



Ecclesia

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PEMBROKE

Closing of the Holy Doors of Mercy

Mercy

It is more than just a word for Catholics. As our saviour Jesus Christ said: 'Be merciful as your heavenly father is merciful.' (St Luke 6-36)

It is, perhaps now more than ever, a call to action in a world where far too many suffer on a daily basis. As Pope Francis stated: 'Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instills in us the courage to look to the future with hope.'

Closing of the Holy Doors of Mercy

November 20 (Feast of Christ the King), 2016, saw the conclusion of the Jubilee of Mercy, which first began on December 8, 2015. Parishes in our own diocese celebrated on November 13. At St. Columbkille Cathedral in Pembroke, Bishop Michael Mulhall presided over the celebration, which included the removal of the sacred images from the cathedral doors.

St. Columbkille was one of five parishes designated to host the Holy Doors of Mercy. The other four were St. Anne in Mattawa, St-Pierre in Fort-Coulonge, St. Hedwig in Barry's Bay and Our Lady of Fatima in Renfrew. Individuals and groups in the Diocese visited these parishes to reflect on Divine Mercy.

In light of the conclusion of the holy year, it is imperative for all Christians to practise mercy where the opportunity presents itself.

"If we concentrate on mercy and experience it, then it becomes something we go back to time and time again as opposed to something that doesn't hold our attention," said Bishop Mulhall in an interview with Ecclesia.

"That's the key for us: keep alive and be vigilant in ensuring that mercy is a part of our daily lives."

Such vigilance can be a challenge for all Christians as the rigours of everyday life can often overwhelm us.

Conscious of this, Bishop Mulhall encouraged all members of the diocese to embrace mercy as not a burden, but an act of joy.

"In mercy, we often think of it as the wiping away of our sinfulness," said Bishop Mulhall.

"But it's a creative power within us. God's creation of the world is a merciful act. The power behind mercy is something we can tap into, and when we realize it's going to change our lives, then it's going to change how we see the world."

Throughout this past holy year, a variety of celebrations were held throughout the diocese. Pastors

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Holy Doors at Our Lady of Fatima, Renfrew



Father Réal Ouellette, St-Pierre, Fort-Coulonge



Father Rob Arsenault, C.C., guest preacher, St. Hedwig, Barry's Bay



Father Peter Do celebrated Mass at St. Anne in Mattawa on November 13

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took occasion to highlight the theme of mercy at Eucharistic celebrations, while parish organizations hosted prayer services. The Diocesan Pilgrimage to Saint Ann's in Cormac highlighted the theme during the preparatory Triduum. Religious communities also observed special days of prayer focusing on the Jubilee theme. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was encouraged in some communities and books were set out in some of our churches to record particular pledged acts of mercy. Of course, there are the countless acts of mercy diocesan members extended on any given day.

Perhaps the most evident act of mercy that was displayed throughout the Jubilee of Mercy was the efforts of various groups in the diocese to sponsor refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria.

"What the people have done in this diocese and some of the parishes is just edifying," said Bishop Mulhall.

"To see how their hearts have been turned and given so much of their time, energy and financial resources to be able to help these refugees is just amazing. It's beautiful."

Four images were mounted on the Holy Doors at St. Columbkille, each with its own distinct meaning:

Alpha-Omega: The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. In the book of Revelation, which is the last book of the New Testament, Christ is referred to as the 'Alpha and Omega.' This means He is both the origin and end of all creation.



Images adorned the Holy Doors at St. Columbkille Cathedral during the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

The Pelican: Used as a symbol of the Holy Eucharist since the pelican feeds its young by piercing its own flesh and taking blood from itself to feed its chicks. This is like Christ who offered Himself on the cross in atonement for our sins.

The Chi-Rho: Pronounced 'KEE-roe', it is a Christian symbol consisting of the intersection of the capital

Greek letters Chi (X) and Rho (P), which are the first two letters of "Christ" in Greek (ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ, Christos). The Chi-Rho can represent either Christ or Christianity and is also known as a Christogram.

The Lamb: The symbol of Christ. The whiteness of the lamb symbolizes purity. Lambs are often associated with innocence and, in the Old Testament, with sacrifice.

Bishop's message

On September 4 of this year, Pope Francis presided at the Mass to mark the canonization of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. The event was a surprise to no one and had been expected for some time. This expectation was itself a great gift. Having seen the signs of holiness in Mother Teresa's life for so many years, the people of God had already expressed a true appreciation of the great gift she was to the Church in the last decades of the 20th century. She was the real thing, the genuine article, as far as living a radical sign of love for God.

After she had attained this reputation for sanctity she was able to physically meet many of us who will always remember the encounter. A bishop told me recently that as a seminarian he was given the wonderful gift to be present with Mother Teresa and a handful of other people for the morning Mass of St. John Paul II. Two living saints in the presence of Christ in the Mass. It was encounters like this that people never forgot, the memory that they were able to see and meet a living saint.

Mother reached this saintly reputation because of the radical sign of love she showed to the suffering and dying. Her order, the Missionaries of Charity, divided their day between adoration of the Lord and the service of the poorest. In the slums and busy roads of Calcutta she took the dying into her hostels, not necessarily to cure them or to prolong their life but to do all she could so that as their life came to an end they would know that they were loved. What a

powerful testimony for us in Canada as we attune our hearts and minds to the calamity of euthanasia; that the love of God surpasses even death itself.

My apostolate as a seminarian was to help at a soup kitchen for the poor of the city run by the Missionaries of Charity. The atmosphere of the house was pure Mother Teresa. There, Mother's spirit was present in the lives of the Sisters, the selfless volunteers and in the shocking poverty of those in need. Later, as priests, we had the joy of celebrating early morning Mass for the Sisters in the convent. It was not uncommon that Mother would be present for Mass if she were in the city. The simple chapel, dominated by the crucifix above the altar, was centred by the words "I thirst." In that simple and profound prayer of Christ in his death, the mission of Mother Teresa was captured, that she conformed herself so much to Christ that she could feel his thirst for the souls of his people. For me and so many of my brother priests, this grace left a lasting mark on our experience of our vocations.

The Lord has truly been good to us in these last decades with the lives of saints who have lived in our time and given to us the joy of the Gospel. Let us pray that the Lord will continue to bless his Church in this manner and that the saints marked for our lives may speed us on to our heavenly home.

+Michael Mulhall
Bishop of Pembroke



Four Principles of Catholic Social Teaching

By Fr. Michael Smith

Introduction

What does our Catholic faith have to say about how society ought to be structured? From the prophets in ancient Israel, to Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God, to the teachings of popes and bishops throughout the millennia, our Judeo-Christian tradition has much to say.

In particular, Catholic social teaching took on a new dynamism beginning in 1891, when Pope Leo XIII published the Encyclical, *Rerum novarum*, "Of New Things", in order to help people combat the exploitation of workers in the wake of the Industrial Revolution.

Since then, succeeding popes have developed this teaching, to the point where we now have a rich body of proposals for social action.

Unfortunately, Catholic social teaching is not well known. Perhaps this is because people, both laity and clergy, can feel overwhelmed by the complexity of social problems and the great difficulty in coming to grips with them. We need not feel overwhelmed. Our faith, especially when it is strong, is always a great source of hope. We have Jesus' promise that he will be with us until the end of time. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, our humble efforts can bear fruit for a better world, a world more ready to receive the Kingdom of God.

There are many principles, or "starting-points", of Catholic social teaching. I would like to focus on what I would call the four pillars. These, I hope, can serve as a basis for readers' reflection and action. As will become clear, the four pillars balance one another.

1. The Dignity of the Human Person

God has created, and God loves, every human being without exception. God has created us in such a way that we can come to know the truth, and we can choose what is good for us, for the human community, and for our common home here on Earth. We are able to know that God is our Creator, and to choose to serve God knowingly and freely. Even though sin warps all of these capacities, nonetheless our dignity is part of who we are as people created by God.

Various rights flow from this dignity: the right to life from conception to natural death, the right to seek the truth according to our best lights, the right to religious freedom, to freedom of association, to a just wage, to adequate health care and education, the right to own property—to name only a few. We do not invent rights; we discover them. They are there as part of our human dignity. They are by definition a right to something good. There is no such thing as a right to do evil of whatever kind.

Other people's rights are where my obligations begin. The human community, from individual persons to the various levels of government, has the obligation to respect people's rights, and to promote laws and policies that ensure the protection of these rights.

2. The Common Good

Human flourishing cannot occur in isolation. Hermits, for example, in their geographical solitude, rely on the rest of the human community, and the community on them, for mutual benefit. I can live a fulfilled human life only if I am part of a family, of various intermediate groups, and of a larger society.

Thus, society ought to be structured in such a way that no one is left out or left behind. When individuals and groups cannot benefit from life in society, the society itself is wounded and unjust. When rampant inequalities exist, there cannot be social peace. Thus, there is the obligation, on the part of all, to promote change such that everyone can be included in the benefits of living together in society.

3. The Principle of Solidarity

In our families, we give special care to the very young, the very old, and those who are vulnerable in other ways. Society can be compared to a family in some ways, although we must be careful not to extend this analogy too far. Much as vulnerable people need special care in a family, so they need special attention in society.

Thus, there is the obligation to make sure that we as a society care for those who cannot care for themselves, whether temporarily (e.g., those recovering from illness) or permanently (e.g., the severely handicapped). Families are frequently not capable of doing everything; the larger society must step in.

4. The Principle of Subsidiarity

The unfamiliar word 'subsidiarity' often throws people, but the principle is actually quite simple. If, for example, a family can adequately care for a person's needs, a community group should not get involved. If a community group can take care of a local issue, the government should not get involved. If a lower level of government can deal with an issue, a higher level of government should not get involved. The idea is that smaller groups that are closest to a situation are best equipped to find solutions.

Thus, there is the obligation not to disempower families, community groups, and more immediate levels of government, but rather to ensure that each level is able to carry out its responsibilities according to its competence.

Summary

As can be seen, the dignity of the human person and the common good serve as balances for each other. I have rights, but my rights are not absolute (the right to life of the innocent being a notable exception). I have a right to freedom of expression, for example, but this does not extend to the incitement to violence. Also, there ought to be relative equality within society, but not to the point of refusing higher wages to those who do dangerous or highly skilled work.

Also, solidarity and subsidiarity are balances for each other. There is the obligation to care for the vulnerable, for example, but without treating people as though they belonged to the state. Families ought to care for their weakest members, but there are many situations where families are incapable of doing so; a larger level of community must step in.

From Social Teaching to Social Action

It is the unique vocation of laypeople to transform the secular world from within, so that it can be more ready for the coming of the Kingdom of God. This, of course, involves much prayer, but not prayer alone. If the Church proclaims a social teaching with its basis in the Gospel, it is so that this teaching can be a program of action.

But how? What are people to do? This is where Christian discernment enters in. For example, all people of good will can agree that we must defend the poor and work to eliminate the causes of poverty. Good people, including good Catholics, can disagree on what the causes are and how they ought to be overcome—without, of course, succumbing to the temptation to let our ideas be undisturbed by facts.

This divergence of opinion is as it should be. There is need for vigorous political debate on real issues of substance, and not just campaigns that focus on style and personalities. There is need, especially, for people to get involved in political parties and community groups, and to work to transform them from within. The Gospel is a way of life, a way of acting.

Why not get involved in a group that is working for a just cause?

For Further Reading

- Meuser, Bernhard. *DOCAT: Catholic Social Teaching for Youth*. (available on Amazon.ca)

- Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. (available on Amazon.ca)

- Ryan, Michael. *A Brief Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching*. Booklet available free of charge from the author: Rev. Michael T. Ryan, 146 Talbot St. S., Essex ON N8M 1B4

-Also, go to Google and type, "social encyclicals".



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Retirement—Father Michael Costello

After 54 years in the priesthood, Father Michael Costello retired on November 1, 2016.

“The way it goes is that at 75, you submit your resignation to the diocese, the Bishop,” said Father Costello.

“I served for another five years until I was 80. It was just a situation where you retire at some point in good health.”

Born and raised in Arnprior, it was during his early childhood that he first sensed that God was calling him to serve.

“I think I was just a little guy,” said Father Costello.

“We used to go to my grandmother’s in the summer and the priest use to bring her Communion. I think that’s when I had a good estimate of the priesthood. In the church at that time, a vocation to the religious life—to the priesthood—was highly valued.”

He attended St. Jerome’s College in Kitchener, then St. Paul’s Seminary in Ottawa, a time when he was able to fully dedicate himself to embracing the joy of his faith during his studies.

“I just enjoyed the whole atmosphere, the whole focus on the spiritual life,” said Father Costello.

“There were a lot of good people there. All the seminarians had the same high ideals.”

St. Paul’s also provided him with his first serious exposure to the French language, a skill that proved essential later on when he served at various parishes in Pontiac County and in the Mattawa Zone.

“There was both French and English at St. Paul’s,” said Father Costello.

“Then when I was in Pembroke, I was able to use my French with the community of Sisters at the Bishop’s house and celebrated Mass for them in French. You just keep reaching into that setting and eventually it rubs off.”

On May 27, 1962, Father Costello was ordained to the priesthood at his home parish of St. John Chrysostom where family, friends and parishioners gathered to celebrate with him.

“It was a lovely experience. The atmosphere at the church was very much one of joy.”

Like many of his fellow priests in the diocese, Father Costello would serve at a variety of parishes, including Our Lady of Lourdes on two different occasions, Paroisse Saint-Thomas-d’Aquin in Astorville, St. Louis-de-France in Chiswick, Holy Name of Mary in Quyon, Immaculate Conception in Bryson, Paroisse Saint-François-d’Assise in Lac-des-Loups, Paroisse Sainte-Sophie of East Aldfield. He also served as Vice-Chancellor of the diocese.

What he found most rewarding was the spiritual connection he inevitably developed with parishioners.

“It was always a joy to be able to reach out to the parish, to people’s lives, and share both their joys and sorrows,” said Father Costello.

For a significant portion of his time as a priest, Father Costello also served as a teacher. He taught at St. Mary’s Teachers’ College in Chapeau, Quebec, for seven years (1962–1969). He then moved to Our Lady of Lourdes Parish (1969–1973) where he taught at the Lorrain School of Nursing. From there, he was assigned to St. Edward Parish in Bristol, QC (1973–1982), where he taught at Victoria Avenue High School in Shawville.

He also dedicated time to visiting with residents at the local hospital.

“Hospital work was always a part of my ministry,” said Father Costello.

“You met people from all over the Pontiac, serving in both languages. That was a nice dimension.”



When the discussion turned to the ordination of four new priests in our diocese this spring, Father Costello told of his admiration for those whose passion for their faith has motivated them to join the ranks of the priesthood.

“Growing in your own faith and love for God, that calls you to share it with others,” said Father Costello.

“One of the ways to do that is the priesthood. That is something I think one would appreciate taking on and living out to the fullest.”

But as any priest will tell you, you never really resign from the vocation. With that, members of our diocese should not be surprised if they see Father Costello celebrating Mass when he’s able to.

“The first Sunday after my retirement I celebrated Mass in Sheenboro. That was a request that was made of me. I’m open, so if I’m able and well, then I’ll be happy to go.”

Four Sisters of St. Joseph celebrate 230 years of service to God

Four members of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Pembroke, participated in the joyous Jubilee celebrations at St. Joseph’s on Saturday, September 3, 2016.

Families of the jubilarians, as well as clergy, relatives, and friends joined the Sisters to thank God for their service to God and His people.

Jubilarians

- Sister Rita Bowers C.S.J. from St. Alphonsus Parish, Chapeau, Quebec, celebrated 75 years
- Sister Maria Mousseau C.S.J. from Calabogie, who celebrated 70 years, was unable to attend.
- Sister Lucy Germaine C.S.J. from Bristol Quebec, celebrated 60 years.
- Sister Gloria Muchaypiña C.S.J. celebrated 25 years. Sister Gloria is from our mission in Chinchá Alta, Peru.

The Sisters renewed their vows in the presence of Sister Veronica O’Reilly, Superior General of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada.

We lovingly remember our deceased jubilarians: Sister Mary Cleland, Sister Mary O’Neil, Sister Imelda Duquette, Sister Frances Jeffrey, and Sister Agnes Cuddy.

A Eucharistic celebration of Thanksgiving and praise was celebrated in the chapel of the Sisters of St. Joseph with Father Michael Costello as celebrant and homilist.



50th Anniversary— Father Thomas Zoeller

Father Thomas Zoeller will celebrate the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood on May 27, 2017.

Born on May 20, 1940, he was raised in Louisville, Kentucky. He is second of 10 children born to Jerry and Marie Zoeller. A ‘cradle’ Catholic, he was quite active in his local church.

“I went to Holy Name Church and School in Louisville,” said Father Zoeller.

“I began serving Mass (in Latin) in the third grade and somewhere in the fourth I began singing in the boys’ choir through to grade eight.”

It was also in his youth that he first began to contemplate a life of service to God.

“It was in grade school that I first thought of being a priest, by fifth grade anyway,” said Father Zoeller.

“I would say it was nurtured by my relation to the young priests at our church—at least three assistants helping the older pastor, and the Sisters who taught us—close to 20 of them. One assistant was helpful in getting boys from our Parish into the minor seminary that had just begun. So, with his help this revived my desire to enter the seminary.”

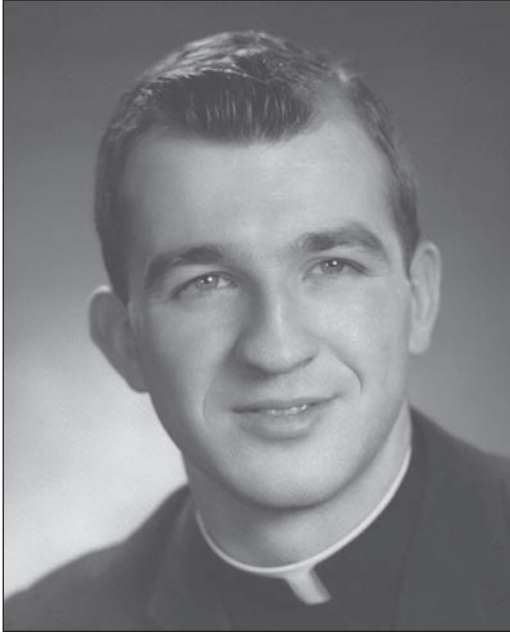
He began his studies at St. Thomas Minor Seminary in Louisville in 1954, graduating from there six years later. He then enrolled in St. Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore, Maryland. It is the first seminary in the United States to be founded and still run by the Sulpicians.

In due course, Father Zoeller made his way to Madonna House in Combermere to visit Father Bob Pelton, who also attended St. Mary’s Seminary.

“What I found at Madonna House was a community founded on the living faith of Catherine Doherty and those who had committed themselves to this way of life,” said Father Zoeller.

“Christ was the centre. And since he was here, love was here. I knew I needed both.”

Upon deciding to join Madonna House, Father Zoeller returned there for a one-year applicancy, taking promises of poverty, chastity and obedience. He went on to study theology at St. Augustine’s Seminary in Scarborough. He was ordained in May 1967 at Holy Canadian Martyrs Parish in Combermere by Bishop William J. Smith.



“There wasn’t a lot of feeling during my ordination, just great gratitude that God has gotten me through some rocky roads to get me to lying on the floor as the Litany of the Saints was sung over and for me,” said Father Zoeller.

“I knew that it was God who had got me ordained. It was not the result of my work or effort or merit. Gratitude to God and also to the diocese, Madonna House, and my blood family. My family and Madonna House were there, but I remember many priests of the diocese as well. The next day was my first Mass, and Father Hass had me baptize a newborn. That was exciting and a gift.”

Soon afterwards, Father Zoeller set forth to serve Madonna House at a variety of locations.

“The summer after I was ordained, I worked at our Cana Colony, where families come for a week’s holiday/retreat,” said Father Zoeller.

“Then I was sent to our new house in Regina called Marian Centre, serving a meal to unemployed men and pensioners—I played crib with the men who came and they taught me all I know about the game. They were sharp and there was no fooling around. I also helped out at St. Cecilia’s Parish on weekends and was chaplain to one of the CFM (Christian Family Movement) groups, helping married couples live a gospel life.”

After Regina, Father Zoeller moved on to the Marian Centre in Edmonton, where his responsibilities mirrored those in Regina, as well as working with some couples and families given permission by the archbishop to form an experimental community in the post-Vatican II years.

“I was also somewhat involved with the charismatic movement during these years,” said Father Zoeller.

“I felt like I ‘grew up’ as a priest in these three years. Edmonton holds a warm spot in my heart. I was also sent back to Edmonton for two years in the late ’70s and again from 1996 to 1999. After I was at Edmonton the first time, I went to our Cana Colony in northern Virginia, in the Diocese of Richmond. Then back to Madonna House in the summer of 1973. I was guestmaster or assistant at Vianney House, welcoming visiting priests, until 1989.”

“In these years I began a long relationship with Latchford Bridge Parish, going for the weekend Mass. I watched many families grow up, had some of their marriages, baptized some of their children, and buried a few. I also attended the Barry’s Bay deanery meetings as the priest from Madonna House.”


He also spent three years in Robin Hood’s Bay, England, a pastoral centre for the coastal deanery. He then served a year-and-a-half at Madonna House in Whitehorse, Yukon, living and working with local staff and celebrating masses at the Cathedral and surrounding parishes.

He returned to Combermere in 1999 and has remained there ever since, joyful in what he calls ‘a living faith’ that began when he was an applicant back in 1964-65 and pursues him to this very day.

“I have been stationed here in our training centre for formation of future staff and receiving many guests yearly who are seeking to know God and to deepen their life in Christ,” said Father Zoeller, crediting Madonna House for bringing him closer to God, just as he does for others.

“Walking with individuals in their journey into their own hearts and finding God in their lives at one level is so very commonplace and ordinary, but absolutely essential at another,” said Father Zoeller.

“My own journey to God likewise is a gift and something I have been consciously pursuing since university. Without that sheer gift of God, I would never have been ordained or stayed a priest these fifty years. I cannot thank God enough.”



OUR LADY OF FATIMA PARISH
INVITES YOU TO JOIN IN A TRIDUUM IN HONOUR OF
THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY CELEBRATING THE 100TH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST APPARITION OF OUR LADY
AT FATIMA AND PREACHED BY FR. BRIAN J.T. CLARKE, A
PRIEST OF THE DIOCESE OF SCRANTON.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10 TH 9:00 a.m. Mass 7:00 p.m. Sung Vespers and Homily	FRIDAY, MAY 12 TH 9:00 a.m. Mass 7:00 p.m. Sung Vespers and Homily
THURSDAY, MAY 11 TH 9:00 a.m. Mass 9:30 a.m. Exposition and - 7:00 p.m. Confession 7:00 p.m. Sung Vespers and Homily	SATURDAY, MAY 13 TH 9:00 a.m. Solemn Mass <i>The Celebrant and Homilist for this Mass will be the Most Reverend Michael Mulhall, Bishop of Pembroke.</i>

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40th Anniversary—Father Patrick Dobec

May 14, 2017, will mark the 40th anniversary of the ordination of Father Patrick Dobec to the priesthood. He currently serves as parish priest for both Our Lady of Mercy Parish in Bancroft and Saint Anthony Padua Parish in Haliburton.

Born in Renfrew, Ontario, on March 11, 1951, he is the youngest of four children of Martin and Esther Dobec. From a young age, Father Dobec felt the presence of God urging him towards a priestly vocation.

“As a young boy I felt God was calling me to the priesthood,” said Father Dobec, also noting the invaluable support he has received from his fellow priests and the religious Sisters, both past and present.

“I was very blessed to have wonderful role models with the many priests who were in our parish. Throughout my priesthood I have been blessed with some fellow priests who have been true brothers to me. Their friendship and example have inspired me in a most powerful way. A few have recently died, but others are always there.”

He was ordained in 1977 at Saint Francis Xavier Parish in Renfrew, the first ordination liturgy of its kind at the newly constructed church. From there, Father Dobec would serve God’s people in various parishes throughout the diocese.

“I have had many moving experiences with the people,” said Father Dobec.

“To have the profound privilege to be a friend of their souls and to share their lives is an ongoing inspiration and gift from God. Despite one’s weaknesses you try your best knowing that one must trust Divine Providence.”

Joy is mixed with sorrow for all of us in the various chapters of our lives. But in such times, God was

always near in providing solace to Father Dobec, often displayed through the very people he has served.

“It is in our times of difficulty, loss and suffering that we rediscover God’s friendship in a way we never realized possible,” said Father Dobec.

“I would have preferred it not to happen in this way, but these were definitely turning points in my ministry. Some family members, laity and religious, have been important vehicles of God’s transforming love. I know now that I would never have survived without their affirmation and love.”

Aside from his duties as parish priest, Father Dobec has also served as chaplain with the Canadian Armed Forces.

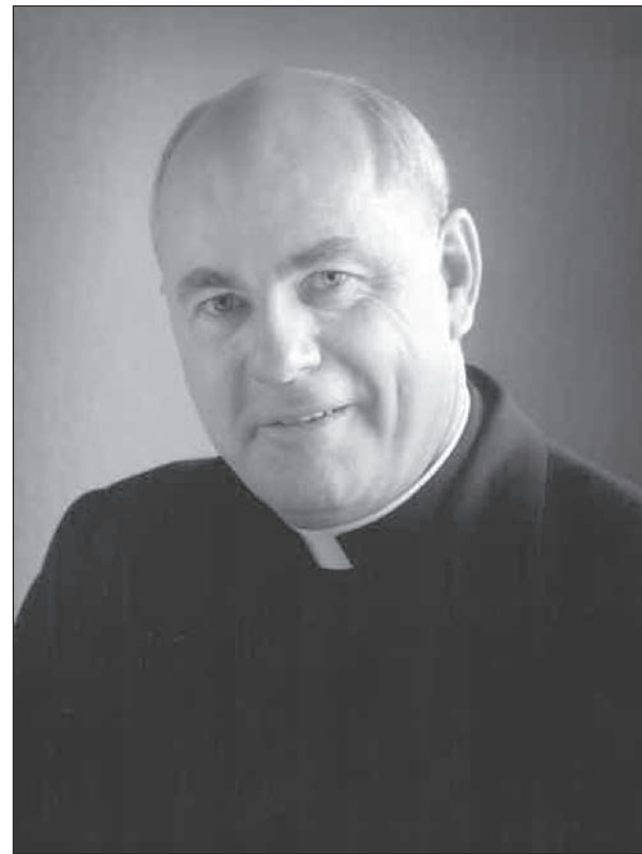
“I was a reserve chaplain to a military unit in Pembroke and then the Governor General’s Foot Guards,” said Father Dobec.

“I was deployed to be part of the Casualty Support Team at Landstuhl Regional Medical Centre in Germany. The ministry there was a great challenge and encouraged one to develop skills to mature in the spiritual life. When one deals with major crises every day, you begin to grasp what really is important in life.”

He has also served as Director of the Diocesan Lay Ministry Program, Priestly Life Committee and retreat work.

This year saw the ordination of four deacons to the priesthood in our diocese. Father Dobec expressed great happiness in seeing such a significant number of young men join the ranks of the clergy.

“What a joy and blessing to have four ordinations this spring,” said Father Dobec who shared some words of advice to those who have also chosen to answer God’s call to serve.



“Trust in God’s Providence even when we do not understand it or even like it. If we attempt to make that personal decision to accept and rely on his graces, our lives will be transformed. Also, always be aware that our parishioners have a great deal to teach us. Our years in ministry go very quickly. Do not fret over the small stuff. As Pope John XXIII pointed out—‘See everything, overlook a great deal, and improve a little.’”

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada

Gathering at their recent Chapter meeting held in Toronto, September 11–16, 2016, more than 100 Sisters of St Joseph in Canada recognized the need to prioritize care of the Earth for the common good. At this meeting, they committed to using “integral ecology” as the lens for focusing their way of life, believing that this reality recognizes the interrelationship of all things, as with others they serve in our “common home”. Integral ecology links inseparably care for the Earth and all peoples, especially the most vulnerable. It embraces Gospel values, interreligious and intercultural dialogue and all the world’s most urgent needs today.

For many years, the Sisters of St Joseph have been taking seriously the call to listen and respond to the “cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor”, rooted in their founding charism in 1650 France of unity and reconciliation.

Today they embrace further the notion of an Earth-centred spirituality and ecological education supported by transforming action to fuel the hearts of the Sisters in the years ahead.

During these days of Chapter, a new leadership circle of the congregation was elected. The congregation welcomed Sisters Margo Ritchie, Congregational Leader, Joyce Murray, Assistant Congregational Leader, and Councillors Anne Karges, Sheila Fortune and Nancy Sullivan with all their gifts of mission and ministry as they lead the congregation into its future of prayer and service for today’s world.

For more information, please visit: www.csjcanada.org



25th Anniversary—Deacon Doctor Robert McDonald

August 22, 2017, will mark the 25th anniversary of the ordination of Deacon Doctor Robert McDonald to the diaconate. He currently serves at St. Hedwig's Parish in Barry's Bay, the very church where he was ordained.

Born in Stirling, Scotland, on October 30, 1939, Deacon McDonald studied medicine at Edinburgh University and graduated in 1963. He emigrated to Canada in 1971, spending three years teaching at the University of Saskatchewan, then serving six years as an Assistant Professor of Family Medicine at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. He eventually transferred to private practice in order to provide spiritual healing.

In 1985, Deacon McDonald organized and trained a medical team destined to bring aid to the starving people of Ethiopia. Seeing his fellow human beings in such dire circumstances left a significant impression upon him.

"The work with dying, starving children deepened my desire to be of help to my patients, especially in the profound area of the spirit," said Deacon McDonald.

In 1987, he was elected Canadian Family Physician of the Year by the College of Family Physicians of Canada.

He later received spiritual direction from Father Jim Duffy of Madonna House. It was during this time he discerned that God was calling Deacon McDonald, and his wife Rita, to relocate to the Madawaska region.

"We were somewhat alarmed by that revelation as my medical practice was doing very well in Kingston," said Deacon McDonald.

"However, we prayed about this and it became increasingly clear that indeed we were being called to move, but to where? On scouting the area, Rita and I visited St. Hedwig's Church. As soon as I entered, I felt immediately at home and I could easily sense the tangible atmosphere of prayer. We attended Mass and Monsignor

Ambrose Pick took the time to welcome us, two strangers, to the parish. That did it. We built a house in Barry's Bay close to St. Hedwig's and moved into it in 1991."

Some years earlier, Deacon had received encouragement to pursue the diaconate from close friends, Deacon Bernie MacDonald.

"It was like a light bulb went off in my head," said Deacon McDonald.

"I just knew he was right and so with the bishop's permission I attended Wadham's Hall in Ogdensburg, New York, where I received my diploma after three years of study."

He has served the parishioners at St. Hedwig's for the last 25 years, though his passion for preaching the Word of God would lead him to other locales.

"It was not long before I was travelling all over Canada and the United States, preaching and teaching at Catholic conferences. I also led many parish retreats and missions."

Deacon McDonald also authored *The Catholic Family: Image and Likeness of God* in 2000.

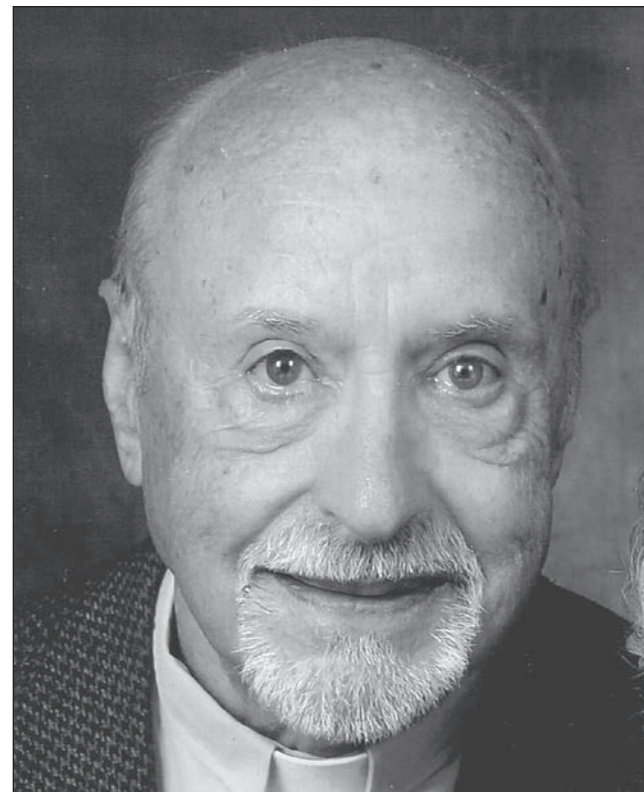
"The most rewarding feature of my diaconate is the privilege of serving at the altar of the Lord," said Deacon McDonald.

"To be the Minister of the Cup never fails to energize my soul."

He also offered some advice for those contemplating a life in the diaconate.

"My first advice to anyone considering the diaconate is to embark on a campaign of prayer in order to receive confirmation of one's vocation and for his conviction to become deeper and deeper a reality in his psyche and soul," said Deacon McDonald.

"An applicant should also understand that, according to Canon Law, the Church insists that his family is first in priority, his work is second and his diaconate is



third. The deacon should never get so immersed in his ministry that he neglects his wife and children. If he is single, it would be important for him to want to be a permanent deacon and to see himself as remaining in that awesome vocation."

He also mentioned the need for one's family to be supportive to one who pursues the life of a deacon.

"The support of one's family is a great asset to a deacon," said Deacon McDonald.

"It is vital that his wife stands beside him in his preparation for ordination and beyond that into his ministry. The children should also be enthusiastic about their dad and mom's partnership in this venture. My wife and I have been blessed over and over again and although I am now 77 years old, I hope and pray that I can continue in this most rewarding of ministries to the church."

25th Anniversary: Deacon Frank Martel

August 14, 2017, will mark the 25th anniversary of the ordination of Deacon Frank Martel to the diaconate.

A native of North Bay, Deacon Martel was very active with the Church in his youth.

"In my youth I was as active as a lay person could be at the time," said Deacon Martel.

"I started serving Mass at the age of seven and did so until my parents moved to Kapuskasing, Ontario. I graduated in 1964 and went to teachers' college in Sudbury. At the end of that, I moved back in with my parents in North Bay until I was married. When we had our first child, we both returned to the Church, and were very active in prayer groups for a number of years under the guidance of Father Donal O'Callahan from Ireland."

Deacon Martel worked in various locations in Canada, including southern Ontario and Labrador City in Newfoundland and Labrador. It was during his stay in St. Stephen, New Brunswick, that he first felt the call from God to serve in a greater role. Upon settling in Bonfield, Deacon Martel was ordained to the diaconate at Ste-Bernadette Parish in 1992. Having served there during his early years as deacon, Deacon

Martel moved on to serve 12 years at Sacred Heart Parish in Corbeil. He returned to Ste-Bernadette in January 2016.

Throughout his years of service, Deacon Martel has cherished his role in helping others discover the presence of Jesus Christ during religious retreats.

"The most rewarding for me is in helping people to discover who Jesus is in their lives," said Deacon Martel. His other duties include preparing the church for Mass, preparing parents for baptism, and delivering the homily when called upon.

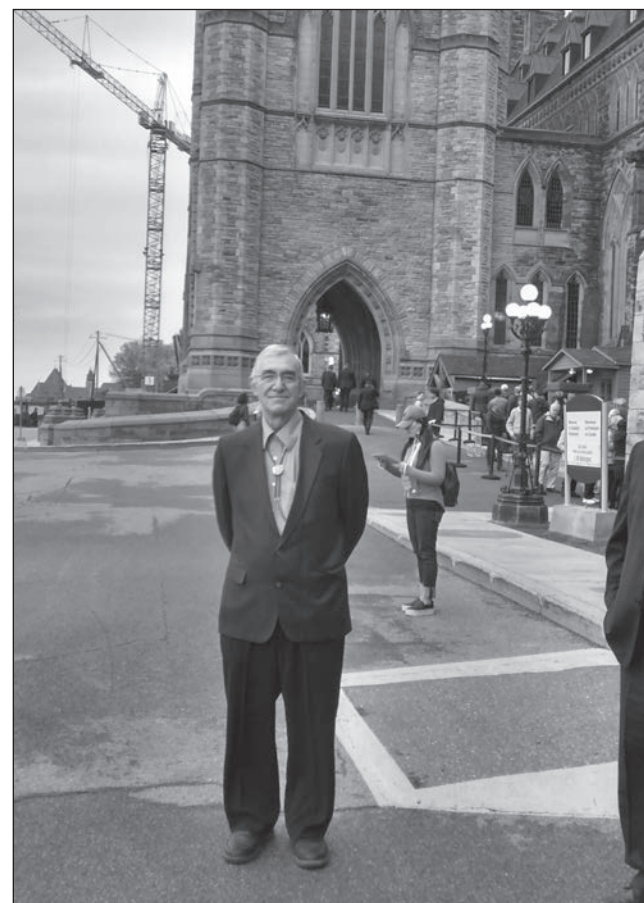
For those in our faith community who may be contemplating a life in the diaconate, Deacon Martel has some simple words of advice.

"If I were to give someone advice, I would say prayer. Lots of prayer," said Deacon Martell.

"It's not always easy, but it is rewarding."

He also mentioned the invaluable support he has received from his family during his initial years of preparing for his diaconate duties.

"With my whole family supporting us, Danielle (wife) and I went through all the hard times of learning. Their support was absolutely necessary for us to succeed in our learning."



Theology of the Body (TOB) for teens

by Father Scott Murray

In addition to the Grade 9 classes taught at Bishop Smith Catholic High School, Pembroke, and St. Joseph's High School, Renfrew, "YOU. Life, Love, and the Theology of the Body" ran throughout the fall months on Sunday nights at the Cathedral. Teens from several parishes in the diocese attended the program, which consisted of dinner, games, videos, discussion, and Eucharistic adoration. Topics in the program included personal identity, love, chastity, gender, vocations, relationships, and discernment. Many thanks to the volunteers who prepared the meals and organized the sessions!

Next semester we will continue Pembroke's youth ministry with "Chosen". It is a dynamic course in the truths of the Catholic faith and a practical guide to applying those truths in daily life. The structure of the course is similar to that of the "Theology of the Body", but the content is broader. Some topics to be covered are "What makes me happy?", "How do I know God is real?", "Why be Catholic?", "Why tell my sins to a priest?", and "Why do I have to go to Mass?".

For more information or to register a teen, please contact Fr. Scott Murray: s.josephmurray@gmail.com.



Steubenville Summer Conference: July 28–30, 2017



"Behold, I make all things new." – Revelations 21:5

Registration for Steubenville Toronto 2017 will be opening in February. The theme this year is *Elevate*, and the conference will be from July 28–30, 2017. Students who are entering Grade 9 to students who are just finished Grade 12, and all in between are welcome to attend, but hurry and let us know, because there are limited spots available! First come first served! Registration is \$275 per student.

Steubenville Toronto is a fantastic youth conference attended by thousands of youth every year. There is great music, interesting speakers, and lots of opportunity to learn more about the faith that we share. If you would like more information about the conference, please visit www.steubenvilletoronto.com

For more information, or to reserve your spot with the Diocese of Pembroke at the conference, please contact Gordon Lund: gordonlund@pembrokediocese.com, 613-732-8513 or Yvette Bourque: yvettebourque@pembrokediocese.com, 613-732-7933 ext. 208.


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For more information, go to ewtn.com/familycelebration or call 1-205-795-5813.

Léonie Martin: From the difficult child to loving sister

by Sister Catherine Toner, Order of the Visitation



This is a story waiting to be told! We all know Saint Thérèse of Lisieux had 4 sisters: Marie, Pauline, Léonie and Céline and we also know Pauline, Marie and Céline with their cousin Marie Guérin entered the Carmelites but do you know what became of Léonie?

We, the Visitandines in Canada since 1910, are happy to reveal that on June 30, 1899, she entered the Order of the Visitation, founded through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by Saint Francis de Sales and Saint Jane de Chantal "to give to God daughters of prayer, and souls so interior that they may be found worthy to serve His infinite Majesty and to adore Him in spirit and in truth." It is here that she truly lived the essence of her contemplative life.

There may well be a fourth saint in the Martin family. With the approval of the Visitation nuns of Caen, Mgr. Jean-Claude Boulanger, Bishop of Bayeux and Lisieux, introduced the cause of the Beatification and Canonization of Sister Françoise-Thérèse (Léonie Martin), who, since December 18, 2014, has been called "the Servant of God." This is the first step in the canonization process.



Marie Léonie Martin was born on June 3, 1863, to Louis and Zélie Martin in Alençon. Little Léonie was the third born to the Martins. From a young age, Léonie's health was always in a fragile state and a constant issue. One day Léonie was sick and suffering

from convulsions. Her mother prayed for her to be cured if she were to become a saint. Léonie overcame this sickness, but it was not to be the last time.

Growing up, Léonie was referred to as the difficult daughter. She had no inherent talents and school was a struggle. She was in constant defiance of her parents and teachers. Her mother, Zélie, became concerned for Léonie and therefore sent her to boarding school at the Visitation convent in Le Mans. Zélie entrusted Léonie to her sister, Sister Marie-Dosithée, a nun at the Visitation. She made a connection with Léonie and saw her potential to become a Visitandine sister. Léonie's time at Le Mans was cut short just as she was beginning to form a relationship with her aunt. Sister Marie-Dosithée fell ill and was close to death. At this time, Léonie wrote her aunt a note revealing her initial call to become a "true religious." When Marie, the oldest Martin sister, asked what she meant by a true religious Léonie replied, "To be a saint."



With the grace of God Léonie began her quest to join a religious order. Léonie's heart was not set on the Carmel, unlike the rest of her sisters. She first tried to join the Poor Clares, but was forced out due to her constant poor health. Then, she set her eyes on the Visitation in Caen. She would go to the convent and have to retreat back home due to illness. After three attempts, she was finally accepted into the convent. Léonie received the name Sister Françoise-Thérèse and became the second Thérèse in the Martin family. The two sisters would write letters to one another. In these letters, Thérèse would remind Léonie to remain little as she was adjusting to religious life. Léonie came to follow and practise Thérèse's Little Way so familiar to the visitandine way of life.



Léonie spent the rest of her life at the monastery of Caen. It's at the age of 78 years that she "walked into Life" and entered into Heaven. Her flight "towards the

eternal Splendors" confirms what the faithful from several parts of the world have testified to her delicate intercession. Léonie went from being a "difficult child" to a "loved and admired nun" for her humility, simplicity and smallness. With the help of her sister, St. Thérèse, she developed a beautiful soul, and we hope that she will join her sister and her parents in the communion of saints.

It was said in a letter from the superior of the monastery of Caen to the Carmelites of Lisieux in the aftermath of Léonie's death: "... we all unanimously proclaim the fragrance of edification left by the humility, obedience, and delicate love of our beloved Angel who flew off to the eternal Splendors. Her memory will remain with us as a blessing and... veneration."

The entire community of the Visitation held Léonie as an example of uplifting humility, obedience and delicate charity. These expressions are the synthesis of the important areas of the religious and human qualities of our servant of God's existence. The most obvious sign of humility is the readiness to obey. This is the characteristic of those who have nothing dearer to them than Christ.

We are grateful to the Martins for the gift of Thérèse, and hopefully soon, Léonie. To keep current on Léonie's beatification process, visit leoniemartin.com

To honour the 75th anniversary of Léonie's death and entry into Heaven on June 17, 1941, Father Antonio Sangalli, Postulator for Léonie's cause, has proclaimed this a year "Léonienne". This Jubilee gives the Visitandines in Canada the opportunity to make known Léonie, her life and her Salesian spirituality.

Accounts of graces received through the intercession of "the Servant of God" may be sent to: visitation@leonie-martin.fr or by mail to:

MONASTÈRE DE LA VISITATION
3, rue de l'Abbatiale, F-14000
CAEN, FRANCE

Sources of information:

Letter of Father Antonio Sangalli of July 2, 2016
Letter of Sister Marie-Agnès Debon, June 18, 1941 to Mother Agnès, St. Thérèse of Lisieux's sister
The Life of Léonie Martin (Sister Françoise-Thérèse) written by the Monastery of the Visitation at Caen/La vie de Léonie Martin (Sœur Françoise-Thérèse) écrit par le monastère de la Visitation de Caen
http://www.martinsisters.org/sister_francoise_therease.html
http://www.helpfellowship.org/Sr_Francoise-Therease.htm

Monasteries in Canada:

Monastère de la Visitation d'Ottawa à Pembroke
1127 Pembroke St. W.
Pembroke, ON K8A 5R3
e-mail: ctkayton@gmail.com

Monastère de la Visitation de La Pocatière
1430, 4^e avenue Painchaud
La Pocatière, QC G0R 1Z0
e-mail: j_berger11946@videotron.ca

Parish Mission assists newly-formed Carmelite study group

Submitted by Carmel Farmer

"Prayer is the oil in the engine of life." Such are the words of wisdom spoken by Fr. Dominic Borg, Order of the Discalced Carmelites (OCD) in the parish mission he presented on the weekend of October 23, 2016, at St. Andrew Parish in Killaloe, Ontario. Born in Malta, Fr. Dominic studied theology and was ordained a priest in 1972. Further studies in philosophy, as well as the Biblical languages of Greek and Hebrew, equipped him for work with international Biblical translators. In 1989, at the invitation of Bishop John Michael Sherlock, he was sent by his Order and became the Founding Father of the Order of Discalced Carmelites in English-speaking Canada. His knowledge and love of scripture flow from his heart and is contagious.

In a prelude to this mission, Fr. Michael Goring, pastor of St. Andrew Parish, attended a Discalced Carmelite Secular Order (OCDS) Congress held in Toronto, which was organized by Fr. Dominic. As a fruit of this experience Fr. Mike took up the task of encouraging and supporting the formation of an OCDS Study Group in the Killaloe and Barry's Bay area. We now have four members who aspire to this lay vocation and meet on a monthly basis. Needless to say, the group especially benefited from Fr. Dominic's presentation of the mission.

Over the three days dedicated to the well-attended parish mission, Fr. Dominic expounded much on prayer and encouraged and explained the Liturgy of the Hours, the Breviary, which contains the Psalms. He says, "All Scripture is the word of God but the Psalms express the feelings of joy, pain, fear, trust, and depression of man speaking to God." Fr. Dominic speaks of prayer as "tuning in to the wavelength of God" where we enter

into that secret room in our hearts and we share with sincerity our joys and sorrows. "God acts and we react. He showers blessings and we praise Him."

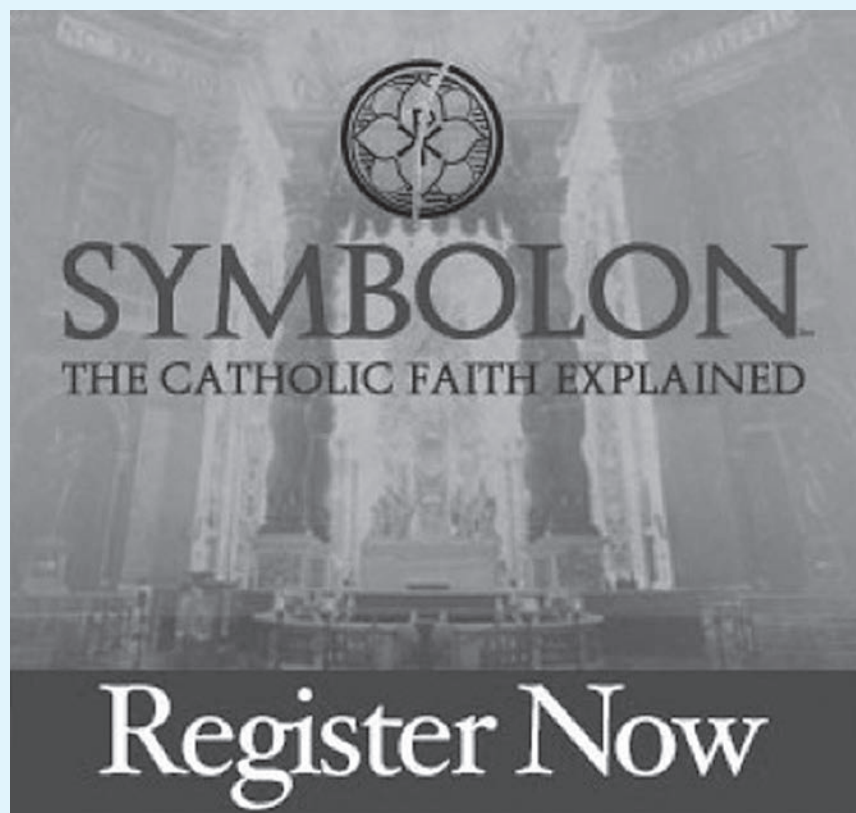
Of course, Fr. Dominic quotes the great Carmelite Doctor of the Church, Teresa of Avila, who defines prayer, "Mental prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us." We do not find time, but we "make time to spend with God". Fr. Dominic quoted Saint Mother Teresa's definition of prayer as "the enlargement of the heart until it is capable of containing God." Fr. Dominic says, "Prayer is the service of the heart" and "Crying is the 'sweat' of the soul." In his talks Fr. Dominic expressed a great sense of humour from the ordinary events of life.

By inviting Fr. Dominic to our diocese for the first time, Fr. Goring hoped to give his parishioners and others an opportunity to experience Carmelite Spirituality firsthand. Fr. Dominic explained that Carmelite Spirituality is very much rooted in the Scriptures, especially the Old Testament, since the Order traces its roots to the prophet Elijah. After the final parish mission talk, our study group was able to have brunch with Fr. Dominic and then he led our monthly meeting. The Killaloe community truly profited from Fr. Dominic's preaching and words of wisdom.

Carmel Farmer is the leader of study group. She has been a professed Carmelite for 18 years and a member of the OCDS Community in Ottawa. Patricia Pristanski is a recently professed OCDS member and is assistant leader of the group. Fr. Goring is the Spiritual Advisor to the group and allows the group to meet monthly at St. Andrew's Church. Anyone considering a secular vocation



as an OCDS member is welcome to contact Pat Pristanski at 613-756-2267. The group is currently composed of four aspirants, who will complete the one-year formation in June 2017. New aspirants are welcomed once a year and require a pastoral reference and interview to assure the suitability of the candidate for a secular religious vocation.



Please join us during this Lenten Season for
PART FOUR

**Location: St. Columbkille
Cathedral Parish Hall
188 Renfrew Street, Pembroke
6:30 p.m.**

Monday February 27, 2017

All are welcome. First, Second and Third Sessions are available upon request. To register, contact Deacon Adrien Chaput at the Office of Faith Formation for the Diocese of Pembroke at 613-732-7933 ext. 206 or dcadrienchaput@pembrokediocese.com

Saint André Bessette

Feast day: January 7

By Deacon Adrien Chaput

In the northern sector of Upper Richelieu in Saint-Grégoire d'Iberville, Quebec, Alfred Bessette was born on August 9, 1845. He was the eighth child of a French Canadian family whose parents were Isaac and Clothilde Bessette. They were devout Catholics who led their children in the ways of faith.

Alfred was ill from birth. Fearing that he might not survive, his father had him baptized the very next day in the "Chapel/Rectory" of St. Grégoire Parish by Father Pierre Albert Sylvestre. When Alfred was 10 years old, Mr. Bessette died in a lumbering accident not far from the town of Farnham, Québec.

Alfred's mother tried raising the children by herself, but she became ill with tuberculosis. When Alfred was 12 years old, his mother died on November 20, 1857. After his mother's funeral, the children were separated and taken in charge by other members of the family or generous friends. Alfred always recalled his mother's gentle, loving ways. As Alfred shared, "Probably due to the fact that I was most sickly, my mother showed more affection to me than to the other children and also took greater care of me. She kissed me more often than I deserved... how I loved her!"

This love brought him great comfort for he was left orphaned, separated from his brothers and sisters, but he continued the journey the Lord had prepared for him.

Alfred later recalled: "When I was living with my uncle and was very young, I could not go to school much because I was always sick. Once I tried to become a shoemaker, but I could not stand bending over and being inside the place so much, and my health made me give it up. Then, after a little while, when I thought I was strong enough, I tried to become a baker, but again I found that my health would not let me do inside work. It seems that I was never very strong." His greatest strengths were his strong faith, personal holiness and a persevering devotion to St. Joseph.

Alfred had tried to find work in the United States, but after a few years, he returned to Québec. On his return he met his childhood parish priest who encouraged him to consider a vocation to religious life and directed Alfred to the Congregation of the Holy Cross with a note that said, "I am sending you a saint."

Initially he was not accepted as a candidate because of his ill health, but eventually through the assistance of the Archbishop of Montréal he was admitted into the Holy Cross Novitiate on December 27, 1870. There he took on the given name of his childhood Parish Priest Father André Provençal and from that moment was known as "Brother André". Because of his poor health and the absence of a formal education, on December 20, 1871, Brother André was assigned as doorkeeper, infirmarian, and lamp keeper at Notre Dame College in Montreal. His responsibilities also included running errands, caring for the garden, cutting students' hair, managing the laundry and working as a general factotum (handyman). After a while, his daily duties consisted of greeting visitors and tending to their needs.

On August 22, 1872, Brother André made his first vows and on February 2, 1874, he pronounced his final vows at the age of 28.

Brother André was a very humble man who cared for people. Many of those for whom he prayed experienced physical healings and his reputation as a vessel of God's healing power through the intercession of St. Joseph became well known. Such crowds came to see him that the Congregation allowed him to meet the sick people at a trolley station across the street.

Brother André sought to encourage the faithful to have devotion to St. Joseph, and he was inspired and determined to establish a shrine to this favourite Saint, across the street from Notre Dame College. Brother André worked hard to save money for the construction by giving haircuts at five cents apiece until eventually he had accumulated two hundred dollars to construct a simple structure. The Shrine opened on October 19, 1904, and in 1909, after almost forty years dedicated service at the college, Brother André gave up his duties as doorkeeper and was assigned full-time caretaker of St. Joseph's Oratory.

Many faithful made pilgrimages to the Oratory, and plans were made to construct a large basilica. Brother André dedicated the rest of his life to receive the long lines of sick visitors who flocked to the Oratory from 1909 to 1936 to seek his prayerful intercession to St. Joseph for God's healing. Many from our diocese made pilgrimages over the years and some also reported having received healing. This humble religious brother became known as the "Miracle Man of Montréal," and thousands of miraculous healings were credited to his intercession over the many years.

Brother André died on January 6, 1937, at the age of 91. During the week that his body lay in state outside of St. Joseph's Oratory, an estimated one million people



braved the bitter Montréal winter to pay their respects. The basilica was eventually completed and remains a major pilgrimage site, attracting more than two million visitors a year. The side chapels are filled with crutches of people healed by the Lord through Saint André's prayers. On November 7, 1940, the cause for the Beatification of Brother André was opened. He was beatified by Saint John Paul II on May 23, 1982. On October 17, 2010, during the Solemn Rite of Canonization in Saint Peter's Square in Rome, Pope Benedict XVI raised Blessed André to Sainthood, and introduced him to the Universal Church.

Now, eighty years after his death and approaching the seventh anniversary of his canonization, we come with the same expectant faith as the pilgrims who have travelled and continue to travel to St. Joseph's Oratory. We ask Saint André Bessette to intercede with St. Joseph on our behalf for God's healing in our lives.

A Prayer for Healing to St. André Bessette

Saint André,

I come to you in prayer for healing.

(State your need)

You were no stranger to illness.

*Plagued by stomach problems,
you knew suffering on a daily basis,
but you never lost faith in God.*

*Thousands of people
have sought your healing touch
as I do today.*

*Pray that I might be restored to health
in body, soul, and mind.*

*With St. Joseph as my loving Protector,
strengthen my faith and give me peace
that I might accept God's will for me
no matter the outcome. Amen.*

Catechist Formation Day

By Lance Patriquin

A recent day for catechists from throughout the diocese provided the opportunity to reflect on some positive approaches to contemporary challenges in sharing faith and providing sacramental preparation for young people in our parish communities.

From this author's viewpoint, it is increasingly evident that in today's culture people of faith are often attacked and ridiculed. Many know firsthand the indifference towards spiritual needs that afflicts persons who once were supported within strong families and vibrant faith communities. It is getting harder and harder to find families that pray together, and we all know friends and relatives who have drifted away from religious practice.

Ministers of the church see firsthand the effects of these problems. Priests, deacons, religious and lay ministers all know from experience that God takes a backseat for many families. Today's secular society puts more effort into sports, movies, politics, etc. When it comes to their faith, parents want the sacraments for their children. Unfortunately, many do not want to fulfill their obligations in regards to the covenant that they made when they, themselves, received them, nor in assisting their children to fulfill theirs. Those who are catechists see this as a major stumbling block to their ministry and know how difficult it is to deal with. It was out of this expressed concern that approximately 30 catechists from throughout the Diocese came together at a Catechist Formation Day on November 5. The event was organized by Deacon Adrien Chaput and his team from the Diocesan Office of Faith Formation and was held at Most Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Pembroke.

The day started with morning prayer in the church. The beautiful prayers and the music played by Mr. Leo Rochon were an inspirational start to this gathering. There is no better way to recognize the call of God to our ministry as catechists and to touch our hearts with the peace and love that He offers us. We then had time for a short meet and greet where we had a

chance to discuss the different challenges, solutions, and formats being used in other parishes for sacramental preparation. It is fair to say that after speaking to others, the challenges are universal, albeit in varying degrees; and the possible solutions and programs are many. How do parish catechists know what program is right for their candidate? Every parish has its own circumstances, issues, and constraints to deal with. Our concerns were soon addressed by a unique video and some simple, sound advice from Father Howard Chabot.

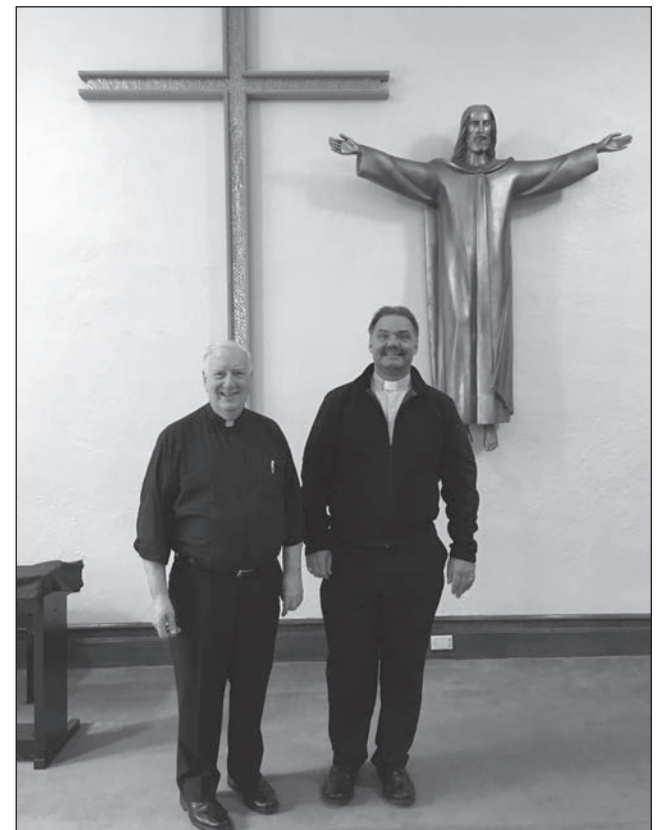
The video was called *Celebrating What is Right with the World* by Dewitt Jones. He is a retired photographer for National Geographic with a message that is so simple, so profound and so clear that it stops you in your tracks. That message is that we should not let perception control reality. Do not take things for granted. Don't be indifferent or dismissive. Rather than citing the failings, find and celebrate the good that is always there. One example he used was a picture of a puffball dandelion shot from above. It looked like a piece of fluff and not very impressive. Then he took a picture of it from below with the sun directly behind the flower, and it was amazing! It shows that we can be jaded to everyday things and that we don't take enough time to appreciate everyone and everything in our lives. Dewitt's message was inspirational for our everyday lives, but Father Chabot tied it directly into our role as catechists.

Anyone who has heard Father Chabot preach will tell you that he is a gifted speaker, who can talk to many people at once, and yet each individual feels that he is talking directly to him or her. As the guest speaker at the Formation Day, he did not disappoint. With his usual good-natured manner and lots of jokes and anecdotes, he spoke about our role as catechists and evangelists. He stressed that it is up to us to offset or combat the problems that were mentioned at the beginning of this article.

He said it is not easy, but we should use the example of Jesus' love for everyone as how to deal

with the problems that face not only those who prepare candidates for the sacraments but, more importantly, the candidates themselves. He emphasized that every person has his or her own circumstances in their lives. We do not know how they ended up with us at this time, or in this manner. He said that we must believe in God's plan and to follow His teaching that we are not to judge. Accept the fact that you are interacting with this person now, and make the absolute best of it. While it is easy to complain about how hard our job is to catechize when the person is not receptive, we must continue to empathize with that person. We must love them unconditionally, and offer any support we can. We do not know what they are going through, but they are present. He went on to say that catechists may be the only contact that person has with their faith, and although it may not be evident now, this interaction can have a profound effect on his or her spiritual life. It seems quite simple when you stop and think about it. There is nothing hard to understand. The answer is right in front of us. Jesus shows us the way. We are to follow His lead. Not just those who are catechists, but ALL of us. "We often look for teaching methods," said Father Chabot, "but we need look no further than the Gospels where Jesus sends the messengers back to tell John the Baptist what they have heard and what they have seen. We need to remember that like Jesus we teach not only by what we say, but by what we do." Father Chabot challenged us to remember that what we do and how we do it are very important, but our real success comes when we recognize that we do it out of love for God, love for God's people and trust that "the Lord who begins every good work will bring it to completion."

After every Mass, we receive the mandate: "The Mass is ended. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord... to proclaim the Gospels with our lives." Here we receive a reminder that we are to live by Christ's example and go out to share the Good News wherever He calls us all to evangelize. In that sense, we are ALL catechists.



Faustina: Messenger of Divine Mercy

By Tina Rodrigue, parishioner of Our Lady of Sorrows Parish, Petawawa

On the tail end of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, October 1, 2016, the Diocese of Pembroke brought the live production of *Faustina: Messenger of Divine Mercy*, to Festival Hall Centre of the Arts in Pembroke.

Put together by Saint Luke Productions, it was a one-woman play that reflected upon the life and diary entries of Saint Faustina and the integral role she played as the key messenger in the birth and development of the Divine Mercy devotion. The play was intertwined with video narratives including flash forwards into the modern day of two troubled souls seeking peace, forgiveness and God's merciful love in their life's choices of misgivings. It was a true piece of modernized art in that it was enjoyable, but it also encouraged the audience to think deeper into life and, appropriately so, soul search. It was inspiring and thought provoking as it made us not only reflect on our own lives, but also others around us, and the magnificent beauty of how our threads of life are all intertwined.

Maria Vargo brought down the house with a riveting performance of acting and singing with the result being a very soul-stirring masterpiece. With the voice of an angel, Maria captivated and brought us along Sister Faustina's emotional journey of faith, persistence, obedience, doubt, devotion and, ultimately,

her dedicated trust in Jesus in bringing about the message of The Divine Mercy. Ironically, Maria not only captured hearts as the Saint but also the sinner. In video clips, she portrayed a modern woman struggling with society's pressures of the image of a perfect life with a not-so-perfect soul. In a finale, Maria blessed the audience that night with a gift of a song. Appropriately, the show was wrapped up and tied with a bow when Maria shared her beautiful creation that was inspired by The Divine Mercy titled 'Trust in Me.'

"For the sake of his sorrowful passion, have mercy on us and the whole world." As we witnessed in the play and know all too well, it was a troubled and complicated world in the time Saint Faustina lived, and yet the complications and the troubles still prevail today, with issues of the growing numbers of abortion and even more recently in Canada, legalized euthanasia. How true those words of remembering Jesus's ultimate sacrifice resonated loudly with Remembrance Day on the tail end of the Jubilee year as well. Lest we forget, such a good message Remembrance Day brings that also is very appropriate when reflecting upon the Divine Mercy. "For the sake of his sorrowful passion, have Mercy on us and the whole world"... For the sake of Jesus's sorrowful passion, Lest we forget the ultimate sacrifice given to us by God and the message that no matter what a person has done or not done in their own life, God is still merciful and loving above all.

A performance such as this cannot be successful without the behind-the-scenes expertise of a great stage manager. Much gratitude and appreciation is due to Nicole Scofield, Stage Manager, for the Faustina production. Nicole is also a graduate of Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Academy in Barry's Bay.



Maria Vargo.



Many thanks to the volunteers who put together and took down the set: Chris Paulusse, Bernard Drapeau, Steven Henry, Deacon Adrien Chaput, Maria Vargo (Faustina Actress), Larry Henry, Cyrille Chaput, Nicole Scofield (Faustina Stage Manager), and Andrew Bing.

The Catholic Review of Books provides a resource for reading

By Father Tim Moyle

Ecclesia recently had the opportunity to interview Dr. Colin Kerr, PhD (theology), on his recent project, *The Catholic Review of Books*. It is a high-gloss publication published from his home office in Barry's Bay and stands as another tremendous resource emanating from the dynamic Catholic community built around Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Academy where he worked as a professor until 2011.

Ecclesia: What inspired you to start the CRB?

I have long thought about this. I never thought I would be able to bring something like this to fruition. I didn't know anything about printing and had no money. But I wanted to share my love of books. Books had done so much for me; I thought they could do things just as ideal for others. Books taught me about Jesus and His Church and the world that God has always been a part of. They fed and directed my questioning. Books by Plato and Tolstoy got me thinking about the bigger questions of life when I was in high school. Books brought me into the Catholic Church when I was just seventeen years old. And it was books like Augustine's *Confessions*, *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, and *St. Gregory's Life of St. Benedict* that started to make me thirst for holiness. In time, I came to see that God could not be figured out, but that the whole mystery of life was meant to lead us to Him. The whole world

is about God, and literature has a privileged place in that. Literature is the record of the world's greatest minds and hearts thinking about the bigger picture. I wanted to share this insight with others, that it could be a blessing to them as it was for me. Now, so many years later, I have a PhD in theology and think that I have a duty to share what I've learned with others.

Ecclesia: How do you see the CRB as an example of lay ecclesial leadership/involvement in the model of Pope Francis?

My papal model is Pope Benedict. He loves truth for its own sake, and so do I. He realized that all truth is from and can draw us back to Christ. His life is proof to me that bookworms have a role to play in the Church, too. However, I have had to learn the hard way that lay leadership in the Church is not a given and is not all that it's cracked up to be. You have to find your path, not presume that there is any slot prepared for you to fit into. Pope Francis gives some credibility to this. Everything in the Church doesn't have to be clerical. "Being in the Church" means being the way God wants you to be a Christian. Pope Francis has certainly wanted us to learn this.

Ecclesia: How do you get the reviews that are published in the CRB?

So far, I am the author of far too many of them! I love writing, but I don't want the Review to be about

me, but, as I said, the "perspectives of Catholics." Besides those written by me, some old friends, some new friends that I made precisely through the magazine itself, and people who have only just heard of it and reached out to me, have shared their love of books in our pages. I have had scholars write reviews; stay-at-home moms, grandmas, journalists, authors and students write reviews. So far writers from Canada, the U.S., and England have had reviews published in the CRB. I am always looking for contributions! I have only two requirements in a prospective author: they are Catholic in the broadest sense of the word and love books. You don't have to be primarily intellectual or schooled. We talk about every kind of books—Catholic classics, new Catholic books, world literature, fiction, non-fiction, books for teens and kids. Anyone, anyone at all, interested in sharing their love of a certain book, series, or author should send me an email!

Ecclesia: How does one go about obtaining a subscription and what does it cost?

You can get a subscription by going to our website: www.catholicreviewofbooks.com/subscribe. You can subscribe online, or you can mail or email me. It costs \$40 for a year's subscription (4 issues). I am hoping that the Review will become available in Catholic bookstores—please ask your favourite one to start carrying it!

THE OFFICE OF FAITH FORMATION AND THE FAMILY LIFE AND YOUTH MINISTRY OFFICE OF THE DIOCESE OF PEMBROKE INVITE YOU TO **DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY**



Sunday, April 23, 2017
2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
St. Columbkille Cathedral
188 Renfrew St., Pembroke, ON

GUEST SPEAKER:
FATHER HOWARD CHABOT
SOCIAL TIME IN HALL
AFTER PRAYER SERVICE

For more information, please contact Deacon Adrien Chaput at 613-732-7933 ext. 206 or dcadrienchaput@pembrokedioocese.com at the Diocese of Pembroke.

New directors general at Madonna House

Madonna House of Combermere recently saw the election of three new Directors General, all of whom will serve a four-year term. All three were kind enough to share some of their time with *Ecclesia* to tell us about themselves and their roles.

Larry Klein—Director General of Laymen

Klein has been a staff member with Madonna House since 1975. Most of that time was spent working St. Benedict's Acres farm for 20 years as both a gardener and farm manager. He was also assigned to the Marian Centre in Edmonton, the prayer house for the United States government on Capitol Hill and four years in Robin Hood's Bay in Yorkshire, England.

"Since my election as men's director, I have received a particular responsibility for the 33 laymen and six men applicants," said Klein.

"This includes being a friend and brother, but also asking them for the sacrifices that any particular assignment will bring to them, for the sacrifice of life together. With the other two directors—we three are called to serve together the whole family with love, unity, care and enthusiasm."

Klein explained how the election process takes place at Madonna House.

"We have elections every four years and we vote by what we call sobornost," said Klein.

"We vote every two months or so until we have unanimous agreement. The time of elections is a special holy time of giving ourselves over to God's will. We take the time necessary for the purification of our hearts – usually three or four months."

He also mentioned the integral need for directors to support each other in their roles.

"Our goal as directors is to lead the whole family to more unity, faith and love," said Klein.

"Our primary way of doing this is by the unity we directors have with each other. The unity in our community of laymen, women and clergy requires our own unity together as directors."

Elizabeth Bassarear—Director General of Laywomen

Prior to arriving at Madonna House in 1981, Bassarear had worked for several years as a rural nurse in Appalachia in the United States. She had always felt the need to help the poor, feeling a call to prayer.

"During my stay here, I felt drawn by 'something' that I saw being lived here—something that I couldn't put my finger on, but which I very much wanted to learn to live," said Bassarear.

"I realized many years later that what drew me was the *mystery* of our faith being lived out in the very ordinariness of daily life—each moment being a hidden communion of His love and ours, and all of it connected with the whole Body of Christ."

During the 35 years at Madonna House, Bassarear has served 16 of those years at the mission house in Brazil.

"We lived in a poor area and had many friends among the poor who were our neighbours, and had many well-to-do friends and benefactors who also felt at home in our house," said Bassarear.



Father David Linder, Elizabeth Bassarear, and Larry Klein

"We often received live-in guests who wanted to learn about incarnating the Gospel in daily life and, as in most of our houses, we had space available for people to make a 'desert' day, or poustinia, as we call it, using the Russian word."

As for being a Director General, Bassarear looked to the words of Catherine Doherty in describing her passion for serving in this position.

"Catherine Doherty taught us that *To Govern is to Love*, and she kept in her cabin a plaque with these words carved on it," said Bassarear.

"This phrase describes not simply a call to love, but a grace that is given with the position. What this grace looks like in my current daily life, in serving the 140 women of Madonna House, is a deep desire to hear the heart of the person and then, in silence and waiting, listen to the heart of God for what he wants for the person."

Father David Linder—Director General of Priests

Originally from Illinois, Father Linder joined Madonna House in 1984. Since assuming his position as Director General, he has experienced what he calls 'full circles' in relation to his time with Madonna House.

"In November, the three of us directors general, all relatively new at our posts, went on our first formal 'visitation' together," said Father Linder.

"We visited Maryhouse in Whitehorse, Yukon, where our first mission was established in 1954. In part, it was a journey back through 62 years of apostolic presence

in that northern town. First circle: we 'newbies' touched some of our oldest foundations. Our presence had a relatively singular focus: to listen to the Spirit for direction regarding our members who serve there and our apostolate in that diocese."

"Second circle: It was in that very neighborhood where we still serve that God called me to my Madonna House vocation in 1984. At the time, I was a volunteer for the diocese, teaching in a northern mining outpost. While I was visiting Whitehorse and was ensconced in one of the prayer rooms Maryhouse made available to the public, the Lord told me to return to Combermere and join, saying this was 'not just any family, but my family.' What a gift!"

Upon reflecting on his role as Director General, Father Linder told of the need to be true to one's spiritual faith.

"As for leadership, it is not so much about skills as about authenticity—living the life, faithful to our spirit," said Father Linder.

"Leading by example opens hearts to the beauty of this life—the Gospel vision of our foundress Catherine Doherty. Then any other skill the Lord has given the three of us will be utilized and find its proper place. As for the title 'director general', it is a bit deceptive. We are called directors, true, but 'listeners' might be more appropriate. If we are not listening to the Spirit—discerning God's plan and not ours—if we are not listening to each other, bowing before the other instead of asserting some agenda of our own, then this community will begin to die."

Margaret, Memories, and Maestros

by Susan Dagenais

As I quietly stood at the October Life Chain rally, holding my placard, 'Life the Inalienable Right', I wondered about the tiny elderly woman standing next to me. Oh, I could call her by name alright, Margaret Thuemen, but did I really know her?

Margaret's life began in Weingarten, Germany, on July 6, 1927. She remembers her hometown, in the centre of which stood a Benedictine monastery surrounded by hills and vineyards.

"We had Sunday walks. Everyone walked and sang folk songs. Germany is a singing nation."

Margaret grew up during Hitler's regime. "No religion was taught in schools. I received my religious training from the monks at the Benedictine monastery. I was very fortunate."

Margaret handed me the little brown leather-bound Latin missal that her mother had given her in 1942. "I still use it today," she giggled. "I bring it with me to the Cathedral Latin Masses every Saturday morning. Very little of the Latin Mass has changed, except for a few new saints."

Margaret can well boast having Franz Gruber, the composer of *Silent Night*, as a paternal relative. The hymn *Silent Night* is considered world-wide as "The Carol of Peace" and is sung in more than 300 languages and dialects.

Margaret's family encouraged her love for all things musical through piano lessons. Is it any wonder that this young woman was to meet, fall in love with, and marry a talented young music teacher? Oh! And not just any music teacher: Pembroke's very own Horst Thuemen.

Some years after their wedding, Mr. Thuemen travelled ahead to Canada to secure a job and accommodations for his family. Three-and-a-half months later, Margaret and their two young daughters boarded an ocean liner for Halifax.

"It wasn't first class travelling. Immigrants were placed below. I remember I brought a little set of clothespins with me. There were no disposable diapers in those days. Each night, I would hang the clean diapers up on a makeshift clothesline. One morning, I woke to find the diapers lying wet in the bottom of a sink and in their place someone's undergarments. I can assure you the girls had no dry diapers that day."

Disembarking at Halifax Harbour was not a pretty sight, with makeshift huts everywhere and hundreds of people scrambling to exit the ship. After clearing Customs, our three weary travellers boarded a train for the long ride to Ottawa.

"It was a nightmare! I just wanted to turn around and go home. Thank God Horst was there in Ottawa to meet us!"

During those early years in Ottawa, Mr. Thuemen took any and every job he could in order to support his loved ones. While Horst was working at Simpsons-Sears repairing furniture, a local priest heard that Horst could play the organ.

"Horst got a break. The priest told Horst that Casavant Organs was looking for a service man. And so, we moved to Almonte. Horst travelled up and down the Valley servicing organs. On one of his many service trips, he met Victor Tangier, a musician



Margaret and Horst's wedding day in Weingarten, Germany.

who was the organist at the Cathedral in Pembroke. Victor was heading off to the University of Toronto and asked Horst to take over his job as organist at the Cathedral."

So, Mr. and Mrs. Thuemen once again packed up their little family and moved to Pembroke. They purchased the last house still available for sale on Patricia Street. Their house was just a stone's throw from Our Lady of Lourdes School.

Not only did Mr. Thuemen play the magnificent Casavant organ at the Cathedral for more than 50 years, but he also tuned that masterpiece himself!

"Horst had such a fine ear. He could hear the slightest deviation in pitch. It was never a chore for him. That organ was Horst's life! It was his joy!"

What about Margaret? Did she continue playing music?

"When Father John Harrington found out that I could play the piano, he handed me a key to Our Lady of Lourdes School gym. The gym was the temporary church, as the new church was still but a giant hole in the ground."

Every Saturday evening, when her children were in bed, Margaret walked over to the school gym to practise on the old pump organ.

"I had never played on a pump organ before."

When the new church opened its doors to its eager congregation, Margaret Thuemen became Our Lady of Lourdes' first organist.

"I remember the choir members and the organist were hidden behind a partition to the left of the altar."

Margaret was always busy. On Saturday mornings, she offered classical music and exercise classes to both boys and girls in the church basement. Sometimes, she introduced German folk dances and culture as well.

When the new seniors' residence was built on Bell Street, Margaret, who said she always liked seniors, wrote a letter to the County to ask if they would like someone to teach crafts to the residents.

Margaret shared her expertise and love for music and crafts with the residents at Miramichi Lodge for 18 years. She taught weaving, cross-stitching, knitting, pottery, and recreation through music. Margaret designed quilt patterns, and many quilts were made by the elderly. She ordered real sheep wool, and the residents knitted socks and crafted afghans together.



Church choir. Horst is fifth from left in back row

They even had a clay oven. Margaret would bring her record player from home and play classical music.

"After a while, everyone was singing along. It was a good time! We would have coffee and cookies and great talks."

Margaret continued to return to Miramichi Lodge long after her retirement. "I went visiting those who had no visitors."

Margaret was among those who founded Renfrew County Right to Life. She wrote many letters to the editor and briefs for local politicians. Margaret has attended most Marches for Life in Ottawa. Early on, Margaret foresaw the dangers we are facing today. Many thousands of unborn children are killed in Canada every year.

Music remains a favourite in the lives of the Thuemen family. Imagine four Thuemens, all members of Pembroke's Community Choir at the same time: Margaret, her daughter Barb, her son Chris, and her grandson Michael.

Margaret returns to Germany every four or five years. "Flying used to be luxury travel. Now it is no fun. Everyone is squeezed in."

Margaret has observed many changes in her lifetime. She feels that in today's modern music, accompaniment is overshadowing singing, and that this makes it difficult to understand the lyrics. Margaret likes to attend classical music concerts. She also likes to sing to herself.

The tiny woman who stood next to me during the October Life Chain rally is approaching the nonagenarian plateau. She will celebrate her 90th birthday on July 6. Margaret Thuemen is still driving her own vehicle. She is still living in her own home and cooking her own meals. She enjoys walking, reading and watching EWTN. She never wastes anything and has always been frugal, which she attributes to growing up during the war.

OLSW Knights Host Recruitment Dinner

by Sean Gribbon, 2016 OLSW Alumnus

On Sunday, September 18, 2016, men from the Barry's Bay & Area Council 6894 and Knights of Columbus Round Table at Our Lady Seat of Wisdom, the post-secondary Catholic liberal arts institution in Barry's Bay, hosted a recruitment dinner in St. Hedwig's Parish Hall. The event brought in students and faculty from Our Lady Seat of Wisdom (OLSW), as well as parishioners from throughout the Diocese of Pembroke to learn about the K of C and to consider becoming a brother Knight. The dinner and fellowship was highlighted by the guest speaker, Ontario State Deputy Alain Cayer.

A Knight of Columbus since he was 18, Alain Cayer has served in all K of C executive and district positions. In 2015, he was elected as State Deputy—a prominent leadership position for the purpose of driving regional charitable activities and governing a state or province with the principles of the K of C. Alain's dedication to the K of C and the Church would not be possible without the support and prayers of his family—something to which any vibrant Knight must attribute his endeavours.

Alain Cayer's presentation began with the origins and development of the Knights of Columbus—a Catholic fraternity founded in 1882 by Venerable Fr. Michael J. McGivney, a parish priest of St. Mary's Church in New Haven, Connecticut. The Order developed as a means to unite men in the virtue of charity and allow for a fraternal insurance program aimed to protect widows and orphans after the loss of the primary income earner. Since then, the K of C has become the largest lay Catholic organization in the world, with nearly 2 million members, countless hours of volunteer service, and more than \$100 billion of insurance in force.

The principles of the Knights of Columbus—charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism—were reflected upon by the state deputy in his presentation. Alain commented that whether a man be a student or a parishioner with duties towards family and career, the Knights of Columbus allows one to decide on the amount of time and energy he can give towards serving others and the Church. The good work the Knights do is what led St. John Paul II to refer to the Order as the “strong right arm of the Church.”

The long-standing relationship between the K of C and the papacy was touched upon by Alain in his talk, when he showed the audience a brick that was placed in the Holy Door of the Papal Basilica of St. Paul at the closure of the Jubilee Year 2000 by Pope John Paul II. This brick was recently presented to the State Council as a sign of appreciation for the good work the K of C continues to do.

State Deputy Alain Cayer stressed the importance of having a K of C Round Table at Our Lady Seat of Wisdom as a post-secondary school. He stated that the young men in attendance have the ability to play an important role in strengthening the local Barry's Bay council, serving St. Hedwig's parish, and assisting with the development of OLSW. Student Knights also have the unique option to gain support from the Knights of Columbus with bursaries, scholarships, and fraternal insurance and investment benefits.

Third-year OLSW student and current Round Table Coordinator Ben Lamb shared his thoughts on the relationship between the college and the Knights of Columbus: “The K of C Round Table's presence at OLSW manifests its mission to build up the Church through the leadership of young men. OLSW offers the K of C the privilege to recruit responsible, principled, and intellectually equipped men who graduate into the world as prepared and contributing citizens for the promotion of social justice in the world. Simultaneously, the K of C have the opportunity to promote a uniquely excellent and rigorous institution in Canada, which Our Lady has entrusted in her keeping for 17 years in continuation.”



Speaking on behalf of the Barry's Bay Council and the OLSW Round Table, Grand Knight John Artymko expressed gratitude to the Ontario K of C State Council for its ongoing support, and especially thanked State Deputy Alain Cayer for his informative presentation. In turn, Alain Cayer expressed his appreciation for being invited to speak to the men of OLSW and the Diocese of Pembroke. He concluded that “the Knights of Columbus provides the opportunities to meet great people and to make a difference in someone's life, which a man will never forget as he lives his life and moves closer to heaven. We are here to help others, because we can—because we are Knights of Columbus.”

The Recruitment Dinner proved to be successful, with men from both OLSW and the Diocese as a whole deciding to undertake their First Degree exemplification at the end of September, beginning an experience of a lifetime and becoming a better Catholic as a Knight of Columbus.

Sean Gribbon graduated from Our Lady Seat of Wisdom in 2016 with a Certificate of Christian Humanities, concentrating in Philosophy. He now works as a Knights of Columbus Field Agent in the Diocese of Pembroke and Archdiocese of Kingston, serving brother knights and their families to provide them with the fraternal and insurance benefits of the K of C. He can be contacted at: 613-717-5552 (cell) or sean.gribbon@kofc.org

St. Jean Baptiste Parish celebrates 75th anniversary

When you speak with Claudette Thanasse about being a member of St-Jean-Baptiste Parish in Pembroke, you quickly realize how much passion she has for the church she calls home.

“This parish is unique,” said Thanasse, a member since 2005. “I’ve always gone to a French church. I was amazed at the family atmosphere that exists here.”

It is a family that has persevered for 75 years, and this past October, members both young and old gathered to celebrate the anniversary of their parish. Though some no longer reside in the community, they nonetheless journeyed to partake in the celebration.

Erected along the perimeter of the church grounds that weekend was a visual display of the history of the parish, but also the francophone community of Pembroke. To look upon this vista of the past was to journey into the pioneer days of the Ottawa Valley, when these brave souls laboured to establish a bedrock from which their descendants would prosper. What endured was a community passionate for their culture and faith.

“There are still some parishioners who were here when this church celebrated its first Mass,” said Thanasse, telling of how emotional it is to see those members gathered together again.

“They have such pride in this religious community. It is just such a joy to see all of them coming back, in their 80s and 90s, and they are making the effort to come here this weekend. It really is something special. It almost brings tears to my eyes.”

But St-Jean-Baptiste is more than a church. It is a foundation that members of the francophone community in Pembroke and the surrounding area can gather at to socialize in their native tongue. In doing so, they strive to maintain what their predecessors built so many years ago.

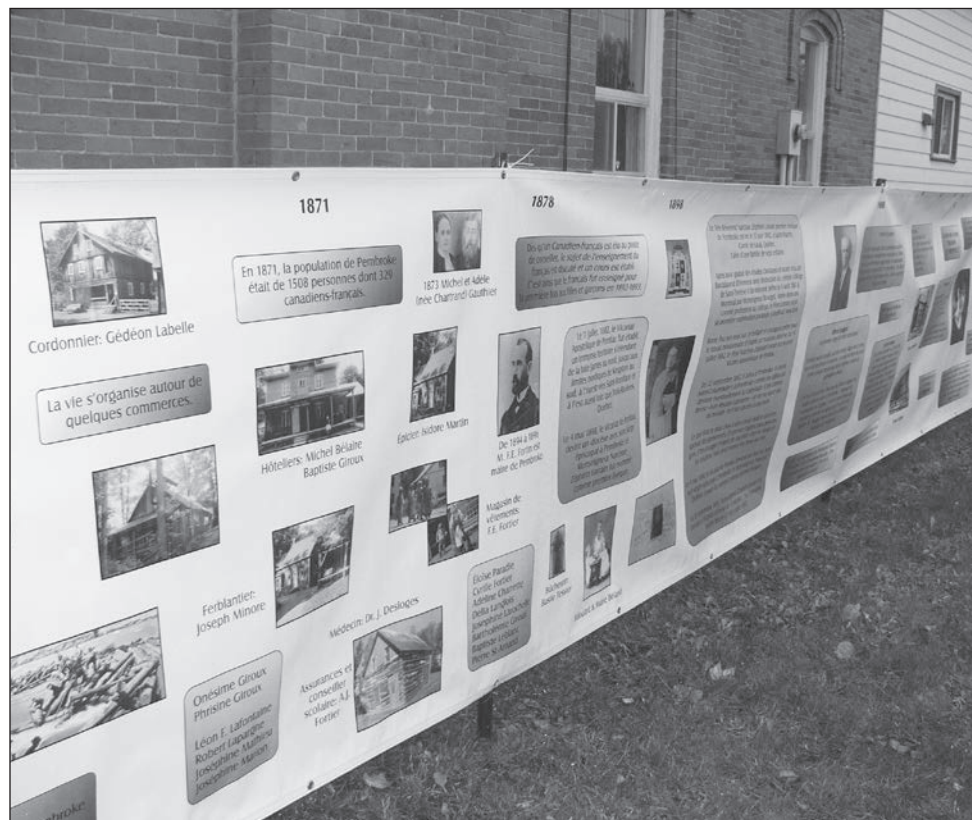
“It’s a way of keeping the traditions alive that exist within this church,” said Thanasse.

“When needed, they all come together. The parish is going to endure.”

For those who did attend, it was a priceless opportunity to reconnect with one another, some of whom they have not seen in many years.

“It’s very important because many of the people are members of families who have been here for a long time,” said Father Michael Smith, current parish priest.

“Some since the beginning, but other families have moved in since then. So a lot of people are reconnecting with relatives and friends. Just in the time that I’ve been here this afternoon, there are family members from out of town who have come here for the weekend. It really is a happy occasion.”



Pierre Beaupré, Claudette Thanasse, Gisèle Marion, Pere Michael Smith, Marg Wendt, Rose-Marie Larivière, Lucile Tourigny, Gerry Bergeron, Florence Duguay and Huguette Frappier.

Added to the celebratory atmosphere was the knowledge that the current church community continues to ensure that the parish flourishes to this day.

“There are many people now who are continuing to build up the parish into the future,” said Father Smith.

“I’m frequently at the school (Centre scolaire catholique Jeanne-Lajoie). The school is my principal point of contact with the young people. On a regular basis when I celebrate Mass with the high school kids, I invite them to Sunday Mass. Lo and behold, there are a few I see from time to time at Sunday Mass.”

But St-Jean-Baptiste also contributes to the preservation of the French language.

“The parish exists to serve the French-speaking community of the area, with the exception of the military base, which has its own chaplaincy,” said Father Smith, who learned to speak French fluently only as a young adult.

“I’ve been bilingual since the age of 20. I had excellent French teachers in school. When I was a seminarian, I was privileged to take immersion courses in Trois-Pistoles, Quebec.”

As a minority within our diocese, the francophone populace of St-Jean-Baptiste provides inspiration to the English-speaking members of our faith community. For they have shown us that we must continue to ensure that our devotion to God prevails in the face of the secular challenges that surround us.

“We try to spread the Gospel, as the Church does everywhere else in our culture,” said Father Smith.

“The only difference is that we do it in French. When you are a linguistic minority, you cannot take the French language for granted. One thing that we are becoming increasingly aware of is that we are a minority as practising Christians as well. As a result, we recognize more than before that we cannot take our faith for granted. So we have to be conscientious to nourish our faith. In that sense, St-Jean-Baptiste is like any other parish.”

A panorama of the history of the francophone community.