



Ecclesia

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PEMBROKE

Make a joyful noise

Music has an inspirational power that mere words cannot invoke. The combination of words, sounds, harmonies and rhythms can lift the soul, console the broken heart, create moods and affect thought and outlook.

“Put that together with prayer and the celebration of mass, and it’s a very beautiful thing,” comments Fr. Grant Neville.

The experience is a regular feature of the Saturday night mass he celebrates at Our Lady of the Angels Parish in Brudenell. The choir there is a legacy left behind by Sister Catherine, a nun from Western Canada who spent a few years in the community and encouraged the local young people to form a parish choir.

Those youth are now adults who have been joined by others during their 15 or more years together. Their music continues to inspire and add a very special element to the weekly mass. It often has a Celtic sound, blending strong voices in rich harmonies.

“Even in huge parishes, you don’t get the enthusiasm and beautiful music you find in Brudenell,” comments Patricia Hazelton, who has served as organist and music director there for the past half dozen years.

“It’s been a really good experience,” she enthuses. “They’re just a good, good group. It’s like we’re family.”

In a parish that serves approximately 40 families, a regular choir of 10 voices is a powerful instrument. The music ministry at Our Lady of the Angels has attracted widespread attention. Visitors often attend mass because they’ve heard about the power of song in the church. Fr. Neville notes that parishioners sing with extra enthusiasm and confidence when they’re led by a strong choir.

“They add a tremendous amount to the worship,” he says. “People want to participate.”

The annual Christmas reflections hosted by the choir in recent years are a great example of the musical influence of the group. Hazelton describes the music-filled events as a time of peace and quiet reflection amid the seasonal chaos. The atmosphere was set with a candlelit church. The choir leads the music from the loft at the back of the church, and the

participants are instructed not to applaud between numbers. For over an hour, the music drifts from one piece to another with only the candlelight for visual stimulation.

“They just sit and absorb it,” says Hazelton, “and they come out in droves.”

Hazelton says the choir members have inspired both her and her husband to try new musical ventures. A classical guitarist, he has recently begun writing hymns, while she is now learning how to play the flute. New hymns and new approaches to familiar favourites are often suggested by members of the group.

“It’s inspiring. We always want to strive for more,” says Hazelton, adding that even rehearsals can be invigorating.

“Once you get there, then you’re pumped,” she reports.

The energetic combination of youth and music is also inspiring parishioners at St. Hedwig and St. Lawrence O’Toole churches in Barry’s Bay, where Uwe Lieflander has formed a “Sparrows Choir” with students from St. John Bosco Catholic School.

Lieflander spends each Thursday at the school, teaching music to all grade levels.

Fr. Chris Shalla of St. Hedwig admits that when the concept was first launched in September, he thought a children’s choir would be “cute”.

“It’s professional,” he now says. “It gives a real reverence.”

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Above, two members of the Sparrows Choir at St. Hedwig Church in Barry’s Bay. Below, Brudenell’s choir, left to right, Cathy Mask, Patricia Hazelton (sitting), Lisa Hubers, Andrew Mask, Lorna Hudder, Brian Pecarskie, Carol Van Massenhoven, Joanne Pecarskie, Mitchel Holly (sitting on stool) and Howard Hazelton. Photo by Timothy J. Baklinski.



Music - continued from page 1

"It's really uplifting to hear young voices," he adds, noting that the serious approach of the children adds a very deep element of hope.

The Sparrows Choir is taking on ever more complex musical challenges, including harmonies, multiple levels of harmony, and singing in Latin as well as English. They contribute special renditions of hymns during the mass as well as singing parts of the mass itself.

Chants in the mass have a very special place in the heart of Fr. Mitch Beachey, who serves a number of parishes in Pontiac County. At Chapeau's St. Alphonsus, he has re-introduced Latin masses and hopes to eventually form a choral group to contribute to them.

At St. Joseph parish, Choir Director Leo Rochon has added a chant version of the psalm.

Fr. Beachey says it adds a reflective element to the worship, following the first reading and drawing the congregation to a deeper sense of the readings and the thematic message of the mass. Entrance chants are being introduced in some Catholic parishes to further enhance the experience.

"It sets the tone for the mass," explains Fr. Beachey, who wholeheartedly endorses the resurgence in traditional Catholic sounds.

"There is a renewal going on right now with sacred music in the church," he says. "We're actually reclaiming what is ours. We're reclaiming our own heritage."

The Quebec priest points to the pride of place of pipe organs in most Catholic places of worship, and notes that music is a critical element in ministry.

"It's essential to the celebration," he says. "It's of the utmost importance."

At times, he worries about the reluctance of many present-day parishioners to join in song. It is difficult for many parishes to establish a choir. Priests have little time to spare for the extra task. Financial

resources are limited for musical directors, instruments, upkeep of organs, and purchase of music. People don't have the time to commit to weekly practices, and many no longer have the confidence to sing in public.

There are many reasons for the reluctance. Dwindling arts budgets have weakened school music programs. Sing-alongs and other informal opportunities to join in song have given way to organized sports, spectator activities and other uses of our leisure time.

Fr. Beachey says that, in the Ottawa Valley, there may also be a historical factor. Quoting author

Thomas Day's book "Why Catholics Can't Sing", the theory suggests that the Irish were forced to worship in silence when they were being persecuted by the English and their Catholic observances were banned.

"They imported that with them," suggests Fr. Beachey.

But he holds out hope that Catholics throughout the diocese will overcome their inhibitions to join in the power of song.

"There are groups that are really working hard to restore sacred music," he concludes. "It looks like good news to me."



The Sparrows Choir, directed by Uwe Lieflander of Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Academy, is made up of students from St. John Bosco School in Barry's Bay. Photo by Timothy J. Baklinski.

New Diocesan Adult Faith Formation Program launched

by Jason Dedo

This year the Diocesan Office of Faith Formation is offering a new Adult Faith Formation program for parishioners called "Cultivating Seeds of Faith". Last year, the Diocesan Faith Formation Advisory Committee met and began to look at the previous program and made recommendations for a new program this year.

The biggest change in the new program is that, rather than being based in Pembroke, it is "on the road". This change was instituted to make the program more accessible to parishioners in different parts of the Diocese. As a pilot project this year, the program was offered in the Mattawa Zone in September/October and will be offered in parishes in the Renfrew Zone during the liturgical season of Lent.

The program consists of presentations on a variety of faith topics. Presentations were given on Thursday evenings over six consecutive weeks. Presentation topics included Introduction to Scripture, the Liturgical Year, The Mass, The Liturgy of the Hours, St. Paul the Apostle and The Rosary. Presenters included Bishop Michael Mulhall, diocesan priests, religious sisters, a deacon and laypeople. Two sessions were offered each evening – one English presentation and one French presentation.

On average, about 40 parishioners participated each evening with 55 being the highest number to attend. Joyce Lafontaine, a parishioner from St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Astorville, was both a participant in and a presenter for the program. She shared the following comments about her experiences:

"In looking at the list of sessions beforehand I couldn't help but think "How can anyone talk for an

hour and a half on that!" But it was amazing how that time sped by during the sessions. All the feedback I heard was along the same line, that each session was very interesting and that everyone was glad they had attended them. These sessions unwrapped some familiar topics to expose new insights and understandings, they provided an introduction to some completely new topics and devotional practices and they provided me with the opportunity to expand some of the ideas through further reading and research."

During Lent, the program will be offered in several parishes in the Renfrew Zone of the Diocese. The program will be offered on Tuesday evenings from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. from February 24th until March 31st. For more information, see your parish office or contact Jason Dedo in the Diocesan Office of Faith Formation at (613) 732-7933, ext. 206 or jasondedo@pembrokedioocese.com.

A message from Bishop Mulhall

The Year of St. Paul, June 2008 - June 2009

My dear Faithful of the Diocese of Pembroke:

At the end of June 2008, Pope Benedict XV inaugurated a year of St. Paul which marks the 2000th year of his birth. On January 25 we celebrated the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. The feast of the conversion marks one of the central celebrations during the Pauline Year. The story of St. Paul's conversion is well-known and memorable. On his way to Damascus in order to persecute the young Christian community in that city, St. Paul was thrown from his horse by a blinding light and had a life-changing encounter with the Risen Lord. So powerful was this encounter that it took St. Paul many years of prayer, silence and grace to be formed by God into the great Evangelist who spread the Gospel to many lands and gave his life in Rome as a last offering to God. Through the inspired Scriptures, both the account of his travels in the Acts of the Apostles and St. Paul's many letters to the communities that he visited, God has made known to us this remarkable witness of conversion and evangelization.

"It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2.20). I wish to draw our attention to this beautiful phrase from St. Paul's letter to the Galatians. It is found at the end of a brief description of his spiritual pilgrimage in life. As mentioned earlier, one of the central events of that pilgrimage was the conversion which the Lord granted to him on the road to Damascus. This phrase from Galatians is written many years after his conversion, many years

of reflection on the mystery of God's encounter and grace. The conversion and its fruit are beautifully expressed in this phrase – "It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me". It is as if the old Paul has needed to die so that Christ could occupy that place. But it is not some insignificant trading of places. The true conversion St. Paul describes requires a death to self in order to allow Christ to become myself. This seems fantastic or too hard to accept. In human terms it is impossible to accept. But if the One who has created me draws me to Himself, my willingness to accept Christ allows the grace of conversion to play its part – a death to self. The Risen Christ who makes Himself known to me draws from me the desire to follow him. Without my even knowing it sometimes, the desire to follow Christ begins a pilgrimage. This is a pilgrimage which must lead to the death of my old self, because the sinfulness which is part of me through the Fall and sustained in me by my

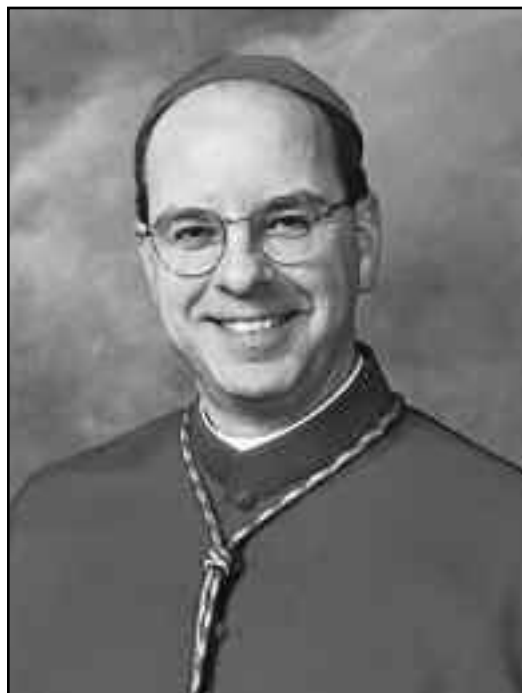
own sins cannot remain in the presence of the Lord. Eventually, through the cleansing of baptism, through the struggles and joys of the Christian pilgrimage and through the strength of the sacraments, God imparts this grace of death-to-self and He becomes the only true Life. Christ then lives in me and it is no longer I who live.

God can grant to us the grace of conversion in an instant of drama or more ordinarily over a period of time which corresponds to our life. The very patience of God in this mystery is a sign of His infinite mercy.

The conversion of which St. Paul speaks is not only the conversion of Lent (which is fast approaching) but more profoundly the conversion of every conscious moment. Every moment of life, every moment of our day, is an opportunity for this mystery. Moments filled with work and responsibility can be used by God just as easily as moments of tranquil reflection. To know that God is present with us in every moment is that first step which allows His grace to bear fruit.

Today in this brief reflection, I ask only this, that we call to mind the Risen Lord's presence. He will do the rest as He has throughout our lives.

† **Michael Mulhall**
Bishop of Pembroke



Some thoughts at -30° celsius

By Fr. Michael Smith

The Canadian winter has some lessons to teach us about the life of the Church.

As I write this, we are in the midst of the most severe cold snap in four years. The forecast low for tonight is minus 35 degrees Celsius. The apparently barren landscape makes one wonder how life can re-emerge in only three months from now. And yet, there is life everywhere. Not far below the snowpack, the ground is thawed, and there are creatures of all kinds that inhabit the soil. In wooded areas, various mammals are in hibernation. Species

of birds flourish in winter, and other species will soon migrate from the south. Trees, bushes, and perennial plants are still alive despite appearances, and are soon to blossom again. We humans are not content merely to endure winter; at least some of us enjoy outdoor activities.

In the life of the Church, we sometimes live through winter. Initiatives and movements that once flourished lose their vitality and shrivel. People who used to be fervent and practising believers lose their zeal and become disillusioned. And yet, there is life everywhere. Beneath the surface of things, God is very much at work. There are people in search of

God, and who live lives of deep prayer without fanfare. There are people who find their way into parishes and communities. People of all ages have conversion experiences. There is so much goodness in the help that people give to others, both nearby and abroad.

Much as the air will warm and the spring rains and sunshine will cause new life to appear, so the Word of God, the Eucharist, and the power of the Holy Spirit working in everything will cause now-dormant life to bud forth into a new springtime.

We have reason to move forward boldly, and to live in hope.



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Ecclesia is published three times a year by the Diocese of Pembroke and is distributed free throughout the diocese.

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Produced by Pappin Communications – www.pappin.com

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The Year of St. Paul

by Jason Dedo

On June 28, 2008, the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, Pope Benedict XVI proclaimed for the Church a special year to honour St. Paul the Apostle. This year honours the saint at the approximate 2000th anniversary of his birth.

St. Paul, originally named Saul, was born in Tarsus in what is now Turkey, sometime between 7 and 10 AD. Much information on Paul can be gleaned from the New Testament. We know that he was born into a wealthy Jewish family and that his father was a Roman citizen. At some point, he was sent to Jerusalem to study at a famous rabbinical school, apparently a student of the great rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Paul also learned a trade while at rabbinical school, which was the custom, and he chose tent-making.

Paul became a persecutor of Christians and was part of the mob that stoned St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr (Acts 8:1). In Acts 9:1-19, we read of Paul's conversion. While travelling on the road to Damascus, Paul is blinded by a bright light from heaven. After falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? ... I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting". In this experience of conversion, God called Paul to, above all, evangelize the Gentiles or non-Jews.

After this call, Paul's ministry became one of intense evangelization. After meeting with Peter and James, Paul became a zealous missionary. His life soon filled with many adventures as he travelled to and worked in cities and countries all over the Mediterranean world. These travels included the challenges of being shipwrecked and imprisoned.

In the last years of his life, Paul became a gifted writer and began to write letters to different groups to preach the gospel message. On Sundays, we encounter St. Paul in one of his letters as they are proclaimed usually in the second reading at Mass.

The New Testament does not describe Paul's death, but tradition holds that Paul was martyred in Rome around the year 65 AD. Many paintings of Paul depict him holding a sword symbolizing that he was likely beheaded during the persecution of emperor Nero.

Some may wonder why St. Paul holds the venerable title of "apostle" since St. Paul is not one of the original 12 men called by Jesus, and who accompanied Jesus in His ministry, 11 of whom He later commissioned to make disciples, baptize and teach. In his General Audience on September 10, 2008, Pope Benedict XVI explained this title for St. Paul:

"In today's catechesis we turn to Saint Paul's view of what it means to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. Though he did not belong to the group of the Twelve, called by Jesus during his ministry, Paul nevertheless claims the title for himself because he was chosen and transformed by the grace of God, and shared the three principal characteristics of the true apostle. The first is to have seen the Lord (1 Cor 9:1) and to have been called by him. One becomes an apostle by divine vocation, not by personal choice. The second

characteristic also underlines the divine initiative: an apostle is someone who is sent and therefore acts and speaks as a delegate of Christ, placed totally at his service. The third characteristic is dedication to the work of proclaiming the Gospel and founding Christian communities. Saint Paul can point to his many trials and sufferings that speak clearly of his courageous dedication to the mission (cf. 2 Cor 11:23-28). In this context he sees an identification between the life of the apostle and the Gospel that he preaches; the apostle himself is despised when the Gospel is rejected. Saint Paul was steadfast in his many difficulties and persecutions, sustained above all by the unfailing love of Christ (cf. Rom 8:35-39). May the example of his apostolic zeal inspire and encourage us today!" (Source: Zenit - <http://www.zenit.org/article-23585?l=english>)

A helpful resource that has been created to observe this special year has been created by the Archdiocese of Toronto. Prayers and resources concerning St. Paul the Apostle can be found on its website at



<http://www.archtoronto.org/stpaul/index.htm>. Another informative resource is the July 2008 issue of Catholic Update by St. Anthony Messenger Press – Introducing St. Paul the Apostle – His Life and Mission. This resource can be found on St. Anthony Messenger Press website at <http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/CU/ac0708.asp>.

In this special year of grace, the Holy Father invites us to listen to God's word through the letters of St. Paul. In the Diocese of Pembroke, as in other dioceses around the world, parishioners are invited to take advantage of the special indulgence granted by the Holy Father for this blessed commemoration, just as it was granted to us in the Jubilee Year of 2000.

Indulgence granted for the Year of St. Paul

During the "Year of Saint Paul," which runs to June 29, 2009, the Vatican's Apostolic Penitentiary, the Office within the Holy See that oversees indulgences, has granted a plenary indulgence to those persons who make a visit to local churches dedicated to St. Paul. Individuals visiting these churches can gain indulgences during the Year of Saint Paul if they also fulfill the normal requirements.

Pope Benedict said, "Dear brothers and sisters, as in the Church's beginning, today, too, Christ needs apostles ready to sacrifice themselves. He needs witnesses and martyrs like Saint Paul." The Holy Father recalled that Saint Paul "lived and worked for Christ; he suffered and died for him. How current is his example today!"

The normal requirements set by the Church for all plenary indulgences are that within several days before or after the visit to a designated Church, the person participates in the Sacrament of Penance and receives the Holy Eucharist. On the day of the visit, the person is to pray for the intentions of the Holy Father, "by reciting one Our Father and one Hail Mary; nevertheless, the individual faithful are free to recite any other prayer according to their own piety and devotion toward the Supreme Pontiff" (Norm 10, *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*). In addition, "the person must be completely removed from the attachment to any form of sin."

Indulgences explained

The word indulgence comes from the Latin *indulgentia*, to be kind or tender. It originally meant kindness or favour and later came to mean the remission of a tax or debt. As used in the teachings of the Church, the word reflects the kindness and mercy of God and the remission of the temporal punishment due to sin. As stated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "An indulgence is partial or plenary according as it removes either part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin." (1471) What is the temporal punishment due to sin? It is the human condition whereby we prefer this life to eternal life, the material world to the spiritual realm, our own will to God's will. The trials and tribulations that accompany this condition, because we are immersed in "temporal" or non-eternal things, are the temporal punishment of our sinful condition. In the Sacrament of Penance, sins are forgiven and the eternal punishment associated with those sins is remitted, but the temporal punishment of sin remains. Throughout our lives, we must atone for this temporal punishment through prayer, penance and works of charity. To the extent possible, we must "put away the old self and put on the new self, created in God's way" (Ephesians 4:22, 24). If at the end of our lives we remain attached to temporal things, purifying grace is still extended to us in the state called "purgatory," so that we can prefer God to all else and enter eternal life with an undivided heart.

Whether in this life or the next, our destiny is eternal union with God. The Church assists us in this effort through the granting of indulgences. By following the prescribed requirements, the faithful gain the full or partial remission of temporal punishment in this life – a great blessing on the spiritual journey toward union with God. With the granting of a plenary indulgence by the Apostolic Penitentiary during the Year of Saint Paul, the faithful of the Diocese of Pembroke have a wonderful opportunity to grow in holiness, to completely remove the burden of the temporal punishment of sin from their lives at this moment in time and begin anew through the grace and mercy of God.

Mass in the extraordinary form in the Diocese of Pembroke

By Fr. Mitchell Beachey

Many words are used to describe the Mass as it was celebrated prior to the Second Vatican Council. We hear of the "old Latin Mass" or the "Tridentine Mass". Pope Benedict XVI, in his motu proprio entitled "*Summorum Pontificum*" has given us a new term, the "extraordinary form" of Holy Mass. Thus, the mass, as celebrated after the Second Vatican Council, is termed the "ordinary form of Holy Mass".

On September 14, 2007, Pope Benedict XVI allowed all priests to celebrate the extraordinary form. Previously, a priest needed special permission to celebrate the Mass according to this form. As a result, many priests around the world have begun to celebrate mass in the extraordinary form once again. In Ottawa, there is a parish that celebrates this form of Mass only. In London, Mass is offered in this form once a week. These places are looked after by the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, an organization of priests that Pope John Paul II approved, who are dedicated to the extraordinary form of the Mass. Now, however, many parish priests have begun to learn and celebrate this ancient form of the Mass. In our diocese, the extraordinary form is celebrated at St. Hedwig Parish once a month. The same is true for the parishes at St. Joseph and, alternately, St. Alphonsus in Chapeau.

Much misunderstanding has taken place since the

changes in the liturgy after Vatican II and the introduction of the ordinary form in 1970. Many people considered the two forms as separate rites. Some people rejected the new form of Mass, groups like the St. Pius X Society. Others began working hard to eliminate any vestige of the extraordinary form in the life of the Church, trying desperately to relegate it to the history books. These people coined new terms like, "mass with the priest's back to the people" which, along with others, were derogatory. These people wished to claim that everything done prior to 1970 was somehow wrong, giving the impression that the Church's liturgy only became relevant after the changes in 1970. Both extremes ignored (and continue to ignore) that there is what the Holy Father refers to as an "organic development" in the liturgy. This means that the extraordinary form and the ordinary form are not in opposition to one another or that one is more valid than the other. Rather, the Holy Father wishes us to understand that one is dependent upon the other; that the manner in which we pray is a development from the earliest days of the Church in New Testament times, throughout history to the present day.

The changes that happened in the late 1960s and early 1970s left many people hurt and confused. They maintained an attachment to the extraordinary form of the Mass. There are also younger people who are

drawn to the extraordinary form of the Mass. Many of these younger people are the children of the Liturgical renewal which saw many unapproved experiments and illegitimate practices which were, in many instances, abuses. These younger people now look back and are drawn to the stability of the extraordinary form.

The basic structure of the extraordinary form (EF) is not different from the ordinary form (OF). There is a penitential rite, the Liturgy of the Word, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The EF has more prayers at the beginning of Mass, but the OF has more options as seen with the variety of Prefaces, and there is more than one Eucharistic Prayer.

Not everyone will be drawn to the EF and some will prefer the OF. There are others who feel the opposite. What is important is that we recognize that both the EF and the OF are valid expressions of our faith and are not in opposition to each other. Those who attempt to put them in opposition are doing a disservice to the Church.

Mass in the extraordinary form in the Diocese of Pembroke is said at St. Hedwig Parish, Barry's Bay on the last Sunday of every month at 11:30 a.m., and at St. Joseph Parish or St. Alphonsus Parish on the first Sunday of every month at 2:00 p.m.



'Cultivating Seeds of Faith'

An Adult Faith Formation Program in the Renfrew Zone

Tuesday Evenings from 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

- February 24: St. Francis Xavier Parish Hall (small hall), Renfrew
- March 3: St. John Chrysostom Parish Hall, Arnprior
- March 10: Sacred Heart Mission Hall, Cobden
- March 17: St. Francis Xavier Parish Hall (small hall), Renfrew
- March 24: Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish Hall, Braeside
- March 31: St. James the Less Parish Hall, Eganville

Please contact your parish office or contact Jason Dedo at (613) 732-7933 ext. 206 or jasondedo@diocesepembroke.ca, at the Diocese of Pembroke for more information.



The liturgical season of Lent

by Jason Dedo

Introduction

The word “Lent” comes from the Anglo-Saxon word “lencten” which means “springtime” or “new life”. The season of Lent is the preparation for the celebration of Easter, the time when Christ resurrected and obtained new life for the world. The Solemnity of Easter is moveable and was set by the Council of Nicea in 325 AD.

Easter is always the first Sunday after the first full moon of the spring equinox. Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, is therefore 40 days and six Sundays before Easter Sunday. The six Sundays of Lent are not included in the 40 days in Lent since each Sunday Eucharist commemorates the Resurrection. The liturgical season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Thursday with the Mass of the Lord’s Supper. The liturgical colour of Lent is purple which signifies royalty, penitence and humility. Lent has two main purposes. It recalls baptism, or prepares for it, and it emphasizes a spirit of penance. Both purposes are meant to prepare us for the Solemnity of Easter.

History of Lent

In the early Church, baptism and penance were key Lenten themes for Easter baptism and people did public penance for serious sins. Later the emphasis shifted to private penance. Lent became a time of forgiveness and reconciliation for those who acknowledged their sinfulness. During the Middle Ages strict 40-day fasts (abstinence from meats and other foods), and not attending festivities, were obligatory for Christians. Gradually these practices became less rigid. Today, emphasis has shifted from long periods of fasting to prayer, meditation and reflection on the meaning of Easter. Lent remains an important time of preparation for, and the renewal of, baptism.

Ash Wednesday

The ashes used in the Ash Wednesday service are made by burning the palms left over from last year’s Palm Sunday celebration. This custom has roots in the early Church. The ashes are a reminder that nothing on this Earth really lasts. All things eventually wither, crumble or die. The only thing that lasts is Jesus and the Gospel message of everlasting life with Him in heaven. Ashes also remind us, that, if we are to rise to new life, as Jesus did on Easter, we must repent our sins and undergo a conversion of heart. Using ashes this way is not new. Long before Jesus, people sprinkled ashes on their heads as a sign to God and to each other that they were sorry for the bad things they had done and that they wanted to make up for it. When ashes are put on our foreheads we hear the words, “Turn away from sin and be faithful to the gospel”. We might feel upset when we are reminded that we are sinners. No one likes to hear the negative. Hearing these words can be a comfort, though, because they remind us that we are only human – we aren’t perfect – and Jesus is there to journey with us when we need reconciliation.

Fasting and abstinence

Two of the most familiar Lenten disciplines are fasting and abstinence. They are linked together but they are two different disciplines. Fasting has to do with the quantity of food eaten on particular days (little or none). For Christians, Lenten fasting has a special meaning: it recalls the 40-day fast of Christ in the desert and the time Christ suffered and died to redeem humanity. Abstinence refers to the kind of food denied oneself, for example, meat. Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fasting and abstinence from meat. We abstain from meat to honour Christ who sacrificed his flesh on Good Friday. Abstaining from meat traditionally also linked us to the poor, who could seldom afford meat for their meals.

Almsgiving

Almsgiving refers to giving to the poor – but not just in the monetary sense. Almsgiving encompasses all that we do to rebuild our world. It is about the wholeness of things and people; it is about our right relationship with our world and with one another. Believers review, analyze and make concrete decisions about their relationship to material things in light of the condition of the planet, the needs of society and the needs and aspirations of the poor in the community. One of the alms which may cost us personally more than a day’s wages is the giving of our time. In a world where more and more demands are placed upon us, to take time to volunteer, to write letters to elected officials, to take a stand on behalf of the needs of justice, to reuse, recycle and compost, all of these are habits we can begin to build this Lent if they are foreign to us now.

Prayer

Prayer should be central to our Lenten journey. More time given to prayer during Lent should draw us closer to the Lord. In Lent, the Church calls us to a change of heart and mind. It means altering one’s mind-set towards a new way of thinking and acting. This involves taking a look at where we are and trying to see where we ought to be. It involves testing our values and discerning how they stack up against the values Jesus offers to his followers. Fortunately, this is not something we do by ourselves. God’s word gives us lots of help in the process, as does the example of our brothers and sisters in the Lord who are engaged during these weeks in the same exercise.

Sacrifices

It is traditional for Catholics in Lent to give something up. The usual sacrifices seem to be excess foods and beverages such as chocolate, candy or soft drinks. We might urge ourselves to move beyond giving up these excesses to giving up some habit of sin that marks our lives. Lent is about conversion, turning our lives more completely over to Christ and His way of life. That always involves giving up sin in some form. The goal is not just to abstain from sin for the duration of Lent but to root sin out of our lives forever. Conversion means leaving behind an old way of living

and acting in order to embrace new life in Christ. For catechumens, Lent is a period intended to bring their initial conversion to completion.

Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross as a devotion certainly has a place in Lent, but the overemphasis given to it in the past tended to distort the meaning of the season. Because the stations were prayed publicly throughout the whole season, the impression was given that Lent was primarily about commemorating the passion and death of Christ. Vatican II strongly endorsed the use of devotions as part of Catholic spirituality, but it also called for their renewal, to harmonize them with the sacred liturgy. The liturgy of Lent only focuses on the passion and death of the Lord near the end of the season, especially with the proclamation of the Passion on Palm (Passion) Sunday and Good Friday. The weekday readings between the fifth Sunday of Lent and Palm Sunday also point toward the coming Passion, so that might also be an appropriate time to pray the Stations. The earlier weeks of Lent, however, focus much more on Baptism and covenant than on the Passion. When we do pray the Stations of the Cross, we can also connect them with the baptismal character of Lent if we place the stations themselves in the context of the whole paschal mystery. In Baptism we are plunged into the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection, and our baptismal commitment includes a willingness to give our life for others as Jesus did. Recalling his passion and death can remind us that we, too, may be called to suffer in order to be faithful to the call of God.

Blessed palms

As we near the end of Lent, we celebrate Passion (Palm) Sunday. At the beginning of the liturgy, we receive blessed palms in memory of Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem. As a symbol of triumph, the palms point us toward Christ’s resurrection and might remind us of the saints in heaven “wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands” as described in the book of Revelation (7:9). The gospels tell us that people spread their cloaks and leafy branches or palms on the ground in front of Jesus as he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. The people who walked ahead of Jesus proclaimed “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” (Matthew 21:9).

Theme of baptism

Lent is also the season of final preparation for those who will be baptized at the Easter Vigil. The church invites its members to pray for these catechumens, but also to renew their own commitment to the life that began in them when they were baptized and so became members of God’s people. The renewal of our baptismal promises is the goal of Lent. All our Lenten activities should move us toward this goal. As we prepare to journey through this most holy season, let us be mindful of our need for reconciliation and the importance of our baptismal call as our attention is turned toward the sacred mysteries of Holy Week.



Stillpoint is a place of refuge

In 1987 Sr. Maria Mousseau of the Sisters of St. Joseph was completing an eight-year period of senior administrative work which had taken her to all of the far-flung locations served by the sisters. During that period of intense effort and constant travel, she says that she was struck by a serious need in today's society.

"I got a sense that most people are on a rat race that they don't know how to get off," she says. She continues, "In order to have a relationship with our God we need solitude and silence and there is no place for this."

Following a period of consultation with her order and the Diocese of Pembroke she set out to find a location for a house of prayer. A chance conversation with a cousin at a family gathering led to a visit to the former McCrea Inn on the banks of the Madawaska River between Burnstown and Calabogie. The owner was not actively marketing the property and his asking price was far above the amount available to the sisters.

Following an exhausting search through 27 different properties, Sr. Maria received a letter from the property owner announcing that the asking price had been lowered to a more manageable amount. After

two years of work with architects and builders the Stillpoint House of Prayer opened in July 1989. The building began as a traveller's stopping place in the mid-19th century so the current mandate as a place of hospitality is not so far from its original purpose.

Stillpoint's Mission Statement says that they are "committed to enabling persons of all faiths to grow in relation to self, God and others by offering a quiet space to 'Come and rest awhile (Mark 6:31)'."

Stillpoint has five guest rooms, each with ensuite washrooms, and the staff of four provides simple and nutritious meals and hospitality. An atmosphere of silence, prayer, and seclusion pervades the whole complex as well as the grounds. There is a chapel, and a well-equipped library of books, tapes, and videos.

Stillpoint is committed to serving all faiths. While spiritual direction is available, there is no organized programming. What Stillpoint offers is the peace, quiet and tranquility that is vital to prayer.

"When people get quiet, it's amazing what God does to the heart," says the current director, Sr. Betty Berrigan.

The location of the house is magnificent, on the banks of the Madawaska River with spectacular views in all directions. The location offers swimming in summer, along with hiking and biking, and the opportunity of simply sitting and appreciating nature.

The house operates 10 1/2 months out of the year, and has an average occupancy rate of 1,060 during that time. Stays last anywhere from a day to three weeks or more.

People come from all over Canada – British Columbia to Newfoundland – and high demand means that rooms must be booked well in advance, especially in summer.

Sr. Maria says that the spiritual effect of a stay at Stillpoint can be amazing. "I would see people arrive on Friday barely able to walk," she says, "by Sunday they're just bouncing around full of energy."

Sr. Maria retired in 1993, but still lives at Stillpoint, in an apartment located in a former barn on the property. Having grown up in nearby Calabogie, she says, "I've come back to my roots."

Stillpoint is affiliated with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Pembroke. Information is available at their website, www.stillpoint.ca.

Left: Sr. Betty Berrigan, Sr. Maria Mousseau, Sr. Teresa Rice, and Sr. Mary King (now deceased), at Stillpoint House of Prayer.



Madonna House looks to summer

By Joanne Weisbeck

It may be winter and just into the new year, but at Madonna House we are already looking to the summer. There is much to prepare for our summer activities.

One focus is our summer program which offers young adults a live-in experience of deeply committed Catholic community. Throughout the year we invite men and women to share our life, but for six weeks in the summer there are special events planned in addition to the normal rhythm of our life together here at Madonna House.

The theme for this year's Summer Program, which begins July 4, is Jesus Christ, Our Hope.

Teachings and witness talks are interspersed with a tremendous range of activities and presentations. Last summer there were bonfires, games nights, skits and DVDs connected to the theme, even a little opera! More of the same will enliven this summer's program.

Another area of focus is Cana Colony, our family retreat. Each summer for six weeks a number of Catholic families gather at this rustic camp in Combermere to be restored in their faith and family life.

Along with time for renewing recreation - swimming, fishing, soccer, campfires, etc. - the families are nourished by the sacraments and Christian fellowship. One of the Madonna House priests is present, providing daily Mass and the availability of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

There are seven simple cabins and two camping spots to accommodate families. Two large cookshacks become a shared "kitchen" space as each family provides its own meals. Underlying all this is the spirit of Madonna House, which finds God in the simple, ordinary things of life and strives to restore all things to Christ. One makes time and space in one's life so God can do just that.

If you are interested in further information on the summer program or Cana Colony, please visit our website www.madonnahouse.org or call Madonna House in Combermere at (613) 756-3713.



Youth

in the diocese

Family, Life and Youth Ministry Office

By Yvette Bourque

Evangelization is one of the most needed components of ministry today and evangelization of youth is no exception. With the world, generally speaking, drawing itself farther and farther away from God, the need for this important element becomes ever more necessary. One can find many different definitions of evangelization but I offer you two very simple ones that I find helpful. First one, "Evangelization is loving people into the Kingdom!" and the second which may be more complete, "Evangelization is inviting people into a loving and personal relationship with Jesus Christ, which is then nurtured by a loving and caring Catholic faith community." The official definition of evangelization,

however, comes from Pope Paul's document *Evangelii Nuntiandi*:

"For the Church, evangelization means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new... The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs (EN 18)."

However you wish to define evangelization, it is important to realize that it is a process, a very gentle process that is the responsibility of every baptized Christian. Some people, including youth, need to be evangelized over and over again until that interior change occurs that Pope Paul speaks about in his definition. Even those with deep-rooted faith need to be evangelized. The gospel message never becomes unnecessary because "the interior" is always in need of change. The key, however, is to identify that an interior change has or is occurring in someone, youth

or otherwise, and to be that loving and caring person who nurtures them into the Catholic community.

One of the ways the Family, Life and Youth Ministry Office supports evangelization is by hosting and coordinating a yearly two-week stay for the National Evangelization Team (NET) in the diocese. NET Canada is a Catholic organization based in Ottawa. Young adults come from every part of Canada, the U.S and beyond, to apply for a position on one of several teams that will then travel to each end of Canada. Their mission is to challenge young Catholics and families to love our Lord Jesus and to embrace the Life of the Catholic Church through retreats and they have been doing this in the diocese for well over 10 years now. They are trained and talented young people who offer their God-given talents in service of the Church for a full year with no pay. In fact, they each must raise a couple of thousand dollars to be part of this evangelization team.

Recently, a NET team – including a young adult from the Pembroke diocese, Jas Baklinski from the Barry's Bay zone – made its way through the diocese for a parish family retreat, three high school retreats, and three elementary school age retreats that joined with other nearby schools for the day. The schools and parishes that continue to support this ministry year

Bishop Smith High School participates in Operation Christmas Child

By Peggy Dunne

"Thinking globally, acting locally" meant engaging in an Operation Christmas Child endeavour for 15 Bishop Smith Catholic High students last Christmas, photo below.

The grade 11 world religion students completed a the three-week blitz with the total number of boxes collected being an outstanding 121.

"Operation Christmas Child was an amazing project for our religion class to do. It really put Bishop Smith Catholic High in the Christmas mood." said student Allison Paquette.



UPCOMING EVENTS

World Youth Day Palm Sunday – Saturday, April 4, 2009

Palm Sunday is recognized internationally as the World Day of Youth. This celebration, including catechesis, praise and worship, procession with Commemorative Cross, mass at St. Columbkille Cathedral in Pembroke and ending with a vigil, will launch the annual WYD theme as chosen by the Holy Father on the occasion of the XXIV World Youth Day. This year's theme is "We have set our hope on the living God" (1 Tm 4:10).

Bishop Mulhall invites all young people from across the diocese to join him in a remarkable and faith-filled celebration of youth and our common mission of being "witnesses of Christ" on our journey towards Easter. All are welcome.

Youth Summit, Quebec City – May 15-18, 2009

Following the 2008 Eucharistic Congress in Quebec City, the Archdiocese of Quebec will be hosting another Youth Summit for young adults aged 18-35. This four-day summit will be filled with spirit, song, pilgrimage, catechesis and much more. For more information contact Fr. Real Ouellette at (819) 683-2056, or rev_real@yahoo.ca.

Fr. Stan Fortuna – Saturday, May 23, 2009 – 9 a.m. - 10 p.m. St. Mary's parish, Ottawa

Fr. Stan is an international speaker and musician whose mission is to evangelize Christ's Word through his music. From contemporary Christian to jazz, folk, reggae and rap, this incredible musician and composer has produced music for the enjoyment of all ages and walks of life. He delivers a clear message of the importance of God's grace in one's life and the challenge of not wasting it.

St. Mary's parish is planning a full day of fun activities including games, dramas, talks, mass, reconciliation, praise and worship and of course Fr. Stan Fortuna. The FLYMO will be organizing one bus to attend this event which is recommended for young people from age 12 -21.

Summer Youth Conference – Journey to the Father – July 17-19 St. Raphael's (between Ottawa and Montreal)

The FLYMO will be organizing a bus to attend this conference for high school-age youth (those entering grade 9 up to 18 years of age). Don't let your teens miss out on this incredible weekend of faith, fun, and friends.

Details and registration forms for all of these exciting events are available from the FLYMO office, your parish, youth coordinators, high school pastoral animators or on the diocesan website www.pembrokedioecese.com under the FLYMO section. Questions? Contact the FLYMO at (613) 732-7933 Ex. 208, e-mail yvettebourque@pembrokedioecese.com.

Youth Ministry Training for adult leaders is available to parishes or groups of parishes upon request. Perhaps your parish would like more information on how to become more "youth friendly" or your parish council is in need of more information on what youth ministry is and how to get started on intentional ministry with youth? Contact the FLYMO for more information on training topics.

after year understand the value and necessity of evangelization of youth by youth. Yes, there is a cost to have a retreat but as one principal states, "How could we not have it? The kids say it is the best day of the school year." One family stated after participating in the parish family retreat, "I'm so glad we came, our family really needed this right now."

The NET team also enjoyed a dinner at St. Columbkille Cathedral with Bishop Mulhall, hosted by the Diocesan Youth Ministry Team, with Mark and Joyce Reilander preparing most of the meal. Following the dinner, the team joined in the diocesan young adult ministry for a time of praise and worship and adoration. Bishop Mulhall shared an encouraging message which was followed by a question and answer period.

To find out more about NET Canada, its retreat themes and costs go to www.netcanada.ca. To inquire about hosting a retreat at your parish or school for the 2009-2010 school year contact the FLYMO - (613) 732-7933, ext 208.

Listed opposite you will find a number of events that are sure to be evangelical in nature for the young people in the diocese. Be sure to get your youth to at least one of these events if not all.

Yvette Bourque is director of the Family, Life and Youth Ministry Office of the Diocese of Pembroke.



One of the recent NET Retreats was held at Our Lady of Sorrows Parish in Petawawa, above.

Pastoral animators provide a faith base at Catholic schools

The high school years present a unique set of challenges and questions for young people: What should I do with my life? How do I relate to other people? How can I live faithfully in a secular world?

In the Catholic school system, a full team of professionals is available each day to provide leadership and guidance. At the heart of that team is the school pastoral animator – the person responsible for the daily morning prayers, organizing liturgical celebrations, and providing spiritual leadership in a variety of settings.

Pastoral animators motivate students to share their Christianity through group discussions and social justice initiatives. They are available on a one-on-one basis to help students find the answers to their personal questions. They find ways to bring faith to life.

Ecclesia invites you to meet the newest pastoral animators in our Catholic education community.

Laurette Gingras, Centre scolaire catholique Jeanne-Lajoie pavillon secondaire

As a Catholic teacher, Laurette Gingras enjoys the opportunity to share her faith with her students.

For the past four years, she has served as the "liaison", providing a link between the teaching staff and the pastoral animator at Mgr-de-Charbonnel French Catholic School in North York.

It was a role she enjoyed, but with a fiancé working in Pembroke and a



wedding date set for December 2008, she knew she had to leave behind the urban Toronto environment where she grew up and head to the Ottawa Valley.

"The angels had it such that there was a job here for me," says the new pastoral animator of Centre scolaire catholique Jeanne-Lajoie Pavillon secondaire in Pembroke.

"The welcome was fantastic," she adds. "It's a beautiful school. Everybody's there to help you."

She points to the support of Fr. Robert Lavoie of CFB Petawawa and Fr. Michael Smith of Saint-Jean Baptiste parish in Pembroke, who are both very popular with the school's students.

The small, central chapel at Jeanne-Lajoie adds an extra element of coordination when it comes to planning mass for the students. With the doors closed, it can only accommodate about 40 people at a time. With the doors open, it can house more pupils but it becomes very busy and noisy.

So mass at Jeanne-Lajoie can be a day-long event, with four separate celebrations for different groupings of students. Normally, one priest presides over two morning ceremonies and the other priest takes the afternoon shift.

In addition to the formal opportunities to mark their faith, Gingras also helps organize a variety of worship and social justice activities. She and a pastoral team of seven or eight students have led food drives, the annual Terry Fox fund-raiser for cancer research, and a collection of clothing and toys for the Salvation Army at Christmas.

The school is under the jurisdiction of the Ottawa French Catholic School Board, so retreats and other events with students there are also a highlight for Jeanne-Lajoie students.



Katie Milosek, St. Joseph's Catholic High School

"I enjoy the faith aspect of my life," says Katie Milosek, the new pastoral animator at St. Joseph's Catholic High School in Renfrew.

She taught at the elementary level in the area for two years before taking a half-time position teaching religion courses at the high school. The opportunity to add pastoral animator duties to her teaching responsibilities seemed like a good fit.

Milosek works with the local priests to organize a monthly mass for the students, either at the school or in one of the churches. She has also helped run social justice activities at the school, including the very successful "Operation Christmas Child" campaign that filled 140 shoe boxes with items for needy children.

In February, she'll be travelling with a group of students from St. Joseph's to the Dominican Republic, where they will work with their peers from Pembroke's Bishop Smith Catholic High School.

A group of 10 students has joined Milosek to create a pastoral team at St. Joseph's that is currently planning activities to mark Lent and to support the pro-life movement.

As well, a youth group now meets at the school each week to engage in Bible discussions, share readings or watch movies. A student has taken on the main leadership role for this group, supported by the pastoral animator.

"I've always wanted to be a teacher," Milosek concludes. "This adds a richness to that role, and gives me new opportunities to celebrate our faith."

Pembroke native was one of North America's most influential Catholics

Fr. Richard Neuhaus, who died last month in New York City at the age of 72, was considered by many to be one of the most influential Catholic thinkers in the United States. Fr. Neuhaus was born in Pembroke, the son of the pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church. He followed in his father's footsteps, serving 30 years as a Lutheran minister, before converting to Catholicism in 1990. In 1991 he was ordained a Catholic priest by John Cardinal O'Connor of New York.

In an article written in 2002 for "First Things", a New-York based magazine, discussing his conversion, Fr. Neuhaus mentioned the influence of his early years in Pembroke. "Across the street lived my best friends, the Spooner brothers, who with their devoutly

Catholic family attended St. Columkille's Cathedral." Later in the article he writes, "I am sure that I as a boy thought – not very seriously, certainly not obsessively – but I thought about being a Catholic."

Tom Spooner, who still lives in the family home across from St. John's Lutheran Church, says of his childhood friend, "Richard was always a very confident chap, and that characteristic followed him his entire life."

Mr. Spooner also tells of childhood mischief. "Rev. Clement Neuhaus (Richard's father) was quite a cigar smoker," he said, "as children we weren't opposed to pilfering his cigars at times." This activity eventually led to a shed in the Spooner's back yard burning down.

Fr. Neuhaus left Pembroke and high school at 14 and went to live with an aunt in Texas. After a brief career as owner of a gas station/restaurant, he entered Lutheran Concordia College in Austin, having never completed high school. After his ordination as a Lutheran minister in 1960 he was assigned to a predominantly Black and Hispanic inner-city church in Brooklyn, New York. Rev. Orlen Lapp, a former Pastor of St. John's, and a long-time friend who studied with Fr. Neuhaus, said, "I could see a change in Richard, he developed a pastoral heart." He continued, "I saw great growth in him spiritually."

Richard Neuhaus became a civil rights activist, marching with Dr. Martin Luther

King Jr., actively protesting the Vietnam War, and getting arrested during the riots surrounding the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago.

The 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion caused him to move sharply to the political right and Fr. Neuhaus became known for his neoconservative leanings.

His obituary in the Washington Post said, "Fr. Neuhaus played a central role in forging an alliance between evangelical Protestants and Catholics and in bringing conservative Christians into the Republican conservative coalition in the 1980s and 1990s."

Mary Ann Glendon, the U.S. ambassador to the Vatican, was also quoted in the Washington Post saying, "Fr. Neuhaus was a guiding force in the creation of faith-based initiatives – private religious groups given government funding to carry out social policy – that have become identified with President Bush's White House. In 2005, Time magazine named Fr. Neuhaus one of the 25 most influential evangelicals in America and noted that when the president talked to journalists about religion, Fr. Neuhaus was "the living authority he cited most often."

The author of over 30 books, advisor to two Popes and three U.S. Presidents, Richard Neuhaus died in New York on January 8, 2009. On January 18th a memorial service was held at St. John's Lutheran Church in Pembroke. Fr. Tim Moyle, a long-time friend, was lector, and the service was also attended by Msgr. Douglas Bridge, Fr. Murray Tardiff and Fr. Michael Smith.



Left, Fr. Richard Neuhaus, born in Pembroke, served as an advisor to Pope John Paul II.

The new diocesan web site: Building media missions on the web

As many of our readers may have noticed, the diocesan web site has undergone a major revision. The step forward represents an ongoing effort to make the image and voice of Christ seen and heard on the vast Internet frontier. As Pope John Paul II wrote in his 2002 exhortations, Internet: A New Forum of Proclaiming the Gospel,

The Internet causes billions of images to appear on millions of computer monitors around the planet. From this galaxy of sight and sound, will the face of Christ emerge and the voice of Christ be heard? ... I dare to summon the whole Church bravely to cross this new threshold, to put out into the deep of the Net, so that now as in the past the great engagement of the Gospel and culture may show to the world "the glory of God on the face of Christ" (2 Cor 4:6).

A mix of new features and powerful interactive tools enable us to answer this call, now echoed in the writings of Pope Benedict XVI, as we work to build a truly human place on the web – a place that can both reach and be reachable in its evangelical mission to know and serve Christ.

The web site's new features and tools include:

- a fresh approach to the browsing experience by allowing visitors to choose from two templates, dark and light, in both English and French. There is a further option of selecting quick machine translation in 33 additional languages. Text size can be increased to help improve article legibility.
- the embedding of video specials and links to worldwide Catholic content allow for easy

presentation of material and the timely dissemination of news and events within the diocese and the Church at large.

- an Events Calendar allows groups within the diocese to submit relevant events for consideration and publication.

Never before has the public been so diffused and never before so accessible. Through new media today Christ's truth can reach distant lands where anonymity allows even those in geographically and ideologically isolated corners of the globe a walk into a Christian village.

The Internet gives us the opportunity of building "media missions" that can serve as a refuge to the weary traveller, making the image and voice of Christ seen and heard. Such efforts can help humanize, truly humanize by satiating the soul, the world wide web.

The diocesan web site is accessible through both diocesepembroke.ca and pembroke-diocese.com. Visit today, and help make the new web mission a part of your faith walk.





Every year during the festive season, the staff at Scotiabank in Mattawa organizes a bake sale to help the Mattawa and Area Food Bank. On Tuesday, December 16, Branch Manager Cheryl Neault presented Sr. Carmelle Laframboise with a cheque for nearly \$250, photo above. The Scotiabank staff did all the baking and raised \$124. Scotiabank matched what the employees had raised.

"We could not have done this without Scotiabank's and our customers' support," said Neault. "We can buy bread," exclaimed Sr. Carmelle. She explained how quickly the food bank goes through loaves of bread, when you are servicing some 84 clients on a regular basis. "Thanks to all the people who are helping with the food bank. We have more and more clients because people are losing their jobs through layoffs."

"It is so important to give at this time of year," said Neault. "Economically we all face our challenges but it just seems to hit home a little harder during the Christmas season. So it becomes important to share and give when we can."

Donations help the Mattawa Food Bank

Before Christmas a group of dedicated ladies donated 21 quilts, two afghans and six stuffed teddy bears to the food bank. It was an enjoyable project for quilters Marie Perron, Annette Demers, Madeleine Nadon, and Edna Clarke.

"These quilts, along with a stuffed animal, bring a lot of comfort to the owner," said Annette Demers. "It also gives comfort knowing that we helped someone in need."

The quilts come in various sizes and for various age groups. The ladies have made quilts for babies, juniors and adults. The adult quilts are approximately 60 by 72 inches. "Each quilt tells a special story," said Demers.

She explains that the large black stripes that divide the squares in this were made from material donated by the Sisters of Charity. "It's material from their veils," she said.

"The Sisters have been helping out the community for such a long time, we all thought it was a good time for us to help them out with the food bank," said Madeleine Nadon.

Donations of fabric have come from other members of the community. "We had yards of denim, flannelette and cotton fabric to work with," said Nadon.

Flo Good, Sharon Monahan, Diane Fawcett, Kati Atchinson, Lynn Turcotte, Estelle Bastien, Nicole Duhaime, Pierrette Viau, and Melanie Bouthillier-Viau all donated material and did cutting for this project. Their names were included with those of the four quilters on the card that was presented along with their donation to the Mattawa and Area Food Bank. Accepting the donation was Lise Reid, president of the Mattawa and Area Food Bank and Sr. Carmelle Laframboise.

"What a nice gesture done by these generous ladies! Their hard work in helping us keep our families warm this winter is such a gift," said Reid.



Left: Marie Perron, Annette Demers, Madeleine Nadon and Edna Clarke have donated 21 quilts, two afghans and six stuffed teddy bears to the Mattawa and Area Food Bank. Their hope is that these quilts will help local families in need.

CWL donates to the Arnprior Hospital

The Diocesan Council of the Catholic Women's League of the Pembroke Diocese donated \$1,000 to the Partners in Caring Campaign to renovate the Emergency Department at Arnprior and District Memorial Hospital.

The cheque was presented to Derek Walter, ADMH Foundation Board member and Partners in Caring



Campaign Team Member, by Suzanne Mullins, president of the CWL for the Pembroke Diocese.

In July 2008, St. John Chrysostom Church was the site for the provincial Catholic Women's League annual convention. According to CWL policy a donation is made to a cause of their choice. The committee came to a consensus that Arnprior should be the recipient of the \$1,000 donation due to the tremendous support from the community.

Derek Walter said, "The Foundation is impressed that we are receiving so much support from the service groups within our community." The Board of Directors for the Foundation and Campaign expressed its appreciation to the community and all donors supporting the ongoing fundraising. The Partners in Caring Campaign to renovate and equip the emergency department at Arnprior & District Memorial Hospital has raised more than \$2.8 million – surpassing the target required for the community portion of construction costs.

Left: Suzanne Mullins, CWL president for the Pembroke Diocese, presents Derek Walters with a cheque for \$1,000 in support of the Arnprior Hospital.

Parish Mission The Year of St. Paul St Francis Xavier Parish, Renfrew

March 9; 7:00 p.m.: Paul's conversion to a life and ministry as the first theologian.

March 10; 7:00 p.m.: Paul's teaching on morality, the law and salvation.

March 11; 7:00 p.m.: Reconciliation celebration with a reflection on Paul's teaching about conversion.

Morning gatherings at 10:00 a.m.

All gatherings will be followed by some social time.

Mission facilitator is Fr. Rick Walsh CSP, Director of Programming at the Paulist Centre in downtown Toronto. He has previously served as associate Pastor in Austin, TX, Knoxville, TN, and New York City. While based in Portland, OR, he also conducted parish missions and retreats across the United States including Alaska and Hawaii.

Please feel welcome to join us for this Lenten opportunity to renew our faith relationship.

Pilgrimage to Lima, Peru – “If you want peace, reach out to the poor”

By Arlene Corrigan

Diocese of Pembroke/Archdiocese of Lima Partnership - The Chorrillos three-year children's feeding project - Lima, Peru

For the past two years, the people of the Diocese of Pembroke have been supporting a feeding project to help malnourished children in the region of Chorrillos, an impoverished section of the Archdiocese of Lima. The Lima-Pembroke Partnership Committee made a commitment on behalf of the people of the Pembroke Diocese to support this feeding project for three years. Our commitment was for \$210,000 to be sent to Lima (\$60,000 the first year; \$75,000 the second year and \$75,000 the third year). The first two years' commitment has been sent and we are assured that the program is well under way.

The children involved in this feeding project (1,000 over the three-year period) are now fed two nutritious meals a day and their mothers are taught hygiene and nutrition in order for them to help their children stay healthy. The generosity of the people of the Diocese of Pembroke has made it possible for the people of the community of Chorrillos to have their children start on the path to good health and we pray that this will continue for them.

The project is in its second year of operation and a second report has been received from the project organizers indicating some of these conclusions:

“We are intending in the near future to make better use of the quality of service we have, thus getting a better handle on the control of parasites through the supplementation of nutritional food for the children. It is our hope that once this is done the parents will be in a better position to maintain the health of their children.”

“An important part of the project is the group of mothers who volunteer their services to the program. As we move into the second phase we have organized a relatively consistent group of people who care for the maintenance of the soup kitchens.”

“The economic support of a third party is without a doubt an important and a necessary part of this project. We are contemplating soliciting help from private enterprise and from the State through means of PRONAA (National Program of Food Assistance.)”

We now invite you to send your donation for our third-year commitment to: Diocese of Pembroke (Chorrillos Feeding Project), 188 Renfrew St., P.O. Box 7, Pembroke, ON, K8A 6X1.

Any donations received by us in excess of the amount that we are committed to will be held and it shall be decided by the committee whether to continue to support this worthwhile program or to use it to support another project within the Archdiocese of Lima.

At the Annual World Day of Prayer for Peace on January 1, 1993, Pope John Paul II reminded us that:

“If you want peace, reach out to the poor! May rich and poor recognize that they are brothers and sisters; may they share what they have with one another as children of the one God who loves everyone, who wills the good of everyone, and who offers to everyone the gift of peace!”

This past fall 15 people from the diocese had the opportunity to reach out to the poor of Peru during the second pilgrimage from the Diocese of Pembroke. In 2006 a diocesan partnership with Lima was created that saw Bishop Smith of the Diocese of Pembroke and Cardinal Cipriani of the Archdiocese of Lima sign a statement of solidarity that prompted pilgrimages to Peru in November 2006 and again in November 2008.

A number of orientation meetings occurred prior to this recent pilgrimage. Led by Sr. Pauline Coulterman and Yvonne Sklepowicz, the pilgrims prepared themselves for this wonderful experience. On November 24 they left from the Ottawa airport, with heavy suitcases in tow and hearts full of warmth and anticipation.

The pilgrimage included visits to some parishes of the Archdiocese of Lima, historical church sites in Lima, a trip down the Pacific Coast to visit the people of the Chincha Valley, served by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Pembroke since 1964, and an excursion to the Andean City of Cuzco and Machu Picchu.

The group arrived in Lima after an eight-hour flight. The warm air was a stark contrast to the cold snowstorm that they had left behind – a vivid reminder that our two countries are very different. The pilgrims soon realized the benefit of travelling with religious and clergy as some of the group were whisked away at customs for inspection but were soon rescued by Sr. Pauline. The pilgrims received warm smiles and greetings from those who recognized their Canadian name tags as they walked through the airport. This was the first of many times that they would be treated like

heroes. Since there are safety issues in Lima the group stayed at a retreat centre which was surrounded by high gates and fencing and was guarded around the clock.

Lima is a large city without the benefits of expressways. Traffic is absolutely chaotic. The only rule of the road seems to be that if you are ahead of someone you have the right of way. The unofficial population of Lima is approximately 10-million people, making it difficult to get employment. Beatriz, the group's interpreter, pointed out how inventive the people of Peru had become in obtaining work. For example, each major intersection included people with clipboards who would keep track of the bus schedules and make recommendations to the bus drivers to maximize their business. Each bus carried a ‘shouter’ or ‘recruiter’ who would shout routes out to the people on the sidewalk. Vendors were everywhere on the streets and rush hour traffic was so slow that vendors could travel between lanes to sell their wares.

The group visited several churches and cathedrals in Peru, all of which are also museums and art galleries. The Cathedral of Lima was spectacular, consisting of room upon room of amazing art, magnificent carvings, shrines, altars, chorus chairs (including ‘cheat’ seats), and tombs. Here the visitors met with Cardinal Cipriani who proudly introduced the signed agreement between Pembroke and Lima, beautifully displayed on a marble pillar. Several of the churches and monasteries had crypts and catacombs that artfully displayed bones and skulls.

Escorted by staff from the diocese of Lima the group visited several poverty-stricken areas that the church supports. The first of these was in Chorrillos, a district of Lima that is on the side of the sandy mountain just behind the rich façade of Mira Flores, the ocean-front tourist area. Here, huts were without water and sanitation. The group received a heroes' welcome at the feeding project that the Pembroke Diocese supports. They then travelled to Manchay and witnessed the absolute poverty of this area where over half of the housing is reed construction with earth floors and workers receive 500 Peruvian nuevo soles per month



The Diocese of Pembroke pilgrims with schoolchildren in Chorrillos, Peru.

(\$175 U.S.). Part of this pays for the water delivered by truck to a rusty barrel in front of the house. The church is a significant presence here, providing all of the health and educational services, as well as tremendous hope in an otherwise bleak environment.

The Pembroke Diocese has also contributed a great deal to the improvements in Chinchá, which is not only very poor, but is recovering from a major earthquake in August 2007. The group stayed at the convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph who have a mission there. Sr. Pauline had served in Chinchá for many years and it is evident that she is loved by all and dearly missed. Homes in Chinchá are about 12' X 12'; the "bathroom" is a pail in the corner that is emptied into a hole in the roadway. Swarms of children and dogs greeted the pilgrims at every stop. The beautiful churches and chapels look out of place among the streets of straw homes but are a source of hope and dignity to the

people. The group visited several of the projects that are supported by people of the Pembroke area, including the pre-fab nursery school that was funded by the St. Michael's School, Douglas, community, and housing and educational programs supported by Christine Gervais, founder of ACCESO International and formerly of Westmeath, Ontario. The Pembroke Diocese has contributed a great deal to the improvements in Chinchá since the earthquake.

Part of the group flew to Cusco, capital of the Inca Empire, at 3,360 metres above sea level. While there they drove through the Sacred Valley and marveled at the many ruins. From here they travelled to Machu Picchu, one of the new seven wonders of the world. Five pilgrims travelled to Puno on Lake Titikaka, at 3,810 metres above sea level. They stayed on the Bay of Puno and experienced the culture and customs of the people of the Uros "floating islands" and enjoyed

the scenery of Lake Titikaka and the island of Taquile as they climbed a further 150 metres straight up. This was truly magnificent!

The whole pilgrimage to Peru was a wonderful experience. Not only did pilgrims see the magnificence of the Spanish-inspired churches, museums, and holy places but they were able to meet Christ in the Peruvian people by experiencing their poverty and their wealth of spirituality, history, and culture. It is difficult to describe the type of poverty that was witnessed. It is much more meaningful to witness it in person and to feel the solidarity that comes from the realization that we are one people filled with hope and dignity. For this reason it is important to continue with pilgrimages such as this.

The lives of these pilgrims are changed forever because of this experience and the chance to 'reach out to the poor' as Pope John Paul II asked.

Parish Profile

Our Lady of Mercy, Bancroft and St. Anthony Mission, Haliburton

This parish profile takes readers to the southwest corner of the Pembroke Diocese, where faith and commitment to church remain strong, despite the distance from brother and sister congregations and the administrative centre of the church family.

We talk in the secular world about a global economy and we enjoy the connectivity of the world wide web. As Catholics we celebrate and live within the unity of a global faith community. Yet geographic location still shapes us.

It takes eight days for a letter to be delivered from Bancroft to Pembroke. The local population's natural links with larger centres for shopping and services lead in the opposite direction, toward Belleville or Peterborough.

Surrounded by parishes within the Peterborough Diocese, the Catholic churches of Bancroft and Haliburton have carved out their own niche and identities.

In 2009, Our Lady of Mercy, Bancroft, will be celebrating its 75th anniversary as a congregation. His Excellency Bishop Mulhall will celebrate mass there on Sunday, June 7, at 10:30 a.m. A stand-up reception for current and former parishioners will follow the mass, and the 130 families who make up the parish

will be invited to celebrate their history as a faith community.

The face of that community has changed in recent years. As prices for recreational properties rose in Muskoka, more and more families from the greater Toronto area travelled further east to enjoy the clean air and waters of the Bancroft region. During the summer months now, the pews of Our Lady of Mercy are often filled to capacity with a mix of regular worshippers and those who are there for a brief respite. Descendants of the church's founding families blend with newcomers who are just beginning to establish their own personal connections to the region.

The result is an extra injection of energy from summer visitors and an additional source of support from the growing seasonal community.

That summertime population boom has been a regular feature of Haliburton's St. Anthony Mission, where the congregation is regularly double in size during the vacation months.

The Haliburton congregation has been served by a priest from Bancroft, or for a time Maynooth, throughout its history. This has inspired a unique spirit among the parishioners, who have readily adopted full responsibility for the day-to-day management of the church property.

"They have a real love for their parish," comments Fr. Richard Starks, noting that the congregation's management of the physical plant allows him to focus on his ordination vows to pray with the people and lead them in the eucharist.

"It frees the priest to be the cleric he is meant to be," he says.

Left: Our Lady of Mercy Church in Bancroft. Right: Children in Haliburton enthusiastically participate in the Christmas Pageant.

In a small community such as Haliburton, where there is no Catholic school available for any grade level, that role can include some additional responsibilities. Faith formation in this setting is primarily a family responsibility. The church provides a family faith formation program to be followed in the home, with coaching available from the priest.

Back in Bancroft, families within the church also face the challenge of limited Catholic education. Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School is part of the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board. It provides Catholic education up to and including the grade 8 level. Beyond that, families must make an extraordinary commitment to pursue Catholic education.

This year, four high school students from Bancroft have chosen to travel to Belleville each day to attend Catholic high school. They leave home each day at about 5:30 a.m. and connect with a bus in the Madoc area. They arrive back home about 12 hours later each day, having travelled a total of 250 kilometres to learn in a faith environment.

"That is an inspiring commitment," comments Fr. Starks, presenting it as one example of the dedication and strong Catholic identity that have been the hallmarks of Our Lady of Mercy for the past 75 years.



John Paul II's Theology of the Body: Key to an authentic marital and family spirituality

By Christopher West

What is marital spirituality? How does the family become authentically spiritual? For John Paul II, the answers to these questions “of the spirit” are revealed in the body.

This is what we learn from John Paul II's “theology of the body.” In this collection of 129 general audience addresses, John Paul developed what promises to be one of his most enduring contributions to the Church and the world.

Establishing an authentic marital spirituality is essential if we are to restore the family and build a culture of life. How do we do it? According to the Holy Father, “Those who seek the accomplishment of their own human and Christian vocation in marriage are called, first of all, to make this ‘theology of the body’ ...the content of their life and behaviour” (Apr 2, 1980).

The purpose of this article is to introduce some of the themes of John Paul's teaching and outline the foundations for building an authentic marital and family spirituality.

The body: Revelation of God's mystery

The Pope's thesis, if we let it sink in, is sure to revolutionize our understanding of the human body, sexuality, and, in turn, marriage and family life. “The body, and it alone,” John Paul says, “is capable of making visible what is invisible, the spiritual and divine. It was created to transfer into the visible reality of the world, the invisible mystery hidden in God from time immemorial, and thus to be a sign of it” (Feb 20, 1980).

A mouthful of scholarly verbiage, I know. What does it mean? As physical, bodily creatures we simply cannot see God. He's pure Spirit. But God wanted to make his mystery visible to us so he stamped it into our bodies by creating us as male and female in his own image (Gn 1:27).

The function of this image is to reflect the Trinity, “an inscrutable divine communion of [three] Persons” (Nov 14, 1979). John Paul thus concludes that “man became the ‘image and likeness’ of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons which man and woman form right from the beginning.” And, the Pope adds, “On all of this, right from ‘the beginning,’ there descended the blessing of fertility linked with human procreation” (ibid).

The body has a “nuptial meaning” because it reveals man and woman's call to become a gift for one another, a gift fully realized in their “one flesh” union. The body also has a “generative meaning” that (God willing) brings a “third” into the world through their communion. In this way, marriage constitutes a “primordial sacrament” understood as a sign that truly communicates the mystery of God's Trinitarian life and love to husband and wife, and through them to their children, and through the family to the whole world.

This is what marital spirituality is all about: participating in God's life and love and sharing it with the world. While this is certainly a sublime calling, it's not ethereal. It's tangible. God's love is meant to be lived and felt in daily life as a married couple and as a family.

How? By living according to the full truth of the body.

“In fact, how indispensable,” our Holy Father insists, “is thorough knowledge of the meaning of the body, in its masculinity and femininity, along the way of this vocation! How necessary is a precise awareness of the nuptial meaning of the body, of its generative meaning – since all that which forms the content of the life of married couples must constantly find its full and personal dimension in life together, in behaviour, in feelings!” (Apr 2, 1980).

Embodied spirituality

One of the greatest threats facing the Church today is a “spiritualism” in which people disembodied their call to holiness. Living a spiritual life never means eschewing our bodies. Authentic spirituality is always an embodied spirituality.

This is the very “logic” of Christianity. God communicates his life to us in and through the body; in and through the Word made flesh. The spirit that denies this “incarnational reality” is that of the anti-Christ (see 1 Jn 4:2-3).

Think about this for a moment. John Paul teaches us that the human body – in the beauty of sexual difference and our call to nuptial union – possesses a “language” inscribed by God that not only proclaims His eternal mystery, but makes that mystery present to us. If there is an enemy of God who wants to keep us from God's life and love, where, then, would he go to do it?

Satan's goal is to scramble the language of our bodies! And look how successful he's been. Because of Satan's scheme, most of us are illiterate when it comes to reading the language of the body. How many of us, for example, think that our bodies are the last place to look for the revelation of God's mystery?

Building an authentic spirituality

In order to build an authentic marital spirituality, then, we must begin by learning to read the true language of the body. We must pray for the eyes to see God's mystery revealed through our bodies and through the marital union itself. Sin is what blinds us: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 Jn 2:16).

In talking about the love between man and woman, we must contend primarily with the lust of the flesh. Marriage in no way “legitimizes” lust. Men and women are called by the power of the Holy Spirit to experience a “real and deep” victory over lust. Through the “redemption of our bodies,” the Holy Spirit impregnates sexual desire “with everything that is noble and beautiful,” with “the supreme value which is love” (Oct 22 & 29, 1980).

This is how husbands and wives build an authentic spirituality: by loving one another according to the Holy Spirit in and through their bodies. Marital love is shown in numerous ways, but spouses who are filled with the Spirit realize “among the possible manifestations of affection, the singular, or rather, exceptional significance of [the conjugal] act” (Nov 21, 1984). They come to understand that their sexual union “bears in itself the sign of the great mystery of creation and redemption” (Nov 14, 1984). In a word, they come to

understand that their union is “Eucharistic.”

When we receive the Eucharist worthily, it bears new life in the whole of our lives. When we receive it unworthily, we eat and drink our condemnation (1 Co 11:29). Similarly, when spouses open their union to the Holy Spirit, their whole marriage continually bears new life in the Spirit. However, if spouses close their union to the Spirit, they undermine the whole reality of their marriage and their family life.

One of the primary ways we remain open to the Spirit is by remaining open to children. Who is the Holy Spirit but the Lord and Giver of Life? Those couples who close their union to children at the same time close their union to the Holy Spirit. Their union is no longer a sign of God's Trinitarian love but, in fact, becomes a counter-sign of it.

This is why John Paul says that “the antithesis of conjugal spirituality is constituted, in a certain sense, by the subjective lack of this understanding [of the dignity of the conjugal act] which is linked to contraceptive practice and mentality” (ibid).

For those who are filled with the Holy Spirit, contraception is simply unthinkable. They know it replaces the true language of the body with a lie. And lying within the heart of marital intimacy has a ripple effect, as does speaking the truth. Spouses who strive to speak honestly in the nuptial embrace strive to be open and honest with each in the whole of their married life.

As professor Mary Rousseau expresses it, when spouses live an authentic spirituality, “the love that marks their marital bed spreads ...into the kitchen, the yard, the supermarket, the workplace, and beyond. Their love eventually spreads throughout the world, into the realms of politics, work, education, entertainment, health care, and international relations. Such is the exact process by which the civilization of love comes to be” (Chicago Studies, Vol 39:2, p. 175).

In conclusion

This is why, according to John Paul, education in the theology of the body “constitutes ...the essential nucleus of conjugal spirituality” (Oct 3, 1984). This education is a clarion call not to become more “spiritual” but to become more incarnational – to allow the Holy Spirit to impregnate our bodies with divine life.

This is what happens in the sacraments. The Eucharist and Penance, in particular, are the “infallible and indispensable” means, John Paul says, “for forming the Christian spirituality of married life and family life. With these, that essential and spiritual creative ‘power’ of love reaches human hearts and, at the same time, human bodies.... This love, in fact, allows the building of the whole life of the married couple according to that ‘truth of the sign,’ by means of which marriage is built up in its sacramental dignity” (Oct 3, 1984).

Through this “sacramental dignity” spouses and families participate in the mystery of the Trinity and proclaim that mystery to the world in an “embodied spirituality.”

This article is reproduced courtesy of the Theology of the Body Institute.

A P O L O G E T I C S 1 0 1

“Can you really prove that?” Proofs for God: Part 1

In this series, the author lays out a common sense approach to understanding and defending the Catholic Faith.

By Andrew Baklinski

(A short preamble to clarify our terms – the term apologetics does not mean an apology in the modern understanding of the word. I am not saying I am sorry for something. What I am doing is giving a defence for something – this is an original meaning of the word ‘apologetics’)

In our last article we examined the relationship between faith and reason, and concluded that faith and reason can and need to work together. It is necessary to give reasons for faith in our search for truth, which we saw earlier, does exist. In our search for the truth about God, we need to look for the evidence with an open mind. The right mindset to have at the beginning of this search for the truth of God — if one is truly open-minded — is not: “There is no God, prove to me there is”, nor “There is a God, prove to me there isn’t”, but rather: “I don’t know...show me the evidence!”

I find it effective to begin my theology courses by giving my students a ‘crash course’ in basic apologetics. When we get to proofs for God, the response is invariably: “Mr. B... no way... no way can you prove God... I mean, you can prove stuff about science and math, but not God!” After a few classes the response becomes: “This is so amazing... I never imagined my faith made so much sense... wait till my friends hear about this...” In looking at proofs for the existence of God, the best place to begin is back in the Medieval Ages.

Aquinas and “ways” to God

The great theologian St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) outlined five “ways” to know God. It is interesting to note that he did not refer to them as “proofs” but “ways” because although they do prove God’s existence, Thomas held that our knowledge of God is at best incomplete and limited, God being so far above us. Humility, St. Thomas realized, is a good thing here! His arguments, in essence, are based on a simple instinct of the mind that “everything needs an explanation.” In other words, there must be a cause for everything that is.

Aquinas argues that things in motion require a mover. A ball cannot, of its own power, throw itself through the air. It needs a thrower. A train cannot decide to roll along the tracks without an engine. Dominoes cannot choose to begin falling on their own — they need an outside mover to begin moving them. No matter how much time you give them, if there are no outside forces acting on them, they will never begin falling. If you see them falling, you know that something acted upon them. We look at the universe around us and see that it is in motion. Much like the ball, train, or dominoes, it cannot move itself and

therefore must have a mover. According to simple logical reasoning the argument looks like this:

Premise: Everything in motion requires a mover.

Premise: The universe is in motion.

Conclusion: Therefore the universe has a mover. (An ‘unmoved mover’ – who is furthermore a personal being with free will outside of the physical limitations of the universe – time, space and matter – who chooses to begin motion. Choice here implies free will, which implies that a personal being has made a conscious choice.)

If both premises are true, which they are, then the conclusion must necessarily follow. The only way to deny the conclusion is to deny one of the premises and no one in their right mind would do this!

Another of Aquinas’s “ways” is based on existence:

Premise: Everything that comes into existence requires a cause.

Premise: The universe came into existence.

Conclusion: Therefore the universe has a cause. (An “uncaused cause” – a being who is without beginning or end – a being whom we call God).

The universe is full of dependent beings, beings like you and me, that car or that tree, or our sun for that matter, that need causes since they all came into being at some moment. If there were no ultimate independent being (God) then there would be no dependent beings. But there are dependent beings – therefore there must be an independent being! Imagine asking someone what caused everything. If he replies: “The Big Bang”, you can legitimately ask: “What caused the Big Bang?” If there were no cause, it could not have happened. (Even science will acknowledge this, although science

how absurd it is to attribute it to a cosmic accident. Clearly, somebody had been there before him, because things like watches, cell phones and houses with dinner just do not happen by chance. They are objects with design and therefore need a designer.

Back to the logic books:

Premise: Everything that has design needs a designer.

Premise: The universe has design.

Conclusion: Therefore the universe has a designer.

Again, if the premises are true then the conclusion must necessarily follow. There is no way around this other than by denying one of the premises, which in reality would be a denial of reality. Advocates for the Intelligent Design movement argue that if a watch or cell phone could not be the result of pure blind chance, no matter how much time is given, how much less so is the created order, which is infinitely more complicated than a simple watch. Scientists today have no idea how life began, and they tend to fall back on the excuse that if only you have enough time, life could happen by chance. But, as we have seen, this does not follow. The recent film “Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed” examines the battle against the teaching of Intelligent Design by atheists who hold to a strict godless form of evolution – which is their only argument for remaining atheists. Acknowledging that there could be a designer would demolish their own personal “faith” of atheism.

Let’s review the evidence so far. We know, using reason alone, that there is a God who is a mover, a personal being, the cause of all in the universe, and also an incredible artist — the designer of all designers. That we can do this, gives evidence of the

“There is a God who is a mover, a personal being, the cause of all in the universe”

gives us little in the way of answers as to what caused the Big Bang.) You could then inquire as to what caused the cause of the Big Bang and on so on. Ultimately, if there is not a place where the “buck stops”, nothing is explained. The “buck stops” at God.

Does design imply intelligence?

Imagine walking along in a forest where somehow you know that no one has ever been before. You come upon a wristwatch and think to yourself, “Wow, how many billions of years of evolutionary processes must have occurred for this watch to exist... lightning strikes, erosion, geological activity and so on... and here it is!” Walking a little further, you find a cell phone and you think the same thing. Finally, you arrive at a house with smoke rising from the chimney, an open door and dinner on the table, and you think yourself the luckiest human being in existence to come across all this stuff that is the result of pure chance. The odds are perhaps one in a billion trillion yet here it is! A person in such a scenario would know

powerful way that reason can back up faith. These arguments do not prove the Christian God directly, but they prove that there is a God, soundly refuting all forms of atheism. They are not to be confused with faith itself, which is a gift from God, but they can help clear away the obstacles that lead one to faith.

Many of my students, after having studied the ways in which we can know God through reason, are filled with an enthusiasm to go out and share what they have seen and heard. One of the great beauties of our Catholic Faith is that it is so eminently reasonable, and this can aid us in the task of evangelization. Let us, each in our own way, be inspired to learn our faith more and be filled with a measure of enthusiasm so that we can share the “good news” of our God with others.

Next issue: “Proofs for God Part 2”

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