

# The New Freeman

January 8, 2021

Vol. 121 No. 02



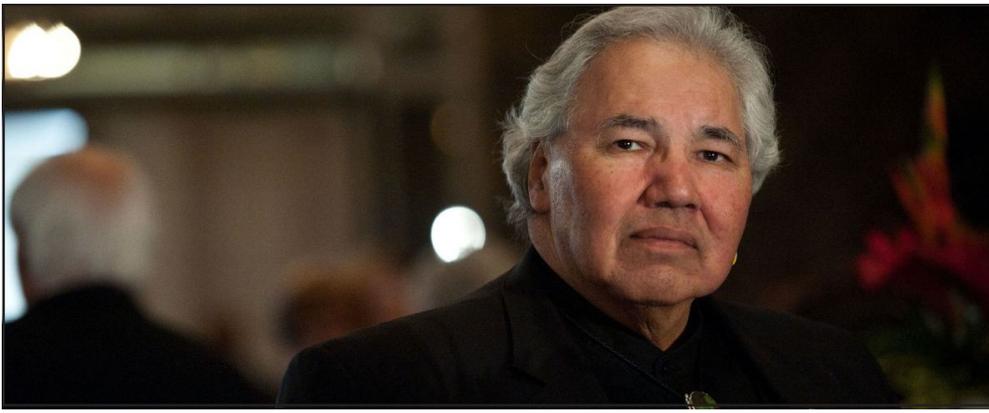
**VATICAN CITY** — Like everyone else, Pope Francis' 2020 was dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic. But when he walked alone into St. Peter's Square March 27 for an "extraordinary moment of prayer," Pope Francis was unlike anyone else. Standing in the rain, he articulated the world's suffering. Story page 4. (CNS Vatican Media)



**FREDERICTON** — Graydon Nicholas was recently named chancellor of St. Thomas University in Fredericton. He was New Brunswick's first Indigenous judge and lieutenant governor. Story page 3. (Web image)



**VANCOUVER** — On December 8, 2015, 16 men made history as the first class of permanent deacons ever ordained in the Archdiocese of Vancouver. Those deacons, having just now celebrated their fifth anniversary, are serving all over the Lower Mainland, in parishes, hospitals, prisons, ports, cemeteries, and First Nations reserves. Story page 9. (The B.C. Catholic photo)



*Murray Sinclair (Web image)*

## **Church leaders, not teaching, at root of Indigenous abuse**

**By RON STANG  
Catholic Register Special**

WINDSOR, ON — It's not Christian teachings that have been at the root of discrimination and oppression in the way whites have treated Indigenous people, but how Church leaders have interpreted those teachings, Senator Murray Sinclair said.

Speaking at an ecumenical event hosted virtually by Windsor, ON's Assumption University December 3 on whether Christians and Indigenous peoples can co-exist, Sinclair said those leaders "have wrongly interpreted the true teachings of the Church."

Mr. Sinclair, who chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and who had been appointed the first Aboriginal judge in Manitoba and the second in Canada, said "reconciliation" between Indigenous and the Church is a "dialogue we need to have."

Mr. Sinclair, who grew up on a reserve north of Winnipeg, was raised Catholic and was told "my future was to become a priest." A seminary had even been chosen for him. But that plan was sidelined as he grew older and realized "it actually was girls who attracted me." But the Catholic teachings he learned under a Jesuit brother dwell in him to this day. What he learned "about humanity, life, about who we are as people, are not so dissimilar to the teachings of traditional Indigenous elders."

But Mr. Sinclair — who will retire from the Senate early in 2021 — said when it comes to the oppression of Indigenous the Church teachings have been used to justify white supremacy. Faith leaders in the past "have wrongly interpreted their responsibility" and applied religious principles "in a way that was harmful to the people."

Mr. Sinclair said much of Canadian and Western history has been one where the

Church aided and abetted widespread discrimination, even genocide.

"The Doctrine of (European) Discovery was a very Christian principle," he said. "It was perpetrated by the pope, initially, and was used in order to authorize the authority of various nations — the Christian nations as they were called — to claim land around the world from Indigenous people who were not considered to be at the same level, in some cases not even considered to be human, because they were not Christian nations."

He referred to the "hue and cry" raised in 1520 by Dominican missionary Bartolomé de Las Casas who had implored the Vatican to do something about the treatment of Indigenous peoples by Columbus' Conquistadors. The Church concluded natives were indeed human beings "but they were of a lesser kind... and continued to claim their lands."

Mr. Sinclair said the problem for someone like him raised as a Catholic was that the entire legacy of oppression and manifestation of discrimination in daily life "was consistent with the teachings of Christianity that had been espoused for so long." And they were "certainly part and parcel of the residential schools' system" of which he is "one of its victims." But the senator said that true Christian teachings of equality and love as equals can be found not just in Indigenous spirituality but in other religions as well.

"It's the loss of the purity of the teaching that often results in things going wrong," he said.

Mr. Sinclair remembers a conversation with a priest who told him Indigenous "believe in too many gods." Sinclair agreed, noting that Indigenous talk to the Earth, the trees, animals.

"You have to understand that one God has put his spirit in all of us, in all of creation," he said. §

# **The New Freeman**

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**Single Copy:** \$1.00  
**Annual Subscription: Canada**  
(NB; NS; NL; ON; PE)  
\$25.00 (HST included)  
**Elsewhere in Canada:**  
\$23.25 (GST included)  
**USA/Other Countries:** \$35.00

**Advertising Rate:**  
\$15.00 per column inch *for most ads.*

**Publishing Date:** Friday  
**Deadline:** Monday noon prior to the publishing date.

**Printed & Distributed by**  
St. Croix Printing Co. Ltd.

**We acknowledge the financial support**  
**of the Government of Canada.**

## **Canada**

**The New Freeman is a**  
**not-for-profit organization.**

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# First lay leader appointed chancellor at St. Thomas

By NATASHA MAZEROLLE  
Correspondent

FREDERICTON — Graydon Nicholas and his wife Beth have been ingrained in the life of St. Thomas University in Fredericton for a long time, and are very invested in the students. So when Mr. Nicholas was appointed as chancellor of the university in December 2020, it is clear there was no better choice for the role.

Speaking with Mr. Nicholas, it is evident how much he cares about this community. Though not an alumni of St. Thomas University, he shared that his brothers studied there. He is actively involved with Indigenous Student Services, and said that, “we have about close to 140 First Nations students on campus which is a large number for the size of the university. And then we also have studies that are taking place on the Tobique First Nation where I’m from, and St. Mary’s First Nations and also from Elsipogtog.”

Mr. Nicholas said that this is a full year appointment, and makes him a member of the Board of Governors at St. Thomas University. He shared that his role will require him to be present at convocations and special dinners, and to be involved in the life of the university as well, something that will not be difficult for Mr. Nicholas as he teaches and serves as the Endowed Chair of Native Studies for the university.

The first lay-leader to hold the position — which has traditionally been held by the bishop of the Diocese of Saint John — Mr. Nicholas hopes to promote education and bring an awareness of what’s happening on campus, to enlighten the community on Indigenous issues regionally, and across Canada. “The campuses are nice canvas’ because they’re very supportive of what we’re doing to encourage awareness of indigenous presence on campus,” he said. “Many of the students have come here from throughout the Maritimes and Atlantic area, and for some this first time away from home. So we’ve tried to establish an atmosphere of welcoming, to make it as close to their home memory as possible.”

A faithful Catholic, Mr. Nicholas has been an active member of faith life on campus and works closely with St. Thomas Campus Ministry to promote Catholic Faith sharing, including participating in Mass and helping with a National Day of Prayer for Indigenous People on December 12, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

“We celebrate the National Day of Prayer on December the 12th, which is a day of prayer song for Indigenous peoples,” he said. “This year because we couldn’t do it in the chapel [due to the pandemic and health restrictions, so] the director organized a virtual event [at St. Kateri Parish in Fredericton], where we recited the *Hail Mary* in Indigenous languages, in Spanish, as well as English. So it was very good.”

Mr. Nicholas holds many accomplishments, including New Brunswick Human Rights

Award, Fredericton YMCA Peace Medallion, Canada 125 Medal, Inaugural recipient of the Golden Jubilee Medal. He was honoured as one of Wilfrid Laurier University’s 100 alumni of achievement, and is a member of the Order of New Brunswick and of the Order of Canada. He has also served as the lieutenant governor to New Brunswick.

*Natasha Mazerolle is a correspondent for The New Freeman. She can be reached at natasha@maz-family.com. §*

## A different lens: possible advantages of campus ministry during pandemic

By NATASHA MAZEROLLE  
Correspondent

FREDERICTON — While the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically impacted all areas of student life at St. Thomas University (STU) in Fredericton, Campus Minister Vivien Zelazny was determined to see the silver lining and the possible advantages that were present in this unique time.

“We’re having to change things up a little bit, getting that opportunity to sort of re-examine what we do from a different lens, and turn that into something that will work in our current circumstance,” she said. Like many other ministries the quick solution was to take programs online. “We have a weekly program called *Know your Faith, Grow Your Faith*, where we gather topics of interest from the students and we set up a schedule of topics we’re going to discuss. So we took that online, and it ended up being a pretty good experience, because while we didn’t get the pleasure of actually visiting each other, we still had the opportunity to connect.”

Ms. Zelazny shared that this new format allowed them to reach people they normally would not have been able to. “We had some alumni from away, and that was nice. It was important,” she said. “It’s sort of a lifeline for them, some of them are in much more rigid lockdown situations than we have. Going online removed a barrier to entry that sometimes people just don’t feel like leaving their house.”

Ms. Zelazny said that while the opportunities for online faith development have been vital, so too has been the effort to preserve the in-person experience as much as possible. “We recognize that in person events are important,” she said. “We try to be very serious about safety in such a way that we preserve

things. And, you know, the fact that one of the few events taking place on campus is Sunday Mass, we think there’s an opportunity there. Physically being in each other’s presence is important. With all due concern for safety we can try to preserve some in person things too.”

Outreach has also remained a priority for STU Campus Ministry, and gives students an opportunity to live out a sense of belonging even remotely. “I have a committee of students who helped me with the food bank, and they do things like manage our social media presence. And they come up with campaigns and ideas,” Ms. Zelazny said. “What we found this semester is we said, ‘listen, if you’re not on campus, you’re still very welcome to join the food bank committee’. And we had huge uptake on that, we had a lot of new people join the committee, including some from Central and South America. So it allows students to feel part of the campus community, in a different way. And I think it helps them to feel that they’re making a contribution. I mean, obviously it contributes to our happiness and we know that we’re helping others.”

While it hasn’t been easy, Ms. Zelazny says an openness to the Holy Spirit is crucial in navigating the changing circumstances of the pandemic in a way that offers hope. “I do think it’s really important to understand that you’re not in the moment, and that’s like the spirit is moving through what you’re doing,” she said. “And that allows us at Campus Ministry to have a lot of hope, and to just keep on trucking on, knowing that our efforts are assisted by someone who’s much more capable than we are.”

*Natasha Mazerolle is a correspondent for The New Freeman. She can be reached at natasha@maz-family.com. §*

# Pope's pandemic year in review: Prayer, online meetings, hopes for change

By CINDY WOODEN  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Like everyone else, Pope Francis' 2020 was dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lockdowns, livestreamed masses, video messages and even something akin to Zoom meetings became a regular part of his life, just like for millions of people around the world.

But when he walked alone into St. Peter's Square March 27 for an "extraordinary moment of prayer," Pope Francis was unlike anyone else.

Standing in the rain, he articulated the world's suffering.

And before blessing the city and the world with the Blessed Sacrament, he began what would become months of pleading with people to use the crisis as an opportunity to rethink the way they treat their neighbours and the way they decide what and how much to buy, as well as to ask themselves larger questions about ways to make the global economy more fair and more respectful of the environment.

The year began normally enough. Italy's severe lockdown went into effect less than three weeks after the 15th and final group of U.S. bishops made their weeklong "ad limina" visits to Rome to pray at the tombs of Sts. Peter and Paul, to meet Vatican officials and to spend more than two hours in a freewheeling conversation with Pope Francis.

Pope Francis told members of each group that a bishop must be close to God, close to his priests and close to his people. And, part of the way through the "ad liminas," he began talking about the importance of bishops being close to one another. Several bishops said the admonition was a recognition of how election-year political divisions in the U.S. risked dividing U.S. Catholics as well.

The topics in the "ad limina" conversations with the pope included: the clerical sexual abuse scandal; youth and young adult ministry; being joyful witnesses of the Gospel; creating a more welcoming environment for migrants

and refugees; abortion and the sanctity of all human life; racism; safeguarding the environment; the growing Spanish-speaking Catholic population; and the importance of Catholic schools.

And, repeatedly, U.S. bishops asked the pope to release, as promised, a report on how Theodore E. McCarrick managed to rise to the position of cardinal and archbishop of Washington despite decades of rumours of sexual misconduct. The report finally was released November 10.

Also in the pre-pandemic period, Pope Francis release *Querida Amazonia*, his apostolic exhortation reflecting on themes discussed during the 2019 Synod of Bishops for the Amazon. Some people were hoping or fearing that he would mention the idea of ordaining married men to the priesthood so that far-flung Catholic communities would have regular access to the Eucharist.

Instead, he focused on encouraging more missionaries to devote at least part of their lives to serving the communities and on efforts to ensure the rights of the region's poor and indigenous are respected, local cultures are preserved, nature is protected, and the Catholic Church is present and active with "Amazonian features."

While the pope said *Querida Amazonia* was his "dream" for that region of South America, his encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti, on Fraternity and Social Friendship*, addressed burning social, political and religious issues on a global scale and his dream for a world marked by greater solidarity and concern for the poor and the Earth.

Published October 4, the encyclical insisted Christians, and all people of goodwill, must recognize that they are brothers and sisters and start living that way.

Doing that, he wrote, would mean recognizing and taking concrete action against "certain trends in our world that hinder the development of universal fraternity" and of acting as a neighbour to one another, including racism, extremism, "aggressive nationalism," closing borders to migrants and refugees,

polarization, politics as a power grab rather than a service to the common good, mistreatment of women, modern slavery and economic policies that allow the rich to get richer but do not

create jobs and do not help the poor.

Pope Francis spent much of the year trying to get his own house in order, too.

On the first of the year, Jesuit Father Juan Antonio Guerrero began working as prefect of the Vatican Secretariat for the Economy, a position that had been vacant since Australian Cardinal George Pell took a leave of absence in 2017 to fight charges of sexual abuse in his homeland.

In June, the pope approved new laws governing the awarding of Vatican contracts with rules designed to prevent fraud and corruption, including barring Vatican employees from awarding contracts to their relatives.

And, as questions continued over the Vatican's massive financial loss in a property investment deal in London, in late September Pope Francis forced the resignation of Cardinal Angelo Becciu, who had been instrumental in making the deal before being appointed prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes.

In November, after the Vatican Secretariat of State missed a papally imposed deadline to hand over the management and monitoring of its financial assets to two separate Vatican bodies, Pope Francis set up a commission to make the transfer and external oversight happen. The London property deal was made with funds from the Secretariat of State when Cardinal Becciu worked there.

Throughout the year, the pope and his international Council of Cardinals also continued working on the new constitution governing a reorganized Roman Curia; as the year ended, the council was reviewing suggested amendments.

As he has done every year since 2014, Pope Francis created new cardinals, adding 13 prelates to the College of Cardinals in a November ceremony.

Like everything else the previous nine months, the consistory was held with COVID-19 restrictions in place. Cardinals from outside the European Union were tested for the coronavirus and quarantined for 10 days before the ceremony. Each was allowed a maximum of 10 guests, though those who came from abroad had fewer. And the public reception to greet the new cardinals was cancelled.

As the year was ending, the Vatican announced it would vaccinate all its residents and employees early in 2021 and that Pope Francis plans to travel to Iraq in March — both signs of hope that the pandemic's days are numbered.§

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# Government defends ‘religious right’ comments about MAiD opponents

By BRIAN DRYDEN  
Canadian Catholic News

OTTAWA — Changes that would open up Canada’s legally-sanctioned euthanasia system to allow for people who are not already nearing death to ask a doctor to help them commit suicide has been approved by a two-to-one margin by MPs in the House of Commons, but some MPs who voted against the changes say the government unfairly maligned religious Canadians during debate over the contentious issue.

Comments made by some members of the minority Liberal government, and specifically by Justice Minister David Lametti, angered some Conservative MPs who feel the Liberal government tried to tar opponents of the changes as being members of a “religious right” cabal within the Official Opposition.

At one point in the House of Commons in mid-December during



debate on Bill C-7, which eases a number of restrictions in Canada’s existing medical assistance in dying (MAiD) regulations, Mr. Lametti said “Conservatives have made it clear they are not interested in improving the bill, they want to stop it”, adding “the leader of the Official Opposition does not seem to have the power in his own caucus to rein in the religious right elements in his caucus, elements that are always against this bill ...”

Those comments angered a number of Opposition MPs who were in the House at the time or monitoring the debate virtually.

Mr. Lametti made the comment in an effort to criticize the Conservatives for prolonging debate on Bill C-7, despite there being a

December 18 Quebec court-imposed deadline to make changes to MAiD after the requirement that a person’s death already be “reasonably foreseeable” before they qualify for MAiD was deemed to be too rigid and unconstitutional. Both the Canadian and Quebec governments decided not to appeal that 2019 Quebec court ruling,

After Mr. Lametti spoke in the House, Conservative MP Garnett Genuis, who was participating in the debate virtually, immediately slammed Mr. Lametti’s comments.

“Madame Speaker, I think you’ll find the bigotry the minister is expressing towards people of faith is unparliamentary and he should be asked to withdraw it,” Mr. Genuis said.

Although no action was taken by the speaker after Mr. Genuis made that comment, Mr. Lametti said in the House that “I am a person of faith.”

“I practice my faith and it is something that is always in me,” said Mr. Lametti, who is Catholic.

Conservative MP Nelly Shin, who also spoke in the House soon after Mr. Lametti made his comments, also took issue with the minister’s statement about “religious right elements.”

“I’ve heard a lot through the debate of my party, my caucus being accused of filibustering and trying to delay,” Ms. Chin said. “I feel that is a little heart-breaking because this is an issue that does have to do with life and death.

“Rather than attack the motives of other members on this topic that we would continue in our debate and understand this is a very complicated issue and that we have can have discussions ... but avoid comments like the minister made about the religious right which I find very offensive,” Ms. Chin said.

The Catholic Church in Canada has been vehemently opposed to legal euthanasia since the MAiD system was first put in place in 2016 following a Supreme Court of Canada court ruling that paved the way for MAiD and has been vocal in its opposition to making MAiD easier to access as Bill C-7 does. Bill C-7 is now being reviewed in the Senate.

When the *Canadian Catholic News* contacted Mr. Lametti’s office for clarification on his “religious right” comment in the House, his spokesperson Rachel Rappaport said his comments were related solely to what the government viewed as delaying tactics in the House by the Conservatives.

“As a Catholic and a person of faith himself, Minister Lametti has acknowledged the multitude of views that members of different faith communities have shared about these difficult issues,” a statement from Mr. Lametti’s office said. “While some oppose medical assistance in dying, others believe that it is consistent with their deeply held principles, including Catholic virtues of dignity of every person, justice, and compassion for those experiencing suffering. All of these views are important and worthy of consideration.

“As with any issue that comes before Parliament, we know that not everyone will agree on the path forward,” the statement continued, adding “the minister’s comment was aimed squarely at politicians who had decided to prevent this important issue from coming to a vote, knowing full well the risks that doing so could have on the most vulnerable and on those who are suffering.”§

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Father Ron Rolheiser’s column *In Exile* and FGather John Jennings column *Our Sacred Stories: God and us* were not available at the time of printing this issue.

# Mary's loneliness

— She suffered great isolation, from confusion about her unique call to the deaths of those closest to her. Yet her trust in God was rewarded.

By FATHER JIM VAN VURST, OFM

*Reprinted with permission from St. Anthony Messenger*

Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus, has from the earliest Christian tradition been given a pre-eminence of place and status in our faith, far beyond any other person in history. She gave God's son flesh and blood, and no one was closer to the Saviour. In



***This painting — On the Eve of the Birth of Christ by Michael Reiser — portrays the beginning of Mary's lifelong journey during which she constantly relied on God for strength and comfort. (Web image)***

preparation for that unique role, God preserved her from original sin and from all personal sin.

Unfortunately, because of her special status and role, through the centuries Mary has also often been removed in the eyes of many writers and artists from our world and the

experiences every person has in life. That is one reason why, in 1964, the Second Vatican Council wrote the following statement: The "Church strongly urges that theologians and preachers of the word of God be careful to refrain as much as possible from all false exaggeration as from too summary an attitude in considering the special dignity of the Mother of God."

In other words, it is totally appropriate that we understand and embrace Mary as a real human being who lived in Palestine in the early years of the first century. Granted, we may not have many detailed historical incidents described in the Gospels of Mary's life, but there is no doubt that those moments actually took place. Her pregnancy with Jesus put her in a situation, i.e., pregnant with no reasonable explanation for her parents or Joseph, that was in fact life-threatening. And she experienced that situation and others with the anxiety and fear any human being would. Great faith and trust do not temper powerful and painful emotions. They did not to Jesus on the cross; nor would they with Mary. She experienced life as you and I experience it.

Actually, what is true is that her very personal sinlessness gave her a deep sense of what sin and evil are. It only caused her moments of suffering to be intense to a point we cannot fully grasp. If you want to ask what sin is, don't ask an evil person. The one who knows sin is the one who is in a deep and loving relationship with God, and one who suffers from the evil of others.

The idea that Mary was never tempted is trumped by the simple fact that Satan tempted Jesus himself. For Satan, Mary would have been a real prize. So, understanding Mary's own humanity, as perfect as it is, consider what would be one of the most painful experiences she or anyone could have. I suspect it was those moments of deep loneliness that she suffered during her earthly journey. There are five occasions, none of them brief, that the Gospels allude to.

## **An unexpected pregnancy**

The Gospels lay the foundation for the first painful experience of aloneness and isolation for Mary. She was the daughter of Anna and Joachim (as tradition relates) and engaged to Joseph, though not yet fully married to him, and so they were not living together. Mary was a young teenage girl, perhaps 14 years old. It was normal in that time for a young

girl, once able to bear children, to be married. At some moment prior to the marriage, in a response to God's grace, Mary gave herself to God and, in effect, said, "Whatever you want, Lord, and I'm your maidservant." In that moment, Mary became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit and became not just the mother of Jesus of Nazareth. Mary's pregnancy immediately catapulted her whole life into confusion, conflict, and indeed mortal danger (Mt 1:18ff).

The beautiful film *The Nativity Story* portrays exactly what Mary faced. She had no answer that would make sense to her shocked parents or to Joseph. Her parents seek an answer: Was she ravished by a Roman soldier? This would not have been unheard-of, because of the Roman oppressors. Mary denies that and any other suggestion with the only answer she has: "I broke no law."

But nothing anyone can come up with solves the problem. She was pregnant, and there is only one way you become pregnant. Joseph is overwhelmed with hurt and disappointment by what he sees. He can only conclude that now it is impossible for him to marry her. In fact, by law he would have to divorce her. And, if that happened, Mary would have been in mortal danger since obviously she could never hide the pregnancy.

As a result, Mary would have become isolated from the three people she loved more than any other in the world — her parents and her intended spouse. To describe her as feeling lonely and confused hardly would describe the emotional turmoil raging inside her. The Gospel reveals that eventually Joseph was told in a dream not to fear taking Mary as his wife. So he did. But we don't know how many hours or days Mary was totally alone with herself, without fully understanding she was carrying the saviour of the world.

## **Life as a widow**

There is a second time of intense loneliness that Mary experienced. Though it is not specifically noted in the Gospels, we know it happened. It was the death of her beloved husband, Joseph. Jesus began his public ministry around the age of 30 or so. It is significant we never hear of the presence of Joseph after Jesus begins his public life, since ancient tradition has Joseph dying some years before.

The relationship of Mary and Joseph must  
(continue on page 7)

# Mary's loneliness

(continued from page 6)

have been something very special indeed — very human in their deep love for one another. Though our tradition has always been that they lived as brother and sister, in no way would it lessen their love or their tenderness and care for one another. Joseph was the protector of her and Jesus, as he grew up.

We know that the closer two people are, the more difficult the pain and loss when they are separated by death. Mary became a widow. Even with Jesus still present in her life, that marital bond had ended. Any widow would know what that experience is like.

I remember when my father died suddenly of a heart attack. My mother and I were quietly sorting some of his belongings and she stopped for a moment and, in a soft voice, said, “Now what do I do?” Why would Mary not have the same kind of thought and experience the emotions that any loving widow would experience?

## Letting go

As I noted, at the age of 28 or so, Jesus was called by the Spirit to begin his ministry. Nothing would or could hold him back from what he sensed God was pulling him to. We often imagine that, because of Mary's role, she knew something of what was going on in Jesus' life. Luke hints of it when Jesus, at age 12, remained in Jerusalem at the Passover feast (2:41ff). She and Jesus almost certainly talked about his future, even as Jesus' call was still developing and becoming clearer. We don't know how this all happened, but there came that moment when Jesus knew it was his time. It would likely have come upon his hearing of the work and words of the powerful new prophet, John the Baptist. Jesus was led by the Spirit to John the Baptist, who then realized Jesus was the promised one the prophets had foretold.

Even if Mary had some understanding that this was what Jesus was called to, that fact would in no way ease the pain of separation as she saw Jesus disappear in the distance, leaving her now alone in Nazareth. We know from our own experience that just knowing the will of God and following it in no way makes that human experience easy, especially when it calls for separation from loved ones.

There was no question of Jesus abandoning his mother. There were other relatives of some degree who would provide for her. But still, she was now separated from those closest to her because of Joseph's death and Jesus' departure. Ask any mother who kisses

her son goodbye as he goes off to war. She will have some understanding of what Mary felt in that moment when Jesus turned and headed toward his future. There had to be tears in her eyes and a deep sense of loneliness and worry for Jesus.

## On the sidelines

Surprisingly, the Gospel recounts the events following Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan, his 40-day preparation in the desert, and his first battle with Satan. Luke (4:16-30) points out that soon afterward, Jesus, filled with the Spirit, “returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout the whole region. He taught . . . and was praised by all” (4:14-15).

Next, Luke describes Jesus' return to Nazareth, “where he had grown up.” We can imagine what the sight of Jesus must have done to Mary's heart when word got to her that he was coming in the distance. Talk about a homecoming! No words could describe that moment. What did they talk about? What did Jesus share with her? But, almost immediately, there is a dark and foreboding cloud that comes over Jesus and Mary, too.

Jesus' first preaching in the little synagogue of Nazareth, following his reading from the prophet Isaiah, was initially received with wonderment on the part of his friends and neighbours. But they see that there is something different about Jesus. “Isn't this the son of Joseph?” (Lk 4:22).

But when Jesus begins to speak that the truth of God's love is for all people, including even gentiles in the Old Testament such as the widow of Zarephath and Syrian General Naaman, everything changes. In an instant, the townspeople are stunned and shocked by Jesus' assertion. How dare a Jew speak of God's love for the gentiles? They rise up and attempt to kill him. Jesus is able to escape and leave Nazareth, never to return (Lk 4:29).

But now, as a result of the town's criticism and rejection of Jesus' words, try to imagine what Mary's status would have become among her own neighbours. From that time on, Mary's life in Nazareth must have been terribly uncomfortable. Was there sniping and criticism of her, implying that there was something wrong with Jesus and all the changes in him? Who did he think he was? What was it like for her to meet the women at the well each day and overhear their gossip and snide remarks? What had happened to her son?

But it would get worse. As Jesus moved

through his public ministry, it became very plain that what his preaching and teaching were doing was turning the Pharisees and scribes against him. Rumours that “he's a law-breaker and a blasphemer” would reach Nazareth. Even more, the powerful high priests were getting critical word about Jesus. They were sending representatives to check him out and test him. What they were finding drove them in time to plot against Jesus. Word had to get back to Nazareth where everyone knew Jesus was from. Such accusations were giving the people of Nazareth a bad name. “Don't you people in Nazareth know how to control your own people?” How many sleepless nights would Mary have experienced? We know that faith itself is not a sedative against suffering and hurt. Who could she turn to?

## A mother's despair

Finally we come to the moment of Mary's deepest suffering in her whole life — witnessing the terrifying death of her son on the cross (Jn 19:25 and Mt 27:55). John mentions that Mary was at the foot of the cross. Matthew's account is probably more historically accurate, as Mary and other holy women disciples of Jesus “watched from a distance.” Any crucifixion was a horrible event to witness. For Roman soldiers hardened by their brutal experiences, it was simply business to be taken care of as proficiently as possible. The last thing they would allow would be hysterical and emotionally distraught relatives and friends of the victim getting in the way of their gruesome task.

Regardless, there is no question Mary witnessed the death of her son. Granted, the women were supporting her, especially Mary Magdalene, but no one could possibly touch the inner pain and devastation of that scene and Mary's sense of total helplessness. Of all those moments of loneliness up till then, this would have been the most devastating and heartbreaking of Mary's whole life.

To make matters even worse, it would have been the time when Satan himself, who was already tempting Jesus as he hung helpless on the cross, would besiege Mary with the most horrible thoughts. “So, this is the reward for your gift of yourself to God. What a failure your son turned out to be. What kind of a mother were you, anyway? Why didn't you stop him when you had time? Doing God's will? Nonsense!”

Early Church tradition describes the next  
(continued on page 11)

# Communion and Liberation moves annual Christmas Concert online

By NATASHA MAZEROLLE  
Correspondent

MONTREAL — Every year members of the Communion and Liberation (CL) choirs in Montreal and Toronto organize a Christmas concert in support of a needy cause. It is an event that draws many, and which is greatly anticipated each year. Like many Christmas traditions, the pandemic restrictions in both of these cities has forced organizers to come up with a new way to offer this concert, which this year supported the Urgent Call for Lebanon campaign organized by Aid to the Church in Need.

The concert, which was broadcast live via YouTube on December 19, featured footage from past years' concerts of both choirs, and a new digital compilation of Silent Night. It marks the first year that the choirs from both regions were able to perform together, and for members of CL it was a true moment of solidarity in this time of physical isolation.

Ellen Roderick, a Saint John native who now lives in Montreal, shared that, "I was pretty disappointed this fall when it became apparent that due to the pandemic our choir would not be able to sing together and prepare the Christmas concert. Since I moved to Montreal five years ago, this had become a highlight of the Christmas season for me."

In addition to music, the program also featured meditations and art accompaniment, which Ms. Roderick was involved in preparing. She shared that, "I was asked to help edit the booklet of meditations that accompanied the concert. It was a gift for me to carefully read through the lyrics, translations and meditations, the part of the concert that is so dear to me. I was glad to help in a small way so that this gesture could accompany so many people again this year."

This event was a true consolation for those from CL communities outside of Toronto and Montreal who typically are unable to participate, including a community in Saint John. "In the midst of the Christmas busyness, this concert always provides a moment of clarity,

helping me to go beyond the gifts, shiny lights and travel plans, to the deeper meaning of everything: God took pity on our nothingness and came to share his life with us. And he came as a baby in a stable. It was this help in living Christmas more deeply that I longed for this fall, and that I thought I would miss out on." Ms. Roderick said.

The CL Choirs are directed by Dr. Mark Basik in Montreal, and Anthony Savidge in Toronto. A replay of the concert can be viewed at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=6o9AB5gK43E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6o9AB5gK43E).

*Natasha Mazerolle is a correspondent for The New Freeman. She can be reached at [natasha@maz-family.com](mailto:natasha@maz-family.com). §*



*The Communion and Liberation choir performs in a past Christmas concert. (CL photo)*

## Vatican will offer Pfizer vaccine against COVID-19 to employees

By CINDY WOODEN  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The Vatican health service will begin vaccinating employees and Vatican citizens against COVID-19 using the Pfizer vaccine, the director of the Vatican health service told Vatican News.

"Only through a widespread and capillary immunization of the population will it be possible to obtain real advantages in terms of public health to achieve control of the pandemic," Dr. Andrea Arcangeli said in December.

"Therefore, it is our duty to offer all residents, employees and their families the opportunity to be immunized against this dreaded disease," he said.

The Vatican News story said the vaccination program would begin "in the first months" of 2021, but a Vatican official posted on Facebook that employees were told they would be vaccinated in January.

"It is important to educate everyone that the vaccine is not only to protect one's own

health, but also that of other people," the Vatican News story said.

Dr. Arcangeli said the Pfizer vaccine, developed in conjunction with BioNTech, was chosen because it is the leading candidate for both European and U.S. approval, is already being used in England and has tested at 95% effective.

"Other vaccines produced with different methods may be introduced after evaluating their efficacy and full safety," he added.

Vatican News did not ask Dr. Arcangeli about reports that in the early stages of testing, the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine was tested on cells lines produced from cells that originally came from an aborted fetus. The vaccine, however, is not one of those that use abortion-derived cell lines in the manufacturing process.

The Pontifical Academy for Life and Catholic bishops around the world, including the chairmen of the U.S. bishops' doctrine and pro-life committees, have said it is immoral to be vaccinated with vaccines like the

Pfizer/BioNTech product because any connection they have to aborted fetuses is extremely remote. Such cells derived from those fetuses were used only in a testing phase but not in the production phase.

Vatican News did ask Dr. Arcangeli about concerns over the safety of the vaccine.

"It is understandable that there may be some fears about a vaccine that has been developed in such a short time, but there have been very rigorous tests on safety," he said.

For the time being, he said, the Vatican will not be recommending the vaccination of anyone under age 18 since "studies including this age group have not yet been carried out."

As an independent country, the Vatican has its own health service, with doctors' offices, a pharmacy, a laboratory, a walk-in clinic and first-aid stations. Many of the services are free to employees and their family members as well as retirees; the service covers about 15,000 people, including the pope and cardinals resident in Rome. §

# Five years later: deacons bringing Church to the people

By **AGNIESZKA RUCK**  
The B.C. Catholic

VANCOUVER — Five years ago, Deacon Jamie Meskas and his wife sold their five-bedroom home and moved into a single-wide trailer on First Nations land near Agassiz.

If you ask him about the dramatic move, he'll say it's only natural he lives in the community he has been called to serve.



**VANCOUVER — Deacon Terry McLaughlin can be found preaching or baptizing in a prison or parish. (Photo courtesy of Deacon McLaughlin)**

"It takes time to earn their trust," Deacon Meskas told *The B.C. Catholic*. "My approach has been to serve the people, not to wait for them to come to church."

Deacon Meskas was ordained December 8, 2015, with 15 other men, making history as the first class of permanent deacons ever ordained in the Archdiocese of Vancouver. Those deacons, having just now celebrated their fifth anniversary, are serving all over the Lower Mainland, in parishes, hospitals, prisons, ports, cemeteries, and First Nations reserves.

Deacon Meskas serves the Sts' ailes and Seabird Island communities through Our Lady of Fatima and Immaculate Conception, missions of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Agassiz. The mission churches rely on visiting priests to celebrate Mass on Sundays, with no lasting Catholic presence during the week.

So the deacon who has made the community his home tries to keep the church active all week long. He has started movie nights, grief support groups, and a food bank, and spent most of his pre-pandemic days connecting with locals and visiting elders in their homes.

"It's those little movements that give people back a sense of pride in who they are," he said.

"The pain and the brokenness that [residential schools] caused to the people have made it extremely difficult because they don't trust the church anymore ... I had to try to

let people know that things have changed. This isn't the same church. It has evolved."

Deacons are ordained clergy, but don't share the same job as a priest. While they can't celebrate mass, deacons can baptize, distribute Communion, preach, and devote their time to the church community. Most in the Archdiocese of Vancouver are married.

"We are made ... to go to these places priests can't go and we can spend the time building trust and building community that a priest doesn't have," said Deacon Meskas. His wife, a nurse, has also received a warm welcome in the neighbourhood.

In five years, Deacon Meskas has seen the number of people at mass jump from five to as many as 40. Before public worship services were banned in the COVID-19 pandemic, he was getting worried the Sts' ailes church was getting too cramped.

"The more that I can be there for the people in little ways, the more they can see the church is different," he said. "This isn't a church that wants to tell you that the language you speak is no good and your culture is no good. We invite the culture in the church, with us."

Monsignor Gregory Smith, permanent diaconate program director, called it "a wonderful example of the diaconal spirit of service, displayed with astonishing generosity."

He said in the five years since ordaining Vancouver's first permanent deacons, he's been surprised at the enthusiasm of the deacons and their wives for this new ministry. "These 16 deacons have done remarkable things, helping countless seafarers, patients, people dealing with same-sex attraction, converts, and ordinary parishioners. Several hold key positions in the archdiocese."

Since that historic ordination in 2015, six more deacons were ordained in 2017 and another nine men are preparing to take that step next spring. Another eight are currently in academic formation at St. Mark's College, part of the training process.

Prison chaplain Deacon Terry McLaughlin sees his work as bringing healing to wounded people.

As a deacon, he has set foot inside every prison in the Lower

(continued on page 11)

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**SISK, ANITA** — It is with great sadness that the family of Anita (Landry) Sisk of Saint John, NB announces her passing which occurred peacefully, surrounded by her loving family, on November 18, 2020 at Rocmaura Nursing Home. Born April 17, 1924 in Collette NB, she was the daughter of the late Pierre & Philomene (Martin) Landry.

Anita is survived by her children: Don (Kathy) of Arizona, Paul Edwin (Maria-Elena) of Columbia, Pauline of Calgary, Alberta, daughter-in-law, Mary Sisk of Chipman, NB, Monica (Vince) Vautour of Kingston, NB, Arthur (Isabelle) of Saint John, NB and Irene (Bill) Crandlemere of Saint John, NB. She is also survived by her siblings: Ovila (Annette) Landry of Collette, NB, Aurore Maillet of Rogersville, NB, Eva Gallant of Rogersville, NB & Odette Sisk of Bathurst, NB. She has 15 wonderful grandchildren which she dearly adored: Jason (Lesley) Sisk of St. John's, Nfld, Michael (Bernadette) of Ottawa, On, Heather (Katen) Amin of Goa, India, Andrew Sisk of Montreal, Quebec, Raquel Sisk of Columbia, Sarita Sisk of Montreal, Que, Phillip (Kaitlyn) Sisk of Pembroke, On, Joel Vautour of Montreal, Que, Tom Vautour of Montreal, Que, Nigel Sisk of Saint John, NB, Olivier Sisk of Campbellton, NB, Jacob Sisk of Saint John, NB, Beniot Vautour of Saint John, NB and Makayla & Riley Crandlemere of Saint John, NB. Nine great-great-grandchildren as well as several nephews and nieces.

In addition to her parents, Anita was predeceased by her loving husband, Paul M.A. Sisk (1985) and her son Bernard Sisk (2019); brothers, Robert (Regina) Landry & Rene Landry.

Arrangements were under the care and direction of Brenan's Bay View Funeral Home, West Saint John. A private family Funeral Liturgy was held. A celebration of Anita's life was to take place at a later date.

**LEGERE, KAREN LOUISE** — Karen passed away peacefully on November 21, 2020 at S.J.R.H. Palliative Care Unit with her best friend, her husband, by her side. She was born August 3, 1956 in Saint John, NB. Karen was the daughter of Constance (Thorne) and Frank Murphy.

Karen is survived by her loving husband Donald Legere of Saint John, children; Amy (Bill) Brewer of Quispamsis, Terri (Caroline)

Legere of Saint John, Donna (Samantha) Tobias of Saint John, sisters; Margaret Ross of Saint John, Nancy (Richard) McGuire of Saint John, Susan Duffley of Saint John and 5 grandchildren; Ruby, Abigail, Claire, Ashton, Archer and several nieces and nephews.

Karen was predeceased by her parents and brother Peter Ross.

Arrangements were under the care of Castle Funeral Home, Saint John. A private funeral mass was held at Our Lady of the Assumption Church, Saint John. Internment will take place at Holy Cross Cemetery in the spring 2021.

**RASCH, MABEL MARY** — It is with heavy hearts and gratitude for a lifetime of memories that the family of Mabel Mary Rasch announces her passing, which occurred on Monday, December 14, 2020 at Bobby's Hospice. Born on January 12, 1937 in St. Stephen she was a daughter of the late Medor and Judith (Robichaud) Henrie. She was predeceased in July 2019 by the love of her life and husband of 62 years, Leonard Joseph Rasch.

Mabel will be missed by her children: Linda McDonald (Jay Buchanan), Danny (Barb), Bruce (Rose) and Stephen (Patty); her grandchildren: Keith, Craig (Brittany), Jonathon, Matthew (Gina), Travis (Sara), Melody (Kevin), Richelle, Kevin (Pheonix), Jeremy (Jill), Rebecca (Batman), Kailey (Colin), Kaitlin (Ryan) and Scott (Danica); several great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews; siblings: Jeannine, Exilda, Rosanna, Alma, Edward and Frank; and her good friends Karen McDonald and Linda Garey.

In addition to her parents and husband, Mabel was predeceased by an infant son Richard, and her siblings: Mary, Margaret, Alice, Eric and Antoine.

Arrangements are under the care and direction of Brenan's Funeral Home, Saint John. A private Funeral Liturgy was held.

**BAKER, WILLIAM D.** — With heartfelt sorrow, the family of William "Bill" Dale Baker, husband of Connie (Davenport) Baker, announce his passing on Monday, December 14, 2020, at Kings Way Care Centre. Born on January 17, 1948, in Perth Andover, NB, he was a son of the late Vincent and Katherine (Dee) Baker.

Besides his wife, Bill is survived by his

daughter Kimberly Hennessy (James) of Rothesay, brothers; Earlen (Glenna) of Perth Andover, NB, Ken (Renelle) of Sussex, NB, Eric (Lydia) of Caledonia, ON, sisters; Betty Fournier (Alex) of Perth Andover, Susan Baker of Fredericton, and Kathy Goin (Jerry) of Pefferlaw, ON, grandchildren; Tianna and Makayla Veinot, Elizabeth and Jacob Hennessy, son in law Wayne Veinot, his beloved Davenport and Gallant Families, as well as several nieces and nephews. Bill will be missed by all who knew him.

Bill was predeceased by his parents, his daughter Melanie Veinot, sister Anna Morrell (Lorne), sister-in-law Janet Nason, and brother-in-law Vincent Davenport.

He rested at Kennebecasis Community Funeral Home, Quispamsis. A Mass of Christian Burial was held at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, Rothesay.

**CAIN, JOAN CATHERINE** — It is with great sadness that the family of Joan Catherine (McInerney) Cain, wife of the Honorable Murray Francis Cain, QC, announces her passing on December 18, 2020 at St. Joseph's Hospital in Saint John, following a lengthy illness. Born August 21, 1936 in Saint John, NB, she was the daughter of the late Murray and Helen (Doucette) McInerney.

In addition to her loving husband, she leaves behind four children; Cathy McGill (Mike) of Quispamsis, Beth Stymiest (Donnie) of Bathurst, Larry Cain (Helena) of Quispamsis, and Anna Cain of Toronto, ON. She also leaves behind her sister Margie Dilworth of Aurora, ON, her brother Terry McInerney (Mary) of Rothesay, and brother-in-law Bernard Cain (Ursula) of Dieppe, NB. She is survived by eight grandchildren; Matthew, Patrick and Jordan McGill, Andrew and John Stymiest, Madeline and Stone Cain, and Grace Cain Gray, and one great granddaughter Quinn McGill, as well as several nieces and nephews. She also leaves behind her lifelong friend, Noreen Stack Cavanaugh.

Joan was predeceased by her parents, her brothers; Murray, Billy, and Ray, and her infant son Michael Francis.

She rested at Kennebecasis Community Funeral Home, Quispamsis. A Mass of Christian Burial was held from Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, Rothesay. §



# Seven New Year's resolutions for Catholic families

January is a perfect time for parents to reinvigorate their children's faith

By RITA E. PIRO

Reprinted with permission  
St. Anthony Messenger, January 2015

Who among us does not think of the new year as a time for a fresh start, an opportunity to wipe the slate clean and begin anew? Each January 1 (or maybe 2, or even 3) we hit the ground running, turning our back on those nasty bad habits that are doing nothing for us mentally, physically, or emotionally.

While deciding to improve your lifestyle, take on a new project, or be more welcoming to an irritating relative or the neighbourhood busybody is certainly commendable, how about making a few spiritual resolutions as well?

The following ideas will allow your family to grow in faith with reverence and fun, while also enriching both your own and your child's personal relationship with God and God's people.

## 1 Own your faith.

Do not hesitate to identify your family as Catholics. Make a banner that proclaims your family as Catholics—"We are the Smiths, a Catholic Family." Then take a photo of your family holding the banner, and display it in your home with pride.

## 2 Don't hide the family Bible in the back of a closet or the bottom of a drawer.

Keep it in a place of honour in your home, on the coffee table in the living room, or on the mantel over the fireplace with the family photos. Get into the habit of filling in the information, dates, and photos of important family and sacramental milestones with your kids as the events take place, sharing with them family history and memories.



can.

Most of them have features geared to a variety of age groups. Read them with your younger children and share them with your older ones. It can spark real conversation among you.

## 4 Celebrate your child's feast day or name day, as well as his or her birthday.

If your child does not have a name that is associated with a saint, have your child pick one as his or her own, and perhaps select a Marian title or devotion as well. As your child grows older and develops new interests and needs, his or her choice may also change.

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## 5 Make a big deal about Advent and Lent.

Encourage your child to "do" during Lent, rather than "give up." Acts of kindness are powerful reminders of the mission of Jesus. Take time to celebrate the wonderful holy days and saint days that occur during Advent — Nicholas on December 6 and Lucy on the 13th. Buy or make some toys for a Christmas charity on the feast of the Immaculate Conception (December 8).



## 6 Don't forget the dead.

If loved ones are interred within driving distance, visit their graves a few times a year on birthdays, anniversaries, holy days, and holidays. Recall your memories of the role they played in your life. If your child has something in common with someone who has passed on, fill him or her in. "You know, Uncle Jim played the piano just like you" or, "My cousin Ann loved animals almost as much as you do." If the person served in the military, try to visit the grave on Remembrance Day (November 11).

## 7 Carry your faith into the summer and school break times.

Just because school is out doesn't mean your faith has to go on vacation, as well. There are many beautiful shrines, monasteries, churches, and cathedrals throughout the world, near all major cities, and maybe right in your own area. Include one or two during each family vacation.



Rita E. Piro is a freelance writer from Queens Village, New York. She is the creator of the website [catholicschoolhistory.com](http://catholicschoolhistory.com).

It's all about having the time now to make choices that make sense for you and make it easier for your family. It takes very little time to leave them your wishes, leaving you all plenty of time to get on with making memories.

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