



Ecclesia

The Newsletter of the Catholic Diocese of Pembroke

Fall 2023

Pilgrimage: A journey with a purpose

A pilgrimage is a spiritual journey. It may take one day, one week, or even longer. Everyone has their own reason for undertaking a pilgrimage: it may be an opportunity to experience God in a unique way, to honour a loved one, to mark a transition in life, or to pray for a need.

For Catholics, it is traditionally a journey to holy sites, shrines, or saints located around the world. Some of the most visited pilgrimages include the Shrine and Basilica to Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City, the Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi in Italy, and Lourdes in France, each receiving millions of visitors annually.

But it is not necessary to travel that far. Within the Diocese of Pembroke, there are opportunities to participate in pilgrimages where individuals can strengthen their faith through prayer, deepen their connection with God, and receive special blessings.

Cap-de-la-Madeleine and Sainte Anne de Beaupre Shrine

By Karen McKibbin

My trip to Ste. Anne de Beaupre and Cap-de-la-Madeleine are days to fondly remember.

The first visit was a stop at Cap-de-la-Madeleine, and we arrived in time for Mass – the cantor at Mass was a superb vocalist. Afterwards we had the opportunity to walk around and view the beautiful surroundings bordering the St. Lawrence River in the Trois-Rivières region of Quebec.

Its history is rich: this shrine goes back to 1634, when the first Jesuit missionaries arrived in what was French Canada and built a small wooden structure in 1659.

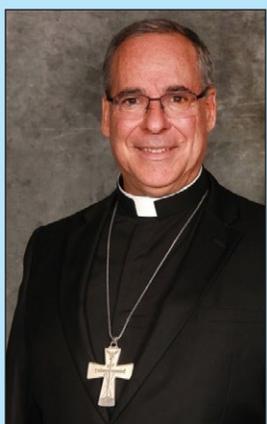
In 1720 the first stone chapel was built, and is known as the oldest church in Canada. Two miracles are associated with the building of the third

continued on page 2...



Cap-de-la-Madeleine

Diocese of Pembroke awaits the appointment of its 10th bishop



In July, Our Holy Father, Pope Francis appointed the Most Reverend Guy Desrochers, C.Ss.R. as the Seventh Archbishop of Moncton, New Brunswick. Archbishop-designate Desrochers succeeds Archbishop Valéry Vienneau, who reached the age of retirement this past October.

The date of installation in the Archdiocese of Moncton is October 18, 2023.

Following the canonical installation at the Cathedral of Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption in Moncton, the College of Consultors will be convoked to elect a diocesan administrator awaiting the appointment of the Tenth Bishop of Pembroke.

In the meantime, Bishop Desrochers entreats us to continue the evangelization efforts in our diocese, “which simply entails making God known, loved, and served through every possible means.”

Let us pray for Archbishop-designate Desrochers, the faithful and clergy of the Archdiocese of Moncton and the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the Diocese of Pembroke at this time.

In this issue:

Pastoral Appointments

Diaconate ordination

Seminarian Marcus Poisson

In Memoriam:

Father Roch J. Gagnon, 1930–2023

Father Joseph Clement

Austin Legree, 1930–2023

Father Grant Reginald Neville

Father Roy Boucher, 1940–2023

End of an Era: The Sisters of Charity honoured for 145 years of service in Mattawa

The Journey Remains: The Ongoing Services of the Evangelization Team

Healing Services with Eucharistic Adoration

A Letter about Becoming a Catholic

Development and Peace Caritas Canada

Caring for one another – helping refugees from Ukraine in our diocese

Parish Profile – St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Vinton

Family Life and Youth Ministry update

Pembroke Diocesan CWL: “Bee” Inspired, Go Make a Difference

What is a Secular Franciscan?

News from Galilee Centre

Saint Profile – St. Peregrine

What is the “Kingdom of God”?

Pro-Life Internship



125th ANNIVERSARY



Diocese | Diocèse
of Pembroke | de Pembroke

church in 1878. It had been decided to tear down the old church and build a new one using some of the stones from the old church, along with stones brought in from across the river after the ice had frozen solid.

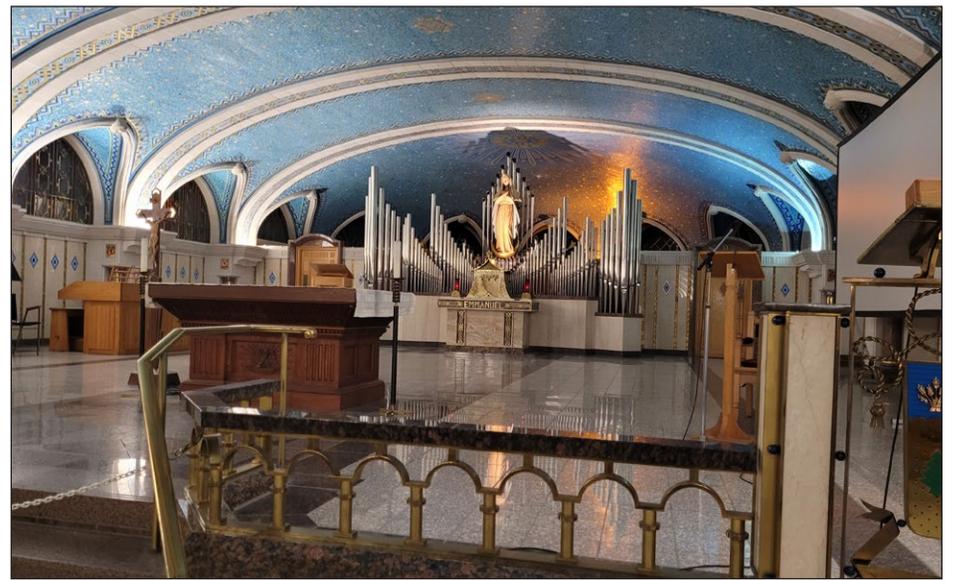
Unfortunately, the winter of 1878–1879 was mild, so no ice formed on the river. The parishioners began to pray the Rosary asking for a big freeze. The priest at that time vowed to Our Lady that if she answered their prayers, he would leave the old church standing and dedicate the parish to Her patronage. Miraculously, as the story goes (Sanctuary Notre-Dame-du-Cap, sanctuaire-ndc.ca/en/about_us/historical-summary/), some thin pieces of ice floated down the river, and stopped at Cap-de-la Madeleine and water was poured over to thicken them into the much-prayed-for ice bridge.

A second famous miracle, the Miracle of the Eyes, occurred in June 1888 as Blessed Father Frederic Jansoone O.F.M., Father Luc Désilets, and Mr. Pierre Lacroix prayed before a statue of Our Lady, they saw her eyes open.

Since that time the first Marian shrine in Canada has seen millions of pilgrims, including Pope John Paul II in 1984. There are daily Masses as well as many other spiritual activities.

The Basilica at Ste. Anne de Beupre, located a short distance northwest of Quebec City is especially memorable. The architecture of the basilica is striking, from the elaborate ceilings to the marble floors. There were so many beautiful chapels in the interior of the basilica, and every chapel is distinct in its design.

The immense pillars inside the entrance of the main chapel hold proof of the many miracles people have experienced. For me, it was an incredible and unforgettable site.



Basement chapel of Ste. Anne de Beupre Basilica

In 1922, Ste. Anne de Beupre Basilica burned. Reconstruction was completed in 1946, twenty-four years in the making.

The Sunday Mass I attended was presided by Archbishop Designate Guy Desrochers in the main chapel. It was at crowded capacity of over 1,300 people. His enthusiasm for our Catholic faith is infectious. He invoked such a passion for faith; listeners were so attentive to his words.

I thank my travelling companion, Reggie Gauvreau, who speaks excellent French, and was my translator for this journey. I am very grateful to Reggie for her companionship.

This pilgrimage was a wonderful experience to meet so many like-minded people from our area.

Saint Ann, Cormac

For 83 years, pilgrims have been journeying to Cormac to seek the intercession of St. Ann. The 2023 Pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. Ann was blessed with sunny skies, as the faithful gathered to celebrate the Outdoor Mass of Healing at the Shrine.

Bishop Guy Desrochers led the Mass, his last as Bishop of the Diocese of Pembroke.

“Today, in the Gospel you just heard, the Lord is giving a parable about a treasure hidden in a field,” said Bishop Desrochers during his homily.

“We are in a field right now, and I can tell you, there is a treasure in here, hidden. The treasure is hidden in your hearts. It’s the gift to love God that you have received when you were baptized; the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. It comes with a consequence; that if you are faithful to the inspirations to the Holy Spirit, all these gifts will blossom and give you eternal life. There is no treasure on earth that is comparable to the gift of eternal life.”

That treasure was granted to us from God’s only son, Jesus. Bishop Desrochers explained that the love Jesus has for St. Ann, the mother of Mary, is an affection that he wants all of us to extend to her as well.

“She (St. Ann) held the author of this treasure in her arms,” he said.

“That’s why Jesus wanted to bless his grandmother in a special way, to make her known and loved throughout the world, because the people that Jesus loves, he wants us to love as well.”

He then went to tell of the establishment of the Basilica of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré. It was in the year 1658 when Étienne de Lessard donated land to the church to establish a shrine in honour of St. Ann. Not long after, persons afflicted with serious health issues were miraculously cured.



The 2023 Pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. Ann, above, and Bishop Guy Desrochers, right, leading the Mass.



Bishop Desrochers then read recorded accounts of miracles. “There are thousands and thousands of stories of people who were cured through the intercession of St. Ann,” he said, noting the countless number of faithful who visit the shrine to express their devotion and gratitude for past miracles.

“That’s why so many people come to the Shrine of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré year after year, because they want to thank St. Ann. I think that’s why you are all here this weekend; to honour St. Ann, to believe in her powerful intercession.”

Walk the Opeongo Line

By Katrina Boguski

When Geoffrey Chaucer wrote the Canterbury Tales in the late 14th century, he told his stories from the perspective of people whose occupations and characteristics were suited to the day. A knight, a physician, a friar and a nun were among the host of characters on Chaucer's famous pilgrimage to Canterbury. Perhaps because of this work's great literary legacy, or maybe because of the many holiday decorations depicting the pilgrims of the Mayflower, it can be easy to imagine that only fictional characters go on pilgrimages.

It was to some a considerable surprise then to discover that on the Pilgrimage to St. Ann's in Cormac, the walk was undertaken by real, modern-day people whose work covered a range of occupations.

There were government workers, parents, teachers, students, counsellors, priests, business people, academics and engineers. In fact, the ranks of pilgrims included at least three engineers. Churchgoers are often accused of being in opposition to science and the presence of the engineers and others with strong backgrounds in science was proof that this misunderstanding is as false as many of the other accusations levied against those who practice their faith.

Throughout the pilgrimage, the intellectual gifts, sound formation and good moral character of my fellow pilgrims continued to impress me. These were, in many cases, very accomplished professionals who took time out of their busy careers to walk the Opeongo Line. For many pilgrims on the journey, this 67 km trek is an annual rite.

There were also people of all ages; they ranged from very young children, who did part of the journey in a stroller, up to people well into their eighties. Although many of the people on the pilgrimage were avid outdoorsmen and athletes, many others had desk jobs and were less physically fit. If you are considering doing the pilgrimage next year, but worry that you will not fit in, you can dispel that idea now. You are likely to find people from all walks of life, well-grounded in their faith and supportive of each person's unique journey along the path and throughout life.



Pilgrims walking the Opeongo Line

A gifted pilgrimage: Rose and her churches

By Susan Dagenais and Rose

Today is the first Sunday of our journey.

For my First Communion, my grandmother gifted me with a new church every Sunday. Since today marks the 83rd Annual Pilgrimage to Saint Ann's Shrine in Cormac, that's where we are headed.

Saint Ann is Jesus' grandmother and I am making this trip with my grandmother, Susan.

We left Pembroke around 9:30 a.m. and drove along Hwy 41 past Shady Nook, Rankin, and on to Eganville, a town that, according to a large sign, was established in 1853 with a population of 1,300. We turned onto Road 152 toward Foymount.

Probably because my grandmother is a retired schoolteacher, when I stepped into her little black Toyota, she handed me a clipboard with a half a dozen pieces of white paper and a Ziploc bag loaded with markers, a sharpened pencil, a pencil sharpener and a pen.

"Gramma, you are so organized," I said, as I proceeded to put these writing tools onto the floor.

"Oh, just keep that on your lap," she said. "You can record things as we drive. I'll help you with the spelling."

"How many people do you think will be at church today?" she asked.

I guessed 80 people and Gramma guessed 400. We were both wrong. There had to be over 1,000 people gathered on the lawn!

I asked Gramma if she thought there would be any children and she said, "Oh, I'm sure there will be." And there were tons of children. Some families had up to six children.

Grandma said that the talk the priest gives after reading the Gospel is called a homily. Today's homily was given by Bishop Guy Desrochers.

I didn't know his name, but now I do.

He talked about three of the thousands of miracles that happened because of Saint Ann. The bishop said that when Saint Ann asks Jesus for a favour, Jesus cannot say no to his grandmother. Bishop Desrochers encouraged us to trust Saint Ann and to ask her for a favour for ourselves or for a loved one.

We visited the little church, and I lit a candle for my great-grandmother Frances. We knelt and prayed for a few minutes and then, as we were leaving the church, I got a little silver medal. On the front it reads 'Sainte Anne' and on the back 'Priez pour nous.'



125th ANNIVERSARY



Diocese | Diocèse
of Pembroke | de Pembroke

Ecclesia: Newsletter of the Diocese of Pembroke
Fall 2023

World Youth Day

By Julie Belec

How can I sum up this last WYD in Portugal? As a counsellor, I saw young people blossom, develop self-confidence, open up to faith and discover trust in God. That's why I'll use two words: fertile chaos.

After a warm welcome from the families of the Diocese of Viseu, our young people set off for Lisbon. The first dinner set the tone for what was to come. While we were waiting for our food order (which had been forgotten), pilgrims from the United States and Colombia spontaneously joined us at the table! We shared our experiences as Christians in our respective countries. The theme of this WYD was already taking on its full meaning: "Mary got up and left in haste..." It was with the same eagerness that our young people went out to meet pilgrims from other countries.

During the opening ceremony, Pope Francis gave a breath of courage and hope to the young people present when he told them: "There is room in the Church for EVERYONE." We also witnessed a miracle. During the Pope's speech, less than 10 metres from where we were, a tree broke and fell on the crowd, causing NO INJURY. One of our young people summed up the experience in these words: "If there's one message in all this, it's that God protects us."



After a series of enriching encounters and challenges, we were in for a pleasant surprise at the end of our second catechesis. Seeing a cordon of police officers blocking the street, we stopped, and lo and behold, the Pope himself walked past us and waved!

We faced many challenges on the way to the prayer vigil with the Pope: the extreme heat, the blazing sun, the lack of food, the difficult access to water and the fact that we had to sleep on fossil stones. Despite this, one of the young people in our group, Julien, described it as the best moment of his pilgrimage: "I was at the end of my rope physically, in terms of everything. We were running out of everything, nothing was going right and it was too hot. But it made me appreciate even more everything I have at home. I was exhausted and excited at the same time, and happy to meet all these people."

Charity was visible all around us, in the sharing of food, water, and smiles, because nothing, not even the greatest disorganisation of 1.5 million people, can keep us away from God's love.

Pastoral Appointments

The Most Reverend Guy Desrochers, C.Ss.R. announces the following pastoral appointments:

- **Reverend Fortunatus RUDAKEMWA** was appointed administrator of St-Jean-Baptiste Parish, Pembroke. This appointment was effective April 28, 2023.
- **Reverend Tim Moyle**, while remaining pastor of Saint Anne Parish, Mattawa, becomes administrator of Paroisse Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin, Astorville, Paroisse Sainte-Bernadette, Bonfield and Sacred Heart Parish, Corbeil.
- **Reverend Réal Ouellette** resigns as administrator of Astorville, Bonfield and Corbeil due to reasons of health. Father Ouellette will be in residence at St. James Parish, Eganville and continue to assist with pastoral ministry in the diocese.
- **Reverend Stephen Helferty** is assigned to spend a year of discernment for the possibility of religious life. Father Helferty does this as a priest in good standing with the Diocese of Pembroke and with the support and blessing of Bishop Desrochers, beginning in October 2023.

Ecclesia



Diocese | Diocèse
of Pembroke | de Pembroke

Ecclesia is published by the Diocese of Pembroke and is distributed free throughout the diocese.

Editor: Heather Coughlin

Editorial Committee: Bishop Guy Desrochers, Yvette Bourque, Jane Carroll, Father Michael Smith, Deacon Adrien Chaput, Father Réal Ouellette, Lucile Tourigny, Pierre-Alain Giffard, Ellie Hrkach, Father Scott Murray

Produced by Pappin Communications: www.pappin.com

Articles, letters and photos are welcome. All items will be considered.

Direct correspondence to Pappin Communications, or call Heather at 613-633-1938, or e-mail heather@pappin.com.

Diaconate ordination

This past June 9th, the Feast of St. Columbkille, saw the ordination of Lukas Časta to the Diaconate.

“It is a strange feeling to have made one of the final steps in my journey to the priesthood, and a significant one at that,” said Deacon Časta. “While it will take some time to get used to, I have no doubt that this is not just where I want to be, but where God wants me to be; I really am excited to see what He has in store for the future. I know that it will not always be easy, but I trust that Christ will always be at my back so long as I strive to do his will day by day. There are no words that can accurately describe what the Lord has done for me, I only hope that in my ministry of service as a Deacon, I can accurately reflect in some way His vast goodness, and show others how much He wants to give them.”

The ordination was held at St. Columbkille’s Cathedral in Pembroke, where family, friends, clergy and other members of the diocesan family gather to bear witness to this most special and holy event. Most Reverend Guy Desrochers, Bishop of the Diocese of Pembroke, was the Mass celebrant.

“Even if your deacon ministry is transitory, the grace given to you on this day is not transitory,” said Bishop Desrochers of Deacon Časta’s elevation to the diaconate during his homily.

“It’s there for the rest of your life. You will remain a Deacon at heart and spirit for the rest of your life. A Deacon receives the ministry of charity and the ministry to proclaim the word of God. In both ministries you must serve faithfully and lovingly the people of God.”

Prior to his ordination, Deacon Časta continued his studies at St. Augustine’s Seminary.

“This past year my classmates and I studied a variety of topics, including Canon Law, the Gospels, the Sacraments, etc.,” said Deacon Časta.

“While our studies varied, they all delved deeper into the mystery of grace in the world, and what that looks like in the concrete forms that have been handed down to us. When we return, the final year will have us focused mostly on practical courses: how to hear confessions, how to celebrate the Mass, etc. Along with that we will have to pass our final comprehensive exams, both on Theology in general and Canon Law in particular.”

Before returning to his studies, Deacon Časta participated in a special program to learn French.

“The month-long program I am entering immerses students in the language and culture of Quebec, so that by the end, students improve not



Diaconate ordination of Lukas Časta

only their knowledge of French, but also the knowledge of Quebec and its people,” explained Deacon Časta.

“Every day involves a mix of classes, workshops, meals with local families, and different gatherings, social events and sports to employ French in number of different settings.”

“At the suggestion of the Bishop, I applied for this program in Trois-Pistoles, QC, and hope that the knowledge and skills I will gain there will be not only a practical tool in my life as a Canadian, but also an aide in my life as a future priest, in order to be available wherever and to whomever.”

He also expressed his gratitude to members of the diocesan clergy who have assisted him in his religious journey.

“The support of the priests of the Diocese, from the pastors who fostered my vocation when I was younger, to all the priests who I have come to know and have supported me and stayed in touch while I am away at the seminary, has been immensely helpful,” said Deacon Časta.

“I am very grateful for all their kindness and generosity to me over the years. I would not have made it this far without them, and their example continually inspires me to emulate them.”

Seminarian Marcus Poisson

Marcus Poisson was born and raised in Scarborough. He recently moved to the Bonfield area, east of North Bay. Since then, he has been a parishioner at Saint Bernadette’s Parish in Bonfield and will be entering St. Peter’s Seminary this fall for the diocese.

Marcus is the youngest of three children, has a diploma in Horticulture, is an arborist by trade, and plays the trumpet.





125th ANNIVERSARY



Diocese | Diocèse
of Pembroke | de Pembroke

Ecclesia: Newsletter of the Diocese of Pembroke
Fall 2023

In Memoriam – Father Roch J. Gagnon, 1930–2023

By Lucile Tourigny

Father Roch J. Gagnon, son of Pierre Gagnon and Germaine Pilon, was born on March 8, 1930, to a family of 14 children in Chiswick, Ontario, in the parish of St-Louis-de-France. He died on March 20, 2023, in North Bay, Ontario.

Father Gagnon began his primary and secondary education in Chiswick, after which he went to Collège Sacré-Cœur in Sudbury to complete his classical studies, and finally to St. Augustine Seminary in Toronto to complete his bachelor's degree in theology.

He was ordained to the priesthood on June 1, 1958, in Chiswick by Bishop William Smith, and began his apostolate as curate in Témiscaming at Ste-Thérèse parish until 1964. He then went to St-Pierre parish in Fort-Coulonge from 1964 to 1971. He returned to Témiscaming for a brief period before being appointed pastor of Ste-Anne parish on Île-du-Grand-Calumet in 1971. In 1974, he became pastor of Ste-Bernadette parish in Bonfield until 1983, when he was appointed pastor of St-Jean-Baptiste parish in Pembroke. He returned to Témiscaming in 1996, but this time as parish priest until his well-deserved retirement in August 2005. His ministry also led him to serve as diocesan chaplain to the “La Croisade” and “La Vie Montante” groups. Even in retirement, he tirelessly continued his ministry as chaplain to the Sisters of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in North Bay.

For recreation, Father Gagnon was a man who loved to go hunting: a ‘sacred’ season for many. His head was always full of projects to improve

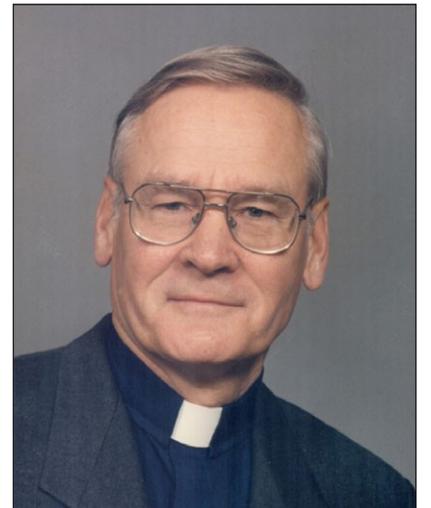
his churches and communities. He made a point of organizing wonderful celebrations for adults and children alike, and encouraged parishioners to take an active part. Each feast was marked in a meaningful way to help people grasp the true liturgical meaning of these gatherings.

Father Gagnon cared deeply about the French language, both spoken and written, and knew how to preserve and protect the community’s French-speaking character. He was an active member of community associations.

During his stay in Pembroke, he became an active member of the “Centre des aînées, aînés francophones de Pembroke,” and a founding member of the “Club Richelieu-Longpré.” Also, in Pembroke, he took the first steps towards establishing the Centre Culturel francophone.

Father Gagnon was a caring shepherd for his flock, always available, even if that meant sometimes leaving something behind to visit a sick person, for example.

Those who knew him will certainly keep him in their prayers, and their memory will always be filled with beautiful memories of his dedication to the diocesan Church.



In Memoriam – Father Joseph Clement Austin Legree, 1930–2023

Reverend Father Joseph Clement Legree, revered parish priest and author, passed away peacefully, fortified by the Sacraments of the Church, on Monday August 28 at the Pembroke Regional Hospital.

Father Legree was ordained to the priesthood on June 3, 1956 at St. Michael’s Church in Douglas. During his 67 years of priestly ministry, Father Legree served as assistant priest in the parishes of Killaloe, Mattawa, Campbell’s Bay, Fort-Coulonge, Renfrew, Whitney, Pembroke, Calabogie, Killaloe, Barry’s Bay and Eganville.

He served as parish priest of Portage-du-Fort, Madawaska, Vinton, Sheenboro, Combermere, Latchford Bridge, Killaloe, Calabogie and, finally, Griffith and Esmonde.

Father Legree’s love for the parishes and people of the Ottawa Valley was evident in his service as diocesan historian. In 1988 he published *Lift Up Your Hearts*, a history of the Diocese of Pembroke.

In return, he was dearly loved by the priests and faithful of the diocese. To Father Stephen Helferty, he was both a friend and a mentor and he noted in the funeral homily that Father Legree had “opened himself up and the precious blood of Christ’s love was poured into his heart and overflowed to those around him.”

In 2018, Susan Dagenais, a frequent contributor to *Ecclesia*, had a unique opportunity to spend time with Father Legree when she penned an article about him for the newsletter.

“Father Joe was a walking encyclopedia. He was a gifted historian. I enjoyed sitting with him and listening to his answers to my many questions. Father Joe always had a wonderful and humorous little

anecdote to add. I’ll always remember his smile and the reverence he had for his calling,” recalls Dagenais.

He spent many years providing opportunities to youth through the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) and considered it “a great achievement getting all the youth together.”

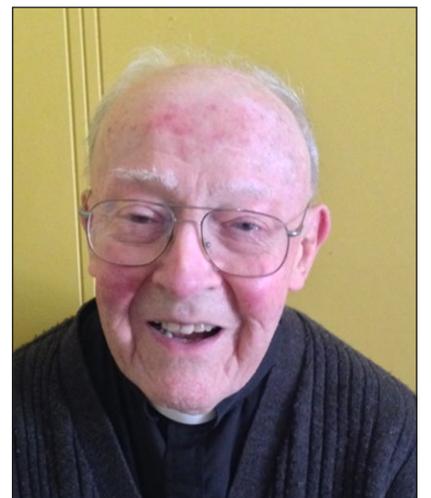
Father Legree also travelled with busloads of pilgrims from Combermere to Le sanctuaire Notre-Dame-du-Cap in Trois-Rivières eight times.

Father Joe visited Martyrs Shrine as a young boy and expressed a desire to revisit. “Let’s go then,” said Frances Dagenais.

“I was proud to travel outside the diocese with Father Joe because he was so genuinely welcomed, and loved by everyone who met him. We also visited Cap de la Madeleine and Ste Anne de Beaupré where once again people were overjoyed to see him.”

Solemn Rite of Reception was held at St. Michael’s Church, Douglas, on Wednesday, August 30 followed by visitation.

The Mass of Christian Burial was offered by the Most Reverend Guy Desrochers, C.Ss.R. at St. Michael’s Church on Thursday, August 31 followed by Interment in the parish cemetery.



In Memoriam – Father Grant Reginald Neville

On July 28th, Father Grant Reginald Neville, in his 55th year of the priesthood, was called to God's kingdom.

For Father Patrick Blake, Father Neville was not just a fellow priest, but a friend and teammate.

Having both grown up on Isabella Street in Pembroke, Father Blake told of when he first met his long-time friend.

“The earliest recollection I have of Father Grant was – I was a little older – was playing ball over at Rotary Park,” said Father Blake.

Not only did the two friends share a passion for athletics, but also their faith in God, both having attended Most Holy Name of Jesus Parish. So strong was it that the two friends from Isabella Street would heed the call to serve God via the priesthood, with Father Neville being ordained on May 24, 1969.

From there, Father Neville would serve at a variety of parishes across the diocese, starting at Our Lady of Mercy in Bancroft, followed by St. John Chrysostom in Arnprior/Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Braeside. He was then assigned to Our Lady of Good Counsel in Deep River/Our Lady of the Snows in Stonecliffe, followed by St. Ann's in Cormac/Our Lady of the Angels in Brudenell. Holy Canadian Martyrs in Combermere/St. Francis of Sales in Latchford Bridge was his next posting, then completing his time as a parish priest, at St. Andrews in Killaloe/Our Lady of the Angels in Brudenell.

As it turned out, Father Neville was appointed to St. John Chrysostom at the same time Father Blake was also serving there.

“I was just assigned there earlier. We were actually there for several years and we had a wonderful time,” said Father Blake.

Like Father Blake, Father Neville was also a member of the Flying Fathers hockey team, playing with the club for 20 years.

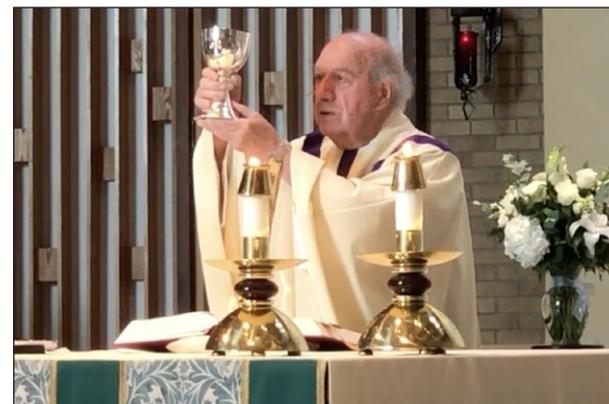
In an interview with *Ecclesia* to mark the 50th anniversary of his ordination, Father Neville told of how lucky he was to have time away from his parish duties to play on the team, which would travel throughout Canada, the United States and Europe:

“We were fortunate at that time because you had two or three priests in the parish at that time. There was always a priest there. So, you could take your day off and go and play hockey and come back that night after travelling probably all night to play hockey. The pastors we were with encouraged us to play sports, and the people really enjoyed seeing priests playing sports and seeing them in a different light.”

But it was serving the faithful at the parishes that Father Neville will be most remembered for.

“It was always a pleasure to work with Father Neville,” said Joanne Murray, a parishioner at St. Andrew's in Killaloe since 1983.

“I worked at St. Andrew's School for 25 years, so on Fridays after school finished, I would come to the church to prepare the bulletin and the Prayers of the Faithful. It always took much longer than I thought as Fr. Neville always sat with me and had a funny story or two to tell, which I enjoyed very much. He had no interest in learning the computer, with the exception of checking the stats for his favourite hockey team!”



At parish suppers, Father Neville would lend a helping hand where it was needed and provide some entertainment.

“During our church suppers, he would help out in any way he could – selling tickets or greeting people – and he always got up to the microphone with the entertainers to sing ‘Green Green Grass of Home’ before the day was out,” said Joanne.

Many of those who were blessed to have worked with Father Neville attended his funeral Mass held at the very same parish of his youth. With the church filled to capacity, it was a glowing testament to the impact he made on so many lives.

“He was a genuine, first-class man,” said Father Blake. “He was loved wherever he served.”

The Rite of Reception at the Church of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, Pembroke, on August 2, followed by visitation. The Mass of Christian Burial was offered at the Church of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, Pembroke, followed by the Rite of Committal in the family plot at St. Columba Cemetery, Pembroke.

In Memoriam – Father Roy Boucher, 1940–2023

Father James Roy Boucher passed away on May 26, 2023, after many years of spiritual service to his community as an Oblate of Mary Immaculate (OMI) priest.

He made his first profession as a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate on September 8, 1959, and was ordained as a priest on December 18, 1965.

Father Boucher worked as vocations director for St. Peter's Province and went on to work with young adults in ministries such as Challenge, Cursillo, and Galilee Proclaims. He also served as Director of Novices at St. Theresa's Novitiate beginning in 1974. During this time, he also founded and led the Galilee Experience in Spiritual Renewal. He was a founder, leader and spiritual guide at the Galilee Centre in Arnprior.

Those who shared memories of him noted their respect and admiration of Fr. Boucher as a man of God, and appreciated his caring, his sense of humour and his wonderful laugh. “He has celebrated many happy occasions with us and has helped us through some tough times as well. He was a great listener, a great laughter, a lover of life, a devoted friend to many.”

Funeral Mass took place on Saturday, June 3, with Interment at St. Theresa's Cemetery to take place at a later date.





125th ANNIVERSARY



Diocese | Diocèse
of Pembroke | de Pembroke

Ecclesia: Newsletter of the Diocese of Pembroke
Fall 2023

End of an Era: The Sisters of Charity honoured for 145 years of service in Mattawa

On Saturday, July 15, 2023, the Paroisse Ste-Anne Parish Event Committee, led by Fr. Tim Moyle, hosted a day of special events to mark 145 years of dedication and service by the Sisters of Charity to the Mattawa community.

The sisters, commonly known as the Grey Nuns in the early years, have been an integral part of the parish and community since 1878. After a long, arduous journey from the motherhouse in Ottawa, three young women of faith began their work healing the sick, teaching the children and attending to the spiritual needs of the people. They worked compassionately and zealously, and soon Mattawa had its first hospital (1885) and first Catholic school (1895). These early years laid the groundwork for more than a century of benevolent work.

Things have come full circle. Three sisters came from Ottawa and now the last three remaining sisters are returning to the motherhouse in Ottawa.

Sister Ginette Duguay arrived in Mattawa in 1996 serving 15 years at the hospital and 27 years at Algonquin Nursing Home with unwavering commitment and dedication. Sister Danielle Garceau came to Mattawa in 2012. She spent 11 years supporting the Mattawa and Area Food Bank and the lunch program at St. Victor Catholic Elementary School. Sister Marie Claire Lefevre took on the administrative role in 2022.

“It is very sad for us to leave,” said Sister Marie Claire. “We knew it was coming, but we did not expect it to be this soon. I have only been here a year, but my term as administrator was for three years. I was hoping that I would have time to become rooted in this community.”

Reverend Fr. Tim Moyle, Pastor of Paroisse Ste-Anne Parish, remarked, “I would never have thought that this day would have come during



Reverend Fr. Tim Moyle, Pastor of Paroisse Ste-Anne Parish, remarked that he was deeply saddened by the departure of Sister Ginette Duguay, Sister Danielle Garceau and Sister Marie Claire Lefevre.

my tenure here as pastor and I am deeply saddened by their departure. I am nevertheless profoundly appreciative of all the graces and benefits our parish has received through their presence down through the years.”

At the afternoon tea hosted by la Fédération des femmes canadiennes françaises, at École secondaire catholique Élisabeth Bruyère, many parishioners dropped by to say farewell and express sincere thanks to the Sisters of Charity for their years of friendship, dedication and loyal service. It was also a time to catch up with some of the sisters who had previously served in Mattawa and who were part of a contingent that had come up from Ottawa to take part in the day’s events.

At 5:00 p.m., the Most Reverend Guy Desrochers Archbishop-Elect of Moncton and Diocesan Administrator of Pembroke, offered the thanksgiving Mass for the Sisters of Charity. During his homily, he remarked, “The

first sisters sowed the seeds of the Gospel with love and good works. These grew with the faith that watered that seed...All the good works you contributed to in education, the hospital and the parish will stay in the hearts of those who live in this community...Goodness is contagious! It is like this for God’s Word. Proclaim it and it becomes contagious.”

The Most Reverend Guy Desrochers also unveiled and blessed a permanent display in Ste-Anne Church honouring all 283 Sisters of Charity who served in the parish over the past 145 years.

After Mass, a large crowd attended a dinner hosted by The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 254.

The Most Reverend Guy Desrochers’ words, “May the sisters stay forever in our hearts and in our history,” summed up the sentiments of the day.

Story and photo credit with thanks to Gerry Therrien





The Journey Remains: The Ongoing Services of the Evangelization Team

By Pierre-Alain Giffard, Director of Pastoral Work

As the evangelization team will mark three years of existence in January 2024, we look back at some of its accomplishments and the services it now offers.

Since its creation, the team has held prayer as the cornerstone of their efforts in promoting evangelization and missionary transformation. This conviction led to the birth of the Blessed Catherine's Star Flowers initiative, now consisting of a community of more than 300 participants devoted to intercessory prayers for the diocese's missionary undertakings. This initiative extends resources, such as booklets and litanies of patron saints, to parishioners, nurturing unity and devotion among its members.

The team has also established a diverse array of both physical and virtual evangelization gatherings, each tailored to specific objectives, thus providing a variety of avenues for spiritual growth. One such avenue is the weekly online evangelization group. This group uses videos to introduce participants to Jesus and engages them in explorations of the Catholic faith. Encouraging attendees to invite friends and acquaintances in need of the love and transformative power of God, the group provides a welcoming and listening space for both curious seekers and steadfast believers.

The Image of God is another type of gathering, drawing men and women from across the diocese to cultivate God's blessings in crucial aspects of life. Participants engage in thought-provoking challenges that empower them to surmount personal hurdles and emerge stronger in their faith. This experience equips individuals to not only uplift their families but also extend their efforts to positively impact their communities.

Committed to enhancing prayer life and fostering a more intimate connection with Jesus, the team organizes "Life in the Spirit" seminars. These seminars provide gatherings for individuals seeking a heightened spiritual experience. Through these sessions, participants are guided on a spiritual journey to deepen their understanding of the Holy Spirit and God's purpose for their lives.

For those seeking a deeper engagement with Scripture, the team offers Diocesan Bible studies. These studies create an enriching environment

where participants can delve into the teachings of the Bible. Through thoughtful discussions, they uncover insightful meanings from sacred texts, allowing for a profound exploration of God's word.

To cater to young adults and their peers, both single and married, the team organizes Theology on Tap gatherings. These gatherings foster a relaxed atmosphere for exploring a wide array of compelling topics related to faith, life, contemporary issues, and morality. Engaging conversations encourage active participation, promoting a deeper comprehension of faith and its relevance in the modern world.

Emphasizing the example of Jesus, the team underscores the importance of incorporating healing and deliverance activities into the Church's outreach efforts. Monthly healing services, accompanied by Eucharistic Adoration, are organized. Additionally, the team actively promotes the Unbound deliverance ministry, assisting those seeking spiritual liberation.

To disseminate knowledge and propel missionary efforts both locally and beyond, the diocesan website features weekly articles on evangelization and parish revitalization. These articles serve as resources for parishes and groups striving to evangelize and make disciples.

Looking ahead, the evangelization team plans to promote small evangelization groups within parishes. Recognizing the undeniable missionary potential of other dioceses embracing the new evangelization, these groups will function as catalysts in guiding unchurched individuals towards Christ and rejuvenating faith communities.

To support this endeavor, the team will provide guidance and a comprehensive guidebook for launching and leading these parish-based groups. Furthermore, in collaboration with the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board, the team will offer Alpha sessions to parents sending their children to Catholic schools.

The evangelization team remains steadfast in its objective to support parishes, movements, schools, and other Catholic groups within the diocese. By encouraging active engagement in the new evangelization, the team embodies the fundamental mission of the Church to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Healing Services with Eucharistic Adoration

By Greg and Mary Doyle

Is there anyone who doesn't need healing, whether physical, spiritual or emotional? Does Jesus still heal? Can we expect to be healed? Should we even ask Jesus to heal us?

The diocese is now offering "Healing Services with Eucharistic Adoration." This allows an opportunity to come directly before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and to ask for healing.

The first two such services were held at Holy Name of Jesus Church in Pembroke (May 9th) and at St. Lawrence O'Toole in Barry's Bay (June 13th) and at the time of writing, a third is planned for St. John Chrysostom in Arnprior (Sept 20th).

Fr. Réal Ouellette led the evenings with inspiring talks based on numerous Scripture passages

and personal experience, while Deacon Adrien Chaput ministered through leading songs of praise and worship.

Fr. Réal explained that Jesus wants first and foremost to heal our hearts, that healing can take time, and it "can be messy." He said that Jesus offers His yoke, which, when shared with Him makes our burden easier to carry. He further explained that as we go forward on the narrow path that leads us to eternal life, it is Christ who lights the path and keeps us from the darkness that surrounds us. "It is my hope," he said, "that as you go home today, you will become, more and more, a light to those around you... an indication towards Jesus, pointing towards Jesus so that people may see Jesus through you."

Following the talks each evening, Fr. Réal exposed the Blessed Sacrament for a time of adoration and silent reflection and then slowly and respectfully processed throughout the congregation carrying Our Lord in the monstrance allowing each person present their own personal encounter with Jesus. This was followed further with an opportunity to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation, Benediction and personal prayer with prayer teams.

Many who attended spoke of a deep sense of gratitude, giving thanks to the great I AM, the divine healer for all they had received.

To find out where the next Healing Service will take place, check out the Diocesan Website's weekly bulletins: <https://pembrokediocese.com/category/bulletin/>



125th ANNIVERSARY



Diocese | Diocèse
of Pembroke | de Pembroke

Ecclesia: Newsletter of the Diocese of Pembroke
Fall 2023

A Letter about Becoming a Catholic

By Paul Kumli

This is a story about my experience in joining the Catholic Church earlier this year through the RCIA program. For over thirty-three years, I have been going to church with my wife Irene (Wren); however, I always saw myself as an observer during the service, not actually participating or being part of the Mass. Irene, on the other hand, was born into a faithful Catholic family and always practised her faith.

Over time, and more recently, I decided to become a Catholic. The opportunity came when we saw the announcements in the church bulletin about the process of becoming Catholic, known as the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA). I talked to Deacon Adrien Chaput, the coordinator and leader of this program, or journey as he called it. I did not really know what to expect, but I had an open mind and was ready to learn.

Irene came with me as my sponsor and support to the meetings, which were held on Tuesday evenings at the St. Columbkille Cathedral. A group of three other people were also there on this journey. Deacon Adrien hosted the session with Sister Marie McArdle who did the readings of the Gospel. Two other people, Dave and Nancy, who took this course previously, came because they enjoyed it and wanted to learn more. The sessions started in October and lasted about eight months for our particular group.

Deacon Adrien was amazing in his talks, his prayers, his videos, and his discussions. Sister Marie read the Gospel each week – actually she read it three times, and each time we grasped a bit more. After the reading, we had a great discussion about it; for instance, what did it mean, what did we get from it, and sometimes, what did we not understand. I soon realized that the Gospel wasn't just another story that happened a long time ago and in a faraway land. This was actually about now. Jesus was not just talking to his disciples and the people around him; He was talking to us, and actually, to me!

During the course, we also had video lessons about the Catholic Faith. One of them was about receiving Holy Communion. This was a difficult matter for me as I was raised in a mainstream Protestant religion where the wine and bread are only symbolic. The RCIA course gave us very good explanations of how the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. Bishop Guy Desrochers also explained it very well in simple terms in one of his homilies at the Cathedral just days before my confirmation.

There were several other people who assisted during our sessions; Lance Patriquin was one of the speakers and he was able to relate to us in so many ways. Father Mitchell Beachey was there a few times; he explained what the Sacrament of Reconciliation was about; I was able to make my first confession with him in a meaningful way.

The main event happened at the Easter Saturday Vigil service at St. Columbkille's Cathedral in Pembroke (known as Cathedral) where Bishop Guy Desrochers presided at the Mass. Everybody in our course was there, including Dave and Nancy. The first part of the evening service was under beautiful candlelight. During the ceremony I was confirmed in the Catholic Church by the Bishop. After Bishop Desrochers said the Eucharistic Prayer, it was time to receive Holy Communion, starting with the newly confirmed members, their sponsors, supporters, and friends. This was a special event for me, to receive the Body of Christ for the first time. It was an emotional experience that touched me a lot.

After the beautiful service, we were invited into the church basement for coffee, tea, and cake. I was touched by so many parishioners taking part and the many who welcomed me into the Church. Of course, Deacon Adrien, Lance, and Bishop Desrochers were there also.

We were thankful for all the preparation and time that Deacon Adrien put into this process. We were very touched by how Deacon Adrien relates to and looks after so many of God's children. He set a good example for all of us. We were also grateful for the guest speakers who helped us, and for the interaction we had with the other members of our group.

The course was good for us; it explained many rituals that may have seemed strange or unusual, especially to people like me who were not Catholic. Maybe more people would be receptive to the Catholic Church if they knew more about this religion.

We found that we still have much to learn, but the RCIA process was an important start, so next season we intend to return. In closing, not only did I learn so much about the Catholic faith, but so did Irene, who was a Catholic all her life. Now Irene and I could better understand the Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes Church (by Fr. Holly and Fr. Coyne). I believe that we have become better people.

Fr. Holly recently said that we are born with faith; it seems that I have taken advantage of it.



Follow us on Facebook

For the most up to date information on events and news in the Diocese, follow us at <https://www.facebook.com/DiocesePembroke>

Development and Peace Caritas Canada

Come be one of Jesus' labourers.

The Pembroke Diocese's Development and Peace (D&P) council gathered at Most Holy Name of Jesus Church in June to celebrate its continued success under the leadership of the outgoing chair, Jean Schlicklin Tyler, and to conduct its second Annual General Meeting (AGM).

The AGM was preceded by a supper sponsored by the D&P Council. Following a delicious meal, the meeting opened with prayer and song, followed by reports of the business of the year. The group was then treated to a talk by Gabrielle Dupuis, a young educator from Saint Paul's University, who spoke of her 15-plus years involved with D&P as a member and now as a member of the National Council. Her talk was passionate and provoked focused dialogue about injustices both at home and abroad and how to attract fellow parishioners, *labourers for the harvest*, to be more involved. It was decided that education was a key component to invite people to further engagement.

Following Gabrielle's talk, the election of officers was conducted by Kiegan Irish, the D&P Regional Coordinator. The Chair position was filled by

Catherine Kerr through acclamation. The outgoing Vice-Chair's, Carmel Rumleskie, position was not claimed. The roles of secretary and treasurer have not changed as Joan Lemay and Deacon Adrien Chaput agreed to remain in those roles respectively.

A sincere thank you is extended to Jean Schlicklin Tyler for her leadership during the first two formation years of The Pembroke Diocese's Development and Peace council and for her desire to remain involved in the council. We would also like to thank Carmel Rumleskie for her willingness to sit as the Vice-Chair for the first formal year of our council. Finally, a thank you is extended to Joan Lemay and Deacon Adrien Chaput for staying in their respective roles and to Catherine Kerr for stepping into the role as Chair. May God continue to bless our work, the work of Development and Peace Caritas Canada and to bless us with more members.

"Then He (Jesus) said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest'" (Matthew 9:37-38).

Come be one of Jesus' labourers.

Caring for one another – helping refugees from Ukraine in our diocese

And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise."

– Luke 3:10-11 ESV

On February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine in an escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian War that began in 2014.

Before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine began, the extended Ukrainian family of Anton and Tetiana lived in the small town of Kalita, 50 kms from Kyiv along the Kyiv-Moscow highway in Belarus.

By March, due to the constant shelling and fear for their children's lives, after consulting with and receiving financial support of Tetiana's aunt, Olga, and her husband Patrick Hynes, they decided to leave their home and come to Canada.

They had to avoid Russian soldiers around Kyiv by taking back roads and traveling through western Ukraine to the border with Hungary. They had to stay in Budapest for some time, then moved to Vienna, Austria, to apply for Canadian visas under the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) Program.

The family left for Canada on May 21, 2022. Their arrival in Montreal coincided with a storm in eastern Ontario and they spent the first two-and-a-half days of quarantine without electricity. After arriving in the Ottawa Valley, they stayed in a cottage on Allumette Island for the duration of their quarantine. Patrick and Olga took an active part in helping the family.

Meanwhile, the Grey Sisters were in touch with Patrick about how to help and support the family from Ukraine settle here. The biggest and most pressing problem and the greatest expense for the family was housing. "The Grey Sisters were happy we could provide a space for the family," shared Sister Mary Buckley.

Kristina (daughter) and Olena (mother) also lived within the area of conflict in the eastern part of their country with bombs and missiles falling, even in the backyard of their home (thankfully the bomb did not explode!).



Ukrainian family back row: Olga Hynes and Anton. Front row: Valentyna (Tetiana's mother), Olga, Danny and Tetiana holding Pauline when they first came to Canada in 2022.

The parish community in Mattawa answered a call to the diocese looking for parishes willing to sponsor families needing to escape the war in their home country.

During Kristina and Olena's stay in Mattawa, the parish community came together to pay for the rental of a house. "The funds were raised by our community through donations and collected by the parish, as well as a contribution from the diocese," shared Father Tim Moyle.

Local businesses hired Kristina as a waitress and Olena as a beautician, so they were able to pay other expenses on their own.

After 11 months, they departed in advance of Olena's husband's arrival in Canada because he had a job offer in the Sudbury area. Kristina went to live with her brother who had emigrated to Toronto to work as a computer programmer.

"It was great to see our community work together to help them 'get their feet on the ground' in Canada," reflected Father Tim.



125th ANNIVERSARY



Diocese | Diocèse
of Pembroke | de Pembroke

Ecclesia: Newsletter of the Diocese of Pembroke
Fall 2023

Parish Profile

St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Vinton

Parishioners of St. Elizabeth of Hungary in Vinton, QC, continue to uphold their devotion to God, a fitting tribute to those who helped establish this church so many years ago.

It was in 1856 that Father Arthur Ouellet arrived in the Vinton area to establish a mission chapel on donated land. Most of the faithful of that time were of Irish descent.

Construction of the chapel was completed in February of 1858 and blessed by Bishop Joseph-Bruno Guigues, the first bishop of the Diocese of Bytown (Ottawa). It was placed under the patronage of St. Elizabeth of Hungary.

It wasn't until 1874 that a permanent priest residence was constructed, an essential development in acquiring a permanent pastor. On July 10, 1875, St. Elizabeth of Hungary was officially declared a parish with Father William Sheehy assigned as the first parish priest.

The next evolution of the parish occurred in 1890 with the construction of a new stone church. This endeavour was led by Father Vincent Ferreri who was assigned to the parish years earlier. Although Father Ferreri had seen to renovating the original church, a new structure was needed.

Tragically, as construction was nearing completion, a fire erupted on Easter Sunday morning in 1896. Despite this, Father Ferreri held Mass at a nearby hall. Parishioners would rise up from this hardship and complete reconstruction by autumn of that same year, with the new church blessed by Bishop Narcisse Zephirin Lorrain, the first bishop of the Diocese of Pembroke.

Father Ferreri would also oversee the building of a high-ceiling rectory in 1908. It was also at this time that an assistant was assigned to him as parish duties were taking a toll on him. In 1914, Father Ferreri passed away into God's embrace.

He was succeeded by Father John Kimpton, who was also assigned to a new mission in Campbell's Bay. Despite this, Father Kimpton would see to construction of a parish hall in Vinton in 1916, then a school in 1923. He would remain there until 1945 when he moved on to devote himself as a full-time educator.

The 1950s would see the addition of a four-room separate school to the parish complex, staffed by the Sisters of St. Joseph from Campbell's Bay. Then in 1962, a new parish hall was built with two floors.

Today, parish members continue to care for their beloved church where they celebrate their devotion to God.

"I have been a member all my life," said parish council member Debbie Frost, who serves on both the finance and cemetery committees.

"I left Vinton at the age of 18 and went to Ottawa. After retiring we moved back to Vinton and became greatly involved in the church. I share responsibility for cleaning the church and I participate as a lector at Sunday Mass."

According to Frost, the rectory needs a new roof and other minor renovations. Parish members recently completed other work at the church.

"In the last year we did a thorough cleaning of the church, painted the trim and a statue of the Blessed Virgin. Further, we took to re-landscaping the grounds in the front of the church and plan on encouraging people to donate perennial plants to establish a community garden," said Frost.



When asked about what makes St. Elizabeth of Hungary special to her, Frost spoke of the serenity that encapsulates the church.

"What makes this church so special is that when you walk through the doors you get a sense of 'Aww' that is very peaceful," said Frost.

She also told of the devotion of parishioners to contribute to Mass celebrations when needed.

"The church holidays are always celebrated with music and decorations to suit the occasion. Although there are less people attending Sunday Mass, anytime you ask a parishioner to help out, they do so with pride and enthusiasm," said Frost.

Members also hold a special annual celebration on the second Sunday in July to honour the deceased members of the parish.

"We recently celebrated Mass in the graveyard as we do each year and there were well over 100 people who came back to Vinton to pray and thank our ancestors. It felt like a family reunion," said Frost.



Family Life and Youth Ministry update

This fall will be a busy one as the gears of family and youth ministry begin to ramp up once again.

New for this fall is the YOU Program for teens. All teens from ages 14 to 19 can attend the sessions which will be held over three Saturdays from 10 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. The dates are October 21, November 18 and December 9. Each youth will receive their own workbook to keep, which covers 10 chapters explaining God's Plan for Life, Love and the Theology of the Body. Who, in their teen years, can explain what LOVE really is? Why God made us male and female? What do love and truth have in common? What is the teaching of the Catholic Church on homosexuality and gender dysphoria? Why is pornography so harmful to society and how to handle this addiction? How does contraception work against God's plan? What is the real meaning of marriage? These questions and many more will be explained in this amazing program that is for ALL youth, even for those not attending church. Every teenager should have the opportunity to participate in this wonderful program to equip them for life. Please consider inviting a friend along with you.

Instructors for this course are Yvette Bourque (Director of Family Life and Youth Ministry Office), Angela Watson (Religion teacher and Chaplaincy

Leader at Bishop Smith Catholic High School), Fr. Scott Murray, Dave Afelskie (Religious Education Coordinator for RCCDSB), and James and Ellie Hrkach (longtime teachers of Theology of the Body and Marriage Preparation teaching couple for the Diocese of Pembroke). All of these instructors taught this amazing course to all Grade 9 students at Bishop Smith Catholic High School and St. Joseph's High School over five years.

The first day only, there will be a **parent session running from 10 until noon and includes lunch.** Fr. Scott Murray and Dave Afelskie will go over the parent booklet that each parent will receive. This booklet highlights all the chapter topics within the program and there will be time for discussion.

For more information contact Yvette Bourque (613) 585 6301 or yvettebourque@pembrokediocese.com. Online registration is available at www.pembrokediocese.com

Other initiatives that continue this year are the monthly presentations for **Theology on Tap** in both Pembroke and Barry's Bay and **Image of God, Men and Women** Sessions at Our Lady of Sorrow Parish in Petawawa. These events are always listed on the diocesan website on the front page under Upcoming Events with dates, times and locations.

Pembroke Diocesan CWL: "Bee" Inspired, Go Make a Difference

By Pat Weller, Communications Chairperson,
Pembroke Diocesan Council of The Catholic
Women's League of Canada

Provincial and National themes help set the tone for Catholic Women's League members as they find a variety of ways to serve in their parishes, communities, and wider society. The Provincial Council's theme, *Go Make a Difference*, sends members into action. The Ontario Provincial President's symbol, the bee, highlights many of the bee's attributes such as gentleness, productivity, and a focus on the work to be done, attributes that members can follow. In combination with the National theme *Catholic and Living It!*, league members recognize that in all that we do, our lives are meant to bring our Catholic faith to the world.

Annual conventions offer the League the opportunity to gather together and celebrate accomplishments. Members of Pembroke Diocese attending the Ontario Provincial Convention in Cornwall in July were inspired by the spiritual programs, various workshops, and year end reports. Guest speaker, Fr. Eugene O'Reilly, C.Ss.R., engaged the delegates with his humour, quick wit, and timely message reminding us of the importance of living in the present, experiencing the joys of staying

CATHOLIC and LIVING IT!

connected with those around us, and how the Beatitudes can be a positive influence in our daily lives. Provincial Spiritual Advisor, Most Rev. Thomas Dowd, Bishop of Sault Ste. Marie, wove a series of homilies based on the daily readings and Gospels. One homily reflected on the image of a yoke and the burden being carried. When the yoke is balanced, the burden is light. For the CWL, when members work together and share the burden, much can be accomplished.

Fall events scheduled by the Diocesan Council include a Day of Reflection on Saturday, September 23, 2023 at Our Lady of Fatima Parish Hall in Renfrew with a focus on Indigenous Spirituality and Catholicism, and the Diocesan Fall meeting on Saturday, October 28, 2023 at Our Lady of Sorrows Parish, Petawawa.

The Catholic Women's League of Canada is adapting to the times by listening to its members, using a variety of both new and traditional methods of communications, and striving to bring a Catholic voice to society through service to its parishes and communities, and advocacy on issues of concern with all levels of government. The three core values of Faith, Service, and Social Justice are the foundation of the league's work under the guidance of our Patroness, Our Lady of Good Counsel.

To find out more on the organization, go to the national website www.cwl.ca or provincial website www.cwl.on.ca, come to a CWL meeting in your parish or a parish nearby, or speak to a CWL member and discover the "Sisterhood" and sense of belonging that is so much a part of the CWL.



125th ANNIVERSARY



Diocese | Diocèse
of Pembroke | de Pembroke

Ecclesia: Newsletter of the Diocese of Pembroke
Fall 2023

What is a Secular Franciscan?

By Len Gignac, St. Bonaventure Secular Franciscan Fraternity, Barry's Bay, Ontario

God's call to Francis

Francis of Assisi heard life-changing words from Jesus in a vision saying: "Francis, go and repair my house, which you can see is falling into ruins." It took some time before he understood the full significance of the message.

Francis was born in 1182 to a rich cloth merchant in Assisi. He grew up believing that he was to become a noble knight. He was a pleasure-loving extroverted young man who attracted other youth to himself. When he was 20 years old, a war broke out between Perugia and Assisi. As one seeking recognition, he valiantly joined the conflict. To his dismay he was captured and imprisoned. When another attempt at chivalry in 1205 ended badly, he began to have self-doubts about his purpose and way of life. This put him at odds with his father who wanted him to be a noble of whom he could be proud. While praying in St. Damiano's Church, which was gravely in need of repair, he had a vision beckoning him to repair the church. When Francis took his father's money to a priest to help reconstruct the church at Damiano, the furious father sought to have the local bishop command his son to return the money. This was a turning point for Francis. In the town square, for all to witness, he took his clothes off and said, "I will give back not only the money but all my clothes too." He was, in fact, renouncing his father and the control his father and material wealth exerted on him.

Dressed as a hermit, he began to beg for food. These were difficult times for him. The Lord was not to abandon him, and so it was on February 24, 1208, at Mass he pondered the words of the Gospel: "Take no gold, nor silver, nor copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff" (Mt 10:9-10). He found great joy and freedom in these words. Now, at last, there was clarity about his mission and purpose. This was how he was to repair the "Lord's house." Since God made Himself poor in Christ, Francis would desire with all his heart to follow Him by embracing evangelical poverty.

Order of Secular Franciscan (OFS) Rule is approved

Francis did not begin his new way of life believing that he was called to have others follow in his footsteps. However, as more and more people were drawn to his zeal and way of life, they gathered around him. He felt unprepared. He realized he needed approval and direction from the Church, specifically the Pope. In 1210, Pope Honorius III approved the Franciscan Order, and eventually, the Friars. Friars Minor Conventual and Capuchins made up the First Order family. Francis established the Second Order when Clare of Assisi wished to follow his way of life much against her noble family's wishes. In the same year, **Francis persuaded the Pope to approve a Rule of Life for anyone who, while remaining in the world, could also live the Franciscan way. Initially these were called Brothers and Sisters of Penance and later the Third Order.**

Francis encouraged them to live a life that wasn't ruled by the material world that could distract them from living the Gospel life.

In 1978, a new rule approved by Pope Paul VI recommended the Third Order title be changed to "Secular Order" to better reflect those individuals who, while 'living in the world' choose to live their lives exemplifying the life of St. Francis. It should be noted that priests and deacons who are not already members of a Religious Order are also free

to profess as Secular Order Franciscans. The last eight centuries have seen not only "ordinary" people, but also popes, bishops, kings, scientists, poets, and painters who chose to belong to the Secular Franciscan Order. Among them, holy men and women like St. Louis IX of France, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, and St Pius X became members.

What is special about the way of the Secular Franciscan?

Living the Franciscan Way or Charism begins with looking deeply at St. Francis as Seraphic Father and modelling the one who identified so profoundly with the poor, crucified Christ. Francis would tell his followers that "love is not loved enough." They were to embody Christian forgiveness, charity and brotherhood. They were to be servants of one another and not lord it over others. He particularly reminded them to frequent the sacraments and show respect to ordained priests. Because Christ willingly endured the shame of the cross for all, his followers should strive to see the folly and emptiness of living only for human respect and even desire to experience the "pure joy" that comes with being deprived of it.

Detachment and the spirit of penance and poverty are guiding principles. On a personal level, it requires choices, such as sacrifice, and self-denial to foster that inner spirit of self-giving, as well as building up and renewing the Body of Christ. Friar, Fr. Fonck suggests that Franciscans ... "don't just put up with nonsense nor endure suffering nor wallow in pity nor get snagged into the gloomy side of life, but rather work as hard as possible to make the experience of 'death' a new resurrection for them" (*Fully Mature with The Fullness of Christ* P.9). In every troublesome situation the ideal is to purposefully make the decision to find positive meaning in all aspects of God's will.

The Secular Franciscan embraces "Lady Poverty" which comes in many forms. A question that often is asked is: "Must I divest myself of all my material possessions to adopt Francis' spirituality?" The answer is no. Rather, it is our attitude to material things that is important. Are we attached to things? Are we self-aware enough to know the difference between needs and wants? Are we ready to entertain the merits of living life more simply?

What about emotional/psychological poverty? Francis's life demonstrates that his emotions did not control his actions – Christian values did. Franciscans are encouraged to be profoundly connected to Christian values, to be self-aware enough to know when the urge to control gets in the way of loving more selflessly. Francis approached each day willing to take responsibility for his life choices, and accepted the consequences while having profound trust that God had his back.

What about ego-like poverty? The Franciscan is encouraged to ask, "Is everything about me?" Francis discovered that life was about loving unconditionally no matter the cost. With eyes fixed on his Savior, he was able to accept the flaws in others without any interference of expectations driven by the ego or false self.

Personal note about being a Secular Franciscan

As Formation Director, and journeying with others, I discovered that "living as Francis lived" is the result of grace received over time spent in prayer and reflection both personally, and within fraternity. It is a commitment. The implication of living the Gospel Life and truly grasping the role of "Lady Poverty" is potentially life-changing. It must take on flesh, as it were, and continue to grow. For example, holding little affection for human respect, as Francis did, is challenging because we instinctively



seek affirmation to safeguard and bolster our self-esteem. It can be very freeing to stop pursuing self-affirmation and worthwhileness and, ultimately, be challenged to “look elsewhere.” Where, then? I am learning that the deepest level of self-regard comes through acceptance of one’s human fragility – the place where we meet the crucified Christ. It is God who affirms in the most authentic way possible. Social recognition is at best fleeting. True acceptance of our poverty shared in Jesus is lasting. St. Francis and St. Clare taught me not to take myself too seriously and to take God at his Word. My wish is to keep moving forward.

Who might be called to be a Secular Franciscan?

A practicing Catholic, 18 years and over, in good standing with the Church who desires to come to know Christ by observing and following St. Francis is welcome to apply to the nearest fraternity. In the Pembroke Diocese, there are two fraternities, St. Bonaventure Fraternity which meets in Barry’s Bay, and St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe which meets in Arnprior. Fraternities are privileged places for members to develop their Franciscan vocation and minister actively in their community. Common prayer, ongoing formation and fellowship provide the spiritual nourishment needed to live the Gospel life. There are approximately 8,000 members of the Secular Franciscan Order across Canada.

The process to discern this life-long commitment unfolds in the following way: A Period of Inquiry, followed by a Period of Candidacy, and lastly formal Profession.

Period of Inquiry

Before applying to the fraternity, the interested individual is encouraged to attend at least three fraternity meetings as a guest to get to know members of the fraternity and learn more about St. Francis. If they so wish, they may apply to the **Period of Inquiry**. The application consists of completing an application form and including two references (one from a Roman Catholic priest). The council of the fraternity to which the applicant is applying will discern whether to admit the applicant.

Individual interviews are very helpful for this process. Once the inquirer is accepted, the Inquiry Period may last between three to six months. This typically involves monthly formation meetings led by the Formation Director and may also include any fraternity member wishing to be present.

Period of Candidacy, Acceptance, and Profession of Vocation

If both the Fraternity council and the applicant discern (after the period of Inquiry) that the latter has a Franciscan vocation, the applicant is formally received, during a paraliturg, into the **Period of Candidacy**. The latter consists of regular monthly formation meetings lasting between 12 to 18 months. Once completed, the applicant who believes they truly have a Franciscan vocation is asked to provide a formal written request to be admitted to **Profession**. Once the council is satisfied that all has been considered to help enable the authenticity of a vocation, the applicant is advised of acceptance. Most often profession takes place during the celebration of Holy Mass to reaffirm that it is a public and ecclesiastical act. There may be situations where an applicant may decide that they believe a ‘temporary profession’ (rather than ‘permanent’) is the best option for them at the time. If so, it must be renewed annually and not exceed three years.

It is with great joy that fraternity members accept new applicants. Both diocesan fraternities are happy to receive inquiries and are eager to welcome those who are considering deepening their relationship with the Lord by strengthening their witness to the Kingdom of God by becoming a Secular Franciscan.

Contacts for follow-up

St. Bonaventure Franciscan Fraternity, Barry’s Bay, contact: 613-281-8545 (Mark)

St Maximilian Maria Kolbe Franciscan Fraternity, Arnprior, contact: 613-832-2267 (Norm)

News from Galilee Centre

On September 6, 2023, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, OMI Lacombe Canada Province leadership announced that Galilee Mission Centre of Arnprior will close in the late spring or early summer of 2024.

Queen’s House Retreat and Renewal Centre in Saskatoon, SK), will also close while a third centre, Star of the North Retreat Centre, St. Albert, AB, will remain open.

A September 7 press release quoted Father Ken Thorson, Provincial, OMI Lacombe Canada:

“I want to express our gratitude to the many, deeply committed people who have contributed to Galilee Centre and Queen’s House over the years for their meaningful commitment to these sacred spaces. I recognize that this is a painful decision for many, and one that has been difficult for our entire council. There are many people who leave legacies that we intend to honour and celebrate, and we are committed to treating staff with the utmost respect as they conclude their work.”

The release shares that the decision was made “in the context of several challenges for retreat house ministries, including declining financial

independence, increasing operating and maintenance costs and diminished regular Oblate presence. The Oblate Provincial Council wishes to thank its community for their understanding, prayers and dedication to the Oblate mission.”

A letter on the Galilee Centre website from David B. Perrin, President, Galilee Centre Board of Directors, and Megan Postin, Executive Director, concurs that it was not an easy decision and that it followed a period of discernment, consideration of the Province’s strategic plan, consultation with key stakeholders, and study of reports from each of three retreat centres.

Until its closure, Galilee Centre will continue to host retreats and activities and will continue to share updates and information with the community as it becomes available.

The letter also notes that, “The time will come to celebrate the unique gift Galilee Centre has been to so many people and to thank all involved in the ministry of this sacred space. Your contribution as a supporter and friend of our retreat Centre has been an invaluable part of this ministry over the years. Be assured of our deep gratitude for your partnership.”



125th ANNIVERSARY



Diocese | Diocèse
of Pembroke | de Pembroke

Saint Profile

St. Peregrine

From sinner to sazzint

The only son born of wealthy parents, Peregrine Laziosi was born in Foli, Italy in 1265. He grew up with a hatred against the Pope and the Church and became a leader to encourage others to rebel with him.

Pope Martin IV tried to bring the people to their senses by closing churches, but when that did not work for him, he chose to send a priest named Phillip Benizi from the Order of Servites (Servants of Mary) as his ambassador to bring peace.

Unfortunately, that was not the case. While speaking to the crowds he was removed from the podium and beaten with clubs and rocks. Peregrine also joined in and delivered a devastating blow to the priest's face. Shortly after this attack Peregrine felt great regret for what he had done and asked for forgiveness from the priest who was badly beaten with bruises on his body and bleeding. The request was freely given with a great smile.

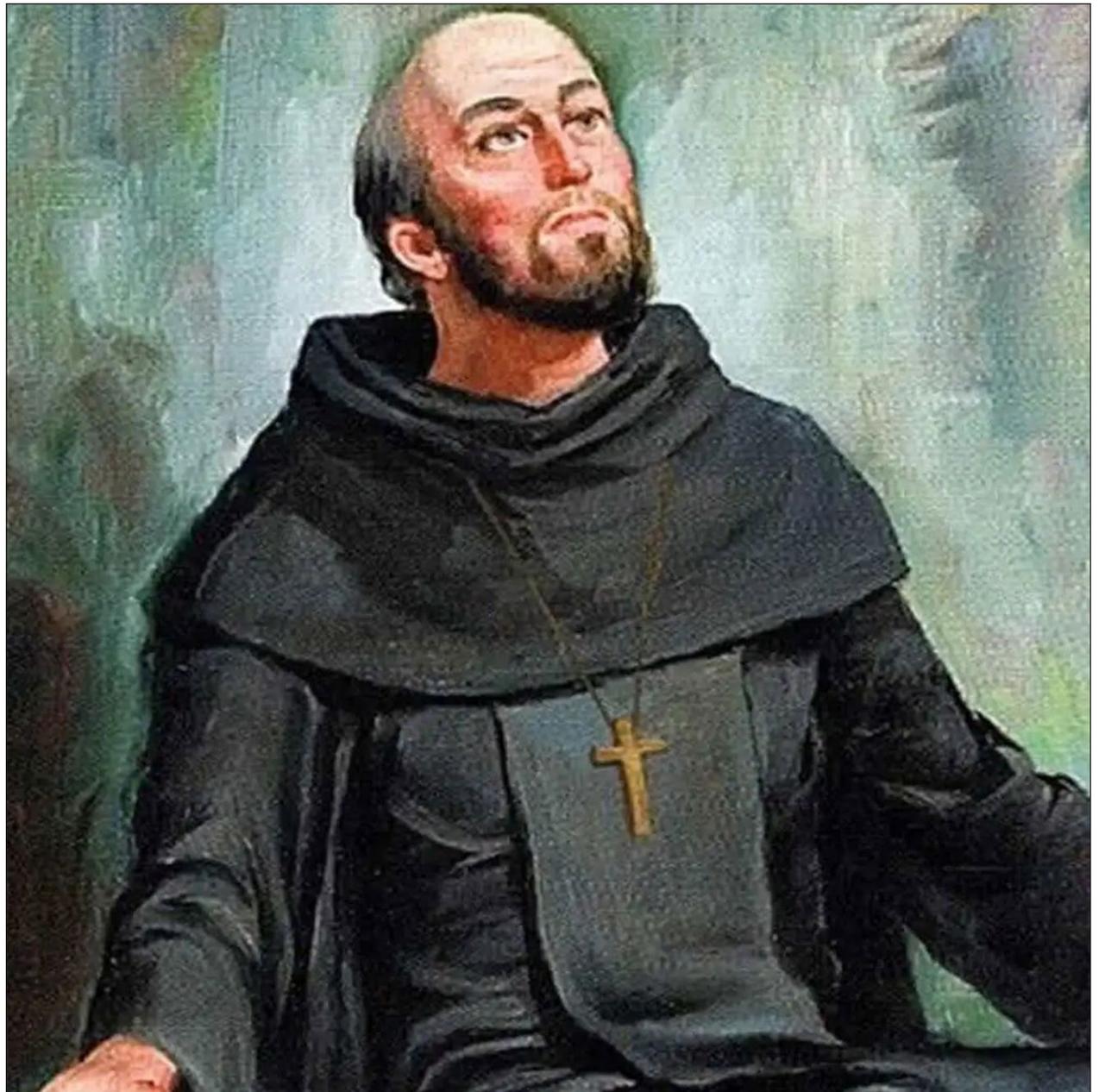
Peregrine became a great defender of the faith and supporter of Phillip Benizi who also became a saint. He followed his advice and often prayed in Our Lady's Chapel in the Cathedral. While there, he had a vision of the Blessed Mother holding in her hands a black habit like one the Servites wore. "Go to Sienna," Mother Mary told astonished Peregrine. There you will find devout men who call themselves my servants. Attach yourself to them."

The Servites welcomed him with open arms and grateful hearts. Phillip Benizi was delighted and clothed him in the religious habit during the ceremonial celebration.

Every day Peregrine worked to draw closer to the Lord and to do the work he was called to, and he treated himself miserably to atone his past transgressions, working hard with the poor and the suffering in his area.

So many of the people took to him and called him the "Angel of Good Counsel" because of his wise advice that he would freely give to help the people.

After serving as priest and founding of a Servite Monastery, one day a cancerous growth appeared on his right foot. The pain from this growth was so extreme that he finally agreed with the surgeon who wanted to amputate.



The evening before his surgery, Peregrine spent hours in prayer and then prepared for a good night's rest. As he dozed off he dreamt that Christ was touching and healing his foot. The excitement of the Lord doing this woke him up, and in the dim moonlight he saw that his foot, that had been carefully bandaged earlier, was completely healed. Praise God!

The people of Forli had been grateful for Peregrine, but now they were more overjoyed than ever of the miraculous cure. When the people were sick, they appealed for his prayers. Many were healed and some were cured when he whispered the name of Jesus in their ears.

Peregrine died on May 1, 1345 at the age of 85, and was made a saint in 1726. He is the Patron Saint of cancer, foot ailments, or incurable diseases.

Let us pray to Saint Peregrine to intercede for us:

V. Keep us, O Lord, as the apple of your eye.

R. In the shadow of your wings protect us.

St. Peregrine, we come to you confidently to implore your aid with God in our necessity. You were converted instantly from a worldly life by the good example of one holy person. You were cured instantaneously of cancer by God's grace and unceasing prayer. In your gracious kindness please ask the Lord to heal us also in body, mind and soul. May we then also imitate you in doing His work with renewed vigor and strength. Amen.



What is the “Kingdom of God”?

By Fr. Michael Smith

*“Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.”*

—Luke 6:20

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [...]”

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

—Matthew 5:3,10

The kingdom of God is “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

—Romans 14:17

“However, my dear friends, it could also be that the kingdom of God whose coming we daily wish for is Christ himself, since it is his coming that we long for. He is our resurrection, since we rise again in him; so too he can be thought of as the kingdom of God because we are to reign in him. And it is good that we pray for God’s kingdom; for though it is a heavenly kingdom, it is also an earthly one.”

—St. Cyprian of Carthage (died A.D. 258),
quoted in the *Liturgy of the Hours*, Vol. II, p. 367

Introduction

If one were asked to summarize in a few words the core of Jesus’ preaching during his public ministry, perhaps the best summary would be his opening message: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (Mt 4:17). (Among Jesus’ contemporaries, ‘heaven’ was frequently used in place of ‘God’, in order to avoid pronouncing God’s name.)

The Greek word for ‘repent’ means: Be transformed in your minds! This involves a change of direction in life, turning away from sin and towards God.

It is not quite so easy, however, to explain the reason for this “transformation of mind:” the Kingdom of heaven (or the Kingdom of God) has come near. What does it mean?

What the Kingdom of God is not

The Kingdom of God is not a fixed point on the globe or in some far-off galaxy, such that one could take an airplane or spaceship to get there. It is not a matter of being in one space in such a way as not to be elsewhere.

Nor is the Kingdom of God a political regime on this earth, as though perfect justice could somehow bring about an earthly paradise. The presence of the Kingdom certainly has ramifications in the political realm, but it is not a kingdom or empire *as we know it*.

The Kingdom is present to the extent that God reigns in us and among us

The word ‘kingdom’ is also sometimes translated as ‘kingship’ or ‘reign’. These alternative renderings help to convey more precisely that we are not talking about a fixed geographical place. A king is someone who rules. To say that God has a kingdom is a way of saying that God is sovereign, that no one or nothing else has supremacy over God.

But is it not true always and everywhere that God is sovereign? Here we enter into the mystery of human freedom. God rules, or has sovereignty, in our lives to the extent that, moved by grace, we allow God to enter in. Once that happens, a transformation gradually takes place. To the extent that we allow God to take charge, other realities – pleasure, power, money, and honour – gradually cease to be idols. Only God is God. The dethroning of these idols is what we pray for when we pray that God’s “will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

The Kingdom of God has not yet come in its fullness

The Gospels, especially the Gospel of Matthew, speak frequently of the coming of Christ at the end of time to inaugurate his kingdom (e.g., Mt. 22:1-14; 24:29-31, and chapter 25 in its entirety). Nothing in our current experience enables us to picture accurately what this will look like. The best we can do is to consider our current experience and negate its incompleteness and imperfection. St. Paul expresses it in this way: “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Cor. 13:12).

The fullness of the Kingdom also involves the renewal of creation. St. Paul writes: “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in the hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience” (Rom. 8:18-25).

Our current experience, though characterized by much truth, goodness, and beauty, is also marred by falsehood, evil, sickness, and death. Also, “we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7). The Trinity dwells within us, but we do not see God face to face; we know God through faith, hope, and love.

In our earthly life, we also live the mystery of the Cross: we live with the limitations and sufferings that are part of this life, and especially the sufferings that come our way because we are followers of Christ. The Cross is the gateway to the fullness of the Kingdom.

The fullness of the Kingdom is a state of being in which God has triumphed over all falsehood, evil, sickness, and death. These will be no more.

“For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you” (Lk 17:21)

Scripture confronts us with a paradox: the Kingdom of God is not of this world, yet the Kingdom of God is among us. The Kingdom is here, and yet it has not yet come in its fullness. How are we to see our way through the paradox?

The quotation from St. Cyprian at the beginning of this article gives us a clue. Instead of thinking of the Kingdom as a place, think of the Kingdom as a Person. The Risen Christ is the Kingdom of God. Where the Risen Christ has been made welcome, God is sovereign. To the extent that we have welcomed the Risen Christ into our lives, the Kingdom is indeed among us. We have not welcomed Christ perfectly, and so, to that extent, the Kingdom is yet to come.

The Second Coming of Christ will be our life and resurrection, the victory over sin and death, perfect justice and love. It will be the fullness of the Kingdom.

continued...



125th ANNIVERSARY



Diocese | Diocèse
of Pembroke | de Pembroke

Ecclesia: Newsletter of the Diocese of Pembroke
Fall 2023

“[I]t is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs” (Mark 10:14)

Jesus adds, “Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” (v.15)

What does it mean to receive the Kingdom as a child?

It certainly does not mean being childish or immature. Rather, Jesus is speaking of certain qualities that we find especially in children: humility of heart and a predisposition to trust. Children know that they are small and that they are dependent on their parents for everything. It takes us years, in some cases, to learn that we are the same with regard to God. Children trust their parents implicitly; their trust is a model for what our trust in God is meant to be.

For Jesus, children are also the prime example of those whom the world holds to be of little account. Jesus has in mind “the little ones,” those whom the world considers to be nobodies. In proclaiming the coming of

the Kingdom, Jesus is proclaiming an imminent reversal of fortunes. The “little ones” have first place in the Kingdom.

To work for the Kingdom on this earth is to build a world where the “little ones” are valued, have a voice, and are able to live with dignity.

Conclusion

On this earth, we are never really at home. Our home is the fullness of the Kingdom. Yet, while we are here, we are called to do what we can, by God’s grace, to make this world a better place by working for greater truth, justice, and love in the world. The Kingdom of God is also among us. To the extent that we have welcomed Christ into our lives, we are children of the Kingdom. The Kingdom buds forth in the world if we welcome it.

For further reading:

Gospel of Matthew, chapter 13

Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 541–556

Pro-Life Internship

Hannah Afelskie

This past summer, my work for the Canadian Centre for Bioethical Reform (CCBR) flew by. For the latter two months of the internship, we were joined by a number of new interns, and we continued our activism on the streets of Toronto, sending out five full vans of interns each day to change peoples’ minds and hearts on abortion.

The Eastern internships’ activism accomplished the following this summer:

- 37 high school “Choice” Chains
- 124 vehicle “Choice” Chains
- 172 regular (street corner) “Choice” Chains
- 2,760 doors knocked
- 280,802 postcards hand-delivered
- 1,357,138 views of abortion victim photography

My summer was highlighted by a number of conversations, but two strike me as being extremely pertinent to the state of abortion in Canada right now. Quite frequently on the streets, I would meet people who were, by default, ‘pro-choice’. Many of them had not given much thought to the debate. However, abortion seemed the compassionate solution to the many difficult circumstances that many women find themselves in while pregnant. I met one man in Toronto who was of this mindset exactly. He simply thought that we must have abortion, especially for those who got pregnant through sexual assault. I asked him the simple question: We know the rapist is guilty and the mother is innocent, but is the child innocent or guilty? His eyes lit up and he exclaimed that he had never thought about it that way before. Immediately, he thanked me and agreed that abortion was always wrong, and he insisted upon giving me a fist bump.

Meanwhile, towards the very end of the summer, we were on the streets of Hamilton talking to people about abortion. At the very end of my ‘Choice Chain,’ I reached out to a young lady and asked her what she thought about abortion. Towards the middle of our conversation, I learned that she was five weeks pregnant and she was going to abort her child. Despite my attempt, I was not able to change her mind and help her realize the humanity and blessing of her child as I was able to help the first girl I talked to in the summer. I’m sharing this experience because it was this conversation that truly made me realize how necessary it is to be active in the pro-life movement and to have these conversations.

Most people are unsure of what they believe about abortion or are pro-life with exception to a few scenarios. This group of people, especially through a good conversation, are likely to change their mind and become more, if not fully, pro-life. Meanwhile, there are others, like this young girl, who are not willing to change their minds at the exact moment you speak to them (and perhaps will never change their minds). However, I was able to show both of these individuals that the pro-life movement cares for them and that the abortion debate is not yet over.

This summer I realized that, ultimately, I am a broken instrument, but, as St. Paul most beautifully states in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” This summer was not about simply checking off that box of contributing to the pro-life movement, but hopefully marks the beginning of my work in it. Some of my friends and I plan



Hannah Afelskie spent the summer as an intern for the Canadian Centre for Bioethical Reform (CCBR) in Toronto.

to continue volunteering for the CCBR this year, and I am very excited for what this new chapter holds.

I want to truly thank the people of the diocese who provided support for me this summer. My experience with CCBR was truly life-changing, and I am excited to continue working in the pro-life movement in whatever capacity the Lord calls me.

Katrina Hamon (4-month internship) and Gianna Baklinski (2-month internship), both from Combermere, and Sophia Holmes (2-month internship), from the Renfrew area, also participated.