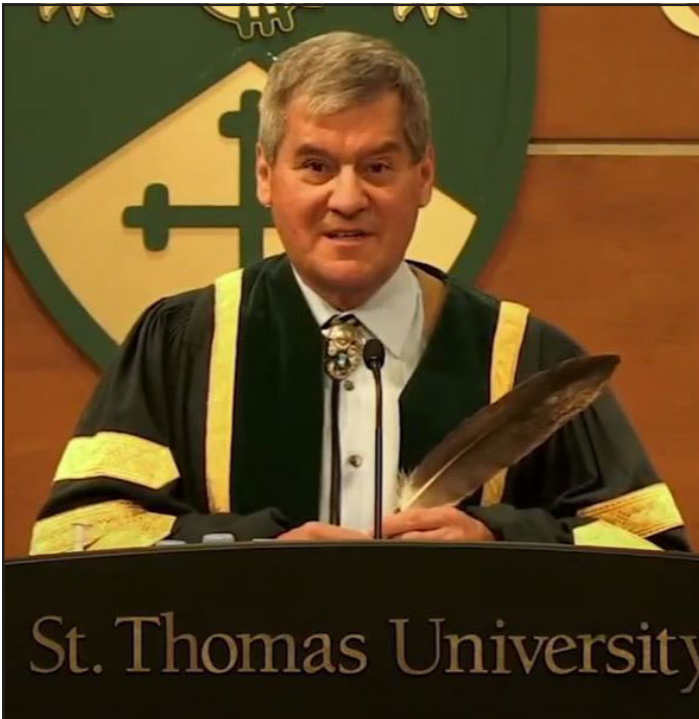


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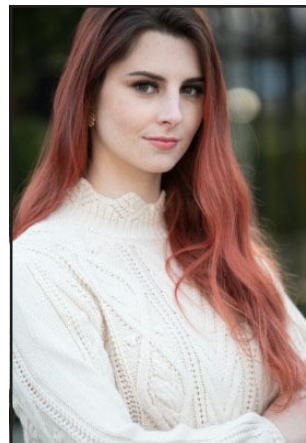
FREDERICTON — Graydon Nicholas was installed as chancellor of St. Thomas University in Fredericton on Tuesday, May 10. Story page 2. (Natasha Mazerolle photo)



SAINT JOHN — Over the past year, in consultation with the Religious Education Coordinators and the Council of Priests, the Diocese of Saint John has discerned a new Confirmation formation. A letter from Bishop Christian Riesbeck, CC of the diocese explaining the changes and a over view of the program can be found on pages 3 and 6. (CNS image)



FREDERICTON — Bishop Christian Riesbeck, CC of the Diocese of Saint John presides at St. Thomas University's in annual Baccalaureate Mass, Monday, May 9 in Fredericton. Story page 2. (Natasha Mazerolle photo)



Lindsay Shepherd a 25-year-old mother and native of Victoria, B.C., recently released her memoir *Diversity and Exclusion: Confronting the Campus Free Speech Crisis*. In it, she presents arguments for saving free speech from ideological conformity while also providing a personal account of her experience at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, ON. Story page 4. (Catholic Register photo)



VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis holds roses given by someone in the crowd during his weekly general audience in the San Damaso Courtyard of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican May 12, 2021. It was the first time in more than six months that visitors and pilgrims have been able to attend the audience. Story page 9. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

STU installs new chancellor

By NATASHA MAZEROLLE
Correspondent

FREDERICTON — On Tuesday, May 10, 2021, at the Spring Convocation, St. Thomas University in Fredericton installed Graydon Nicholas as chancellor.

This full year appointment makes Mr. Nicholas a member of the Board of Governors at St. Thomas University. This role requires him to be present at convocations and special dinners and to be involved in the life of the university, among other duties.

Mr. Nicholas addressed graduates, faculty, staff and alumni during the installation and thanked President Dawn Russell and the Board of Governors of St. Thomas University. He expressed gratitude for the “honour and privilege to serve in a new capacity on campus.”

He has been a part of the life of the university for many years, having taught part-time between 1983-1999. Mr. Nicholas has also served on the Board of Governors, and as Endowed Chair of Native Studies — a position he continues to occupy.

Calling this honour a tribute to his parents, his family, his wife Beth and their sons Michael and Brian, Mr. Nicholas reflected on his fam-

ily life and how it has shaped his academic pursuits. “My mother decided that her children would go get a higher education. She went as far as grade eight on our reserve because there were no other educational opportunities,” he said.

Through prayer, hard work and determination, Mr. Nicholas said that, “my mother was successful in having her ten children become a civil engineer, a registered nurse, four teachers, a hairdresser, an office secretary, a chief in our community, and a lawyer.”

He also shared that, “both [of my sons] Michael and Brian were students on this campus. I had the privilege to have them as students in the classes I taught here in Native Studies.”

Beginning this new chapter in his longstanding relationship with St. Thomas University, Mr. Nicholas concluded his address with gratitude. “I look forward to more involvement and the future growth of our university,” he said. “Thank you, naka Woliwon.”

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

‘Nothing is impossible with God’, Bishop Riesbeck tells graduates at Baccalaureate Mass

By NATASHA MAZEROLLE
Correspondent

FREDERICTON — On Monday, May 9, 2021, Bishop Christian Riesbeck, CC, of the Diocese of Saint John was invited to join the graduating class of St. Thomas University [STU] in Fredericton for the annual Baccalaureate Mass.

The graduating class was represented by 15 of its more than 300 members, with the mass being livestreamed via STU Campus Ministry’s Facebook page.

The bishop was joined by Father Peter Melanson, pastor of Paroisse Ste-Anne-des-Pay Bas and chaplain of St. Thomas University; Dr. Vivien Zelazny, campus minister, St. Thomas University; Chancellor Graydon Nicholas and Beth Nicholas; Dawn Russell, president; Dr. Kim Fenwick, vice-president Academic and Research; Karen Preston, registrar; as well as members of faculty, family and friends of the graduates.

Bishop Riesbeck had some words of wisdom to impart to the graduates. “We’re con-

fident that STU has prepared you well for the future,” he told them. “Of course, we don’t really know what the future holds. Sometimes at convocations graduates are told that the world is their oyster, that they can be anything they want to be, that they can conquer every challenge. But I think it is important to manage expectations when it comes to thinking about what we can accomplish in the world, especially if we are tempted to rely on our own strength, or our own lights and devices, following our own plans.”

Bishop Riesbeck challenged graduates to seek out the Lord’s will for their lives. “What if we knew that God had a plan for our lives? And because he is crazy about us, because he loves us so much and wants us to be truly fulfilled, we were inspired to turn to him now with confidence and trust and ask him where we fit into his plans?” he said. “What if we decided to never go it alone, to be led by the Spirit, to immerse ourselves first in this communion of love, loving God and loving our neighbour, responding to Jesus’

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The New Freeman

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New Journey to Confirmation

“Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’.” (John 20:21-22)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On the solemnity of Pentecost, we celebrate the coming of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom Jesus promised, to renew the Church and enkindle our missionary desire to share the Good News.

Over the past year, in consultation with the Religious Education Coordinators and the Council of Priests, we have discerned a new Confirmation formation for the Diocese of Saint John. This came about through much prayer, motivated by a sincere desire to help our youth become truly engaged and to become intentional missionary disciples. Two significant goals emerged from our prayerful reflection: a more comprehensive formation for Confirmation over two years, and a uniformity of school-age level for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation across the diocese.

It is deep love for our candidates that compels us to offer them the very best. We are investing in our youth by providing a more comprehensive formation journey, which will help them encounter and re-encounter Christ and prepare them for a deeper engagement in the mission of the Church. To that end, I am enthusiastic about our updated formation for Confirmation, which begins in a more focused way in grade 8 and continues in grade 9 or beyond. It is my prayer that by investing more in their preparation, our young people will complete their formation and be propelled into society, empowered by the Holy Spirit, ready to share the good news of God’s love and salvation with joyful zeal.

Our new formation process focuses on giving our youth the opportunity of a renewed personal encounter with Jesus in Year 1 (*Alpha Youth Series*), followed in the second part of Year 1 and into Year 2 by deeper catechesis rooted in the primacy of evangelization (choice of Dynamic Catholic’s *Decision Point* or Ascension Press’ *Chosen*). Each of these programs has sound catechesis and proven effectiveness in leading youth to encountering Christ and developing a deeper relationship with him in the Church, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Beginning this fall, formation for Confirmation will be implemented in the following way:

- Candidates in grade 8 will begin the full two-year formation. Beginning with the *Alpha Youth Series*, it will be followed by 24 sessions of either *Chosen* or *Decision Point*. The Sacrament of Confirmation will be conferred in the Easter season 2023.

- For the 2021-2022 academic year only, candidates entering grade 9 or beyond will be given a condensed formation for Confirmation so as not to delay Confirmation for these students. Beginning with the *Alpha Youth Series*, it will be followed by 12 condensed sessions of *Chosen* or *Decision Point* (two themes per session). The Sacrament of Confirmation will be conferred in the Easter season 2022.

(continued on page 6)

Nouveau parcours vers la confirmation

« Jésus leur dit de nouveau: La paix soit avec vous! De même que le Père m’a envoyé, moi aussi je vous envoie. Ayant ainsi parlé, il souffla sur eux, et leur dit: Recevez l’Esprit Saint. » (Jean 20, 21-22)

Chers frères et sœurs dans le Christ,

En la solennité de la Pentecôte, nous célébrons la venue de l’Esprit Saint que Jésus a promis, pour renouveler l’Église et enflammer nos cœurs de la mission de partager la Bonne Nouvelle.

Au cours de la dernière année, en consultation avec l’équipe de coordination de l’éducation religieuse et le Conseil des prêtres, et motivés par le désir sincère d’aider nos jeunes à s’engager véritablement

et à devenir des disciples missionnaires intentionnels, nous avons discerné une nouvelle formation pour la Confirmation dans le Diocèse de Saint-John. Deux objectifs significatifs ont émergé de notre réflexion de prière : une formation plus complète pour la Confirmation qui s’étend sur deux ans, et l’uniformité à travers le diocèse du niveau d’âge scolaire pour recevoir le sacrement de la Confirmation.

C’est le profond amour que nous ressentons pour nos confirmands et confirmandes qui nous oblige à leur offrir le meilleur. Nous investissons dans nos jeunes en leur proposant un parcours de formation plus complet, qui les aidera à rencontrer et à renouveler leur rencontre avec le Christ, et les préparera à un engagement plus profond dans la mission de l’Église. À cette fin, la formation que nous avons mise à jour pour la Confirmation, qui commence de manière plus délibérée en 8e année et se poursuit en 9e ou au-delà, me remplit d’enthousiasme. Je prie que par cet investissement dans leur préparation, nos jeunes achèveront leur formation et prendront leurs places dans la société, habilités par l’Esprit Saint et prêts à partager la bonne nouvelle de l’amour

et du salut de Dieu avec un zèle joyeux.

Pendant la première année de notre nouveau modèle de formation, notre objet est d’offrir à nos jeunes la possibilité d’une rencontre personnelle renouvelée avec Jésus (La Série Alpha Jeunes). Durant la seconde partie de l’an 1 et se poursuivant dans l’an 2, les pasteurs et les coordinateurs d’éducation religieuse adapteront un programme axé sur un enseignement plus profond, enraciné dans la primauté de l’évangélisation. La formation pour la Confirmation sera basée sur des notions catéchétiques solides et une efficacité avérée dans le contexte d’amener les jeunes à rencontrer le Christ et à développer une relation plus profonde avec lui dans l’Église, dans la puissance du Saint-Esprit. Dès cet automne, la formation pour la Confirmation se déroulera de la façon suivante :

- Les confirmands et confirmandes en 8e année commenceront la formation de deux ans. Ils étudieront d’abord la Série Alpha Jeunes, suivie de 24 séances basées sur un programme adapté qui cible un enseignement plus profond, enraciné dans l’évangélisation. Le sacrement de la Confirmation leur sera conféré à Pâques 2023.

- Exceptionnellement en 2021-2022, les confirmands et confirmandes entrant en 9e année ou au-delà, recevront une formation condensée pour la Confirmation, afin de ne pas retarder le sacrement pour ces élèves. Ils étudieront d’abord la Série Alpha Jeunes,

(continué à page 6)



Bishop Christian Riesbeck, CC

(Joanie Marks photo)

Ascension: a story of leaving yet remaining

Some 40 years ago I met Jim and Pauline. Jim was with the OPP [Ontario Provincial Police] and Pauline worked in a Catholic school in Barrie, ON. At the time I was on sabbatical researching. I lived and assisted in a parish in the north of Toronto. The three of us worked together in a marriage enrichment program. Over the course of the year we became good friends. Then I left to return to Fredericton.

One of the remarkable things is that the departure did not end the friendship. For the past 40 years we have maintained the friendship through letters, emails and phone calls. It was not always easy to maintain the contact but it did happen. Though we left each other's physical presence we had not really left one another. Somehow, there was a presence that continued. We continued to be with one another in our friendship. There was a sense of being apart and together, of "leaving yet remaining" with one another.

When the Scriptures speak of the Ascension, it may seem that Jesus is somehow leaving his disciples. But when we look more closely at the Gospel accounts, it is evident they speak of Jesus still being present among them.

The classic image of the ascension of Jesus is captured in the story that we find in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:1-11). The writer of Acts tells the story of the earliest Christian communities after the resurrection of Jesus. Acts begins the story with the account of Jesus leaving the disciples and ascending to heaven, or put another way with the return of Jesus to the Father. It is a story of "leaving yet remaining."

The disciples have been given two important pieces of their call as followers of Jesus. They have been promised the gift and power Holy Spirit, and they have been told that they are to be *witnesses* to all that Jesus has proclaimed. In some way, the ascension is the end of the appearances of the risen Jesus. He leaves them yet remains among them through the continuing power of the *Spirit* that they will receive. Thus, they are to be the ongoing presence of the risen Jesus for our world.

Lindsay Shepherd carries on fight for free speech

By QUINTON AMUNDSON
The Catholic Register

John Carpay, the president of the Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms (JCCF) in Calgary, holds the conviction "that truth has the opportunity to emerge through debate, but if you censor debate, you silence truth."

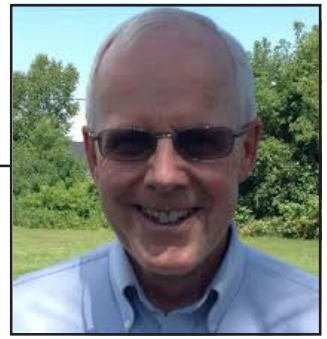
Lindsay Shepherd has seen debate censored up close and personal and has put pen to paper to share her experience.

The 25-year-old mother and native of Victoria, B.C., recently released her memoir *Diversity and Exclusion: Confronting the Campus Free Speech Crisis*. In it, she presents arguments for saving free speech from ideological conformity while also providing a personal account of her experience at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, ON, that thrust her into the national spotlight.

Ms. Shepherd found herself in the limelight in late 2017, quite unexpectedly, as a graduate communications studies student at Laurier teaching a grammar class to first-year undergraduates. She had watched a 2016 segment of the TVO program *The Agenda* with Steve Paikin featuring University of Toronto [U of T] psychology professor Jordan Peterson taking issue with Bill C-16, which would add "gender expression" and "gender identity" as new protected

Our sacred stories

Father JOHN JENNINGS



Jesus might have left, but remains among us. The Incarnation continues with us, for we are the face of Jesus for our world. The final verses of Mark's Gospel present us with this mission. We are called to: "Go out into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). With Jesus among us, and marked by the Spirit we are to be *people of the Good News*.

The last major Constitution of the Second Vatican Council closed the council in December 1965. This was the *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. Its title and opening words declared its principal vision:

The joy and the hope, the grief and the anxiety of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted; this is the joy and hope, the grief and the anxiety, of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. The Christian community is, after all, a community of women and men truly linked with humankind and its history, bearing a message of salvation [good news] intended for all peoples (Gaudium et Spes, preface 1, Huebsch, trans. 1997).

Truly, Good News for all.

Father John Jennings, retired priest of the Diocese of Saint John and St. Thomas University, reflects on the previous Sunday readings with the intent to be a form of on-going adult faith formation. He can be reached at: jennings@stu.ca. §

grounds under the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code. It was a decision that would lead to an e-mail calling Ms. Shepherd to a hearing with a course professor, the program head and a representative from Laurier's Diversity and Equity office and made headlines nationwide when Shepherd released a secretly recorded copy of her meeting to the media.

Ms. Shepherd's book recounts how this episode turned her from an anonymous TA [teaching assistant] on a small university campus, accused of creating a toxic and unsafe environment for students, into a defender of free speech.

It almost didn't come to be though. MS. Shepherd was originally opposed to revisiting her past.

"I was pretty resistant to writing the book at first," Ms. Shepherd told *The Catholic Register*. "I didn't want to relive the Laurier controversy, but then I thought it was an interesting story, and I wanted the chance to document what happened in one book so someone can pick it up and have the whole case laid out. It really is a case study of a campus free speech issue in Canada."

Ms. Shepherd has seen firsthand how free speech has become limited and how it has become the norm.

"In a way people have become so desensitized that they don't even
(continued on page 7)

Rich kids growing up without money — or understanding

Gloria Steinem once confessed that, while never having been overweight, she has always been concerned about her weight because the genes she inherited from her parents predisposed her in that direction. So, she says, *I think of myself as a fat woman who is slim at the moment.* Her comment helped me to understand something I misunderstood years before in a classroom.

Early on in my seminary studies, taking a course on the sociology of poverty, I was struggling to accept our professor's explanation as to why poverty isn't always the consequence of personal failure, but is often the product of unchosen circumstances, accidents, and misfortune. Many of us in the class weren't buying it, and this was our logic. Most of us had come from very humble economic backgrounds and believed that we had pulled ourselves up by our own bootstraps. Why couldn't everyone else do the same?

So we protested: we grew up poor. We didn't have any money. We didn't get free school lunches. We had to work to pay for our clothes and books. Our parents never took any handouts. Nobody helped them — they took care of themselves. So have we, their kids. We resent those who are getting things for nothing. Nothing came to us free. We've earned what we have.

Our professor answered by telling us that this is precisely why we needed a course on the sociology of poverty. He wasn't buying the notion that we had grown up poor and had earned things by our own hard work. Then, this surprising phrase: *"None of you were poor as kids; you were rich kids who grew up without money; and where you are today isn't just the result of your own hard work, it's also the result of a lot of good fortune."*

It took me years (and Gloria Steinem's comment) to understand he was right. I was a rich kid who grew up in a family without money. Moreover, so much of what I naively believed that I'd earned by my own hard work was in fact very much the product of good fortune.

Baccalaureate Mass

(continued from page 2)

commandments and working to build a civilization of love? The world would be a much better place because we would be doing God's work, even as we pursue his plans for our lives through a vocation that he has called us to, using our God-given talents and charisms and knowledge for the common good and the building up of his Kingdom."

Bishop Riesbeck reminded graduates that they have nothing to fear by surrendering to the Lord. "When we submit our gifts and talents to the Lord — including the fruits of our educational pursuits and talents, achievements, knowledge, intelligence — God does not take them away from us, but he brings them to perfection. He does more with them than we could ever imagine on our own. And he also brings us greater happiness — in fact, lasting happiness and fulfilled lives."

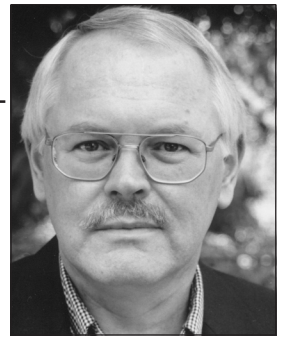
He encouraged them to never stop learning and growing in the Lord, saying "there is always more power, more grace, that God desires to lavish on us — let's seek and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Reminding each person that in the Eucharist divine assistance is received and the nourishment truly needed for the mission. He concluded by calling everyone to do their part with God to build up a civilization of love. "With God — that's the key," he emphasized. "Because nothing is impossible with God."

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

In Exile

RON ROLHEISER, omi



I doubt our society understands that. A number of popular clichés have us believe that one's background should never be an excuse for not being a success in this world, that success is open equally to everyone. We've all inhaled the clichés. *Any poor kid can grow up to be President of this country. Any poor kid can go to Harvard. Anybody industrious can make a success of his or her life. There's no excuse for any healthy person not having a job.*

Is this true? Partially, yes; kids from poor economic backgrounds have become president, thousands of poor kids have found entrance into the best universities, countless kids who grew up poor have been highly successful in life, and people who are motivated and not lazy generally do make a success of their lives. However, that's far from the whole story.

What really makes for the separation of rich and poor in our world? Is everyone really on equal footing? Is it really virtue that makes for success and lack of it that makes for failure?

In a best-selling book, *Elderhood*, Louise Aronson, makes this comment about her mother and Queen Elizabeth, both who aged wonderfully and gracefully: "They both were born into privilege: white, citizens of developed countries, wealthy and educated. Both were gifted with great genetic DNA, and both had the good fortune of not ever having been assaulted, abused, felled by cancer, or in a debilitating car accident. ... These advantages are not a matter of character. *Indeed, willpower and capacity for wise decisions are often by-products of fortunate lives.*" (Emphasis, mine)

Success isn't predicated only on personal character, hard work, and dedication. Neither is failure necessarily the result of weakness, laziness, and lack of effort. We aren't all born equal, set equally into the same starting blocks, have equally gifted or abusive childhoods, are allotted equally the same opportunities for education and growth, and then are parcelled out equally the same measure of accidents, illness, and tragedy in life. However, it's because we naively believe that fortune is allotted equally to all that we glibly (and cruelly) divide people into winners and losers, judge harshly those we deem losers, blame them for their misfortunes, and congratulate ourselves on what we have achieved, as if all the credit for our success can be attributed to our own virtue. Conversely, we see those who are poor as having only themselves to blame. Why can't they pull themselves up by their bootstraps? We did!

But ... some of us have genes that predispose us to become fat, some of us are rich kids who grow up without money, and willpower and capacity for wise decisions are often the products of a fortunate life rather than a matter of character. Recognizing that can make us less cruel in our judgments and far less smug in our own successes.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author. He can be contacted through his website www.ronrolheiser.com Facebook www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser §

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Diocese supports catechists on new journey to Confirmation

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20).

By **NATASHA MAZEROLLE**
Correspondent

SAINT JOHN — The Diocese of Saint John has announced a new formation for Confirmation, which will come into effect in the 2021-22 catechetical year. The result of prayer and consultation with Religious Education coordinators and the Council of Priests of the Diocese of Saint John, this new two-year formation is “motivated by a sincere desire to help our youth become truly engaged and to become intentional missionary disciples” wrote Bishop Christian Riesbeck, CC, in a letter to the faithful of the Diocese of Saint John, *New Journey to Confirmation*, see page 3, this issue of The New Freeman.

The program begins in a more focused way in grade 8 and continues into grade 9 or beyond.

In his letter for the pastoral year from September 2020, Bishop

Nouveau parcours vers la confirmation

(continué de page 3)

suivie de 12 séances condensées, basées sur un programme adapté qui cible un enseignement plus profond, enraciné dans l'évangélisation (deux thèmes par séance). Le sacrement de Confirmation leur sera conféré à Pâques 2022.

Je reconnais que pour de nombreuses paroisses, cette extension de la formation pour la Confirmation représente un changement par rapport à la façon dont la formation se déroule actuellement. Il est possible que nos jeunes soient spirituellement prêts à être confirmés avant la 9e année, mais nous avons cru important de choisir un niveau d'âge scolaire uniforme dans tout le diocèse. La 8e à la 9e année a été choisie comme la meilleure période pour entreprendre le parcours spirituel de la formation à la Confirmation, car il s'agit d'un moment critique dans la vie des jeunes, où ils peuvent bénéficier d'un soutien supplémentaire dans leur cheminement de foi. Nous voulons encourager et inspirer nos jeunes à développer une relation permanente avec Jésus et qu'ils reçoivent la force d'être plus pleinement engagés dans la vie et la mission de l'Église.

Je tiens particulièrement à exprimer ma profonde gratitude à l'équipe de coordination et aux catéchistes de l'éducation religieuse qui s'engagent plus profondément à soutenir nos parents et nos parrains et marraines dans leur cheminement, et à investir dans le développement de la foi de nos jeunes, alors que nous les préparons ensemble à recevoir ce sacrement important. Soyez assurés de mes prières sincères alors que nous entamons ce nouveau projet qui, j'en suis convaincu, aidera nos jeunes à se présenter le jour de leur Confirmation avec le cœur grand ouvert au Saint-Esprit. Guidés par ce même Esprit, puissions-nous embrasser joyeusement notre rôle dans la formation à la Confirmation de nos confirmands et confirmandes, en ayant confiance que le Seigneur saura captiver leurs cœurs et en faire des disciples missionnaires enflammés pour le Christ.

Notre-Dame, Étoile de la nouvelle évangélisation et Épouse du Saint-Esprit, priez pour nous.

✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC
Évêque de Saint John

Riesbeck called on the faithful to “give God permission to move in power in the diocese, staying close to him in the Word and sacraments and in prayer.”

By giving each person involved in the process — candidate, parent, sponsor, catechist, priest and parishioners — the opportunity to engage with each other and to grow deeper in relationship with one another and with Jesus, this new formation for Confirmation is a step towards renewal, not only for the candidates, but for parishes and the diocese as a whole.

This new formation centres around a personal and ongoing relationship with Jesus in the Church, not only for the candidates but for everyone involved in the candidates formation.

Understanding the valuable role catechists play in forming candidates for Confirmation, the diocese has committed itself to investing in these leaders, helping them deepen their own relationship with Jesus and providing the resources and accompaniment they need to embark on this new journey.

A special Alpha for Catechists is currently underway, with more than 30 catechists and lay-leaders from all regions of the diocese — Fredericton, Miramichi and Saint John. It has been an opportunity for leaders to not only experience Alpha, but to grow in relationship with Jesus and with one another and make meaningful connections in small groups as they prepare for a new catechetical year.

Following this, additional training will be provided to equip catechists to facilitate the programs selected by their parish for formation for Confirmation. *Alpha Youth Series* in the first half of year one, and a choice of either Dynamic Catholic's *Decision Point* or Ascension Press' *Chosen* in the second half of year one and into year two.

(continued on page 7)

New Journey to Confirmation

(continued from page 3)

I recognize for many parishes, an extended formation for the Sacrament of Confirmation may be a change to how formation is currently offered. While it is true that our young people could be spiritually ready to be confirmed before grade 9, it is important to choose one school-age level to have uniformity throughout the diocese. Grade 8-9 was chosen as the school-age level time frame for the completion of the Confirmation formation journey because it is a critical time in the life of a young person, when they could use additional support for their faith journey. We want to encourage and inspire our youth to develop their ongoing relationship with Jesus and be strengthened to be more fully engaged in the life and mission of the Church.

I express my deep gratitude especially to our religious education coordinators and catechists who are making an extra commitment to support our parents and sponsors on this journey and investing in the faith development of our youth, as we prepare them together for this important sacrament. Be assured of my sincere prayers as we begin this new endeavour, which I am convinced will help our young people to arrive on Confirmation day with hearts wide open to the Holy Spirit. Guided by this same Spirit may we joyfully embrace the role we have in the formation of our candidates for Confirmation, trusting the Lord to capture their hearts as missionary disciples on fire for Christ.

Our Lady, Star of the New Evangelization and Spouse of the Holy Spirit, pray for us.

✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC
Bishop of Saint John

Fight for free speech

(continued from page 4)

get outraged over free speech issues and how it is now,” said Ms. Shepherd. “It can be like, ‘oh, that student got expelled or that teacher got fired for stating they are pro-second amendment or pro-gun?’ Well of course they’re going to be expelled or fired.”

She details early in the book that at the time she held no strong

Catechists on new journey

(continued from page 6)

Parishes may also choose to work together offering this new formation for Confirmation, to share resources and build community.

Bishop Riesbeck expressed his gratitude to religious education co-ordinators and catechists for their role in supporting young people and investing in their journey towards the Sacrament of Confirmation. “Be assured of my sincere prayers as we begin this new endeavour, which I am convinced will help our young people to arrive on Confirmation day with hearts wide open to the Holy Spirit,” he said in his letter, *New Journey to Confirmation*.

The bishop asks all faithful of the diocese to keep candidates, parents, sponsors, catechists, religious education co-ordinators, pastors and lay leaders in his/her prayers as together to support all candidates for Confirmation to a deeper relationship with Jesus in the Church in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Bishop Riesbeck’s full letter to the faithful New Journey to Confirmation, which includes information on the delivery of the new formation for candidates, can be found on page 3 of this issue. For information on the Alpha Youth Series visit <https://alphacanada.org/alphayouthonline/>, for Decision Point visit <https://www.dynamiccatholic.com/confirmation/decision-point.html>, and for Chosen visit <https://ascensionpress.com/collections/chosen-your-journey-toward-confirmation>.

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

opinion about Mr. Peterson and his worldviews. That would change, however. Her willingness to make what happened to her a matter of public interest has led to her emergence as a key voice in the public cultural conversation the past several years. Soon after her story hit the news, Ms. Shepherd founded the Laurier Society for Open Inquiry. Since 2019 she has been Free Speech Fellow with JCCF and also writes about free speech issues and the news of the day on behalf of the Canadian news platform True North.

Perhaps the most compelling aspect of *Diversity and Exclusion* is that it features a written transcript of the fateful conversation that Ms. Shepherd secretly recorded on the advice of her mother as both were suspicious of the vague language in the e-mail invitation.

Considering insights about grammar was at the heart of the Mr. Peterson segment on *The Agenda*, Ms. Shepherd felt her students would benefit from the screening of this clip as it would help them “see the real-life implications of seemingly uninteresting grammar rules.” She also felt it would complement the gender pronouns section of the student textbook and aired an exchange between Mr. Peterson and U of T professor of Transgender Studies Nicholas Matte.

No protest was raised about the content during the tutorial, Ms. Shepherd said, but one week later she would receive the startling e-mail.

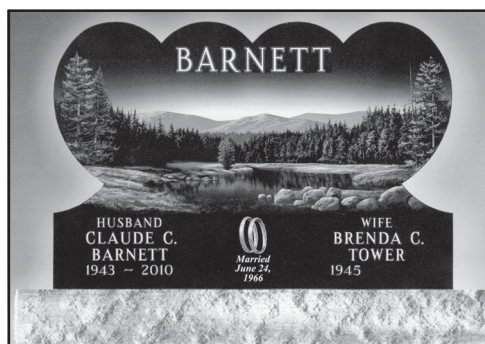
Those sitting across from Ms. Shepherd said they felt Mr. Peterson “is a figure who is basically highly involved with the alt-right” whose ideas should not be exposed to young students, and that a couple of pupils complained about the material (a claim later proven false). She was also told her discussion ran counter to Laurier’s Gendered and Sexual Violence Policy. She left the meeting with a dictate to submit all of her lesson plans beforehand for approval.

Instead of complying, Ms. Shepherd took the road less travelled because she felt it “wasn’t right to stifle discussion in an environment dedicated to open inquiry and the pursuit of truth.”

She believes the censorship of conservative thought and speech is even more acute in 2021.

“Diversity and inclusion offices serve as enforcers of ideological conformity,” she said. “They exist on campuses to ensure everyone

believes trans women are real women, to be pro-choice and you have to believe Canada is systemically racist. If you don’t play along ... you will be excluded from polite society basically.” §



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Archdiocese of Montreal names ombudswoman to deal with sex abuse complaints

By FRANÇOIS GLOUTNAY
Catholic News Service

MONTREAL — Determined to "eradicate the scourge" of sexual abuse in his diocese and in the church, Archbishop Christian Lépine of Montreal has appointed an independent ombudswoman on abuse.

The archbishop appointed Marie Christine Kirouack, a lawyer with extensive experience in family law and crisis intervention, to the position. Her task will be to receive all complaints of abuse and inappropriate behaviour committed by priests, pastoral staff, employees of the archdiocese and volunteers of the Archdiocese of Montreal, he said at a news conference May 5.

With her appointment, the archbishop said, the Archdiocese of Montreal has implemented more than half of the 31 recommendations to fight sexual abuse issued in a November 2020 report by former judge Pepita G. Capriolo.

Ms. Capriolo emphasized that the position of ombudsman needed to be entrusted to "a layperson, completely independent of the church."

Ms. Kirouack said she's Jewish, and she'll be working with a team.

At the briefing, Capriolo also explained that admissible complaints will not be limited to sexual abuse.

"All forms of abuse will be taken seriously," she said, noting that included psychological, physical, spiritual and financial abuse. In addition, reports of inappropriate behaviour, such as delivering a racist or misogynistic homily, throwing a tantrum, or showing up to church or a meeting in an intoxicated state, will also be received by the ombudsman.

Within 24 hours, the ombudsman will refer all complaints of abuse received to an advisory committee, which will meet within seven days and make recommendations to the archbishop: the need for an independent investigation, removal of the priest from ministry, suspension of an employee, or closure of the file.

Any inappropriate behaviour complaint will be received by the vicar general or the director of the Office of Pastoral Personnel, who must respond within 48 hours. It is always the ombudsman who will be the link between the victim and the Catholic authorities.

Alleged victims "will be received with deference and listening," said Ms. Kirouack. She specified that she "will not force anyone to file a complaint" but that "if the person so desires," her job will be "to collect his complaint and to ensure its follow-up." She also said she would accompany the victims or complainants throughout the process.

"I will be available if a person wants me to



Marie Christine Kirouack (CNC image)

accompany them to file a complaint with the police or to be at their side during a canonical or criminal trial," she added.

"I invite anyone who has been the victim of inappropriate actions to contact the ombudsman without delay," Archbishop Lépine said. He emphasized that all citizens, staff and clergy "have a responsibility and an obligation to report to the ombudsman any situation that constitutes abuse or could be abuse," regardless of when the event may have occurred.

François Gloutnay is a staffer at Presence info in Montreal.

Archbishop says new reporting system adds another tool to church's efforts to eliminate all abuse

By BRIAN DRYDEN
Canadian Catholic News

OTTAWA — A new system that was launched on May 5 to report abuse by bishops within the Catholic Church in Canada is just one aspect of a larger effort within the church to make sure that all instances of abuse are exposed and eliminated, Gatineau Archbishop Paul-André Durocher said.

"We wanted to make sure there were no gaps in the system when it comes to reporting abuse," said Archbishop Durocher, who is one of four bishops on the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops' (CCCC) Standing Committee for Responsible Ministry and the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults.

"This is another step, and in keeping with Pope Francis' directives, to make sure there is no place for abuse within the church," Archbishop Durocher said.

"There has been a lot of effort and focus within the church to set up procedures and protocols to make sure people feel they can safely report instances of abuse, but the reporting would eventually have to through a bishop," Archbishop Durocher explained. "But what if the issue or abuse involved a bishop?"

"In some ways that was a gap in the system, what if it is a bishop that is doing something wrong or is not following the proper protocols, what then? Who do you report that to?" Durocher said in an interview with the Canadian Catholic News.

"In many ways, it is plugging a hole in the system," Archbishop Durocher said.

The CCCC announced the launch of the new *Canadian Reporting System for Sexual Abuse or Cover-up by a Catholic Bishop* on May 5, calling the new reporting system "a national, bilingual service for reporting situations of sexual abuse either committed or covered-up by a bishop."

"This service furthers their commitment to responsibility, accountability and transparency in matters of clergy sexual abuse and their commitment to facilitate healing and justice for victims-survivors," the CCCC said of the Canadian Church's leadership.

The CCCC said the new reporting system is the Canadian Catholic Church's "direct response" to Pope Francis' call for all dioceses and eparchies in his Apostolic Letter *Vos estis lux mundi* (*You are the light of the world*) to establish "one or more public, stable and easily accessible systems for submission of report."

"With *Vos estis lux mundi*, the pope indicates what procedures must be followed in the universal Church when allegations are made against a Bishop," the CCCC said.

"In doing so, he updates, clarifies and standardizes practices around the world," said the CCCC. "The reporting system for bishops (continued on page 9)"

Reform aims to carry Gospel mission forward, not clean up past, pope says

By CAROL GLATZ
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The Christian idea of reforming one's life is not about making it perfect but initiating a process of going outside of oneself to best follow one's vocation and carry out a mission, Pope Francis said.

"Reform does not have a functional role nor one of self-perfection, but rather it is aimed at mission -- the vocation of each of us in life," the pope said in a video message released earlier this May.

The message was released ahead of the publication of a book in Italian by the late Jesuit Father Miguel Ángel Fiorito, the pope's long-time spiritual director, on the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

The book, *Cercare e trovare la volontà di Dio*, (*Seeking and finding the will of God*),

was scheduled for release May 11. The book's preface was written by Pope Francis.

In the video message, the pope said the text, written as a practical guidebook, can be helpful for entering "into the soul of St. Ignatius' spiritual exercises."

One of the book's aims is to take the time "to feel the emotion of the Spirit and to seek in concrete terms the will of God through the reform of one's own life," the pope said.

In the spiritual exercises, he said, the concept of reform is "in tension not only with what was once deformed. Reform is also conforming to what is new, to take on a new form."

It is a form that leads toward or conforms "to the life, to the style, to the criteria and choices of the Lord," he said.

That is why reform is less about perfection and more aimed at mission and one's vo-

cation, he said.

If one looks at St. Peter, for example, the Lord always called on him each time he confessed to being a sinner. The Lord called the apostle to follow him, "perfecting him not in everything, but in what was needed to be a fisher of men and to shepherd his sheep."

"The Lord will not ask Peter to reform all the faults he carries with him from his past life," the pope said, and, in fact, many of these faults will accompany him for the rest of his life.

Rather, Jesus invited St. Peter to "go out of himself to proclaim the Gospel" with a mission in which the past will need reform with some things, but not everything, he said.

Ignatian exercises seek to aid in that "inner action of knowing, through discernment, the divine will on the relevant issues of our spiritual life," the pope said. §

New reporting system adds another tool to church's efforts

(continued from page 8)

introduces an additional level of accountability for Church leadership in Canada, alongside the existing diocesan/eparchial protocols for reporting and responding to sexual abuse or other sexual misconduct by priests, deacons, religious, and mandated lay pastoral personnel."

According to the CCCB, the new abuse reporting system was developed by the Canadian firm Clearview Strategic Partners in consultation with Canada's bishops.

"This new reporting system is designed to receive and transmit to the proper Church authorities reports of sexual abuse, sexual mis-

conduct (e.g., sexual harassment or possession of child pornography) or cover-up by a Catholic Bishop," the CCCB said. "ClearView's technology benefits anyone wanting to make such a report by providing them with a secure and confidential platform, allowing them to remain anonymous if they so choose, and ensuring all communications are documented and preserved."

The new reporting system can be accessed online at BishopReportingSystem.ca or by calling toll-free 1-866-892-3737. The phone line and online reporting system operates 24 hours a day in English and French.

According to Dr. Delphine Collin-Vézina of Montreal's McGill University, the new reporting system is designed to

protect abuse victims.

"Our society must aim to create a climate of safety where the abuse of children and vulnerable people is simply not tolerated, and where their support is paramount," said Dr. Collin-Vézina, who is director of the Centre for Research on Children and Families at McGill.

"The newly established national, bilingual system for reporting sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, or cover-up by a Catholic Bishop in Canada is an important step forward in this direction. This system is rooted in a victim-first approach and aims to remove the multiple barriers that prevent disclosure.

"These abuses have been silenced and covered up for too long, leaving victims and survivors unheard," she said. "I applaud this initiative led by the Bishops of Canada, which will hopefully facilitate healing and recovery for those who were abused."

Archbishop Durocher told the Canadian Catholic News that the CCCB's Standing Committee for Responsible Ministry and the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults played a key role in the development of the new reporting system as did the two members of the committee who are abuse survivors.

"There was a lot of discussion about this to make sure that the concerns of survivors were addressed in setting up the reporting system," Archbishop Durocher said.

The Standing Committee for Responsible Ministry and the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults, which has been a consulting body to CCCB since being established after the 2018 Plenary Assembly of Bishops, has a mandate "to provide the appropriate CCCB bodies with researched-based information, insights, and recommendations on questions and concerns related to clergy sexual abuse."

The goal of the committee that Archbishop Durocher is a member of within the church is to "address the issues of healing and prevention comprehensively in recognition of their full impact on victims, families, local communities, society and religious faith; and to do so in a manner fully consistent with federal and provincial/ territorial laws in Canada." §



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Critics of Bill 21 and Quebec government agree that April court ruling must be appealed

By BRIAN DRYDEN
Canadian Catholic News

OTTAWA – Two of the organizations trying to have Quebec's controversial secularism law Bill 21 overturned by the courts announced May 6 that they will be joining the Quebec government in appealing a court decision released in April that upheld most of Bill 21.

But the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA), who were the first to challenge Bill 21 in the courts, will be appealing the ruling for very different reasons than Quebec's government.

In his 242-page Quebec Superior Court ruling released on April 20, Justice Marc-André Blanchard ruled that for the most part the Quebec government does have the power to force government employees not to wear any religious symbols while they are at work.

He made that decision even though his ruling concedes that Bill 21 infringes on the religious freedom and freedom of expression rights of Canadians. But Mr. Blanchard ruled that because Quebec's government invoked the notwithstanding clause of the constitution, most of Bill 21 is shielded from being challenged in the courts.

However, Mr. Blanchard did strike down a part of the bill that relates to English language education rights in Quebec because he ruled that the law violates Section 23 of the charter of rights. His ruling says minority education rights can not be upended by the notwithstanding clause.

It is that aspect of the ruling that has angered the provincial government and prompted the Quebec government to announce it was appealing the ruling almost immediately after it was made public on April 20.

Quebec Justice Minister Simon Jolin-Barrette told a press conference after the court ruling that the province does not believe the law in Quebec should be applied differently based on language.

"The laws of the National Assembly apply throughout Quebec. There is no question of dividing Quebec in the application of Quebec legislation," said Mr. Jolin-Barrette.

But while the ruling has appeased English school boards in Quebec that were part of the challenge to Bill 21 — and those school boards vow to defend the court ruling on appeal — two of the main English school board's allies in the case challenging Bill 21 now say will also appeal the ruling. And they say it is Bill 21 and the Quebec government that is dividing Quebecers, not those who are against Bill 21.

"Justice Marc-André Blanchard recognized that there are fundamental problems with Bill 21. The stories of how real people continue to be harmed by Bill 21 are clear in this decision. There are real life consequences to the harms that Bill 21 causes," a joint statement May 6 from the NCCM and CCLA said, adding that they will continue to challenge Bill 21 to the Canadian Supreme Court if they have to.

"The government wants to make us believe that the court's decision divides Quebecers," said CCLA equity program director Noa Mendelsohn Aviv.

"In fact, the legislation known as Bill 21 is itself the source of division, discrimination, and harm to Quebec society," she said. Quebecers deserve choice and freedom from government oppression, and that is why we will continue to fight Bill 21."

Many human rights and religious groups have been calling on the federal government to get involved in the legal challenges to Bill 21, but so far the federal government's position has been to stay out of the Quebec court cases. That is a position that has been reiterated by most of the other federal political parties in Canada, including the Conservatives and the NDP.

But despite the lack of action or support from the main federal political parties which have all framed the issue as being a provincial issue in Quebec, opponents of Bill 21 will continue to seek to overturn Bill 21 in the courts.

"It has been almost two years of second-class citizenship for Quebecers who wear religious symbols such as the hijab, kippah, or turban," said NCCM Director of Quebec Affairs Yusuf Faqiri.

"We promised that we would not stop fighting until second-class citizenship ends for all Quebecers."§

Sunday's Liturgy

May 23, 2021 Pentecost Sunday

First Reading: Acts 2.1-11

*All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit
and began to speak in other languages.*

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 104.1ab+24ac, 29b-30, 31+34
(R.30)

*R. Lord, send forth your Spirit,
and renew the face of the earth.*

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12.3b-7, 12-13
In the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.

OR

*Galatians 5.16-25
Works of the Spirit.*

Gospel: John 20.19-23
*As the Father has sent me, so I send you.
Receive the Holy Spirit.*

OR

*John 15.26-27/16.12-15
The Spirit of truth will guide you into all the truth.*

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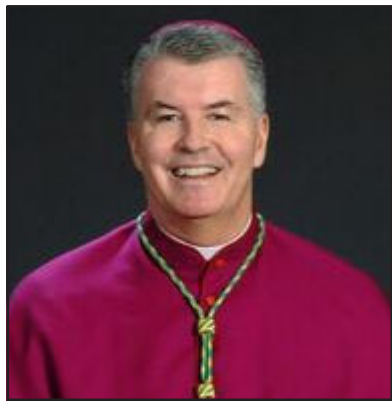
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Alberta churches dealt harsh pandemic measures

By QUINTON AMUNDSON
The Catholic Register

CALGARY — Houses of worship were among the many sectors of Alberta society hit with the most stringent COVID-19 capacity guidelines since the first wave of the virus last spring.



Bishop William McGrattan

“In some ways, I was preparing myself for the eventuality of this kind of announcement.”

This sweeping elevation of lockdown measures is being executed due to Alberta posting a seven-day average daily case count of 466.4

New regulations are limiting in-person worship services to 15 people in high case areas, down from the 15 per cent of building fire code capacity.

It doesn't come as a surprise to Calgary Bishop William McGrattan.

“My immediate reaction was recognizing that the situation in Alberta is critical in certain areas of the province and certain decisions would probably be in the best of public health and safety,” said Bishop McGrattan.

per million people as of May 6, the highest in North America. Michigan is second overall at 334.8, and Manitoba is second highest among Canadian provinces at 229.3. Another motivating factor is that variants account for more than 55 per cent of active cases, as well as the seven-day average for hospitalizations is 666 people.

Among the wide-ranging “stop the spike” province-wide restrictions, unveiled during a May 4 primetime television address from Premier Jason Kenney, is a shutdown of in-person K-12 learning until May 25, a closure of indoor dining, capacity cuts to retail establishment occupancy from 25 to 15 per cent (or 10 in high-case regions) and all health services are appointment only. Higher case regions like Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer and Lethbridge have even more restrictions (listed on the Government of Alberta website).

Father Paul Kavanagh, a senior mission leadership lead for the Edmonton archdiocese and rector at St. Joseph's Basilica, said he expected tougher restrictions despite the success of the Alberta Catholic community in ensuring no major outbreak emanates from a church.

“I think the protocols we have had in place the past several months have been very strong for our parishioners, our clergy and our staff,” said Kavanagh. “Sometimes this news is hard to hear, but we continue to follow the direction of the chief medical officer.”

Not all Albertans are as understanding as Fr. Kavanagh and Bishop McGrattan. The new restrictions were announced just days after a No More Lockdowns rodeo near Bowden, Alta., attracted 4,000 people during the first weekend of May in defiance of Alberta Health Services stipulations. Mr. Kenney strongly condemned this gathering.

This spirit of rebellion has been evident in other Alberta faith denominations for some time. James Coates, the pastor of GraceLife Church in Spruce Grove, is on trial for leading church services in violation of health orders, and pastor Artur Pawlowski of Calgary's Street Church branded Calgary police officers as “Nazis,” “Gestapo” and “communists” as he told them to leave a service on April 3.

Rev. Pawlowski was arrested May 8 for failing to abide by public health regulations during a service.

Bishop McGrattan and Fr. Kavanagh both state they have not received any large-scale pressure from parishioners to disobey the government.

As of now, both Calgary and Edmonton are interpreting that the priest is not factored into the count of 15 people.

While online registration systems will likely get revamped to only allow 15 people, a first-come, first-served approach will be employed. Guidelines listed on the Calgary diocesan website state priests “may also consider encouraging parishioners to only attend one mass in the next three weeks to give others the chance to attend Mass in person.” Priests are also welcomed to add more masses throughout the week and weekend if they so choose.

These restrictions will be in effect until at least May 25.

Manitoba has also introduced new restrictions, suspending faith gatherings as of May 9 until at least May 30. Livestreamed Masses will continue to be held. Ontario remained in lockdown as well, with masses suspended until at least May 20.

Here in New Brunswick, faith venues can continue to be open as long as two metre of distance is maintained between people outside of their household or Steady15 at a maximum of 50% of the venue, and everyone is wearing a mask. Masks must be worn, and two metres of distance must be in place, for singing to be permitted — otherwise, no singing is allowed. §

OBITUARIES

FREILL, ROBERT EDWARD — The family of Bob Freill mourn the passing of a loving husband, father and grandfather, which occurred on Friday May 15, 2021 at St. John-St. Stephen Nursing Home. Born in Montreal, PQ on June 9th of 1947, he was the son of the late James Edward and Kathleen Estelle (Gilmour) Freill (formerly of Montreal and Ontario). Bob was ordained as permanent deacon by Bishop Arthur Gilbert in 1979 and worked for the bishop in many Parishes and capacities until his retirement in 2010. Deacon Bob served on many committees, local, provincial and national boards in leadership roles including Scouts of Canada. Those who knew and loved Deacon Bob will miss him forever.

He is survived by his loving and devoted wife of 53 years, Margaret (Mowry) Freill of Saint John; children Sean Freill (Donna Fleras) of Ottawa, ON, Moira Rees (Jamie) of Rusagonis, NB, Bryan Freill (Jennifer Mercer) of ACT Australia, Liam Freill (Sara Nicol) of Saint John and Deirdre Freill (Gerry Lewis) of Montreal, PQ; grandchildren Emma, Molly, Ben, Sunny, Frankie, Teghan, Maryn, Rowyn and Fintan; brother Peter Freill (Linda) of Oakville, ON; several cousins, nieces, nephews and friends.

Arrangements were under the direction of Fundy Funeral Home, Saint John. A celebration of Bob's life will be held at a later date. Following cremation a graveside service was held at St. Joseph's Cemetery, Saint John. §

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Pope, at audience with public present, talks about the power of prayer

By CINDY WOODEN
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Holding a general audience with visitors and pilgrims present for the first time in more than six months, Pope Francis said he was very pleased to see people "face to face."

"I'll tell you something: it's not nice to talk in front of nothing, just a camera. It's not nice," the pope told about 300 people who attended the audience May 12 in the San Damaso Courtyard of the Apostolic Palace.

Because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the last general audience open to the public was October 28. After that, the pope returned to livestreaming the audience from the library of the Apostolic Palace.

Greeting Polish speakers at the audience, the pope noted that May 13, the feast of Our Lady of Fatima, marked the 40th anniversary of the attempt to assassinate St. John Paul II.

The Polish pope, who was riding in the popemobile at the start of a weekly general audience when he was shot by Mehmet Ali Agca in 1981, was convinced "that he owed his life to Our Lady of Fatima," Pope Francis said. "This event makes us aware that our lives and the history of the world are in the hands of God."

In his main audience talk, Pope Francis fo-

cused on overcoming obstacles to prayer, but also on the power of prayer.

Prayer, he told the crowd, is not always "a walk in the park."

While it may be easy to "parrot" prayer, "blah, blah, blah," he said, real prayer requires effort.

Prayer "certainly gives great peace, but through inner struggle, at times hard, which can accompany even long periods of life," he said.

Often when a person wants to pray, he said, "we are immediately reminded of many other activities, which at that moment seem more important and more urgent. This happens to me, too; I'm going to go pray. But no, I have to do this and that.' We run from prayer; I don't know why, but that's how it is."

But "almost always, after putting off prayer, we realize that those things were not essential at all, and that we may have wasted time" on things that were not as important as prayer, he said. "This is how the Enemy deceives us."

Pope Francis told the story of a man he knew in Buenos Aires, Argentina, "my other diocese," who was told that his 9-year-old daughter was sick, and the doctors were convinced she was about to die. The man took a train to the Basilica of Our Lady of Luján and prayed outside all night, "fighting for the health of his daughter."

When he got back to the hospital, he found his wife smiling because their daughter sud-

denly improved, the pope said.

"I saw this myself," Pope Francis said. "Prayer works miracles because prayer goes straight to the centre of the tenderness of God who loves us like a father. And when he does not give us the grace" of what was asked for in prayer, "he gives us another, which we will see over time."§



VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis greets people during his weekly general audience in the San Damaso Courtyard of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican May 12, 2021. It was the first time in more than six months that visitors and pilgrims have been able to attend the audience. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Papal vaccine campaigns offered punishments, rewards 200 years ago

By CINDY WOODEN
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — When popes were king, they ordered all their subjects in the Papal States to be vaccinated, using punishments and rewards to convince the hesitant and making sure the poor and the prisoners were inoculated as well.

Vatican News recounted how, as a smallpox epidemic swept central Italy at the end of the 1700s and beginning of the 1800s, Pope Pius VII threw the full weight of his temporal power behind a vaccination campaign.

The text of a law promulgated June 20, 1822, by Pope Pius' secretary of state, Cardinal Ercole Consalvi, described the new smallpox vaccine as a gift "put in place by divine providence" as a sign of God's "paternal love to save his children."

But the text noted that not everyone saw the vaccine as a gift, and it denounced appearances that "a deep-rooted prejudice was stronger in some parents than the love of their offspring."

"The legislation specified that to obtain subsidies, benefits or premiums, it was necessary to provide the 'certificate showing that the applicant, being the father of a family, has had the vaccination,'" said the Vatican News report.

Refusing the vaccine was defined as "reprehensible conduct" punishable by a loss of benefits.

The pope set up committees to oversee the vaccination campaign and tied the licensing of physicians to their willingness to vaccinate patients, the report said.

But two years later, Pope Leo XII, who succeeded Pope Pius in 1823, removed the vaccination obligation.

And his efforts drew the praise of one of Rome's most famous poets, Giuseppe Gioachino Belli, who wrote a sonnet extolling the virtues of the new pope who "liberated" his people from an invention of "the Freemasons" and restored the possibility that God alone would decide when it was time for someone to die.

Pope Gregory XVI, elected in 1831, restarted the vaccination campaign and extended

it to all prisoners as well. Pope Pius IX, the last of the popes with temporal power, continued the campaign and designated a financial reward of "two paoli" — 20 cents of a scudo — for those who returned eight days after being vaccinated to have its efficacy checked, the Vatican News report said.§



Portrait of Pius VII by Sir Thomas Lawrence (1819) (Wikipedia image)