the three kings) and the year (13, next year will be 14 etc.). Everyone can stretch their hands over the door and the leader prays or all pray together:

*God of all time and space
With Christmas joy we praise you
For the year gone by
And for the year we have begun.*

*May this home we have made
Be filled with kindness to one another,
With hospitality to guests
And with abundant care for every stranger.*

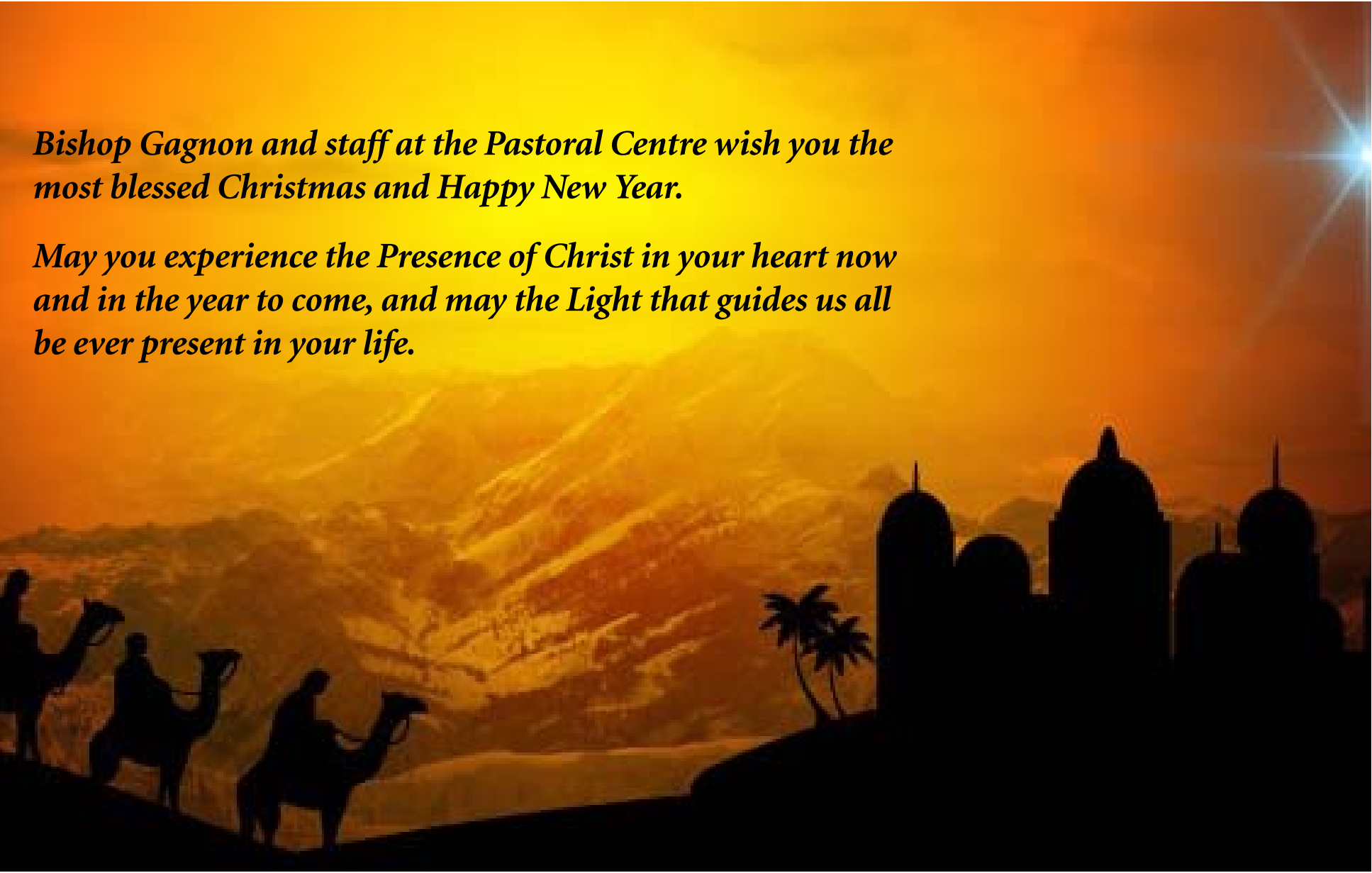
*By the gentle light of a star
Guide home all who seek you
On paths of wonder, peace and charity.*

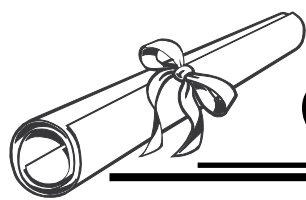
*Fill the year with good gifts for all the world
As we join with the angels
In proclaiming your praise:
Glory in heaven and peace on earth,
Now and forever.
Amen.*

I hope these ideas will provide you with ways to truly celebrate the presence of Christ in your home during the holiday season through the practice of family prayer. The Domestic Church is a series of articles designed to help us be Catholic leaders in our families. We hope the ideas presented here will assist you in taking this leadership role and highlighting the place of your family as “The Domestic Church.” ✠



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On Campus



by Fr. Dean Henderson

Invited by Jesus Into the Silence

In the midst of the frenetic busyness of papers and exams, the constant electronic interruptions of tweets and texts, and the universal pressures and pleasures of the pursuit of friends and romance, something ever-ancient, ever-new is stirring in the souls of students—it’s the restless hankering for silence. It’s the one “thing” so suppressed by modern urban life, the “thing” that Pope Benedict XVI says we should enter more attentively within the holy liturgy: sacred silence.

Amongst the varied offerings at Multifaith services at UVic are forms of communal contemplation—Buddhist Meditation, Baha’i Meditation and Christian Meditation—to which young adults with little or no religious identity flock in search of just such an identity. Into the silence, many Catholic students are discovering the contemplative power of Christ’s presence in Adoration, where some find healing and wholeness, and all find peace and abiding joy. To look upon the face of Jesus and experience his affirming compassion has the marvelous effect of clarifying one’s identity, confirming one’s vocation, correcting faults and constricting one’s anxieties. In a word: Jesus converts!

I remember well my own driven compulsions as an undergraduate student; the zealous and irrational need to succeed, the restless desire for purpose, and the confusing quest for relationships. Admittedly, my relationship with God was still quite novel, but I had come to know that I needed Jesus if I was to have any hope of living peacefully with myself.

Adoration wasn’t offered then, or at least I knew nothing of it, but I was given a life-changing little book of meditations by Fr. Henri Nouwen called *Out of Solitude* that introduced me to a new way of being with Jesus. Nouwen reflects on the fact that Jesus himself retreated from the active ministry of healing, teaching and preaching that defined his public ministry. “In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house, and went off to a lonely place and prayed there (Mk 1:35).” In solitude and silence Jesus found intimacy with the Father and Holy Spirit from which his mission and ministry was born.

Somewhere we know that without silence, words lose their meaning, that without listening speaking no longer heals, that without distance closeness cannot cure.

Somewhere we know that without a lonely place our actions quickly become empty gestures. The careful balance between silence and words, withdrawal and involvement, distance and closeness, solitude and community forms the basis of the Christian life and should therefore be the subject of our most personal attention.

The simple reflections of this modern mystic and the guidance of God’s Spirit propelled me over 30 years ago in the direction of the Benedictine community of Westminster Abbey in Mission where I discovered solitude and silence that both terrified and captivated my soul. It was in the holy, foreign, and otherworldly retreat house of St. Benedict’s sons, with the written spiritual guidance of a Catholic Yale Divinity professor that I was met by Jesus, the living Lord who promised his abiding presence when he parted this world, saying: “I am with you always, to the close of the age (Mt. 28:20).” Because of his presence, with St. Paul I could (and can) say “the life I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal 2:20).”

“...I discovered solitude and silence that both terrified and captivated my soul.

While we have offered an annual Advent day retreat for students, this will be our first year to make a trip to the Abbey. The spaces were booked and paid for by students within a week of announcing the opportunity a couple months ago; more evidence of the yearning for silence! Now in my sixth year of ministry on the campuses of UVic and Camosun, I can see the ever-growing fruit from inviting young people into the presence of Jesus. Christ is encountered on annual retreats, through the study of God’s Word, in the community gathered in His Sacramental presence, through service and mission opportunities and in the Newman and Bethany houses.

From those of us on Campus, we wish our Diocesan family the greatest Christmas present ever: the sure and certain experience of Jesus presence in the midst of sacred silence! ✠



Connections



by Raya MacKenzie

I took a break from studying for exams and writing my final papers. I started up my little red car and made a trip to Michael’s Craft Store. Plastic evergreen garlanded the aisles and the music piped in through the speaker played Jingle Bells. I pushed my cart over to the Styrofoam section and loaded in a donut-shaped slice. Then I cut a yard of dark evergreen and selected four candles: purple, purple, pink, purple.

“What a weird colour combo,” said the cashier when she rang me through her till.

“It’s an Advent wreath,” I said. “Or it will be.”

“A what?” she said.

While gluing together the wreath back at my apartment, I tried not to feel too prickly about the cashier’s confusion. Catholics tell these kinds of stories all the time to illustrate conflict with the secular world, but I find that often we become self-righteous about others’ ignorance and show little compassion for the agnostics who, in all honesty, just think it is a funny set of colours. When I look at all the manufactured Christmas ware—the light-up Santas and bedazzled snowmen—I feel at least glad that the marketing section of the secular world doesn’t know very much about Advent. The Advent wreath is the one item in this season that we have to make ourselves. Sure, you could argue that I am cheating a bit by using Styrofoam and plastic evergreen when our ancestors had to trek out into the forest for the real deal. But I want this Advent wreath to last. It is the first Advent wreath of my life as an adult, the first wreath I have made. I want it to last for my children to one day light the candles, the way my childhood Advent devotion centered on the wreath my mother made when she was a young woman.

The creation of an Advent wreath marks not only preparation for the spiritual rebirth of Christ but also a preparation for a new phase in life. In hot-glue-gunning these candleholders to the Styrofoam, I invest in my future as a Catholic. I assert, yes, this is important to me. This is a tradition I want to continue. I don’t think I would feel the same way if I could just buy a wreath straight out of the box. My hands, my creativity, my labour mark this wreath as part of my relationship with God—a relationship I hope I will pass down to future generations.

As a child, I remember feeling very proud of my mother’s Advent wreath, especially proud that she made it herself. I would ask, why did you put this here? How did you make that stick? Now that I am older, I ask the same questions about

faith. Why do we follow this ritual? How did you reconcile this problem? Just as her Advent wreath serves as a model for mine, her faith serves as a model for mine.

And yet there always comes a time when we have to choose to actively inherit our parents’ faith rather than passively accept it. We create our own wreaths in the same form, but with slight variations. When my parents were newly engaged, my Nana accidentally lit her Advent wreath on fire. My dad scooped it up, all aflame, and ran out with it into the snow. My dad, then an agnostic, helped my mother and her mother reassemble the wreath. My Nana says that in that moment she realized how her family was transforming to include my dad as part of it.

The wreath my mom made has big plastic apples and gold foil among the leaves. I wove red and white roses into the evergreen on mine. The two wreaths aren’t identical, but you can tell they are related. I find this inheritance comforting as I sit in a phase of my life that I might call an advent. I look towards my future and honour the blessings of the past just as Advent looks forward to the renewal of Christmas and gazes behind to the miracles of some two thousand and twelve years ago. Sometimes I find my own advent tense. There are days I want to hit a fast forward button and wake up with a stable career and three children. There are other days when I want to wake up with that wonderful awe of a four-year-old and peek out the window in hope of snow. Ahead and behind.

But now, I light a candle in the dark and watch the flame as it pulses its tiny circles of heat and casts shadow on the wreath that has no beginning and no end, no future and no past. Only continuance. I wait, I watch. It holds me here. ✠

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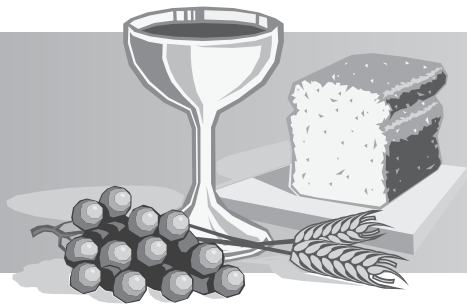
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Vocations



Discern This...

by Fr. Sean Flynn

JUST WONDERING...

Wondering can seem endless and may hold some back from making a commitment to God and one's brothers and sisters in Christ—a commitment to offer their lives in humble service through a consecrated life either as a priest or religious. We will have to be patient as they wonder. Let us continue to pray that the wondering will soon be over and that our Father will send labourers into the harvest. Let us trust that Love will provide.

What can inspire one to become a priest or a consecrated person of God? Can the saints be the inspiration that moves one to commit one's entire life to God? Can prayer be the thing that catapults one over a barrier that keeps one from such a commitment? Will it be the affirmation of friends, the support of family or the encouragement of one's pastor that finally leads one to commitment?

Letting go—is that what keeps one hesitant? Will the challenge of being consecrated to God be the overwhelming attraction that finally draws one to accept what the heart has been urging?

Will it be the realisation of how dearly priests and religious are needed that brings one to finally commit?

Will it be the Eucharist, Adoration, or some other grace of God that brings one to the point of commitment? Will the desire to do not just “more for God,” but to do “all for the love of God” help one to finally commit?

Will the experience of this year's celebration of the incarnation enhance one's awareness of God's commitment and therefore be the catalyst that sets one free from any hesitation to commit?

Will praying for others to answer the call be one's own profound moment to commit?

No one can say what will be the Call to which someone responds, and it is different for everyone. When I first arrived at the seminary the rector asked me, “Why are you here?” I told him, “I don't know!” You see, it was God's will—not mine.

Have a wonderful Advent!

A reflective Christmas Season,

And a decisive New Year ... Pax! ✠

Peter Wilkinson Ordained

by Will and Peggy Mears

Bishop Gagnon ordained the former Archbishop Peter Wilkinson of the Anglican Catholic Church of Canada, a Deacon and Priest in early December within the *Anglicanorum Coetibus*, Pope Benedict's official permission of Anglican communities to become fully Roman Catholic. Prior to this historic event, Bishop Gagnon and Fr. John Laszczyk provided nurturing and encouragement within the Diocese over the course of a year of development. Three additional priests, two in Victoria, Don Malins and Michael Birch, and Michael Switzer of Port Alberni, are expected to be ordained in the Spring.

Wilkinson, of Victoria, becomes the first to enter the Catholic priesthood in Canada. Msgr. Jeffery Steenson, who himself was a former Episcopal Bishop in the US prior to being received, was charged by the Holy Father with establishing the Canadian and US branches of the church.

Under the direction of Cardinal Collins in Canada and Cardinal Wuerl in the US, our Diocese provided guidance and support in successfully achieving the beginnings of the new branch within the Catholic church.

Wilkinson has established the first new Anglican Liturgy parish on the island at St. Columba's (see article same page) following a year of planning and excitement. The recent securing of the church building was followed by a feverish six weeks of activity by parishioners to furnish and beautify the historic house of God prior to its 99th Anniversary. The parishioners of St. Columba's had graciously accepted the use of the facilities at St. Jean de Baptiste, prior to moving to their new location in November, and have now implemented a full liturgical calendar at St. Columba's.

Following Bishop Gagnon's ordination of Fr. Wilkinson the Diocese hosted a reception for this historic event at St. Andrews Elementary school.

Visitors are most welcome to stop by and see our new branch of the Catholic Church, and we ask for your prayers as we endeavour to fulfill God's work within our community. ✠



Photo by Father Philip Kennedy, president, Catholic Missions in Canada



Happy are those who are called to His supper

Bishop Gary Gordon celebrates Mass with Father Kieran Kilcommons in Mary House Chapel; Whitehorse, Yukon

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Face the Day



by Bonnie Landry

Christmas is kind of a wacky affair at our house. Advent and Christmas traditions abound. In fact, we have reached our absolute saturation point of Advent and Christmas traditions. In fact, if we institute one more tradition, I'm going to have to cut out the turkey dinner.

Our traditions start with Advent. Years ago Albert heard Mother Angelica say that people should do something radical during Advent, to really get people's attention. Such as: process around the neighbourhood singing Advent hymns. Rather than inflict our assorted voices on the neighbourhood we started processing around our house every evening of Advent singing *O Come, Divine Messiah*. While it is slightly more dignified now, with so many maturish people in the house, when the house was filled with babies and toddlers and five and eight and ten year olds—well. It was a sight and sound to behold.

Foolish parents that we are, we agreed to let the children not only light the candles to process with, but also to actually carry them around the house. Lit. So that explains the purple splotch stains on my floor to some of you who have visited our home. And there was more than one close call for the need to "Stop, Drop and Roll." Needless to say, eventually we reached the point of wisdom to suggest carrying the figures from the Crèche around while we processed.

We have an Advent wreath that we light in the evening, providing a liturgically rich backdrop to fighting over who gets to light the candles, who gets to blow them out and which of us gets to yell at the people who keep poking their fingers in the purple liquid wax. With all the arguing out of the way, we can pray and draw closer to God and ask forgiveness for how we just all argued.

Clearly lacking opportunity to fill our evening with reasons for children to get all hyped up, we started the Jesse Tree tradition. If you aren't familiar with this tradition, the Jesse Tree is put up, devoid of decoration, at the beginning of Advent. Using nightly Scripture readings and symbols to hang on the tree, the story of Salvation is told, from Adam and Eve to the birth of Christ. The bare tree or branch represents a Scripture passage that foreshadowed the genealogy of Christ: "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots (Isaiah 11:1)."

There are lots of ideas and ways that you can make a Jesse Tree. I was able to muster up a few suggestions, but Google came up with 16,100,000,000 in .27 seconds; I can't actually even begin to compete with that in this short article.

Our version of the Jesse Tree is bare black branches made of poster board that go up on a wall. The symbols are drawn by our kids each night as Dad reads the readings and Mom serves up Advent-like snacks or apple cider variety, while attempting to maintain some damage control. We opted for the "paper tree on the wall" idea to limit potential ornament breakage.

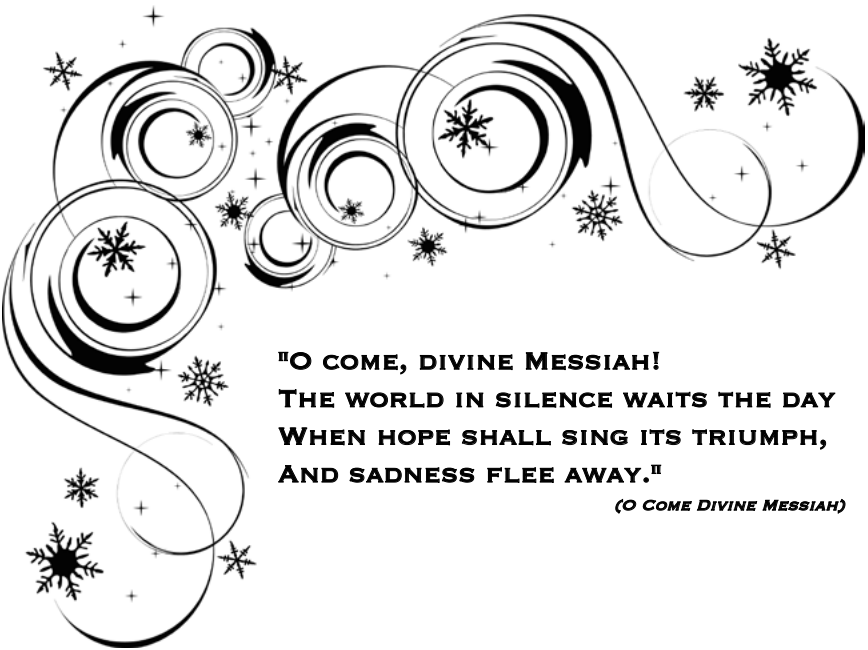
Seven kids, 25 or so nights of Advent drawings—you do the math.

We love doing a Jesse Tree to this day, but imagine this: one reading per night multiplied seven children drawing one symbol per night to tape onto the tree—and please note some children aren't happy to draw an apple to represent The Fall, but are far more Baroque in the approach to art—and of course, its important to adequately depict the story of the Fall to the Unformed or pagan friends and relatives who perchance will visit over the holidays—our Jesse Tree is fairly dripping with Salvation history, possibly far more Salvation history than any family needs.

So far we've processed, we've played with fire, we've sung and prayed, we've drawn, read, and had snacks and drinks. And that's just Advent.

It's practically *Cirque de Soleil*, don't you know.

After the children are tucked away in their beds, we generally indulge in an Advent Adult Hot Beverage heralding creamy Irish traditions. We are not Irish, but the French don't make any hot creamy adult beverages that we like. I don't have a "culture" myself, so I feel it is important to pay homage to many cultures in this way.



"O COME, DIVINE MESSIAH!
THE WORLD IN SILENCE WAITS THE DAY
WHEN HOPE SHALL SING ITS TRIUMPH,
AND SADNESS FLEE AWAY."

(O COME DIVINE MESSIAH)

On the feast of Saint Nicholas, December 6, our children receive a present and little Saint Nicholas chocolates. This becomes the evening on which they write a letter to the Christ Child. They say what they might like as a Christmas gift, and make a spiritual promise of some sort. Sometimes it is a commitment to a certain prayer, or to perform some small act of charity daily. They leave their letters in the middle of the Advent wreath, and in the morning, they are gone.

Christmas Eve comes with a flurry of activity. Capitalizing on one of best of French traditions, *Reveillon*, we prepare to go to evening Mass. I forbid anyone to come into the dining room, where I set up the works of the day: platters full of sweet treats, appetizers, fruit, cheeses, fancy cookies and *tourtiere* fill the table; sparkling apple juice glitters in fancy glasses; and, of course, Christmas crackers sit merrily, waiting for their secrets to be revealed in a "pop" of excitement.

After the family, dressed in Christmas finery, are buckled in to the car, we clandestinely place Baby Jesus in his little bed in the Crèche. We're ready. We will participate in the Mass with him, receive him and celebrate the birth that changed everything. When we get home, it will be a continuation of this same celebration. Jesus is born!

So much fuss! Is all the hype worth it? Oh, yes. I wouldn't change any of it. This is what it's all about, my whole life and yours. Mary gave birth to the Creator. She must have been filled with wonder at the magnitude and meaning of it all. And we celebrate that birth.

It is incredible. And it is in the same sense of awe and wonder that we look, at the moment of the Consecration, at the magnitude of mystery and love given to us through the power and mercy of God. We celebrate birth. We celebrate salvation.

“Behold the Lamb of God,
behold him who takes away the sins of
the world.”

All the hype, pomp and ceremony is to behold that baby whose birth we celebrate, that man whose life was given for our salvation, that God whose mercy is sure.

That is worth every wax splotch, every pencil-crayon serpent, every bit of work, cleanup, crumb and spill which are merely the accidents of how we teach our children to Behold the Lamb of God. All of it tells them "something very special is going on." That, my friends, is something to celebrate. ✕

During this Holy Season,
we THANK YOU our friends
and benefactors for your
continuous support,
and wish you a
Joyous and Blessed
Christmas.

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Faith Matters



The Great “O” Antiphons of Advent

by Jim O'Reilly

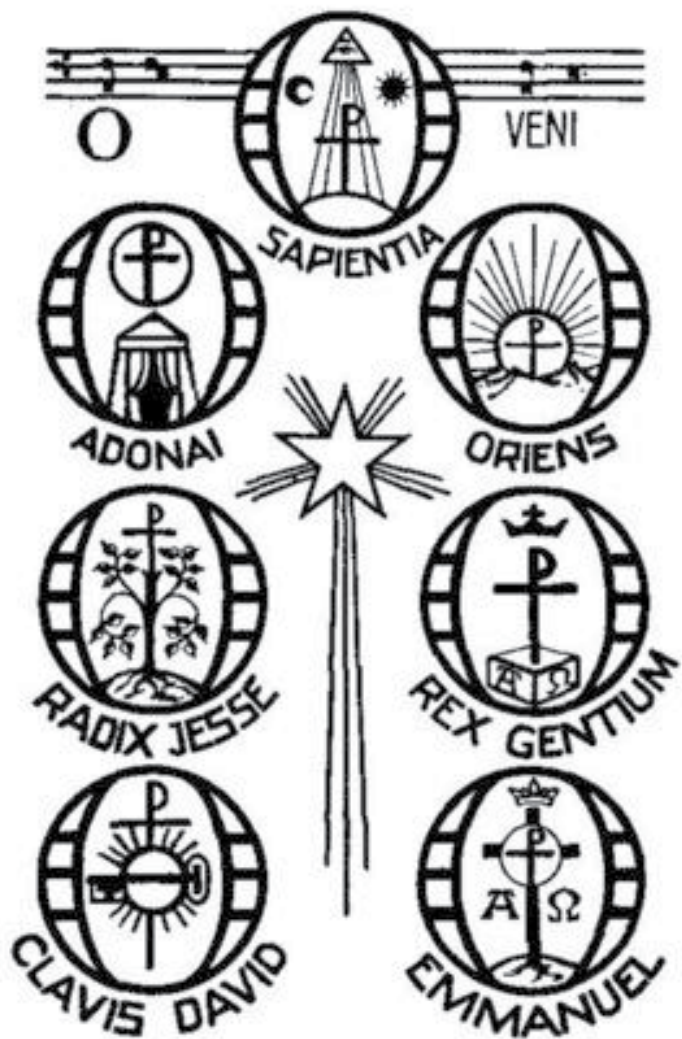
In the Church's *Liturgy of the Hours, Evening Prayer*, also known as *Vespers*, there is always included the great prayer of Mary known as the *Magnificat*. Each day the *Magnificat* is preceded by a short verse or “antiphon” that links the prayer to the feast of the day or the season of the year. In the last seven days of Advent (December 17 – 24), the antiphons before the *Magnificat* are very special. Each begins with the exclamation “O” and ends with a plea for the Messiah to come. As Christmas approaches the cry becomes increasingly urgent. The familiar hymn, *O Come O Come Emmanuel* is a direct link to these “O” antiphons, “O Emmanuel” traditionally being the final plea before Christmas.

The exact origin of the “O” antiphons is not known. At some point texts from the Old Testament, particularly from the prophet Isaiah, which looked forward to the coming of our salvation, were compiled to form these antiphons. Boethius (c. 480 – 524) made a slight reference to them, thereby suggesting their presence at that time. By the eighth century, they are in use in the liturgical celebrations in Rome. They form a rich, interlocking mosaic of scriptural images.

The great “O” antiphons became very popular in the Middle Ages when it became traditional to ring the great bells of the church each evening as they were being sung. At the Benedictine abbey of Fleury (now Saint-Benoit-sur-Loire), these antiphons were recited by the abbot and other abbey leaders in descending rank, and then a gift was given to each member of the community.

Each of the “O” antiphons highlights a different title for the Messiah: *O Sapientia* (O Wisdom), *O Adonai* (O Lord), *O Radix Jesse* (O Root of Jesse), *O Clavis David* (O Key of David), *O Oriens* (O Rising Sun), *O Rex Gentium* (O King of the Nations), and *O Emmanuel*. Also, each one refers to the prophecy of Isaiah regarding the coming of the Messiah. A particularly fascinating feature of the “O” antiphons is that the first letter of each invocation, when read backwards, forms an acrostic in Latin: the first letters of *Sapientia*, *Adonai*, *Radix*, *Clavis*, *Oriens*, *Rex*, and *Emmanuel* in reverse form the Latin words: *ERO CRAS*. These can be understood as the words of Christ, responding to his people's plea, saying “Tomorrow I will be there.”

Saying the “O” antiphons as a family, whether during grace at meals, in front of the manger scene, or in front of the Christmas tree, is a wonderful Advent devotion. To make this devotion even more fruitful, read and meditate together on the Scripture texts on which the antiphons are based. ☩



December 17

O Sapientia (Is. 11:2-3; 28:29): “O Wisdom, you come forth from the mouth of the Most High. You fill the universe and hold all things together in a strong yet gentle manner. O come to teach us the way of truth.”

December 18

O Adonai (Is. 11:4-5; 33:22): “O Adonai and leader of Israel, you appeared to Moses in a burning bush and you gave him the Law on Sinai. O come and save us with your mighty power.”

December 19

O Radix Jesse (Is. 11:1, 10): “O stock of Jesse, you stand as a signal for the nations; kings fall silent before you whom the peoples acclaim. O come to deliver us, and do not delay.”

December 20

O Clavis David (Is. 9:6; 22:22): “O key of David and sceptre of Israel, what you open no one else can close again; what you close no one can open. O come to lead the captive from prison; free those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.”

December 21

O Oriens (Is. 9:1): “O Rising Sun, you are the splendour of eternal light and the sun of justice. O come and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.”

December 22

O Rex Gentium (Is. 2:4; 9:5): “O King whom all the peoples desire, you are the cornerstone which makes all one. O come and save man whom you made from clay.”

December 23

O Emmanuel (Is. 7:14): “O Emmanuel, you are our king and judge, the One whom the peoples await and their Saviour. O come and save us, Lord, our God.”

Adapted from The Crossroads Initiative by Dr. Marcellino D'Ambosio, http://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/library_article/801/o_antiphons_of_advent.html and Sacred Space 102 fm Blog Spot <http://sacredspace102.blogspot.ca/2011/12/o-antiphons.html>



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Office of Justice & Life

Justice and Life Workshops a Success!

Stuart Andrie, Ministry Coordinator for the Office of Justice and Life

The theological dimension is needed both for interpreting and for solving present day problems in human society.

~ Centesimus Annus, 55

Over the course of the first three Saturdays of November, the Diocese of Victoria Office of Justice and Life hosted its inaugural set of workshops entitled *Catholic Social Teaching*. These workshops were held in the major geographical regions in the Diocese to be able to reach as many parishioners as possible. 117 people attended these workshops which were designed to give a basic introduction to the rich theological heritage that is our Catholic social doctrine.



Participants from the North Island Region at the Justice and Life Workshop in Courtenay

The workshops were facilitated by Dr. Christine Jones, the President of Redeemer Pacific College in Langley. In planning these sessions with her, she said that she wanted to tantalize our people with our Catholic Social Doctrine, to lead people to want to learn more and to try and understand what Bishop Richard referred to as “our best kept secret”. Over the course of the day, Dr. Jones was able to take some very complex teachings and boil them down to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. That ultimately, what it is all about is how we are to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind;” and “Love your neighbor as yourself (Luke 10:27).”



Participants from the central region of our Diocese listening to Dr. Jones in Nanaimo

Our Catholic Social Doctrine teaches us how to love our neighbor as ourselves at all stages of life, from conception to natural death. This is a refreshing perspective that we as Catholics need to hear from time to time. We can get too caught up in political ideologies and ensnared in a particular way of thinking that distracts us from Dr. Jones’ thesis point: our Catholic Social Teaching is about the gospel and how we are to live it today. She reminded us very well that: “It is therefore through Christ, and in Christ,



Small group discussion during the Victoria Workshop

that light is thrown on the riddle of suffering and death which, apart from his Gospel, overwhelms us. Christ has risen again, destroying death by his death, and has given life abundantly to us (*Gaudium et Spes* 22).”

Dr. Jones quoted *Deus Caritas Est* and reminded us that “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.” It is this encounter of faith that shapes us and informs the decisions we as Christians make in our world today.

“Faith is knowledge of reality.

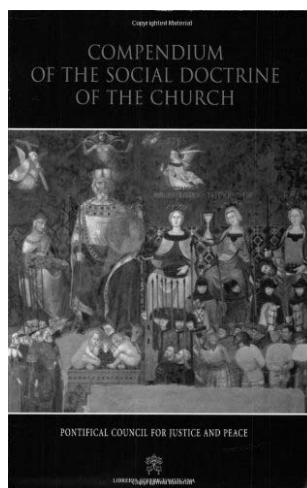
~ Pope Benedict XVI

The feedback from the participants has been very positive:

- I enjoyed the passion and expertise shared by Christine. I appreciated her focus on the young adults in attendance. It brought life and perspective to the workshop [that] Catholic Social Teachings are teachings that can be lived. Not just read about and pondered as a Christian. I believe you would be hard pressed to find someone who disagrees with the social teachings.
- I liked the wealth of knowledge shared by the guest speaker. She exuded passion and sincerity in what she spoke about. As a Catholic, I do have a responsibility not only to promote social justice and environmental stewardship but foremost to actively contribute in the practice of social justice and environment stewardship at anytime and at any place.
- That Catholic social teaching comes from the notion of the inherent dignity of every human person, and that our understanding of this teaching is based on a personal encounter with the person of Jesus Christ. Good stuff! We need personal sanctification before worrying about societal issues!
- The issues of life and justice are of paramount concern to the Church in a fast-evolving world. There is a rich and inspirational body of teaching to guide us as individuals on these issues. The publication *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* which was available at the workshop will provide a useful reference for further action.

As mentioned above, during the workshop I made available copies of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* to get the teachings into the hands of the people. This is an invaluable tool that I encourage all Catholics to read. As stated in the introduction of the *Compendium*:

“This work also shows the value of Catholic social doctrine as an instrument of evangelization (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 54), because it places the human person and society in relationship with the light of the Gospel. The principles of the



Church’s social doctrine, which are based on the

natural law, are then seen to be confirmed and strengthened, in the faith of the Church, by the Gospel of Christ. In this light, men and women are invited above all to discover themselves as transcendent beings, in every dimension of their lives, including those related to social, economic and political contexts.

(*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2)

If you do not have a copy, you can find a link to it on our Diocesan Website: <http://www.rcdvictoria.org/resources.php>

Finally, in reflection about the Year of Faith, Dr. Jones asked us to ponder this very illuminating point when drawing together our Catholic social doctrine and our faith in Christ:

“Advent is the time we are reminded that our God draws near. Days become short and darkness comes quickly. Long ago God came as one of us. He brought light to our darkness and warmth to our cold. Through the ages God continues to come as Spirit, as Word, as Bread and Wine, and in each one of us when we reach out to those in need. Believing in a God who draws near to his children, we wait; we hope and we labour for a more just, loving and peaceful world. As we make this Advent journey we invite God to come again and again so that our waiting, our hoping and our labouring may give way to the fulfillment of God’s promise to come in glory.

The Magic of
Christmas
is not in the presents
but in *His* presence

For feedback or comment please email sandrie@rcdvictoria.org





US churches say ‘No’ to Palestinian aid cuts!

The US Senate is currently considering three amendments to a defense spending bill that would reduce or eliminate funding for the Palestinian Authority, Churches for Middle East Peace report. (CMEP) This action comes in the wake of UN action on Thursday to upgrade the PA’s status in the General Assembly. The funding in question includes \$370 million for budget support for the Palestinian Authority. This funding is essential to humanitarian programs such as the Augusta Victoria Hospital (a project of Lutheran World Federation) in East Jerusalem.

<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=21554>

Posted: Monday, December 3, 2012 6:22 pm

Pope meets community of Venerable English College

Pope Benedict today met with the community of Rome’s Venerable English College. The meeting was the culmination of a year-long celebration marking the 650th anniversary of the founding of an English and Welsh Hospice on the site occupied by the College. Among the distinguished guests at the audience were Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor, a former rector of the College, and the Archbishop of Westminster, Vincent Nichols. In his remarks to the community, the Holy Father recalled his 2010 visit to the United Kingdom. \

<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=21553>

Posted: Monday, December 3, 2012 5:56 pm

Blind activist Chen Guangcheng releases video on forced abortion in China

Blind activist Cheng Guangcheng, whose dramatic escape from house arrest and flight to New York captured the attention of the world in May of this year, has issued a powerful video to call the Chinese Communist Party to account for crimes committed against the Chinese people. He stated that “the United States, in particular, as a beacon of freedom, needs to play a leading role” in shifting the focus of the world from trade to human rights... “the violence in maintaining China’s One Child Policy still extensively exists. It is a sin, because life is sacred.”

<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=21552>

Posted: Monday, December 3, 2012 5:44 pm

Pope expresses concern over ‘religious ignorance’

“One of the most serious problems of our time is the religious ignorance in which many men and women live, including those who are Catholic,” the Holy Father told a group of French bishops during their ad limina visit on Friday. He said this ignorance is two-fold. “It is an ignorance of the person of Jesus Christ; and an ignorance of the sublimity of his teachings, which have universal and permanent value in the search for the meaning of life and happiness,” said the Pope. “This ignorance also produces new generations which are unable to understand their history...”

<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=21548>

Posted: Monday, December 3, 2012 12:34 pm

Day of prayer and action on Climate Change

Saturday’s day of prayer and action on Climate Change saw Christian campaigners pray for the success of the current United Nations climate conference in Qatar and help construct a replica of the ‘keystone’ pipeline between the US Embassy and Canadian High Commission in Grosvenor Square. First, an ecumenical prayer service, hosted by Christian Ecology Link (CEL) and Operation Noah at the Grosvenor Chapel in Mayfair, was led by Rev Chris Polhill.

<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=21547>

Posted: Sunday, December 2, 2012 11:28 pm

Joint Statement by the President of the CCCB and the National President of Development and Peace

November 5, 2012—The Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace has launched its fall action campaign, *International Development – Do It Justice*. This is an urgent issue. International development assistance should be a priority and concern for all Canadians, especially Catholics.

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, n. 192.2, summarizes Catholic teaching on international development assistance by noting that:

... *there persist in every part of the world stark inequalities between developed and developing countries, inequalities stoked also by various forms of exploitation, oppression and corruption that have a negative influence on the internal and international life of many States. The acceleration of interdependence between persons and peoples needs to be accompanied by equally intense efforts on the ethical-social plane, in order to avoid the dangerous consequences of perpetrating injustice on a global scale.*

This fall, Development and Peace invites Catholics and everyone of goodwill to reflect on Canadian international aid, the principles that should guide it, and our expectations of what this aid should be. If our world is indeed a “global village”, then international solidarity is more necessary today than ever before. In his *Encyclical Caritas in Veritate*, n. 33, Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that the needs and sufferings of so many millions of people risk causing “unprecedented damage and new divisions within the human family”. Hence, in charity and truth, he invites us all to confront “an altogether new and creative challenge, one that is certainly vast and complex.”

You are aware that changes have been made to the campaign material. Speculation in the media and among some of the membership as to the reasons for the changes has caused considerable anxiety for many. We want to assure you there is no cause for worry. The reason for the change was simple. In a meeting of the CCCB President and General Secretary with the President and Executive Director of Development and Peace, concern was expressed that elements of the original materials could be a source of division among Bishops, priests, parishioners and donors. Lack of unity compromises our Christian witness to justice and charity. These concerns were taken very seriously, and Development and Peace decided to revise its campaign literature.

International development aid needs to be a concern and a priority for our nation and for the world. The fall campaign materials from Development and Peace are intended to encourage personal and group reflection, as well as discussions in parishes and families. The campaign is also an invitation for concerned Catholics and other Canadians to talk with or write to their members of Parliament, to join Development and Peace as active members, and to make a contribution to assist Development and Peace in advancing and promoting integral human development in the Global South. We encourage the Catholic faithful to participate in the campaign in a true spirit of solidarity with our sisters and brothers in the Global South.

May Saint Kateri Tekakwitha encourage and inspire us in showing care and concern for all those in need.

+ Richard W. Smith Archbishop of Edmonton and President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
Ron Breau President of the National Council Development and Peace

For more information please contact:

Kelly Di Domenico, Communications Officer
514 257-8710 ext. 365
kelly.didomenico@devp.org ✉

Fire Destroyed Orphan’s Sleeping Quarters

by Rudy van Lierop, Lay Brother of the Poor, Liaison Officer of Canada, Knight of Columbus

Five weeks ago I got a desperate cry for help from the “Casa Hogar Mefi-Boset” orphanage in Mexicali, Mexico. Their sleeping quarters burned down and the 19 orphans (aged 2 to 12 years old) have no place to go. On December 27 my wife and I are going south to visit and support them. We will also visit the 32 “Casa Hogar Betesda” orphans in Mexicali and “Casa Hogar Hermoso Atardecer,” which is a shelter for abandoned and repudiated elderly in Ejido Queretaro in Mexico. In 2003, this shelter started with five elderly residents; last year I counted 79 people who are mentally challenged, addicted to drugs, blind or handicapped and who live, eat and sleep in this shelter. It doesn’t matter to them where they live or what they eat, as long as they have someone who takes care of them.

As you know, the Lay Brothers follow the example of Mother Teresa in continuing to feed the poorest of the poor living in the Imperial Valley, which is situated along the US-Mexico border, a very dangerous territory because of smuggling activities and drug trafficking. We feed poor families, the migrants, veterans, orphans, the elderly and street people who live in very poor colonies and even on the refuse dump.

It is with sadness that we see a growing number of elderly who get a minimum of medical and social help as they struggle to survive. Young people who experience this plight with their parents and grandparents are giving up hope for a better future. They are instead turning to drugs, vandalism, alcoholism and theft, as they see their hope being shattered.

Since 1994, we have visited the poor in Mexico. Thanks to your support we have been able to build up a friendship. It should be known that the orphans pray for us: that God may continue His blessings on us, in order that in return we may help them.

Please pray that the cruel and miserable living conditions of these poor are eased.

If you are able to help financially, please make your donation payable to Lay Brothers of the Poor and send your cheque to: 6911 Bayside Place, Brentwood Bay BC, V8M 1B2.

What I have learned from the poor is that we are all together in this world to relate to each other, to live together and to share with and help one another with an open heart.

May God bless you and shower you with peace and happiness. ✉



Presence and Gifts

by James E. O'Reilly, Office of Religious Education

Ask people what comes to mind when you mention “Christmas” and presents will be near the top if not at the top of their list! This is quite natural when we consider the special connection between Christmas and children—children love to receive presents. There is something about presents which touches all of us, resonating with the inner child in us.

But what is behind this gift-giving? Naturally as Christians we can readily connect Christmas gift-giving with the Magi who brought their precious gifts, those “fit for a king.” But reason reminds us that gift giving must have existed long before the Christ Child received gifts from these wise men. We can also conclude that gift-giving in some way forms a part of the fabric of every culture.

The wise men give us one clue, with the word tribute coming to mind—a sign of respect, of honour—deferring to the authority or the power of a superior. Gift giving also can have a reciprocal dimension, as in the case of gifts exchanged by heads of state, or those between exchange students. Gift-giving has also developed into a cultural social convention, an expected gesture. The “welcome gift” presented to the new neighbour, the gift presented to the host for opening their home, the flowers or wine for the hostess to acknowledge her hospitality.

There are also the more culturally formalized moments that incorporate some form of gifting like Hallowe'en or Valentine's Day or Administrative Professional's Day. Some of these have even been formally “legislated” like Mother's Day and Father's Day.

The world of commerce has not missed the inherent opportunities presented by those looking to gift others (for example candy sales in the US are highest on Hallowe'en followed by Christmas, Easter and Valentine's Day). And yet we also know that we don't need a reason to give a gift; some of the best gifts are borne out of a spontaneous generosity. And then again we have all had the experience of witnessing the child who was given the “perfect toy” only to see him or her within ten minutes be captivated more by the wrapper or the gift's box than the toy itself. So maybe this last experience tells us something else about gift-giving.

Suffer the little children.

Perhaps during this time leading up to Christmas much of our worry about getting someone “perfect gift” perfectly misses the point! After all isn't what we have been talking about really symbolism? A gift represents us as much as it does our feelings for the other. A gift is a symbol of our appreciation, love, respect, honour—(fill in the blank)—for the other. It is also helpful here to recall an old saying which gives us a bit more of a perspective, “it's not the gift but the thought that counts.” To get to the heart of the matter, as it were, Jesus in Matthew's Gospel is very clear about what our gifting really ought to be about:

So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift (Matthew 5:23) .

This Advent and Christmas season in this Year of Faith is a unique opportunity for us to become aware of these realities and their implications. God is a community of persons who give of themselves for the sake of each other. This is no more evident than in the life of Jesus who gave everything, his suffering, his entire life, out of love for us. This depth of love demands a response, not out of duty or even reciprocity, but out of love for the One who first loves us. Jesus' words are a personal statement by God Himself to us, revealing just how much He loves you and me as individuals. No one has greater love than this, than to lay down one's life for one's friends (John 15:13). And later, after Jesus reminds us that he does not call us servants but friends: *you did not chose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.*

So, our greatest gift for others is the gift of ourselves, as made in the image and likeness of God, bearing witness to His life in our hearts, giving of ourselves first, of our time and our talents. And, as we know from the experience of being in love, that love which neither tires nor sees obstacles, His Life, His Grace His Presence with us gives us the capacity to do this! ✠

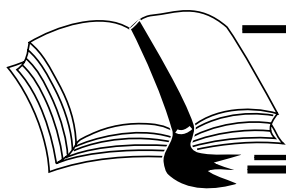
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Impressions

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
~ John 1:1



by Connie Dunwoody

*Perhaps it took several generations to make a man,
perhaps it took several combinations and re-creations
of his mother's gentleness and resilience,
his father's enormous energy and appetite for the new . . .
before a proper man could be fashioned.*

~ The Big Rock Candy Mountain, Wallace Stegner

I'm not a fan of sitting in traffic jams. Over the years I've learned to manage my impatience by using the time for a variety of activities. When I was a member of a vocal ensemble, I memorized songs I'd recorded to tape during rehearsal. I write lyrics, debate driving style with other drivers (my style is *clearly* best), argue with non-existent foes (I consistently win), imagine what I'd do if I won the lottery (save the world, of course), and carry on conversations with people who are not there (I'm scintillating). If people catch me in these activities, I pretend I'm on the phone so it doesn't look too weird.

Lately I've been listening to audiobooks. I actually really enjoy this, and if I'm at a particularly good part sometimes go out of my way to find a traffic jam. It's a kind of reminder of my childhood: snuggled into cozy night-time bed as my father read to us. I can't quite remember when that practice stopped, but I do know I love to be read to, especially by a talented *raconteur* who makes up voices for each character.

With a lineage extending past the birth of any ancestor back into the realm of the Word-with-God, Jesus was a sacrifice who contained both the hopes of his people and the sins of his fathers—an endless circle of history interwoven with promise, forgiveness and redemption that overpowered the darkness with light and eradicated all sin with beginningless, endless love.

A famous author once said, "every good story is about redemption, and God is the ultimate storyteller." I think there's something to that. And I think stories serve us well. They're used to pass on legend and lessons; to connect us with those who went before; to provide entertainment, amusement or distraction; to arouse our intellect, hearts, dreams and—sometimes—fears.

I recently listened to a well-read rendition of *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* by Wallace Stegner. This story, the title of which came from a 1928 song sung by Harry McClintock, follows the Mason family as the father, Bo, searches unsuccessfully for the oh-so-elusive American Dream. Towards the end of the story Bo's son, Bruce, by then a grown man and successful lawyer, engages in some soul-searching about his father: a man who was by turns egregious and kind, unreasonable and charming, penurious and generous. He poses a theory: that what makes a man a Man is the sum of all who have gone before him. His father, and his father's father, and his father's father's father, and so on, back for generations. He posits that a man (or a woman) is the product of all who have come before him (or her).

Hm. This might mean that I am a product of all the people who have come before me. It's not so far-fetched, really. I mean, I am genetically linked to all those people—why wouldn't I be the product of all their strengths? The courage of my forebears who left Germany under religious persecution to raise families in the freedom of shiny new America; the four children in the early 1800s who were raised by American Indians after their parents were violently killed; the young man who turned from a life of depravity to devout Methodism; a diminutive woman whose husband died when my mother was two years old and who courageously raised seven children during the Depression—a determined mother whose

confident and limitless faith was instilled in her offspring; the brilliant family doctor who supported his own father substantively and emotionally while raising his children to love the Lord with all their hearts and souls and minds—these are the people whose lives created mine.

That's pretty heady stuff.

But I can't just pick the good bits to embrace as my character. If I come from "quality," I also have flaws in my pedigree. An ancestor whose prime livelihood involved plug nickels (back when five cents could actually buy you something); others with histories of abuse and alcoholism, desperation, dark poverty and despair.

That's pretty heavy stuff.

Know my father, know me.

In their Gospels, Luke and Matthew spend a fair amount of energy describing Jesus' lineage, using the word "begat" so many times it started to look slightly odd to me the more times I read it. I'm not certain why a description of Jesus' lineage is so important as to be included in two Gospels, though there was considerable conversation about this in the privacy of my skull whilst sitting in traffic jams. I suspect the answer to this fascinating question (or questions) would best be derived by a group of scholarly individuals sipping fine sherry (or a particularly yummy hot chocolate) whilst contemplating and perhaps debating the finer points of the case. At any rate, it's far too complicated a mystery to unravel in a (relatively) short article and would take intelligence, research and depth of far greater prowess than mine.

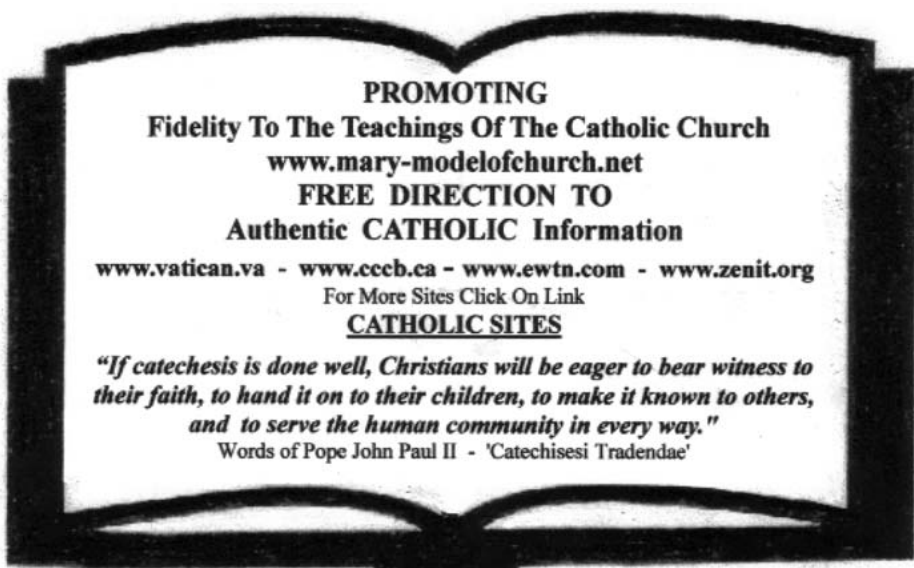
But I do know this: nothing insignificant is included in the Bible. Furthermore, Revelation teaches that Jesus was adopted into the House of David through Joseph, so these descriptions of his lineage must be important and I think perhaps exist to prove his temporal right of succession and eternal fulfillment of his Father's promises. Jesus brought to spiritual perfection the faith, hope and love of God that was evident in the Old Covenant. His ancestry delineates a right to an earthly Kingship which he never claimed; his life was a witness to the wisdom, courage, determination, resilience, fortitude, gentleness and love of his forebears and his Father—the heady stuff of an ancestral path that led from silent stable to soaring heaven—payment of debt for sins, a gift of grace through human frailty and sacrifice. Fully human and fully divine: a story of redemption that passes any we could begin to imagine, let alone write.

Know my father, know me.

Hebrews 10 speaks of Jesus as a single sacrifice for humankind. With a lineage extending past the birth of any ancestor back into the realm of the Word-with-God, Jesus was a sacrifice who contained both the hopes of his people and the sins of his fathers—an endless circle of history interwoven with promise, forgiveness and redemption that overpowered the darkness with light and eradicated all sin with beginningless, endless love. The human-and-divine-Alpha-and-Omega kind. Jesus carried from the manger to the Cross the promise of his ancestors' futures and the sins of their pasts, redeeming *this* generation and *that* generation and *all* generations to come in an endless circle of hope.

A glorious birth celebrated by heavenly hosts and an ignominious death scorned by humankind. A sheltered cradle in the nighttime shadow of evil and a shouting, dawn-bright rebirth of staggering proportions. A protagonist who carried with him all the hopes and dreams and weaknesses and fears of the people God loved beyond mortal comprehension. A selfless, unsung "hero" who offered himself wholly and completely as an unequal exchange for the chaotic pittance we gave him. A baby whose infinite past and all-embracing future made us better than we are and more than we could ever be on our own: Redeemed.

Know my Father, know Me. It's a story worth listening to in a traffic jam. ❧





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"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you made me welcome."
Matthew 25:35



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In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

(JOHN 1:4-5)




"And He shall reign forever and ever..."

*Wishing you a
Blessed Christmas and
a Peace filled
New Year*

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Christmas Mass Schedule

Parish	December 24 Christmas Eve	December 25 Christmas Day	December 31 New Year's Eve	January 1 Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
St. Andrew's Cathedral, Victoria	3:45 pm doors open for 4:40 pm Carol Singing and Children's Pageant; 5 pm Mass of Christmas Night. 7:30 pm Carol Singing and 8 pm Solemn Mass of Christmas Night 10:00 pm Carol Singing and 11:00 pm Solemn Mass of Christmas Night (Incense will be used)	8:55 am Rosary 9:30 am Mass of Christmas Dawn 11:00 am Mass of Christmas Day (Incense will be used)	12:10 pm Mass 5:00 pm Anticipated Mass for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God	10:30 am Mass for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (Incense will be used)
Christ the King, Courtenay	5 pm Christmas Vigil Mass 12 am Midnight Mass	10 am Mass	5 pm Mass	10 am Mass
Church of the Ascension, Parksville	5 pm Mass 7:30 pm Children's Mass 9:30 pm Mass	11 am Mass	5 pm Mass	11 am Mass
Holy Cross, Gordon Head	6 pm Family Mass 8 pm Mass	9:30 am Mass		9:30 am Mass
Holy Family, Ucluelet	9:30 pm Mass	9:30 am Mass	7:30 pm	
Holy Family/Notre Dame, Port Alberni	5 pm Mass 8 pm Mass 12 am Midnight Mass	10 am Mass		10 am Mass
Mount St. Mary Hospital, Victoria		10:30 am Mass		10:30 am Mass
Our Lady of Fatima, Victoria	9 pm Mass (Portuguese and English)	10:30 am Mass	5 pm Mass	10:30 am Mass
Our Lady of Grace, Saltspring Island	7 pm (Carols before Mass)	10 am Mass	5 pm Mass 11 pm Adoration 12 am Midnight Mass	10 am Mass
Our Lady of the Rosary, Langford	7 pm Mass 10:30 pm Mass	10:30 am Mass	5 pm Mass	10:30 am Mass
Our Lady of the Assumption, Sidney	8:30 pm Mass			
Our Lady Queen of Peace, Esquimalt	7 pm Family Mass 12 am Traditional Latin Midnight Mass	10 am Mass	5 pm Mass	10 am Mass 12 pm Traditional Latin Mass
Sacred Heart, Victoria	6 pm Children's Mass 8 pm Mass (English) 10 pm (Korean) 12 am Midnight Mass (Polish)	10 am Mass (English) 12 pm Mass (Korean)	5 pm Mass (English) 10 pm Mass (Korean)	10 am Mass (English) 12:30 pm Mass (Polish) 2 pm Mass (Korean)
St. Edward's, Duncan	5 pm Family Mass 8:30 pm Christmas Carolling 9 pm Mass	9:30 am Christmas Carolling 10 am Mass	5 pm Mass	10 am Mass
St. Elizabeth's, Sidney	6 pm Children's Carol Service 6:30 pm Children's Mass 10:30 pm Mass	10:30 am Mass	7 pm Mass	10:30 am Mass
St. Joseph the Worker, Saanich	6 pm Family Mass (Non-allergenic incense will be used) 8:30 pm Vigil Mass (Non-allergenic incense will be used) 12 am Midnight Mass (Non-allergenic incense will be used)	10 am Mass. (Non-allergenic incense will be used)	5 pm Mass (Non-allergenic incense will be used)	10 am Mass (Non-allergenic incense will be used)
St. Joseph's, Chemainus	7 pm Mass	10:30 am Mass		10:30 am Mass
St. Lawrence, Ahousaht	11 pm Mass		5 pm Mass	
St. Louis de Montfort Church, Lake Cowichan	11:30 pm Christmas Carol Singing 12 am Midnight Mass			
St. Mary's, Ladysmith	8:30 pm Christmas Carol Singing 9 pm Mass	9 am Mass	7 pm Mass	9 am Mass
St. Patrick's, Victoria	6 pm Mass 9 pm Mass	10:30 am Mass	7 pm Mass	10:30 am Mass
St. Paul's, Fulford Harbour (Saltspring Island)	12 am Midnight Mass (Carols before Mass)	NO 8 am Mass		8 am Mass
St. Peter's, Nanaimo	5 pm Family Mass 8 pm Mass 12 am Midnight Mass	10:30 am Mass 3 pm Mass (Gabriola Island)	7 pm Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Adoration and Benediction	8:30 am Mass 10:30 am Mass 4:30 pm Mass (Gabriola Island)
St. Rose of Lima, Sooke	4 pm Youth and Family Mass 8 pm Mass	10 am Mass	5 pm Mass	10 am Mass
St. Francis of Assisi, Tofino	7:00 pm Mass		5 pm Mass	
Trinity Catholic Church, Nanaimo	3:30 pm Seniors Mass 5:30 pm Children's Pagent 9 pm Carol Sing 9:30 pm Mass	10 am Mass		8 am Mass 9 am Mass