



Ecclesia

The Newsletter of the Catholic Diocese of Pembroke

Spring 2025

When There is a Will and Openness, We Can Find a Way to Understand

By Katrina Boguski

The following questions were asked of Bishop Michael Brehl in a telephone interview. In the interest of space, some of the answers have been summarized. Nevertheless, they convey the gist of this particular conversation, which is one of many the bishop has had with members of his flock since he was appointed. His efforts to attend churches in the far reaches of the diocese have been significant, and his openness to dialogue remains strong as he continues to visit the rest of the parishes in the vast territory that comprises the Pembroke Diocese.

Bishop Brehl said that prior to receiving the call to become bishop, he had never been to Pembroke. Amid getting to know the diocese, he has also had to learn more about what it means to be a bishop. To get up to speed on the ins and outs of being a bishop, he attended orientation classes in Rome, along with many other newly appointed shepherds. In one of four Lenten retreats he gave recently, the bishop humorously referred to this training as “Baby Bishop School.”

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Bishop Brehl holding an icon during a Lenten Retreat he gave in Barry's Bay

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Q: What did you learn at “Baby Bishop School?”

A: “It wasn’t so much they were instructing you in practical ways to be a bishop. They wanted you to have an experience of what it is to be part of the College of Bishops. A bishop is ordained into the College of the Apostles. It includes very different cultures and experiences. We are part of something bigger. They are very clear that it is only orientation. It was only nine days. They were very full days.”

270 newly appointed bishops attended the orientation, including a number from Ukraine. The attendees were broken into two groups. One group was from missionary territories and one from places with more established churches. The two groups then came together for three days. Some of the bishops were from areas where there is outright persecution of Christians.

With people from so many different regions, communication was a challenge. There were simultaneous translators but, at times, the process was complicated by the number of languages involved.

“We can always find a way to communicate. When there is a will and when there is openness, we can find a way to understand.”

The time also was a chance to meet with Pope Francis. Despite being the 25th group that he had met with that day, the Holy Father devoted three hours to his meeting with the new bishops. He

opened up the meeting to become a dialogue, and people were free to share any comments.

“God sends us the pope we need in each hour. There have been seven popes in my lifetime, and every one has been the pope we needed at that time.”

What has surprised you most about the people of the Pembroke Diocese?

A: “I was surprised by the poverty in some parts of the diocese. The diocese has pockets of wealth but also pockets of great poverty. There is a tremendous variety in the levels of wealth and median income. The diocese is not homogeneous.”

“Each region is very different; there is a whole different variety of people but, in some ways, people are the same everywhere. I am often surprised by the tremendous welcome, faithfulness, goodness and generosity of the people in this diocese.”

Bishop Brehl also was surprised by the crisis in the number of active priests. He knew this challenge existed, but the urgency of the situation and how it will impact the diocese going forward has really begun to hit home.

Ontario has a growing problem with homelessness; currently an estimated 80,000 people are homeless in our province, including many in Renfrew County. How is the diocese addressing this issue?

A: “Yes, the problem of homelessness is real. I see it in and around the area of the Cathedral every day.

The problem is complex but there is a goodness, which is extraordinary. You see it in people’s willingness to volunteer. In Pembroke, hot meals are served to the homeless. In different areas of the diocese, there are food banks and other forms of assistance. In many places, neighbours are helping each other through difficult and challenging times.”

What are your biggest challenges as a new bishop, and what are your plans to address those issues?

A: “The biggest challenge is finding the way to prioritize what is really important. There are so many demands. The reduced number of priests is a major challenge, and the emptying out of some parishes and communities that have lost younger members is a real challenge. There is an economic crunch in some places, where buildings are in serious need of repairs and there are not the funds to do the work. How we make choices in these difficult situations is a real challenge.

Getting input from the whole diocese on how we address these issues is important. People need to know that they have a say in the future of the diocese.”

My January 14th letter outlines a plan to get the whole diocese involved in addressing the issues.”

Note: The complete text of the letter can be read at the following link: <https://pembrokediocese.com/wp-content/uploads/14January2025.letter.pdf>

Pastoral Appointments

The Most Reverend Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R. announces the following pastoral appointments:

Reverend Kerry Brennan is appointed administrator of St. Michael Parish, Douglas, St. Pius V Parish, Osceola and Sacred Heart Mission, Cobden, while remaining pastor of St. Francis Xavier Parish, Renfrew, and Most Precious Blood Parish, Calabogie. At the same time, Father Brennan is appointed for one year in view of his 75th birthday in 2026, in accordance with Canon 517, as moderator of these parishes entrusted ‘in solidum’, together with Father Michael Coyne. This appointment is effective July 2, 2025.

Reverend Lukas Časta is appointed parochial vicar of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Pembroke, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, LaPasse and Our Lady of Grace Mission, Westmeath. This appointment is effective July 2, 2025.

Reverend Michael Coyne is appointed in accordance with Canon 517 ‘in solidum’ with

Father Kerry Brennan to provide pastoral care to St. Francis Xavier Parish, Renfrew, Most Precious Blood Parish, Calabogie, St. Michael Parish, Douglas, St. Pius V Parish, Osceola, and Sacred Heart Mission, Cobden. This appointment is effective July 2, 2025.

Reverend Dan Kelly concludes his service to the Diocese of Pembroke, effective May 28, 2025. Bishop Brehl thanks Father Kelly for his ministry as administrator of St. John Chrysostom, Arnprior and Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, Braeside.

Reverend William Kenney concludes his appointment as administrator of St. Michael Parish, Douglas, St. Pius V Parish, Osceola, and Sacred Heart Mission, Cobden. Father Kenney will continue to be in residence at St. Francis Xavier Parish in Renfrew and assist Father Brennan and Father Coyne, as well as continue as priest chaplain to Marianhill in Pembroke.

Reverend Robert Ryan is appointed for a temporary period of time as administrator of

St. John Chrysostom Parish, Arnprior, and Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, Braeside. This appointment is effective May 28, 2025.

Reverend Christopher Shalla is appointed to carry out ministry to healthcare centres in Pembroke with residency at Cathedral House. This appointment is effective immediately.

Bishop Brehl confers the office of pastor, effective May 8, 2025, on the following priests assigned as parish administrators in June 2024 during the vacancy of the diocese:

Reverend James Beanish: St Andrew Parish, Killaloe, and Our Lady of the Angels, Brudenell.

Reverend Michael Lund: St. James Parish, Eganville, Our Lady of the Nativity Mission, Pikwakanagan, and St. Ann Parish, Cormac.

Reverend Réal Ouellette: Paroisse St-Jean-Baptiste, Pembroke, Ontario.

Reverend Cyril Okebanama: St. Anne Parish, Mattawa, St-Thomas-d’Aquin Parish, Astorville, Sacred Heart Parish, Corbeil, St. Bernadette Parish, Bonfield.

“He Loved Us” – Remembering Pope Francis in the Pembroke Diocese

By Katrina Boguski

Problems of the modern world are complex, manifold, and messy and Pope Francis did not hesitate to address them. Perhaps if he had stopped at the place of merely addressing these issues, using them as superficial talking points, as ways to signal his virtue and awareness of the zeitgeist, he would have fit in well with many political leaders on the world stage. But he didn't stop at the point of safety and, instead, launched out deeply into often dangerous territory. For that he stood out, being labelled as either a hero or a villain. People often forget that the Pope is not meant to be a political leader. The Pope is a father, shepherd and a servant, and it is for these roles that he is being remembered by many across the diocese of Pembroke.

As the Servant of the Servants of God, Francis set the tone of his ministry early by urging priests to be shepherds who “smell like the sheep.” The sheep, people quickly learned, included many who had left the sheepfold and could not find their way home. Pope Francis went to these sheep where they were.

Fr. John Burchat, pastor of St. Lawrence O'Toole's, Holy Canadian Martyrs and St. Francis de Sales said, “I have often said that I would have loved to share a meal with Pope Francis and engage in wide-ranging conversation with him over a fine Argentinian Malbec red wine! Some believe that Pope Francis was doing the work of the devil by sowing ambiguity, confusion, and heresy. However, I see him as someone who, at times, saw his mission as provoking Catholics to reflect on whether they were worshipping the ways in which they believe rather than

focusing on Jesus Christ and his special love for every person.” The bells of all three churches Burchat serves were rung 88 times each to commemorate the life of Pope Francis who died at 88 years old.

John Morris, who leads a Wednesday night Bible study at St. Lawrence O'Toole's commented on Pope Francis' ability to work and communicate in “...the grey areas of the traditionally understood to try to make the tent larger.” Morris said of Pope Francis, “He was stalwart in his elucidation of environmental care, pastoral care and how we should accompany others through their lives.”

Fr. Dobec praised Pope Francis for his humility and ability to reach out to all saying he was “unafraid to make change and to challenge everyone regardless of the consequences.”

Dr. Hania Fedorowicz, who splits her time between the Pembroke Diocese and Saltzburg, Austria, said she had met Pope Francis three or four times. She said, “Each time, he was mindful, wise, a little humorous and questioning how to make the world better for the weakest and poorest.” She added, “He helped me to see that I, too, can do much more, to look for opportunities to do good close to home and also in a larger context.”

Fedorowicz said Pope Francis' greatest legacy is “his spiritual culture of the heart, about which he wrote in his last encyclical *Dilexit Nos* (*He Loved Us*).” This work, and the treasury of other encyclicals elucidating Church teachings, can be read at vatican.va. Perhaps a good way to honour Pope Francis would be to meditate on



Bishop Brehl and Pope Francis in September 2024

this work, reading it thoughtfully as one would read a last letter from a father who loved his children dearly and knew that Christ did too.

Lord Jesus, you have called Pope Francis to yourself. Thank you for the gift of his papacy. When he was with us, he tirelessly showed the Church your constant mercy toward sinners. Grant him now your mercy and let him rest eternally with you in your Kingdom. Amen.

Correction from the Fall 2024 Ecclesia

The Mashkiwizii Manido Foundation article was written by the Director, Joanne Haskins.

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Editor: Heather Coughlin

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

Our New Pope Leo XIV

On May 8, 2025, the Catholic Church elected a new Supreme Pontiff: Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost, who chose the name Leo XIV. As the first pope from the United States, he represents a groundbreaking figure in the history of the papacy—not only due to his origins but also because of his unique journey to the Chair of Saint Peter.

Origins and Education

Robert Francis Prevost was born on September 14, 1955, in Chicago, Illinois, into a multicultural family. His father, Louis Marius Prevost, was of French and Italian descent, while his mother, Mildred Martínez, had Creole, Haitian, and Spanish roots. This diverse background shaped his broad worldview and deepened his understanding of a global Church.

From a young age, Robert Francis showed a strong interest in faith and spirituality. He completed his secondary education at the minor seminary of the Order of Saint Augustine, graduating in 1973. In 1977, he earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Villanova University near Philadelphia. That same year, he joined the Augustinian order, professed his first vows in 1978, and took solemn vows in 1981. He also earned a theology degree from the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

He speaks English, Spanish, Italian, French, and Portuguese fluently, and can also read German and Latin. These language skills have served him well throughout his ministry across various continents.

Pastoral Work and Ecclesiastical Roles

After his priestly ordination, Prevost spent much of his ministry in Latin America, particularly in Peru. In 2014, he was appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Chiclayo, and in 2015, he became its bishop. His deep commitment to local communities and his ability to engage with diverse cultures earned him significant respect within the Church.

In January 2023, Pope Francis appointed him Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops and President of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, granting him the title of Archbishop-Bishop Emeritus of Chiclayo. He officially assumed this role on April 12, 2023, succeeding Cardinal Marc Ouellet—himself a notable Canadian figure in the Vatican. This appointment underscored Pope Francis' confidence in Prevost's leadership on matters central to the Church's future.

In July 2023, Pope Francis announced that he would make Prevost a cardinal in the consistory



of September 30, 2023. He was given the title Cardinal-Deacon of Santa Monica. On February 6, 2025, he was elevated to Cardinal-Bishop and assigned the suburbicarian diocese of Albano.

Election to the Papacy

On May 8, 2025, during the fourth ballot of the conclave, Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost was elected pope, succeeding Francis. He chose the name Leo XIV in tribute to his papal predecessors and to honour the Church's tradition. His election marked a series of historic firsts: the first pope born in the United States, the first from North America, the first Augustinian pope, and notably, the first in centuries with sub-Saharan African heritage.

In his first public appearance, he wore the traditional red papal stole and the mozzetta—vestments not worn by Pope Francis when he was elected in 2013. He delivered his first address in both Italian and Spanish, and offered the Urbi et Orbi blessing in Latin.

Vision and Pastoral Priorities

In his inaugural homily, Pope Leo XIV spoke candidly about the challenges facing modern faith. He lamented the growing dominance of technology, wealth, and success over spiritual values and called on believers to joyfully witness to their faith in Christ. He also emphasized the critical importance of peace and dialogue in a world marked by division and conflict.

Prayer for the Pope

O God, shepherd and ruler of all the faithful, look favourably on your servant Leo XIV, whom you have set at the head of your Church as her shepherd; grant, we pray, that by word and example he may be of service to those over whom he presides so that, together with the flock entrusted to his care, he may come to everlasting life.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

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The Vatican announced that his inaugural Mass would be held on May 18, 2025. This ceremony will serve as a formal beginning to his papacy and a chance for the new pope to articulate his priorities for the Church more fully.

A Pope of the Present and the Future

Pope Leo XIV is also known for his dynamic presence on social media, using these platforms to communicate directly with the faithful and to share messages of hope and encouragement. His openness to modern tools highlights his desire to make the Church more accessible and engaged with today's realities.

His election has sparked enthusiasm, particularly in Latin America, where he served for many years. In Peru—where he had been bishop—many faithful expressed joy and pride at seeing one of their own rise to the papacy.

Conclusion

Pope Leo XIV represents a new era for the Catholic Church, one marked by diversity, openness, and a willingness to engage with contemporary challenges. His extensive pastoral experience and forward-looking vision make him a spiritual leader grounded in tradition yet open to renewal. As his pontificate begins, Catholics around the world look to him with trust and hope for a future guided by wisdom, compassion, and courage.

Pilgrims of Hope to Converge in Cormac to Celebrate Jubilee

By Katrina Boguski

The annual pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. Ann in Cormac is a long-standing tradition that brings together many people. This year, it will also serve as the diocesan celebration for the Jubilee Year. Bishop Brehl's hope is to see representatives from every parish in the diocese in attendance at the Sunday Mass, which takes place at the end of the pilgrimage.

A statement from the diocese says, "The Diocese of Pembroke has chosen our longstanding and venerable celebration of the Triduum and Pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. Ann in Cormac as our diocesan celebration of the Jubilee Year 2025. Bishop Brehl will preach the three evenings of Triduum at St. Ann's in Cormac, 24, 25, 26 July, at 7:00 p.m. and will culminate with the celebration of Pilgrimage Sunday, 27 July. Please visit www.cormacpilgrimage.com. Parishes and parishioners are invited to plan for participation in Cormac on Sunday, 27 July."

In addition to this event, there will also be plenty of other opportunities throughout the year to receive indulgences granted as part of the Jubilee of Hope. Those who are able to do so may be making a pilgrimage to Rome this year. However, a trip to Pembroke will suffice as a way to receive the same indulgence that would be given as part of a pilgrimage to Rome. "...the graces of this sanctified time have been afforded to any member of the faithful who makes a pilgrimage to our local diocesan Cathedral of St. Columbkille in Pembroke."

Calling Mary "the supreme witness of hope," Pope Francis encouraged increased Marian devotion during this holy year. To aid in this devotion and to further extend the opportunities to gain indulgences throughout this year, other sites around the diocese have been designated as special points of pilgrimage on specific Marian feasts. These include:

- **25 March** – Annunciation of the Lord, Ste Anne, Mattawa
- **13 May** – Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Fatima, Renfrew
- **31 May** – Visitation of Our Lady, Our Lady of Combermere, Madonna House, Combermere
- **9 June** – Mary, Mother of the Church/ Feast of St Columbkille, St Columbkille Cathedral, Pembroke
- **27 July** – Diocesan Jubilee Celebration, Pilgrimage to the Shrine of St Ann, Cormac
- **15 August** – Assumption of the Blessed Mother Holy Well, Mount St Patrick
- **8 September** – Nativity of Our Lady, St. Mary, Quyon
- **7 October** – Our Lady of the Rosary, St Mary, Wilno
- **21 November** – Presentation of the Blessed Virgin, St Alphonsus, Chapeau
- **8 December** – Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Lourdes, Pembroke

More information about these special days can be found in the bulletins of the parishes listed as the dates approach or on the website: pembrokedioocese.com

What is a Jubilee?

By Pierre-Alain Giffard

A Jubilee is a significant event in the Catholic Church, marked by a special year of grace, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The concept of Jubilee has its roots in biblical tradition, particularly in the Old Testament, where it was a time of liberation and restoration. The Church has continued this tradition, celebrating Jubilees as occasions for spiritual renewal and communal joy.

Historically, the first recorded Jubilee was established by Pope Boniface VIII in 1300, which offered "abundant remission and pardon of sins" to those who visited Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome. This inaugural Jubilee set a precedent for future celebrations, emphasizing the themes of penance, conversion, and the grace of God. The Church has since recognized Jubilees as moments to reflect on the mercy of God and the call to repentance, inviting the faithful to engage in acts of charity and spiritual growth.

The Jubilee Year is often described as a "year of the Lord's favor."¹ It is a period when the faithful are encouraged to seek sacramental and extra-sacramental penance, allowing for a deeper experience of God's mercy. The Church traditionally grants indulgences during these years, which are special graces that reduce the temporal punishment due to sin. This practice underscores the connection between the Jubilee and the sacrament of Penance, as both emphasize the importance of forgiveness and the restoration of unity within the Church.²

¹ Tertio Millennio Adveniente II.14

² To the Apostolic Penitentiary (March 13, 1999)

The Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, proclaimed by Pope John Paul II, was particularly significant as it marked the beginning of the new millennium. This Jubilee was characterized by a renewed focus on the Incarnation and Redemption, inviting all believers to embrace the joy of reconciliation and the call to holiness. The Pope expressed a fervent desire for the Jubilee to be a time of unity among Christians, emphasizing the importance of ecumenical cooperation in celebrating this momentous occasion.³

³ Tertio Millennio Adveniente II.16



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In contemporary times, Pope Francis has reiterated the relevance of the Jubilee, especially in light of the challenges faced by society. He has highlighted the need for a Holy Year as a response to the suffering and hopelessness experienced by many⁴. The Jubilee serves as a reminder that God never abandons His people and that His mercy is always available. It is a season of grace that fosters reconciliation, not only among individuals but also within communities and nations.

Each Bull is identified by its initial words. For example, Saint John Paul II proclaimed the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 with the Bull *Incarnationis Mysterium* (The Mystery of the Incarnation), while Pope Francis proclaimed the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy (2015–2016) with the Bull *Misericordiae Vultus* (The face of mercy).

On May 9, 2024, Pope Francis issued the Bull *Spes Non Confundit* (Hope Does Not Disappoint) declaring 2025 as a Jubilee Year. This special year began with the opening of the Holy Door at St. Peter's Basilica on Christmas Eve, 2024, followed by openings at Rome's other major basilicas. Pope

Francis emphasizes "hope" as the central theme, inviting Catholics to renew their faith and participate in acts of mercy and pilgrimage. The Jubilee will conclude with the closing of the Holy Door in early January 2026, symbolizing a renewed commitment to faith and grace.

The Jubilee is also a time for the Church to reflect on its past and seek forgiveness for any wrongs committed. The International Theological Commission has noted that Jubilees have historically been occasions for the Church to acknowledge its faults and to ask for God's pardon.⁵ This aspect of the Jubilee emphasizes the importance of humility and the need for ongoing conversion within the Church.

In summary, a Jubilee is a profound celebration within the Catholic Church that encompasses themes of grace, forgiveness, and reconciliation. It invites the faithful to engage in acts of penance and charity, fostering a deeper relationship with God and with one another. The historical roots of the Jubilee, combined with its contemporary significance, highlight its enduring importance in the life of the Church and its mission to proclaim the mercy of God to all.

4 To members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See (8 January 2024)

5 Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past 1.1

Evangelization as an Act of Compassion

By Pierre-Alain Giffard

“**E**vangelization represents the highest form of compassion one can show to another human being.” This claim may seem exaggerated or difficult to embrace, yet it holds true.

The act of evangelization springs from a deep understanding of the human condition and its inherent longing for meaning, purpose, and transcendence. In today's world, where material prosperity often coexists with spiritual poverty, the Gospel message responds to the profound existential questions that plague humanity. As Saint Augustine famously observed, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in You.” This restlessness manifests in various forms of suffering – emotional, spiritual, and psychological – that cannot be fully addressed by material solutions alone.

When we evangelize, we offer people the ultimate answer to their search for meaning. The Gospel message reveals to each person their incomparable dignity as children of God, created in His image and called to eternal communion with Him. This truth has the power to transform lives, heal wounded hearts, and restore hope to those who have lost their way. In this light, withholding the Gospel message would be a failure of compassion, akin to possessing the cure for a deadly disease but refusing to share it.

The Church's approach to evangelization is holistic, addressing the entire spectrum of human needs. While proclaiming the

saving message of Jesus Christ, the Church simultaneously works to alleviate material poverty, promote justice, and foster human development. This comprehensive approach reflects Jesus' own ministry, where preaching the Kingdom of God was inseparable from healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and showing compassion to the marginalized.

Evangelization also builds community and fosters solidarity among people. Through the sharing of faith, individuals find themselves part of a larger family united in Christ. This sense of belonging addresses the profound human need for connection and community, particularly relevant in our increasingly individualistic society. The Church's small groups and faith communities provide spaces where people can experience genuine fellowship, support, and spiritual growth.

The intellectual dimension of evangelization cannot be overlooked. The Church's intellectual engagement invites individuals to explore their faith more profoundly, providing thoughtful responses to their inquiries about life, suffering, and the search for meaning. Through proper catechesis and biblical instruction, the Church helps people move from mere religious habit to a mature and informed faith.

Perhaps most importantly, evangelization offers the gift of hope. In a world often marked by despair, the Gospel message proclaims that suffering and death do not have the final word. Through Jesus Christ, we have access to God's forgiveness, healing, and transformative love. This message of hope is particularly powerful for

those experiencing personal crises, addiction, broken relationships, or the various forms of modern slavery to sin.

The compassionate nature of evangelization is evident in how it liberates people from false beliefs and destructive behaviors, while offering them the truth that sets them free (John 8:32). It provides a moral compass in a world of relative values and helps people discover their true identity as beloved children of God.

As an act of compassion, evangelization requires sensitivity to the individual's journey and respect for their freedom. It involves meeting people where they are, listening to their stories, and sharing the Gospel in ways that speak to their particular situations. This personalized approach reflects God's own patience and gentleness in drawing people to Himself.

In conclusion, evangelization stands as the supreme act of compassion because it offers humanity what it needs most: salvation in Jesus Christ and the fullness of life that comes from knowing and loving God. While the Church must continue to meet people's material needs and work for justice in society, its primary mission of sharing the Gospel remains the greatest service it can offer to humanity (*Redemptoris Missio* #2). Through evangelization, people receive not just temporary relief but eternal hope, not just material assistance but spiritual transformation, not just human solidarity but divine communion. In this light, reaching out to those who do not know Jesus or do not follow him, truly is the most profound expression of love we can show to our fellow human beings.

Pilgrims of Hope Jubilee Year 2025

Pope Francis declared the year 2025 a jubilee year, which is one of grace and conversion, highlighting prayer, pilgrimage and repentance. The word jubilee comes from the Hebrew word *jobel*, which means ‘rams horn,’ which was used to announce to the people the beginning of the jubilee year. It was with great joy that the word spread throughout the world that Pope Francis requested this be the “Jubilee Year 2025 Pilgrims of Hope.”

In a world where many things are changing every day, Pope Francis wanted “the Church to be reminded that hope does not disappoint or deceive, and nothing can separate us from the love of God.” We are all truly Pilgrims of Hope on this journey, continuing to seek out God’s will for our lives and live out the mission of our baptismal call.

The jubilee logo identifies “four stylized figures, representing all of humanity, coming from the four corners of the earth. They embrace each other to indicate the solidarity and fraternity which should unite all peoples.”

At the front of the logo, the figure is holding onto the cross, which is not only a sign of our faith but also of hope, which can never be abandoned, because we are always in need of hope, especially in our moments of greatest need. We also see in the logo the rough waves under the figures, signifying that life’s voyage doesn’t always go smoothly in calm waters and there is always a greater call for hope. As we know, the trials of daily life and the happenings of the broader world necessitate a greater call for hope. For this reason, we see in the logo that the cross has been stretched out into the shape of an anchor, which is let down into the waves. The




anchor itself has always symbolized an emblem of hope. The anchor of hope refers to the reserve anchor used by vessels involved in emergency operations to stabilize the ship during the storm. In green letters at the bottom of the logo, we read the message ‘Pilgrims of Hope’ marking this very special year.

Pope Francis began the jubilee year with the opening of the Holy Door of St. Peter’s Basilica on Christmas eve December 24, 2024. It will conclude on January 6, 2026, on the Feast of Epiphany. In this jubilee year, the doors of a total of four basilicas are opened: St. Peter’s Basilica, St. John Lateran, St. Mary Major, and St. Paul Outside the Walls. These doors are only opened in jubilee years and remained closed during regular times. Rome is expected to receive 35 million visitors during this jubilee year. Here in our diocese, Bishop Brehl presided over the celebration as per Pope Francis’ request that each Cathedral celebrate this very important jubilee with the Mass on December 29, 2024, on The Feast of the Holy family.

We may ask ourselves where this jubilee year derived from? The answer comes from God’s Holy Word in Leviticus 25 and 27. There, we see that every 50th year was instituted as a time of forgiveness of debt, liberation of slaves and returning of land to its rightful owners. In embracing our Catholic beliefs and traditions, we see the jubilee year as a special year of grace usually celebrated every 25 years, but under special circumstances, the Pope may proclaim an extraordinary jubilee year. In the announcement of this jubilee year, Pope Francis called the Sacrament of Reconciliation “the essential starting-point of any true journey of conversion.”

This jubilee year is of great significance since the last jubilee was in the year 2000. As we know, in the past 25 years, there have been many changes in the world, especially after having experienced the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects. The celebration of this sacred year will have a great influence on all our Catholic communities around the world. During this time, all the faithful are encouraged to partake in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and receive Holy Communion to be strengthened in their faith. We, the faithful, are encouraged to make pilgrimages to designated places in our diocese and to spend time in prayer.

continued on page 8...



THE JUBILEE PRAYER

Father in heaven,
may the faith you have given us
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,
and the flame of charity enkindled
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
reawaken in us the blessed hope
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us
into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.
May those seeds transform from within both
humanity and the whole cosmos
in the sure expectation
of a new heaven and a new earth,
when, with the powers of Evil vanquished,
your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee
reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope,
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.
May that same grace spread
the joy and peace of our Redeemer
throughout the earth.
To you our God, eternally blessed,
be glory and praise for ever.
Amen

Franciscus

... continued from page 7

During this jubilee year, we are also encouraged to do works of mercy, as we know so many people are experiencing many kinds of hardships. As baptized Catholics, we are encouraged to feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, clothe the naked, provide shelter to the homeless, visit the sick and the people in prison, and bury the dead. In doing these great works, we can be that light and hope in our world today.

The faithful can receive so many benefits during this special journey. As Pilgrims of Hope, we can obtain special opportunities to acquire indulgences that are “the remission of temporal punishment for sins that have already been forgiven.” This practice emphasizes the Church’s role in dispensing God’s mercy and encourages the faithful to deepen their relationship with God. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1471 says the doctrine and practice of indulgences in the Church are closely linked to the effects of the Sacrament of Penance.

What is an indulgence? “An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints.”

“An indulgence is partial or plenary accordingly as it removes either part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin.” Indulgences may be applied to the living or the dead. The conditions for receiving an indulgence, beyond

the act of pilgrimage, are: Sacramental Confession within 20 days prior or following the day of pilgrimage, also reception of Holy Communion and a prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father.

In our world of busyness and uncertainty, let us take the time to spend with our Lord and embrace our Catholic Faith, remembering our God is merciful, loving, kind and His mercy is without end. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Let us continue to journey as Pilgrims of Hope, vessels of God’s love and mercy as we pray the prayer for this Holy Year.

The Diocese of Pembroke has chosen our Diocesan Celebration of Jubilee Year 2025 Pilgrimage to be at the Shrine of St. Ann in Cormac. Bishop Brehl will preach the three evenings of Triduum at St. Ann’s in Cormac, July 24, 25, & 26th at 7:00 p.m. and will culminate with the celebration of Pilgrimage Sunday, July 27th. Please visit www.cormacpilgrimage.com. Parishes and parishioners are invited to plan for participation in Cormac on Sunday, July 27, 2025. Also, please check with our weekly diocesan bulletin, the diocesan website and your parish bulletin as they will provide details of the various celebrations with prayer for the chosen locations, with the designated days and times. Please consult www.pembrokediocese.com.

Where is the risen body of Jesus?

By Fr. Michael Smith

“He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.”

– Ephesians 4:10

When I was a young priest-professor teaching at St. Peter’s Seminary in London, Ontario, I made regular visits to a nursing home to chat with Fr. Anthony Durand, who had taught at the seminary from the 1930s until the 1960s. Fr. Durand was a wise old priest. He liked to ask questions in the manner of Socrates, not so much to give answers as to get the other person thinking. One day, he asked me, “Where is the risen body of Jesus?”

After some discussion of the question, Fr. Durand gave his answer: “The risen body of Jesus fills the whole universe.”

This reply has perhaps caught the reader off-guard. Is it not the case that the risen body of Jesus is in heaven, “seated at the right hand of the Father?” Yes, but we have to be careful about what we mean by this. It does not mean that the Risen Jesus is somewhere else but not here.

Our minds are such that when we say, “So-and-so is in heaven,” we think of heaven as a place. That is not entirely false, but, while on earth, we exist in one place in such a way as not to exist in another place at the same time. God is not subject to such limitations. Those of you who remember the old catechism will recall the answer to the question, “Where is God?” The answer is “God is everywhere.”

Jesus is God, the Second Person of the Trinity. He is everywhere in his resurrected life. If the risen body of Jesus is everywhere, this means that he is “here,” wherever “here” might happen to be for you.

One might object: The angel at the tomb on the morning of the Resurrection said to the women, “He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.” (Mt 28:6) Two things can be said about this. First, the ascension of Jesus and the descent of the Holy Spirit had not yet taken place. The significance of this point is alluded to in the Risen Jesus’ words to Mary Magdalene: “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father.” (John 20:17) In the ascension, the sacred humanity of Jesus was united with the Father. So, the Risen Christ is uniquely present in the Blessed Trinity, as well as being present in the Church and, indeed, in the universe.

Secondly, these words were spoken from the tomb, the place of the dead. The Risen Jesus is not in the abode of the dead; he is very much present among us, in the land of the living. He emptied the abode of the dead by his death on the cross.

How is the Risen Jesus present? There are many ways: principally in the Eucharist, in the other Sacraments, in the Word of God proclaimed, in the assembly of the faithful. When the disciples saw the Risen Jesus, they saw him not as a ghost, but as a flesh-and-blood human being. The Risen Jesus manifests himself again today in the faces of human beings, in gestures of kindness and charity, in acts of justice. The Church itself, the entire People of God, is the Mystical Body of Christ. In an invisible way, through sanctifying grace, we are identified with Christ.

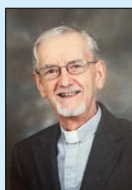
How can we see him? How can we recognize him? Through the eyes of faith. We have two sets of eyes: the eyes of the body and the eyes of faith. Let’s keep our eyes of faith wide open, so that we can recognize him. He fills the whole universe.

Anniversaries

Priests



40 Years – Father John Thomas Fitzpatrick, ordained on December 22, 1985, at St. Anthony Church, Chalk River



60 Years – Monsignor Douglas Bridge, ordained on May 15, 1965, at St. Pierre Church, Fort-Coulonge

Parishes

150 years – St. Mary Parish, Wilno (1875)

150 years – St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish, Vinton (1875)

Jubilarians

In 2025, the following anniversaries will be celebrated:

Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception

Sister Madeline Cooke (80 years)

Sister Irene O'Rourke (70 years)

Sister Marilyn Kelly (70 years)

Sister Catherine Fairbairn (70 years)

Sister Margaret Ann Cuthbert (70 years)

Sisters of St. Joseph

Sister Mary Harold McEachen (75 years)

Sister Teresa Rice (75 years)

Sister Helen Smaggus (70 years)

Sister Mary McGuire (70 years)

Sister Jane Fisher (60 years)

Sister Pauline Coulterman (60 years)



St. Mary's Parish, Wilno – 1875

The following is an excerpt from St. Mary's website:

Wilno is known throughout the world as Canada's First Kashubian Settlement dating back to 1858, and Canada's First Polish Settlement dating back to 1864.

Together the Kashubs and the Polish built a beautiful community. In 1875, they built a chapel and church called St. Stanislaw Kostka Church. On February 2, 1936, the church burned down and our current church, St. Mary's Catholic Church, was built. The cornerstone of St. Mary's was blessed on July 1, 1936. In St. Mary's, two religious icons find their home – a replica statue of Our Lady of Sianowo, Queen of Kashubia/Kaszëbë, and a picture of Our Lady of Czestochowa, Queen of Poland / Polska.

St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish, Vinton, celebrates 150 years

Edited by Fr. Michael Smith

Fr. Thomas G. May (born June 11, 1909, ordained June 10, 1933, died December 25, 1988) was a legendary figure in the Pontiac. He was parish priest of Vinton from the 1950s until his sudden death shortly after Christmas dinner in 1988. I had the privilege of getting to know him when I was in the Pontiac as a young priest, from 1984 to 1986.

St. Elizabeth's Parish was featured in *Ecclesia* only last year. In order to mark this year's anniversary, I have taken a different approach. In 1987 or 1988, Fr. May wrote a booklet, *Anecdotes about Father Ferreri*, containing reminiscences of Fr. Vincenzo (Vincent) Ferreri, an early parish priest in Vinton and another legendary figure. What follows is a series of quotations from the booklet.

Fr. May wrote:

"Father Ferreri arrived in Ottawa in 1881. He stayed with Canon John Sloan, a native of Vinton, for a while and helped him at St. Bridgid's Church. Father Dowdall, the great missionary-minded priest at Eganville, went to see him, as we needed priests in the Ottawa Valley. They decided to have a Solemn High Mass on St. Patrick's Day, and to let the new priest be the celebrant, thinking that he would be a good Italian singer. But on his first attempt to sing, Father Dowdall said: 'Holy God, he can't sing either.' Thus, he became a friend for life of the two older men. Father Dowdall persuaded him to come to Pembroke Diocese, which was still called the Vicariate of Pontiac." (p. 1)

"He fitted right in with the Irish people. He used to say, 'I have Italian blood, but an Irish heart.' He changed the name Harty to Hearty [still a common family name in Vinton – ed.] because they have big hearts." (pp. 1f)

"Father Ferreri searched all around to find stone to build the new church. He found it at the head of Calumet Island at Berry River. He had the stone quarried and piled, ready to be drawn across the river. One Sunday in March, he announced that every team and sleigh must be over there at four o'clock Monday morning, as they had to cross the river on the ice before the breakup. Everybody went good and early, but Father Ferreri was there waiting for them when they arrived.

"He was a tall man, six foot four. Was that why [he] liked high ceilings?



St. Elizabeth rectory, church and graveyard

"In fact, Father Ferreri liked everything big. For example, he had life-sized stuffed animals in the Christmas Crib. There was a stuffed sheep in the basement until 1969. I had put it away in a corner for safe-keeping. A young priest found it, and it frightened him so much that he got a big stick and smashed it up." (pp. 5f)

"Franktown was the original name for this part of Pontiac. It took in the whole area from Bryson to Fort Coulange. The first post office was below where Campbell's Bay is now – about the overpass. Nobody knows why the name was changed to Vinton." (p. 9)

"Father Ferreri never took any holidays from 1882 to 1913. Feeling his age (65) and signs of stomach trouble, he took a trip back to his dear Italy. But now he did not like it. It was so changed from his youthful days, that he cut his visit short. Father Brousseau, the great singer and preacher, was looking after Vinton in his absence. He worried all the way home... 'Will the people have forgotten me? Maybe they will want Father Brousseau for their priest now!' But when he got off the train at Vinton Station, a great roar of welcome greeted him. Every team and buggy in Vinton was there to form a great procession back to the church.

"In May 1914, he went to an Ottawa hospital, and died from a stomach ailment. A glorious life... a glorious death." [He was 66. -ed.]



Church interior



Confirmation circa 1953 with Bishop Smith & Fr. May

Parish Profile

St. Ignatius Martyr Parish in Maynooth – A Good Place to Get Off Your Horse

By Katrina Boguski

Faith on the fringes has always been a central theme in Christianity. It was the fringe of Christ's cloak that the woman with the hemorrhage dared to touch, and it was by her faith that she was healed. The more one visits the small rural parishes on the fringes of our diocese, the more one realizes the strength of the faith that still flourishes there. The Church of St. Ignatius Martyr in Maynooth is one of those places.

In his book on the history of the Pembroke Diocese, Fr. Joseph Legree recognized the isolation experienced by this small flock in their early days of settlement. He wrote, "Being beyond the reach of the first pioneer priests, their faith was wholly left to Divine Providence." That faith was well rewarded.

As Legree explained, "...Maynooth [came] under the direction of the pastor of Brudenell...with the accession of Father James McCormac in 1867. He had Combermere, Maynooth, [and] Bancroft included in his charge. For fifteen years, he made regular and extraordinary trips to Maynooth and vicinity on a spirited black saddle horse."

Today, most people drive through Maynooth on their way to some more exciting destination along Highway 62. Many mistakenly think of the place as a one-horse town. They would be wrong to give it this label. In fact, Maynooth has several horses, and some of them can be seen grazing in the field across the road from the parish parking lot. It is not hard to imagine that McCormac's spirited black saddle horse would be happy they are still there and that McCormac would be grateful the people are too.

While the early Irish settlers and their descendants may have had the constitution to endure life in this isolated place, there was a time when they could not find priests with similar fortitude, and many priests came and went in short succession. Fr. Legree said, "The parish was sorely tried by such goings and comings, but the difficult service that had to be rendered was the cause of so much ill health on the part of the priests who had not the constitution to withstand the hardships."

Eventually, Rev. T.J. Brady was found to be a man who was up to the task, and he served there



for 26 years from 1918 to 1944. Fr. Legree said, "During this time, he endeared himself to all, both Catholics and non-Catholics by his joyful personality, his kindness and his faithfulness to duty."

A spirit of service and ecumenism continues in this community where horses are not the only good neighbours. The area is also home to other Christian churches of different denominations. Services, such as a thrift store and food bank run by these churches are a benefit to many in this parish located in one of Ontario's poorest counties.

As Christians, we should daily ask ourselves not only what we did for the poor but also what the poor did for us. It turns out the poor of St. Ignatius Martyr have done quite a bit for this diocese.

Ordinations from this parish include those of Rev. Stanislaus Flynn and Rev. Adrian Flynn, who were brothers, Rev. Thomas Gerald Buckley and Rev. Paul Hickey. Additionally, Anne Moran, Rita Moran and Lenora Fitzgerald became Sisters of Providence while Anita Buckley and Monica Buckley entered the Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception; Joan Calver joined the Redemptoristines, and Mary Buckley joined the Grey Nuns.

The poor of this parish also brought our diocese the spirit of endurance and the willingness

to start over. In 1976, at a point when many Catholics were abandoning their faith, fire destroyed the church building. The Church community withstood that trial, too. For two years, while the present church was being built, Mass was celebrated in the parish hall. Today, the parish is served by Rev. Malachy Ekezie, S.M.M.M., a priest from Nigeria. Mass times are Sunday 11:00 a.m., Tuesday 10:00 a.m., and Friday 10:00 a.m.

The generous perseverance of these people has taught us that parishes do not die because the Mass schedule changes. Churches do not close because the Mass is offered in a language different than it once was. Communities do not crumble when they need to rely on missionaries once again or when they cooperate with other Christian churches for survival. Things collapse when people are no longer able to bear their suffering together.

There are many people in far wealthier parishes who drive themselves mad fretting about the future of their churches; "Neurosis is always a substitute for legitimate suffering." If you are one of these people, Maynooth would be a good place to get off your horse. There, you will see that real suffering, the sort that comes with poverty and the struggles of daily life lived on the fringes, is the cause for an increase in faith, not for the abandonment of it.

Saint Profile

Saint Monica of Hippo

Among all the great saints today is Saint Monica, also known as Saint Monica of Hippo. Monica was born in 331 A.D. in Tagaste, which is known today as Algeria. At an early age, Monica was married off to a Roman Pagan named Patricius, who was known to have a violent temper, not unlike his mother who lived with them. As both tempers would erupt daily, it made life very difficult for Monica.

Monica's deep faith in God and her prayers disturbed Patricius, but he learned to live with them. The couple were blessed with three children named Augustine, Navigius and Perpetua. Patricius was very controlling and would not let the children be baptized. When Augustine became very ill, he conceded, but once he was better, he revoked his permission once again. Monica never stopped praying and trusting in God and prayed that her husband and mother-in-law would come to Christ. Her prayers were answered a year before Patricius' death, when both had a conversion and came to Christ.

A testament of Monica's dedication to prayer and trust in God was greatly revealed in her devotion. Monica's two children, Perpetua and Navigius, entered religious life after their father's death, but Augustine was very lethargic and rude, so at the age of seventeen, Monica sent him to Carthage for schooling, hoping for a change in his attitude. After a time in Carthage, Augustine became a Manichean, which was a religion that saw the world as light and darkness, and when death occurred, they were removed from the world of matter and were returned to the world of light, which they believed was where light came from. When Augustine shared his views with his mother, it caused a great separation between them that lasted a long time, until she had a vision to reconcile with her son. Monica was so concerned that she decided to see a bishop, who told her that "the child of those tears shall never perish." Monica started her mission to follow Augustine to Rome but later found out he had left for Milan. Monica was determined that her son would convert to Christianity. Saint Ambrose helped her, and Augustine accepted Christ after his seventeen-year opposition. Augustine grew in the faith and later wrote a

book called *Confessions* in which he described his mother Monica's habit of bringing, to certain oratories erected in the memory of the saints, offerings of porridge, bread, water and wine.

In continuing her faith journey, Monica moved to Milan, where Bishop Ambrose told her that wine "might be an occasion of gluttony for those who were already given to drink," so she stopped preparing wine as offerings for the saints. Augustine wrote, "In place of a basket filled with fruits of the earth, she had learned to bring to the oratories of the martyrs a heart full of purer petitions, and to give all that she could to the poor – so that the communion of the Lord's body might be rightly celebrated in those places where, after the example of his passion, the martyrs had been sacrificed and crowned."

In their calling, both Monica and Augustine felt the need to share the Word of God to Africa, but in the Roman city of Civitavecchia, Saint Monica died at age 56, in the year 387. Augustine recorded the words she imparted upon him when she realized death was near. "Son, nothing in this world now affords me delight. I do not know what there is now left for me to do or why I am still here, all my hopes in this world being now fulfilled."

After her death, Monica's testimony of her life travelled quickly, and she was considered a saint by popular acclaim. She was buried at Ostia, and her body was removed during the sixth century to a hidden crypt in the church of Santa Aurea in Ostia, near the tomb of St. Aurea of Ostia. In the 15th century, her body was moved to a church in Pavia, Italy, which was later renamed as the Church of Santa Monica, where her relics are still being venerated. Saint Monica is considered a model of patience, humility, and perseverance, and her life serves as an inspiration for mothers and for all those who seek to deepen their faith in God. She is often invoked for those in need of patience and for those seeking the conversion of loved ones. Saint Monica is the patron saint of homemakers, married women, mothers, abuse victims, alcoholics, and widows. Saint Monica has also been known to have been petitioned for assistance with difficult marriages and difficult children. Saint Monica is appreciated



by many as a model of hope for those whose family members have gone astray. As we honour her today, we contemplate the power of her prayers. As we do, we are reminded that our prayers for our family are also powerful. If you have someone in your family who has gone astray, allow Saint Monica to encourage you and dedicate yourself to praying for them, so that each member of your family will share, one day, the glories of Heaven with you.

*Saint Monica, I need your prayers.
 You know exactly how I'm feeling because you once felt it yourself.
 I'm hurting, hopeless, and in despair.
 I desperately want my child to return to Christ in His Church but I can't do it alone.
 I need God's help.
 Please join me in begging the Lord's powerful grace to flow into my child's life.
 Ask the Lord Jesus to soften their heart, prepare a path for their conversion, and activate the Holy Spirit in their life.
 Amen.*

A Commentary on the Diocese of Pembroke Priests' Retreat

By Father Tanguay

For a number of years, I was chair of the committee that organized the Pembroke Diocese's annual priests' retreat. I have fond memories of fraternal gatherings at La Fraternite sacerdotale near Mont-Tremblant and Le Monastere in Aylmer. It is good to see the tradition living on at Calabogie Peaks.

It was my privilege to offer words of gratitude to this year's retreat director, His Eminence Cardinal Thomas Collins, Archbishop emeritus of Toronto. I can do no better than repeat what I said at our closing lunch:

Your Eminence, Cardinal Thomas Collins, Your Excellency, Bishop Michael Brehl, my brother-priests:

While Socrates was on trial for "impiety and the corruption of youth," he observed: "The unexamined life is not worth living." Cardinal Collins, you have shared with us in these last few days some of what you have learned through observation and reflection and the examination of your own life. From a vast storehouse, enriched through study and wide reading, you have brought to our priests many insights that will accompany our own path in the years to come.

Your contribution is not limited to what you said but also to what you have embodied – a quiet confidence that comes from deep faith in the unfailing providence of God.



Our retreat this year has helped build a new and hope-filled spirit among the priests gathered here. A good part of that, I believe, is due to the presence of one who walks humbly among us, our newly anointed pastor, Bishop Michael Brehl. Pembroke Diocese has been richly blessed.

On behalf of my brother priests and our bishop, thank you, Cardinal Collins. Long may you continue to be a teacher, a mentor, and an observer of the little miracles that happen all around us.

RCIA: A Journey into the Heart of the Catholic Faith in Pembroke

By Stephen Boucher, Renfrew, ON

As an adult convert to Catholicism, I've long been in awe of the beauty and depth of the Catholic tradition.

At the same time, that depth can be intimidating for those who didn't grow up in the Church. Questions swirl, like:

- *When do I kneel at Mass?*
- *When do I stand up?*
- *What is the Novus Ordo?*
- *Why can't I receive Communion?*

That's why I'm so grateful for the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA). It's the Church's pathway for adults—both catechumens (unbaptized) and candidates (baptized in another tradition, like me)—to prepare for full communion with the Church.

The RCIA program is led by Deacon Adrien Chaput and held weekly at St. Columbkille's Cathedral in Pembroke. It's a warm, welcoming space where we ask questions, explore Church teaching, and grow in faith through prayer, Lectio Divina, discussion, and more.

Though I had been reading Catholic books and studying online for some time, my self-study felt overly academic. Reading is good, but our faith is ultimately meant to be *lived*, and RCIA gave me that opportunity.

The program answered many doctrinal questions, but more importantly, it helped bring me more fully into the daily life of the Church. It was a gift to share this experience with fellow prospective converts, lifelong Catholics, and clergy. Each of us came with different stories, struggles,

and victories, yet we all gathered together each week to learn and deepen our relationship with Christ.

A defining moment of this process was the Rite of Acceptance—the first public step in becoming Catholic. No longer was I quietly wrestling with theological questions at home with my nose in a book; this was a visible act of faith, marked by the presence of the Bishop of Pembroke and the support of the parish community.

As the weeks went on, I felt growing anticipation for the Easter Vigil, when I would finally receive the sacraments—make my first Confession, and receive the Eucharist, the "source and summit" of the Christian life. Sharing this anticipation with others on the same walk made it even more special.

What moved me most was that RCIA wasn't just for prospective converts. Many faithful Catholics also attended weekly to support us, grow in their understanding of the Church's teaching, and share in our formation.

I want to thank everyone involved in offering RCIA in Pembroke—especially Deacon Adrien, my sponsor Dave Longpre, Lance Patriquin, Bishop Brehl, and all those who shared this experience with me.

I wholeheartedly recommend RCIA to anyone who wants to grow in their faith. Even if you're just "Catholic-curious," come check it out. RCIA has changed my life, and I look forward to continuing the journey as a full member of the Church.

St. Columbkille, pray for us!

Deacons Retreat 2024 – Pilgrims of Hope – Jubilee Year 2025

By Deacon Dan and Kerry Daley

The deacons and their wives of the Diocese of Pembroke were invited to a three-day retreat held at the Galilee Retreat Centre located in Arnprior. The retreat ran from October 21–23, 2024. Upon arrival at the centre midafternoon, we were greeted by a sign of God's creativity in a show of beauty as the trees above the roadway consisted of a canopy of brilliant red, orange and yellow leaves. This was quite a welcoming sign of things to come. We were blessed to have our newly ordained bishop, Bishop Michael Brehl, as our Retreat Director. The theme was "Pilgrims on a Journey," which tied into the Church's Jubilee 2025 theme of Journey of Hope.

Bishop Michael was an excellent teacher as he led us through the reflection of various scripture readings. He challenged us to put ourselves in the scene that was outlined in the scripture readings and share what we felt or experienced in each of the readings. The bishop was a master at having the attendees share and discuss what we had taken from readings. The participation of all in attendance was very good.

The retreat was well-planned and had a good mix of time together, time for quiet reflection, and time returning as a group to share our thoughts, feelings, and visions from each of our sessions. The facility had lovely, helpful staff and served delicious, nutritious meals in a dining room separate from where we had our sessions. It was nice to have dining tables for four or six people, as it gave us a chance to move about and spend some social time over meals, mixing with different people throughout the retreat. Bishop Michael was especially good at making sure he spent time with each deacon and his wife over mealtimes. He is sincerely interested in the deacons' journeys into their calling and their personal lives, in addition to their diaconate roles.

On the first day, we had one evening session, and the theme was Walking with the Risen Lord Through Prayer and Conversation as we reflected on Luke 24:13-43. The story of the walk to Emmaus and Jesus' appearance to His disciples after the Resurrection was explored. Key takeaways included the fact that the disciples on the road to Emmaus did

not recognize Jesus until He broke bread with them. This teaches us about the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the importance of communal meals in recognizing God's presence. Jesus explained to the disciples the scriptures concerning Himself, showing the importance of understanding and interpreting the scriptures to comprehend God's plan. The disciples immediately returned to Jerusalem to share their experience, emphasizing the joy and necessity of witnessing and sharing one's faith.

On the second day of the retreat, over three sessions, we examined John 20:1-18, 20:19-30, and 21:1-14. The focus was our encounter with the Risen Christ, who is the source of our hope. These passages collectively highlight the transformative power of Jesus's Resurrection. They depict the transition from fear and doubt to faith and mission. Jesus's appearances reassure the disciples, empower them with the Holy Spirit, and commission them for their future work. They also emphasize the personal and communal aspects of encountering the Risen Lord, illustrating that belief in Jesus brings peace, joy, and a renewed purpose.

On the final day, we focused on John 21:15-25 and reflected on Jesus' conversation with Peter. Here, we are reminded that we are commissioned by the Risen Christ to go forward in hope, love and mercy. One of the lessons garnered from this scripture was the love that Jesus had for Peter and the responsibility that he was going to accept. Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him, each time instructing Peter to "feed my sheep." This indicates the link between love for Christ and the responsibility to care for His followers. Peter's threefold confession of love, corresponding to his threefold previous denial, shows Jesus' restoration of Peter and his commissioning as a leader. Jesus hinted at Peter's future and the type of death he would face, teaching us about accepting our personal calling and the sacrifices it may entail.

The retreat was a time of spiritual renewal, where the deacons and their wives were reminded of their roles as believers, witnesses, and caregivers in their faith communities. Bishop Michael's guidance through the scripture readings provided a deepened understanding of the Resurrection, the power of faith, the importance of scriptural literacy, and the call to love and serve others.

It was truly a retreat to remember.



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In Memoriam

Reverend J. Kenneth O'Brien

Priest of the Diocese of Pembroke

1948–2024

Fr. O'Brien passed away peacefully at the Pembroke Regional Hospital, fortified by the Sacraments of the Church on Tuesday, December 3, 2024.

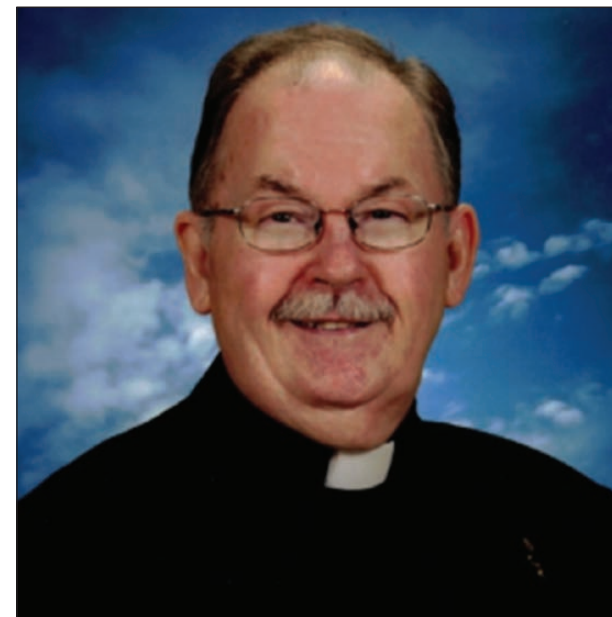
Father O'Brien studied at Resurrection College in Kitchener, Ontario, and at St. Peter's Seminary in London, Ontario.

He was ordained to the Priesthood in St. James the Less Church, Eganville on May 11, 1974. Father O'Brien served as assistant priest in Eganville, Most Holy Name of Jesus Parish, Pembroke, and at the Cathedral of St. Columbkille in Pembroke. Father O'Brien served as pastor of Chalk River, Stonecliffe, Osceola,

Cobden, Combermere, Latchford Bridge, Eganville, Pikwakanagan and Cormac.

In addition to his parish assignments, Father O'Brien ministered as Chaplain to Catholic High in Pembroke, Diocesan Spiritual Advisor of the Catholic Women's League, the Knights of Columbus and with great solicitude as Chaplain and Board Member of Marianhill in Pembroke for over 30 years.

Following retirement from parish ministry in November 2023, Father O'Brien provided pastoral care to the Sisters of St. Joseph and the other residents at Supple's Landing in Pembroke.



Father Steven F. Ballard, J.C.L., P.P.

Priest of the Diocese of Pembroke

June 12, 1963–December 23, 2024

Fr. Ballard passed away peacefully on December 23, 2024, at Hospice Renfrew at the age of 61.

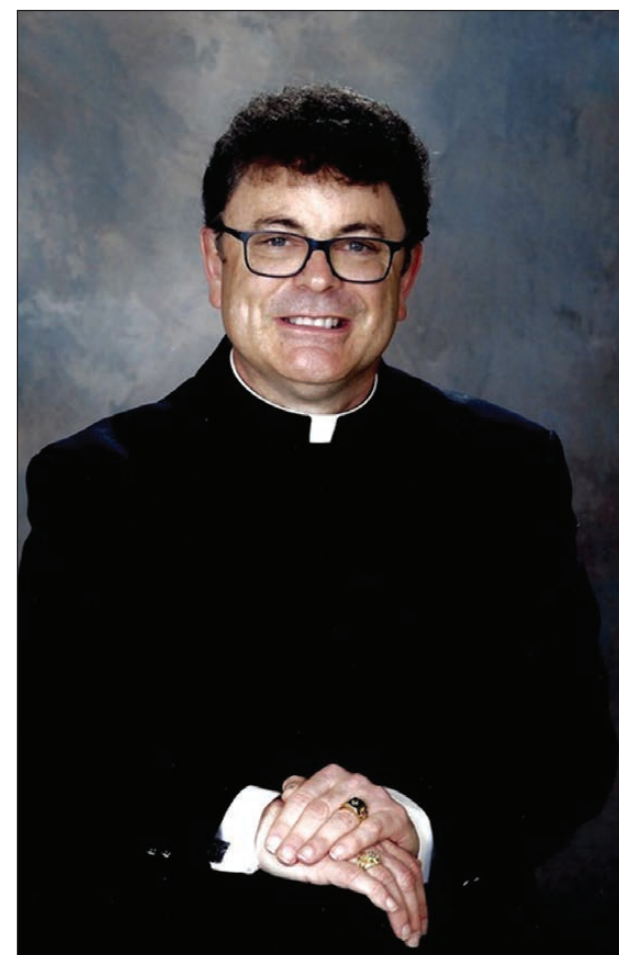
He completed his schooling in Renfrew and entered St. Peter's Seminary, London, Ontario, in September of 1982 at the age of 19 years. He was an intern at Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish, Deep River and the former Our Lady of the Snows Parish, Stonecliffe in 1988–1989, with Fr. Jack Quinn and Fr. Chris Shalla. Fr. Jack Quinn had baptized Fr. Steve as an infant when Fr. Quinn served as an assistant at Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Renfrew.

Bishop J.R. Windle ordained him to the (Transitional) Diaconate in October of 1988 at Our Lady of Good Counsel, Deep River, Ontario. Fr. Steve was ordained to the Ministerial Priesthood by Bishop J.R. Windle, on May 20, 1989, at his home parish of Our Lady of Fatima Church in Renfrew, following the completion of training at the Seminary.

Following ordination, he served briefly at the Church of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, Pembroke, until February 1990, when he was

appointed Parochial Vicar of St. Francis Xavier Parish, Renfrew. He served with Fr. Murray Tardiff from 1990–1997. During this time, Fr. Steve completed further studies at St. Paul University (University of Ottawa) in the field of Canon Law and completed his Civil Masters Degree (M.C.L.) and Ecclesiastical Licentiate (J.C.L.) in Canon Law.

Fr. Steve was appreciated for his humour and caring as he served throughout the diocese as Parish Priest of St. Anthony Parish, Chalk River and Our Lady of the Snows Parish, Stonecliffe, Chancellor and Judicial Vicar for the Diocese of Pembroke, and a member of the College of Consultors, the Presbyterial Council and a Judge for the Ottawa Ecclesiastical Marriage Tribunal – a ministry he loved immensely. He was appointed Parish Priest of the Church of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, Pembroke in 2003 and as Parish Priest of Our Lady of Sorrows Parish, Petawawa, from 2012–2022, followed by service as parish priest of St. John Chrysostom Parish, Arnprior and Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, Braeside.



Lenten Retreat 2025

On Saturday, April 5, a group of more than 90 faithful gathered at St. James the Less Parish in Eganville as part of their Lenten journey. The theme for the adult faith retreat organized by the Diocesan Office of Faith Formation and Leadership Development was “Mercy of Christ,” a day steeped in reflection, prayer, a look into the unfailing mercy of God, and an opportunity to share some time with like-minded people. The retreat was led by Bishop Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R.

The theme, Mercy of God, was chosen by the organizing committee but Bishop Brehl was quick to tell all gathered that it is a favourite topic of his and one he might have chosen himself. It is important to take time to reflect upon God’s Mercy, and Bishop Brehl shared his enthusiasm for this subject with heartfelt passion.

The day began with Mass celebrated by the Bishop, setting a reverent and peaceful tone that would carry throughout the retreat. Deacon Adrien Chaput provided beautiful singing and guitar accompaniment that enhanced the celebration.

In his morning session, Bishop Brehl opened with the Jubilee prayer from the Jubilee of Mercy called by Pope Francis for 2015/2016 and noted that the theme of God’s mercy was prevalent at that time and has been a constant focus of all Popes since then. Reflecting on the words of the most recent popes – Francis, Benedict XVI, St. John Paul II, Paul VI and John XXIII – Bishop Brehl drew on their teachings to illustrate the consistency and power of God’s mercy throughout the Church’s modern history, and pointed to the same truth, that God’s mercy is not earned, but freely given, transformative, and always available to us.

Quoting Pope Francis, he reminded attendees: “I believe that this is a time for mercy. The Church is showing her maternal side, her motherly face, to a humanity that is wounded.” From St. John Paul II’s devotion to Divine Mercy, “The church lives an authentic life when she professes and proclaims mercy-and when she brings the people close to the sources of the Saviour’s mercy,” to Pope Benedict XVI’s view of mercy as the very heart of the Gospel message, “Mercy is the very name of God. May this merciful love also shine on the face of the Church and show itself through the sacraments and in works of charity.” Bishop Brehl wove together a tapestry of papal wisdom, all emphasizing that no one is beyond the reach of God’s love.

Central to the Bishop’s message was the acknowledgment that we are all sinners – a truth that resonated with many in attendance. Yet, rather than leaving it at that, he emphasized the greater truth: that God’s mercy always prevails. God doesn’t wait for us to be perfect but He meets us in our brokenness, and it is through His mercy that we are healed.

The Sacrament of Confession played a key role in the day’s retreat. Bishop Brehl spoke about the importance of seeking God’s forgiveness and mercy through the sacrament of reconciliation. As attendees broke for lunch, Father Lund was available for the sacrament, giving participants the opportunity to experience that mercy firsthand. Many took advantage of the moment to reconcile with God in a spirit of humility and grace.

Confession is where mercy meets the soul, the bishop said. It’s not just about listing sins – it’s about opening our hearts to the healing love of the Father. We sometimes fall into the trap of thinking we have not broken the commandments, we have not murdered anyone or stolen anything and feel perhaps we have no need for regular confession but Bishop Brehl suggested we take a closer look and perhaps consider the sin of pride in our outlook towards our attitude and actions and ask for God’s mercy and forgiveness. We will all fall and there’s no greater freedom than knowing you are forgiven.

Part of his afternoon message invited participants to put themselves into the stories of Jesus. Picture yourself there, as part of the crowd, as Jesus is talking to those gathered at the well, sharing a meal or walking with him. When we remember that He is speaking directly to us, it makes it easier to understand and live the message of mercy. Throughout the day, Bishop Brehl’s message was clear: mercy is not a vague theological concept, but a living reality offered to each of us through the sacraments, especially during Lent.

The retreat concluded with an invitation to carry that message forward – not just for the Lenten season, but into daily life. As one attendee shared, “The bishop’s words reminded me that no matter where I am in my spiritual life, God is always ready to embrace me. His mercy really does endure.”

In our lives that are often so organized and scheduled sometimes the thought of adding another commitment feels inconvenient and overwhelming. We think of all the things we could do in that allotted time or what it might be like to do nothing at all for those few hours. The retreat was another one of those occasions, but the feedback from those in attendance was that this Lenten retreat was absolutely worth the effort it may have taken to attend. The Bishop’s words were simple but powerful. Christ loves us and shows us great mercy. As Pope Francis has said, “Mercy will always be greater than any sin, no one can put a limit on the love of the all-forgiving God.” Bishop Brehl’s message was a welcome reminder that in the heart of God, there is always room for mercy.



Fr. Daniel Janulewicz, a Reminder that Priests are Called to be Transformers

By Katrina Boguski

One gets the impression that Fr. Daniel Janulewicz must have aced his homiletics classes at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. Each week, he gives homilies in both English and Polish; and his delivery style varies depending on the makeup of the congregation and the language he is using. Like Christ's style of teaching, Fr. Daniel's homilies draw on things of everyday life to get the point across.

Born in Toronto to parents from Poland, Fr. Daniel is fluent in both languages and serves as a linchpin uniting several distinct groups in the parishes of St. Mary's in Wilno and St. Casimir's in Round Lake. These parishes have been home to several waves of immigrants who speak Kashubian, Polish and English. His ability to navigate the different needs of these people shows not only his linguistic talent but also his pastoral concern for the sheep of his flock(s).

The day *Ecclesia* showed up to get a photo of Fr. Daniel, he was very busy with a serious pastoral duty. The priest's dedication to this task was so inspired and genuine that it is worthy of note. The task? Discussing in great detail the

Transformer toy brought to Mass by one of his young parishioners. The young parishioner was met after Mass with the same respect and attention that would have been given to the Polish dignitaries who sometimes attend St. Mary's. Bending down to hear the boy's discussion of the toy, Fr. Daniel met the child at his level; it is his ability to meet so many at their level that makes him a transformative presence.

Ordained in 2013, his understanding of technology, video games, and even Transformers helps him to connect with the youth; and St. Mary's has grown a thriving youth group. He keeps his missionary zeal alive through prayer and spiritual reading, and his enthusiasm for his priestly vocation is a powerful example to people of all ages.

When asked why he was drawn to the O.M.I.s Fr. Daniel said, "I first entered the Oblates because I attended the Oblate parish in Ottawa, St. Hyacinth's. So, when I was discerning religious life, I spoke about it with my pastor at the time, and he invited me to consider applying to the Oblates. Once I was in formation, I got to learn more about the Oblates and their founder, St. Eugene de Mazenod. I enjoyed the fraternity of community life, and the many wonderful



Fr. Daniel discussing Transformers and other matters with parishioner Austin Luckovitch. Austin's sister Isabelle looks on and their brother Jacob is in the background.

Oblates that I met along my journey helped shape my decision to join this community."

Winter driving can be precarious for the priest serving two rural parishes. However, he still makes time once a month to see the elderly and sick who are homebound, to visit with them and bring them Holy Communion. Fr. Daniel also is generous with the time he devotes to hearing confessions, offering penitents the transformative power of this sacrament.

Fr. Michal Pajak, O.M.I. Bringing the Good News to All People

By Katrina Boguski

Born in Turek, a city in the centre of Poland, Fr. Michal Pajak is now the Parish Administrator at St. Hedwig's in Barry's Bay. His missionary zeal, attention to detail, and enthusiasm for his priestly vocation are immediately evident.

Since arriving in September, Fr. Michal has been offering his parishioners a detailed explanation of the Mass. At least once a week, he preaches a substantial sermon on specific details of the Mass. These sermons, which now number over two dozen, provide instruction on the historical, theological, biblical, and cultural influences that have shaped the Mass. His references, which range from the Church Fathers to the documents of Vatican II, indicate not only his scholarly research abilities but also his firm grasp of the English language. Most importantly, these sermons reveal his profound love of the Mass.

Fr. Michal began attending a minor seminary run by Oblates of Mary Immaculate at the age of 15. Fr. Michal said, "After finishing school, I started my novitiate in Swiety Krzyz in 1997. This is the oldest shrine in Poland, founded in

the XI century by Benedictine Monks. After the First World War, Oblates of Mary Immaculate took over the place and renovated it." In English, "Swiety Krzyz" translates to "Holy Cross." He explained that "The place possesses the relics of the Holy Cross." He added, "After the Second World War, the monastery became the novitiate for young people who wanted to become Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate."

After one year at Swiety Krzyz, Fr. Michal began attending the major seminary in Odra, a village located in the western part of Poland in the Archdiocese of Poznan; he was ordained in 2004. Fr. Michal's first assignment was to St. Eugene de Mazenod Parish in Kedzierzyn-Kozle, located in a region of Poland known as Silesia. In 2006, he came to Canada and served at St. Maximilian Parish in Mississauga.

This initial Canadian assignment was a fitting one for the young priest. St. Maximilian and Fr. Michal grew up in the same place. Fr. Michal said, "St. Maximilian Kolbe is my favorite saint. He grew up in my diocese... [and he] offered his life for another prisoner in the concentration camp in Oswiecim [Auschwitz]. He had a great devotion to Mary."



Fr. Michal Pajak O.M.I. in the sacristy of St. Hedwig's Church in Barry's Bay.

Fr. Michal was also inspired by another modern-day missionary, the French Oblate, Fr. Roger Bullard. Bullard was an O.M.I. who served in Northern Canada in the area that now makes up the Diocese of Churchill-Hudson Bay. When he was 14 years old, Fr. Michal read a book written by Bullard. The story of his life and missionary work was an inspiration. Fr. Michal said, "I wanted to be like him, bringing the Good News to all people."

International priests

Missionary Priest reminds us of the Importance of Mary and Devotion to the Eucharist in Priestly Formation

By Katrina Boguski

Father Moses Nwosu, pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Deep River and St. Anthony's in Chalk River, comes from the Igbo tribe in the Eastern part of Nigeria. The Igbo people are one of the three major tribes in Nigeria and form one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa. In addition to English, he speaks Pidgin English and the Igbo language.

Fr. Moses first came to Canada on January 22, 2005; and his original assignment was as a missionary in the Diocese of Thunder Bay. He served as a pastor at St. Francis Xavier in Balmertown and was also at St. Theresa's Church in North Spirit Lake. Father also has served at several other parishes including St Ignatius Parish, St. Martin of Tour, St. Michael's in Douglas, and Holy Name Parish before moving to his present assignments.

His seminary training helped prepare him for his missionary work in Canada. He said, "My seminary formation was in Nigeria at St. Joseph Major Seminary, Ikot Ekpene, in Akwa-Ibom State, Nigeria. Eight years for both philosophy and Theology, and one year for pastoral internship." He added, "This does not include an earlier formation period in the religious house."

The website of Fr. Moses's alma mater depicts a thriving seminary full of many young men who

have answered the call to the priesthood. Their mission statement gives some key to the type of formation Fr. Moses and his fellow missionary priests received there. It says, "The seminary's singular aim is to assist young men [to] imbibe the mind of Jesus Christ and acquire virtues that are relevant to the priestly ministry and the salvation of souls. To acquire the knowledge of salvation is the summary of her mission. These virtues or aptitudes are human, spiritual, cultural, social, and intellectual in nature since seminary formation is designed to develop a total man whose services will be relevant to the church and society at large. The four pillars of seminary formation are the guidelines: Human, pastoral, intellectual and spiritual."

Although it wasn't his original intention to join the Sons of Mary Mother of Mercy congregation, (SMMM), Fr. Moses eventually did so with the help of his then parish priest. He made the decision to be a priest in 1989 and decided to be a religious priest, specifically the following year. Fr. Moses said that his late father also played a significant role in his priestly vocation. He said, "He encouraged and supported me a lot." Fr. Moses said, "I held him so dear[ly] for that."

When asked who his favourite saint is, Fr. Moses replied, "St. Michael the Archangel is my favourite saint. His role to secure the dead



body of Moses as recorded in the letter of St. Jude inspired me to choose him to be my patron saint in the religious life." He added "[Moses]...is my chosen name in the religious life."

When asked about what he enjoys most about being a priest, he replied, "Serving at the Altar of the Most High God every day is what I enjoy most. Each time I remember that it is not by my merit but a privilege, I humble myself." For young men aspiring to become priests, Fr. Moses said, "My advice to them is to pray, to always have devotion to our Blessed Virgin Mary, and to never disconnect from the Holy Eucharist."

Northern Ontario Youth Conference 2025

By Yvette Bourque

Once again, in the very early morning hours on February 22, dedicated parents and youth crawled out of bed to set off in car pools for North Bay. That is where the Northern Ontario Youth Conference is held each year, organized by the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie and hosted by Fr. Daniele Muscolino at St. Joseph-Scollard Hall, along with his youth ministry team.

About 26 youth from the Diocese of Pembroke attended this event, along with many others from the area and beyond. The theme this year was "AWAKEN: LIVE FOR MORE," and the highlight was, of course, international speaker, singer, beatboxer, and social media icon Paul J. Kim. Paul is a regular on the speaking roster at the University of Steubenville, Ohio, youth conferences, and we were blessed to have him only a couple hours down the road. The comedic antics he expresses give one the impression that



he should be on a comedy show and, yet, in the next breath, he can have you deeply reflecting on your own actions and the meaning of your existence. A very talented speaker, for sure! Many of the youth who attended said, "this year was the best one yet!" I have to agree.

Many thanks to the parents who drove their own children and several others to the event. The memories, experiences, and friendships that are being made will be there for a very long time.

When God closes a door, He opens a Window – How Our Lady Does Battle

By Katrina Boguski

The road that leads to the Nativity of Our Lady Mission in Pikwakanagan is a rough one.

Nevertheless, the number of cars in the church's parking lot is proof that many are still willing to take this difficult road to attend Mass in a humble church with some utterly amazing windows.

The windows are moving, literally and metaphorically. Not only do the large, hinged windows move physically, opening to the outdoors, they are also moving in an emotional sense. They evoke a feeling of serenity and strength that stands in stark contrast to the difficult world outside.

Translucent glass surrounding each of the figures depicted in the windows does not entirely block out that exterior world and the pain that still exists there. It instead sheds natural light and adds dimension to the figures in a way that more traditional church windows cannot do.

The images include those of Christ the King, the Virgin Mary, and St. Kateri. Though made of glass and beadwork, they appear strong and approachable. They seem to float, surrounding the church in a protective and loving way. They look as though they are dancing in a circle around the people.

The first thing you may notice is that the faces of the saints are intentionally left blank, according to Algonquin tradition. Viewers are invited to use their own imaginations to fill in the features. Only our creator can complete us and our world, and these windows show how much room he leaves for us to participate in that process.

One of the windows shows Mary with St. Ann. Mary holds a toy cradle board symbolic of the Christ Child, and she is stepping on a snake. What is unusual about the use of this familiar



Window dedicated to the Nativity of Mary. St. Ann is with Mary who holds a toy cradle board, symbolic of the Christ Child. Mary subdues the snake gently with her moccasin-covered foot.

Marian motif is how softly her moccasin covered foot is placed. Her grace is sufficient to subdue the snake gently without the need for excessive force. As Sun Tzu said, "The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting."

Viewing the windows during Sunday Mass was made the more powerful when the choir, filled with the voices of the Leahy family, began singing a hymn in the Algonquin language. The name Leahy is the Anglicized version of the Gaelic name Ó Laochdha, meaning "warrior", or "descendants of warriors." The significance of their presence there should not be lost on us.

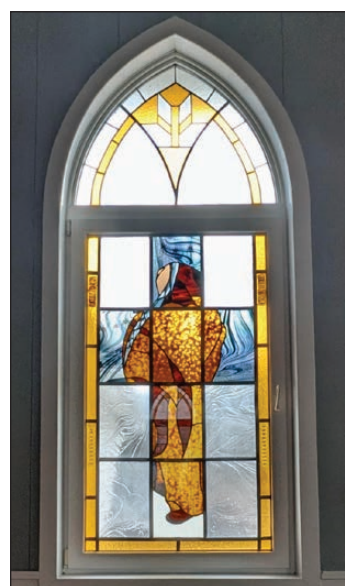
Poverty, displacement, oppression, loss of language, battles with addiction, and unjust



Xavier, Savannah, Julayna and Aliyah Leahy, who sing in the choir at the Nativity of Our Lady Mission. They are standing at one of the windows in the church designed using Algonquin imagery.

government forces were fights the Irish faced as part of their own colonial experience. As such, we descendants of the Irish perhaps have a unique call to stand with First Nations, who are still up against one or more of these same forces. As Catholics we have an obligation to kneel with them too, imploring Mary to subdue these powers gently and in her own way.

Art is a powerful weapon. Used wisely, it can change the world. The names of those who helped create the windows can be read on plaques around the church. The windows were blessed in the 1980s and 1990s, but many local people are still unaware of their existence. It's time that changed.



Companions of the Cross, 40 years of Transforming Anxiety into Excitement

By Katrina Boguski

In the Book of Genesis, we read about the Spirit of God moving over the face of the waters; a few verses later, He establishes a firmament in the midst of waters to separate the waters above from the waters below. This imagery might well be used as a metaphor for how God influenced the life of Fr. Bob Bedard and the community of priests that he founded. The Companions of the Cross are celebrating their 40th anniversary this year, and they remain close to the Spirit of God, which still hovers over the waters He created. That same Spirit also demands that these priests have a firm foundation rooted in Church teaching. Their formation is established on four pillars, which are magisterial, Eucharistic, Marian and charismatic.

It is no accident that the Companions' formation house, Assumption Farm, is located in Combermere, very close to Madonna House. While determining what God was calling him to do next, Fr. Bedard spent much time at Madonna House working out his plans and discerning God's. This discernment continues with the next generation of priests who now lead and shape the Companions' future.

During a two-hour interview with Fr. David Bergeron, the team-leader for the first-year seminarians, it became clear not only that the Spirit still moves in this community but also that the need to provide priests with a firm foundation remains crucial to their success.

In their first year of formation, applicants live at Assumption Farm. They follow a schedule that cultivates human, spiritual, and community formation. During this time, seminarians learn more about themselves and the community they are joining. The farm acts as a sort of firmament separating the interior space of each seminarian from the exterior world and its many influences. With this firmament established and a daily rhythm in place, each seminarian can better discern how God is acting in his life personally, whether the call to the priesthood is genuine and if so, how that call is best answered.

Much time is spent in the community's chapel, an integral part of the formation house. The ambiance of the chapel is influenced by the very large collection of relics it contains and by the artwork that bears the imprint of the local Catholic community. The relics, drawn in from the Church at large, are a reminder that these men will be called to serve the Church universal; the presence of local art is a reminder that this service will be shaped by the varying needs of parishes in different locations.

Currently, besides our own diocese, the Companions serve in places like Ottawa, Toronto, and Texas; the probability of their expansion into other places grows greater with each new ordination, or at least with every four new ordinations. An important part of the Companions' success is rooted in how they care for each other. Priests always live in groups of at least four and, as a result, they are able to thrive as a community and maintain their unique charism wherever they go.

A quotation from Bob Bedard explains just how expansive his vision was. He said, "I love the Church. I call it the 'sleeping giant.'" Once we begin to rediscover what it means to evangelize and to undertake a large-scale revival of this ministry, I see the Church waking up and coming explosively alive to the point where it, with the power of the Holy Spirit, will shake the earth and the nations with its dynamic presence."



In the past, the Church has borrowed phrases from the military to explain its work in the world. Today, some of those analogies fail to capture the movement of the Church because they are too limited by prior meaning or by cultural inference. Perhaps for that reason, the Companions seem at ease borrowing vocabulary and concepts from the business world to help them describe what they are doing. For example, Fr. David used the acronym VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) to describe the society in which the Companions serve. Perhaps the state of the world is becoming more like the chaotic, formless void, that "Tohu wa-bohu" from which God first fashioned his creation.

Chaos can be a source of anxiety for many; however, reframed in a positive light, that same anxiety over the unknown can quickly turn to excitement. It is with true excitement that the Companions launch out into the deep and continue to bring to life Fr. Bedard's vision. More information on how to share in this excitement as the Companions celebrate 40 years can be found at companionscross.org

Polish Scouting and the Cathedral Under the Pines Continue to Keep Faith Alive

By Katrina Boguski

The strong Catholic culture of the Madawaska Valley owes much to the influence of early Kashubian- and Polish-speaking settlers. While these immigrants first arrived in the mid-19th century, subsequent immigrants have continued to keep the culture and the faith alive. Many have been drawn to the region by the Polish Scout Camp called Kaszuby. Established in the 1950s, the camp has been run by Franciscans out of Montreal since 1978. The surrounding area also has other cottages and camps where Polish people vacation.

Fr. Lempicki explained, “The camp was established for scouts of Polish heritage and for their families. Since Polish scouting is deeply rooted in the Roman Catholic Church, pastoral activities such as daily Holy Masses with homilies, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Way of the Cross, Little Hours to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Godzinki), [and other devotions] are held there. Currently, it is generally open to everyone, but absolute priority is given to those who want to spend their vacation with God... Therefore, the camp has become more of a retreat and recreational centre.”

In addition to the religious aspect of the camp, there are also many other activities in which the campers participate. Fr. Lempicki said these activities include singing, walking, fishing, picking mushrooms, and roasting delicious Polish sausages on bonfires.

Father explained, “The Holy Mass in both the Cathedral in the Pines and the chapel is open to everyone. It is worth remembering, however, that all Holy Masses are celebrated there in Polish.”

While the place remains deeply rooted in its traditions, upgrades have been made as necessary. One of the recent changes was the reconstruction of the altar shelter at the Cathedral in the Pines. Fr. Lempicki explained that the list of volunteers and donors who made this project happen was extensive, and he is grateful for the large amount of support. Money is still being raised to cover the expense of this project and for the cost of the pews, which also were replaced recently.

The surrounding forest is an integral part of the Cathedral itself. Fr. Lempicki noted, “Referring to the reconstruction of the so-called altar



Photo submitted by Fr. Jan Lempicki

shelter, it is worth noting that the previous shelter was not the original one, just as the current painting of the Virgin Mary, which requires deep conservation, is not the original one. The shelter with the altar...constitutes only the sanctuary of the Cathedral in the Pines...the crowns of the pines constitute its roof, and the trunks of the trees constitute its columns and pillars.”

Hanna Domagala was instrumental in reaching out to members of the Polish and Kashubian communities for their thoughts on this special place. While too numerous to print in full, the comments included the following responses:

Basia Zabinski said, “Nestled in the heart of Kaszuby, the Cathedral Under the Pines serves as a place of prayer, serenity, and cultural heritage for the Polish community.”

“For many Poles, the Cathedral Under the Pines reminds them of their homeland in Poland; the surrounding trees and quiet hum of Wadsworth Lake transports them back to the forests of Poland. But the true significance of the Cathedral lies with its...presence of God – for both the community and for the Polish scouts.”

“If you ever find yourself in Kaszuby, I urge you to stop by the Cathedral Under the Pines to embrace its beauty and say a prayer. I promise you will feel its importance with just a short stop.”

Michal Zabinski noted the camp's important political significance during the Communist era. He wrote, “The camp and Cathedral are important to the Polish community as they were set-up in parallel in a time of political crisis. The war had ended shortly earlier, and many Poles found themselves exiled from their country by Soviet-Communist powers and looking for a place to call their home. The Kaszuby area already housed settlers from a region of Poland known as Kaszuby and had geographical terms that harkened back to the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth (i.e., Wilno). It became a perfect place to set up a kind of Polish spiritual refuge. The area, its early settlers, and the lush forestry became a perfect spot for both a Polish-centred cathedral, and [a place] where Polish youth could travel to learn about their culture and continue being Polish.”

Maria Szczepaniak noted, “The Polish scout camp and Cathedral Under the Pines in some Polish parents’ and young people’s eyes is essential for the development of our children. It teaches them the three fundamentals of ‘harcerstwo’ the Polish word for scouting. ‘Bóg, Honor, Ojczyzna’ these three words directly translate to ‘God [meaning religion], Honor, and [our] Country’ ...”

Around the diocese

St. Anne Christmas Cookie Elves Outreach (Mattawa)

Paroisse Ste-Anne Parish once again stepped up to make The Christmas Cookie Elves initiative a resounding success in 2024. The Christmas Cookie Elves is an outreach program set-up to bring home-baked goods to shut-ins, seniors and others in need of some Christmas cheer.

Father Cyril Okebanama and the co-chairs of the endeavour were very thankful to all the Baking Elves who donated their best Christmas baking; the Packaging Elves who put together more than 60 boxes; and the Delivery Elves who brought contributions to the recipients and to the Mattawa Food Bank. Approximately 50 of our parishioners took part, showcasing their generosity and talent, shining a light on who we are as Christians – a caring loving community.



Packaging Elves at work: Muriel Turcotte, Darlene Bellaire, Rachel Miville, Sue Lacelle, Ginette Paiement, Pauline Dupuis, and co-chairs of the endeavour Claudette Desroches and Gerry Therrien.

Photo by Nora McKernan

February 2 was the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, also known as Candlemas. Following the tradition that candles for use at our homes be blessed on this day, Fr. Michael Lund blessed candles at our weekend Masses at St. James Parish and Nativity of our Lady Parish in Pikwakanagan.



Knights of Columbus 50th Anniversary Dinner (Corbeil)

Congratulations to the Knights of Columbus of East Ferris Council #6664, on the occasion of their 50th anniversary celebrated at a special dinner in Corbeil on March 15, 2025. The municipality of East Ferris designated the week "Knights of Columbus Week". Parishioners from Paroisse Sacré-Cœur were in attendance.

CWL hosted World Day of Prayer (Corbeil)

On March 7, 2025, the CWL of Sacré-Cœur de Jésus Church in Corbeil hosted the World Day of Prayer Ecumenical Service written by the women of Cook Islands under the theme « I Made You Wonderful ». Approximately 30 people were in attendance, including parishioners from St. Peter's Anglican Church and St. Alphonsus Catholic Church in Callander.



Our Lady of Good Counsel and the Christmas Basket program, which is run by volunteers from our parish. Every year, the program supports those in need within our community.



Lenten retreat with Bishop Brule at St. James the Less in Eganville on April 5th.



Baptism at Our Lady of Sorrows, January 2025 – Deacon Dan Daley



Carlo's Crew Youth Night on March 21 – a lesson in sloth and diligence.



Left: Our Lady of Sorrows recent parish Lenten mission with Fr. Mark Cherry

Below: Our Lady of Sorrows Confirmation 2024



Here I Am Lord, Send Me Joyfully!

The CWL in Pembroke Diocese

Joyful service is the resounding focus for the 24 parish councils of The Catholic Women's League (CWL) in the Pembroke Diocese. They are finding joy-filled ways to grow in faith, serve their parishes and communities, and advocate for social justice at home and abroad. Joy is a fitting theme as it is also deeply embedded in the messages conveyed by Pope Francis for this Jubilee Year and by Bishop Brehl in his vision for the diocese.

Members can draw inspiration from all levels of the League. Two new initiatives from the Ontario Provincial Council (OPC) bring the joy of faith to members. The first involves prayer. The idea took shape at an OPC executive meeting in the Fall of 2024 where members were inspired to compose a prayer beginning with "Dear God". Each member, in turn, added a line based on what was in her heart at the time. Not only is this a prayer activity for our CWL councils but also one for our families and other groups gathered in solidarity of purpose. It presents an opportunity to center ourselves on God and join in a collective act of expressing our joys and sorrows, our hopes and fears.

The second initiative involves the celebration of masses for the intention of CWL members and the provincial executive. These masses, previously offered at the provincial level, will now be expanded to include every diocese in the province. Each diocese will celebrate a monthly mass for the intention of its members. Pembroke Diocesan Spiritual Advisor Fr. Michael Coyne will celebrate these masses privately on the second Monday of each month. In addition, each of the twelve Ontario dioceses will be assigned a specific month to celebrate a mass for the intention of the OPC Executive. Father Coyne will celebrate this mass on June 18, 2025 at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Pembroke at 8:00 a.m. All are welcome to attend.

The CWL is a grassroots organization. While parish councils base their service on the guiding principles established by the national council of the CWL, they retain their sense of identity by tailoring service to best reflect their interests, resources, and the immediate needs of their parishes and communities. The strength of the CWL as a national organization lies in its collective ability to speak and act with one voice, serve in joy-filled ways and be united by the common foundation of our Catholic faith. CWL councils remain a vibrant presence in the life of our parishes. Come and see what the CWL has to offer at one of the 24 parish councils across the diocese.

Calendar of events

- **Sunday, May 25** – Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish Dinner, 2:00 – 6:00 pm, 18 Dochart St., Braeside
- **Saturday, June 7** – 11:00 am to 2:00 pm – Spring Tea, Craft & Bake Sale, Our Lady of the Angels Parish hall, 8325 Opeongo Road, Brudenell (Killaloe) ON
- **Sunday, June 15** – Knights of Columbus Council 7221 is hosting a community supper & bazar (cipaille) at the Knights of Columbus Community Hall, 525 rue Baume, Fort-Coulonge QC.
- **Sunday, July 27** – Ste-Bernadette Annual Parish Picnic (Boonfield). Tickets for the annual 50/50 ticket draw will also be available. All are welcome!
- **Sunday, September 14** – Our Lady of Mercy Church, Bancroft, annual Parish Supper and Fundraiser from 11:30 to 6:00.
- **Sunday, September 21** – The Chapeau parish supper at Harrington Community Centre, Chapeau, QC.
- **Saturday, September 27** – Third Annual Fall Festival – featuring our famous Harvest Soup lunch, Craft and Bake Sale – Our Lady of the Angels Parish hall, 8325 Opeongo Road, Brudenell (Killaloe) from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
- **Sunday, September 28** – Mount St. Patrick Parish Supper from 1 p.m. – 5 p.m. at the DACA Center. Everyone is welcome.

2025 Cormac Pilgrimage



The 2025 annual Cormac Pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. Ann, in the beautiful hamlet of Cormac, Ontario, will take place, beginning with the annual Triduum on Thursday, July 24– Sunday, July 27th

The Triduum Masses will be held in St. Ann's Church at 7 p.m. with presider and homilist Bishop Michael Brehl, Bishop of the Diocese of Pembroke.

On Sunday, July 27th at 11 a.m. a special Mass of Healing at the Shrine of St. Ann will take place, with a second Mass at 2 p.m.

A vast array of religious articles will be available for purchase, along with St. Ann's Mass League Memberships. Food and refreshments will be available.

Everyone is welcome to attend the 2025 St. Ann's Pilgrimage in Cormac, Ontario. We look forward with great anticipation to this wonderful blessed event.