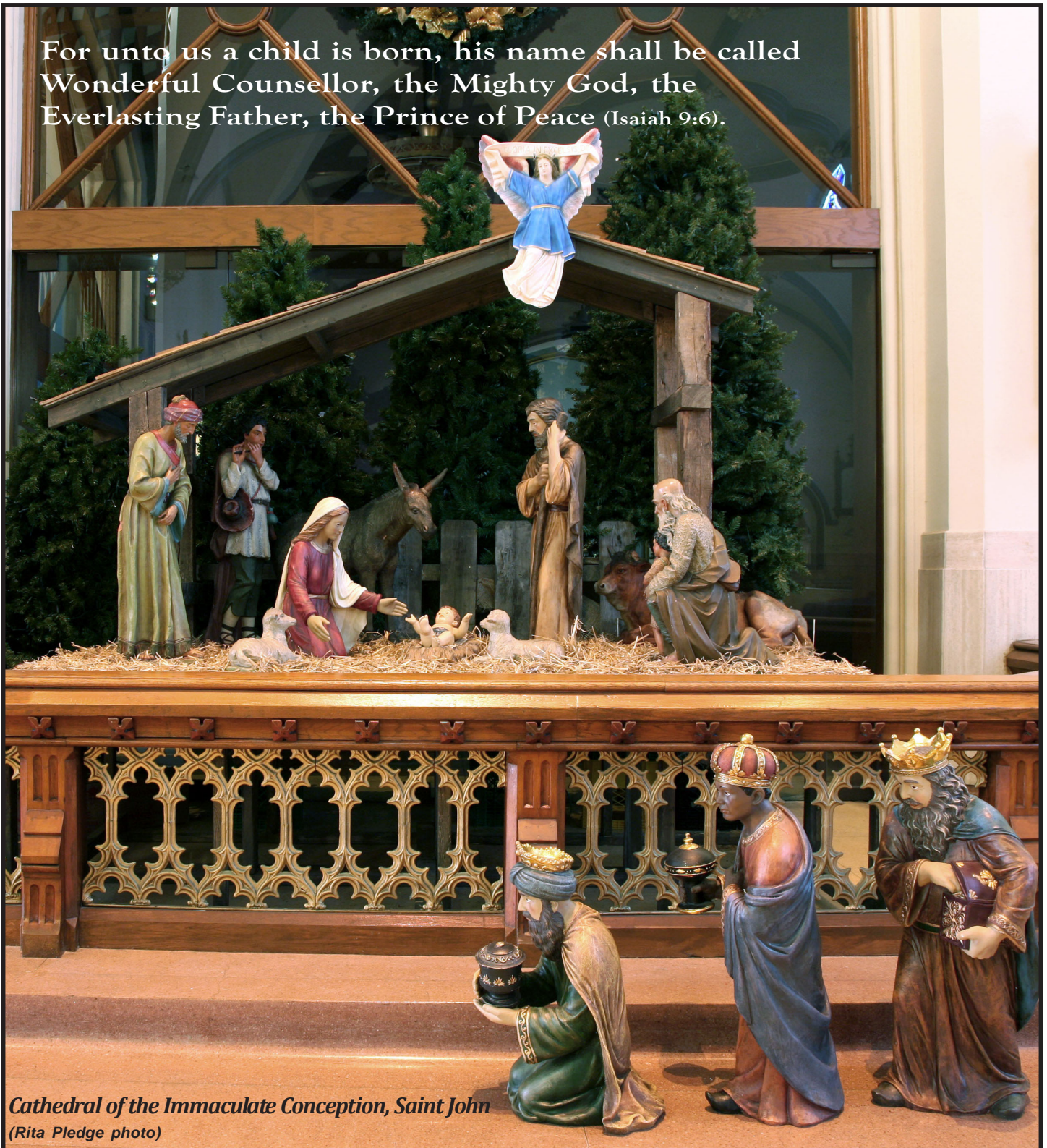


# The New Freeman

December 23 & 30, 2022

Vol. 122 No. 51 & 52

For unto us a child is born, his name shall be called  
Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the  
Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).



*Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Saint John*  
(Rita Pledge photo)

***December 25th is Christmas Day and the Feast of the Nativity of the Lord  
December 30th is the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph  
January 1 is New Year's Day, World Day of Peace, the Feast of Mary, Mother of God***



# Rocmaura: celebrating 50 years

By NATASHA MAZEROLLE  
Correspondent

SAINT JOHN — Rocmaura Nursing Home plays a crucial role in the Saint John community. This “home away from home” offers 150 beds over four units for those who are cognitively well, those with dementia, and those needing physical care or are chronically ill, as well as a palliative care room.

First opened on December 16, 1972, Rocmaura celebrates 50 years of being “a community of caring people, committed to providing quality care guided by Christian values,” that is “inspired by the healing ministry of Jesus and the tradition of caring and compassion reflected in the sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception,” [www.rocmaura.com](http://www.rocmaura.com). But according to its website, its roots go back much further.

It was a partnership between the Diocese of Saint John and the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception (SCIC) that saw the establishment of the city’s first nursing home, Mater Misericordiae Home on Sydney Street in 1888. At that time, and already caring for the poor and disadvantaged of the city through orphanages and schools, the SCIC “began to see a growing need among the elderly.”

This was the beginning of a relationship of care and compassion that spanned decades. Influenced greatly by a number of saints, including St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louise de Marillac and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the SCIC cared for the most marginalized and passed down “ideas and values of Catholic health care...to create what we know today,” [www.rocmaura.com](http://www.rocmaura.com).

In December 1972, after moving from several different locations around the city, a permanent location was found for the Sisters at 10 Parks Street in the city and Rocmaura Nursing Home was officially opened. Rocmaura continues to celebrate “all the efforts from our past and present Sisters to create opportunities for our community,” [www.rocmaura.com](http://www.rocmaura.com).

The fondness the Sisters have for Rocmaura is evident, as Sister Anita Holmes, Rocmaura’s last SCIC administrator, and Sister Mary Beth McCurdy, congregational leader of the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception, reflected on the beginnings of Rocmaura in a video that was produced to mark the occasion. The Sisters are humble about their role, with Sr. McCurdy saying that “it was never about making a big name for us, it was about the signs of the times, which



**SAINT JOHN — Sister Anita Holmes (right), SCIC speaking at the 50th gala celebrations of Rocmaura Nursing Home, October 29, 2022 at the Saint John Trade and Convention Centre is joined on stage by Sister Mary Beth McCurdy, SCIC. (Submitted photo)**

we still look at.”

“It certainly brings lots of memories back, I don’t want to get teary,” Sr. Holmes said. “I’ve always been impressed since I left, when I come back for a visit, I see the department heads, I see the staff in every department carrying on in that same spirit that was here when we began and will continue.”

Now in its fiftieth year, Rocmaura Nursing home continues to build on the strong legacy of Catholic health care upon which it was founded, going above and beyond to bring care and compassion to the 150 residents who call it home, as well as their families. The core values are exemplified in the dedicated staff and leadership who serve the community today: support for the families of residents, meaningful relationships with diverse groups, adherence to the Catholic Health Alliance of Canada Health Ethics Guide, the dignity of each person, the sacredness of life at every age, a welcoming, home-like atmosphere, and a holistic approach to care.

A centre of excellence in the spirit and mission of the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception, Rocmaura is a treasure in the City of Saint John. Sr. Holmes is optimistic for the future. “We hope that Rocmaura Nursing Home will continue to meet the changing needs of our residents and those we serve, blessing families for many years to come,” she said.

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

## The New Freeman

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## From the publisher

Dear readers,

I am writing to inform you that after more than a century, production of *The New Freeman* is coming to an end. This issue (December 23/30, 2022) will be the last for our print diocesan newspaper.

Published on a weekly basis without interruption since 1900, *The New Freeman* leaves a legacy of journalistic excellence. As a voice for the Diocese of Saint John, it has been a trusted news source in the homes of many throughout the years. Faced with increasing costs for publication, decreased demand for paper publications and the shift towards digital news media, we recognize a call to be docile to new promptings of the Holy Spirit, and new ways to communicate the Good News of Jesus Christ in an ever-changing world.

I could not close this chapter in the history of our diocese without offering profound thanks to all those who have contributed to *The New Freeman* over so many years, including our outgoing Managing Editor Margie Trafton, the Board of Directors, correspondents, contributors, patrons, supporters and dedicated readers past and present. With the retirement of our Managing Editor and building on the foundation that *The New Freeman*

has laid, we will be discerning our communications methods in the coming year and exploring other possibilities including a digital online version. While I am saddened at the loss of this longstanding communication tool, I remain hopeful that new and exciting methods of sharing the Gospel are emerging. Stay tuned for future possibilities!

“The revolution taking place in communications media and in information technologies represents a great and thrilling challenge; may we respond to that challenge with fresh energy and imagination as we seek to share with others the beauty of God,” Pope Francis, World Day of Communications 2014. With deep gratitude for the contributions of all who have preceded us, we look forward with hope to continuing the legacy of communicating the Joy of the Gospel in our diocese and beyond.

Thank you for your continued support of *The New Freeman* over the years. Please accept my best wishes for a Merry Christmas and blessed New Year.

Sincerely yours in Jesus and Mary,

Most Reverend Christian Riesbeck, CC  
Bishop of Saint John  
Publisher, The New Freeman



**Bishop Christian Riesbeck, CC**

## Diocesan-wide census launched

By NATASHA MAZEROLLE  
Correspondent

SAINT JOHN — On the weekend of December 10-11, the Third Sunday of Advent, the Diocese of Saint John launched a diocesan-wide census. From now until January 15, 2023, faithful in the diocese are asked to either fill out a census card (available in all parishes and returnable either by placing in the offertory basket or returning to the parish office) or completing the online form at [dioceseofsaintjohn.org](http://dioceseofsaintjohn.org). This important effort, which is the first step in a feasibility study that will be conducted in the new year to test a possible diocesan capital campaign, will also help parishes to better communicate with their congregations.

### **Correction:**

**Christmas and New Year's Mass Times  
Immaculate Conception Parish  
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception  
(Saint John)**

Dec. 24: 4:00, 7:00 & 10:00 pm

Dec. 25: 10:00 & 11:45 am

Dec. 31: 5:00 pm

Jan. 1: 10:00; 11:45 am & 5:30 pm

The potential capital campaign focuses primarily on the next phases in the restoration of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Saint John, which Bishop Riesbeck notes, “is important, not only for its heritage value but also for the missionary outreach and spiritual revitalization it provides in an area of the diocese that desperately needs a Catholic Christian presence.” He went on to say that “as the mother church and with its prominent location in one of the poorest regions of the diocese, the Cathedral plays an important role in our missionary outreach.”

Over the last two years, despite the difficulties of the pandemic, Bishop Riesbeck noted that “the Cathedral community has been reaching out through our St. Vincent de Paul ministry and other lay-led initiatives such as a parish nursing program and Pizza and Prayer serving the marginalized and the poor. We have been providing opportunities for people to encounter Jesus through daily mass and adoration, and a Lenten Revitalization Series, and Marian pilgrimages just to name a few.”

The bishop's heart is for all churches in the diocese to be places of true encounter with Jesus. “I am not interested in simply restor-

ing a building — I want to restore hearts and souls to Jesus,” he said. “And I realize that this happens at the parish level...For this reason, the capital campaign we are proposing will see a portion of funds raised returned to the parishes.”

In addition to this, the plan is still to have a portion of all donations be directed to a diocesan pastoral fund to serve evangelization efforts for youth and families as well as clergy and lay leadership formation, and other pastoral needs.

The bishop explained how the census will help lay the foundation for a feasibility study and the important work of restoration and diocesan renewal. “To assist with this effort, we are conducting a diocesan census, *I Know my Sheep*, which will help parishes update their records and ensure that our data is current,” he said. “Having updated information will provide parishes with a better idea of those within the parish and allow them to deepen their relationship as a parish family.”

Bishop Riesbeck is asking everyone to do their best to ensure that every family fills out a card so that the data will be as complete as

(continued on page 6)



## Advent to Christmas: Hope

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;  
Those who lived in a land of deep darkness —  
on them light has shone. (Isaiah 9:2)*

These words are the first we hear in the readings of the Feast of Christmas. And what words they are. They truly are “for us.” In the midst of winter gloom when darkness comes early and the light of day is short, when winds blow cold and the snow and ice lie on the frigid, frosted ground we long for the warmth and sunlight of summer. But the darkness and cold can often be seen as an image of the great challenges of our lives. War and violence, injustice and oppression, suffering and pain, inequities and abuse of power — these are experiences of darkness marking our very humanity. They prey on the weaknesses and vulnerability of all humanity. Advent – Christmas issues a cry of hope. The images and stories bring light, promise and hope. They touch more than our winter season. More importantly, they reach out to our heart and soul, the heart and soul of all humanity.

There are times when we and our world are *the people who walked in darkness* and we certainly seek and hope to become the ones on whom *light has shone*. This is the promise of Christmas and the Feast of the Incarnation. For it is this feast which speaks to us of *Emmanuel*, that is, *God-is-with-us*. Do we really believe this — in our heart and soul?

God has always been with us. The People of God, Israel was firm in their faith that God was always with them. The great act of God for them was in the liberation of the people from slavery through the Exodus. But God was with them even before this, even in slavery and captivity, in threat and in exile. The prophets, like Isaiah proclaimed this presence of the living God for them again and again. Quite beyond the People of Israel, God’s presence has been witnessed and acknowledged among the many peoples of the earth in the challenges and the wonders of life and creation. But now, in the *Incarnation*, we see a new hope and promise, a new way of knowing God-is-with-us.

Perhaps there are times when we regard Jesus as someone who was born long ago in a simple way and who lived for a while and did marvellous things. He was a great teacher, a moral leader, a charismatic person who gathered many followers. And then he was gone. In some way his influence continues in those who see themselves as

## Sacred in cyberspace

By MARY FRENCH

Catholic Register Special

In a new media age, sacredness can only be a click away. Or can it?

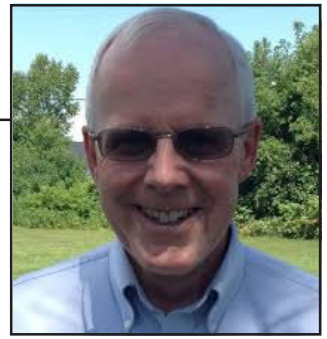
How the religious experience has changed with the onset of the new media world and a constantly evolving cyberspace is explored by Oren Golan and Michele Martini in their recently released book entitled *Sacred Cyberspaces: Catholicism, New Media, and the Religious Experience*.

On December 1, they shared insights regarding their research at a webinar hosted by University of Waterloo’s Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, editor of the *Advancing Studies in Religion* book series. Amid the cyber audience, PhD students and researchers alike listened to what the authors had to say.

Mr. Golan and Ms. Martini’s case study largely followed the Franciscan order and its relationship with Cancao Nova, a Brazilian religious community with a monastic lifestyle and a mission for producing and sharing holy media. The goal was to bring the holy sites of Israel into the live feed of Catholics all over the world.

## Our sacred stories

Father JOHN JENNINGS



his followers. All of this is quite true. But really, *Incarnation* means more than this.

Jesus, the Christ is God sharing in our flesh, joining our humanity, living in our world, not for a brief period of one lifetime, but forever. The moment in Bethlehem, in the meagre circumstances of Jesus’ birth was a moment that revealed God’s very special touch for us. But it was more than a moment. With Bethlehem and the birth of Jesus, the coming of the Christ into humanity, God continues to be with us in this *incarnational* way, sharing our flesh and blood. Beyond the ways in which God has been present from the very beginning, as giver and sustainer of life in all Creation, now God is present as a sharer of the humanity which we have, that all the peoples of the earth share. The great wonder of the *Incarnation* is that it continues...now.

## So what?

So what? What does all this mean for me? What difference does it make for our world? God continues to be a light for the darkness, the hope and the promise for all humanity and creation. Once having entered our world by sharing our humanity, God continues to be present in the Body of Christ. This “Body of Christ” is us, you and I, all Christians of all times, all the peoples of the earth who share our humanness and with whom God has shared humanness in Jesus the Christ. Humanity is truly the Body of Christ. We are the ongoing incarnation of God, the flesh and blood through whom God enters our world now. Hope for our world!

*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](mailto:jennings@stu.ca). §*

Rooted in the Holy Land and Vatican is a cultural and spiritual capital, and technology has placed that mountain top in the hand of any person who wishes to see it. But the question is, can such sacredness be shared in a digital world?

“The Brazilian community believe sacredness can be transferred through media, while the Franciscans are a bit more skeptical about this from a theological point of view,” said Ms. Martini.

Both communities in the study, however, acknowledge the importance of bringing holy Jerusalem closer to the eyes and ears of the faithful, with the Franciscans even blessing the cameras and media tools before production.

Even in this great mission, it is not simply the geographical place of Israel itself that matters as much as the preservation of its spiritual and cultural significance, say the authors. To do that, media producers are selective in what they capture through their lens.

“In the Christian imagination, the Holy Land is associated with deities and Italian renaissance (art)... it’s all mixed in the imagination,” said Mr. Golan. “So, when they make new videos of the Holy Land,

(continued on page 5)

## Defying darkness with Christmas lights

In the days of apartheid in South Africa, one of the ways people expressed their opposition and their belief that someday it would be overcome, was to light a candle and put it in a window where it could be seen by anyone passing by. A lit candle, publicly displayed, made a prophetic statement. It didn't take long for the government to react. Placing a lit candle in your window became a criminal offence, equivalent to carrying an illegal firearm. The irony wasn't lost on children. They joked, "Our government is afraid of lit candles!"

And well they should be! To light a candle for a moral or religious reason (be it for protest, for Hanukkah, for Advent, or for Christmas) is to make a prophetic statement of faith and, in essence, make a public prayer.

Admittedly, this can be hard to read inside the glow of the millions of Christmas tree lights that we see everywhere. Why do we put up all these lights at Christmas? A cynical answer suggests that this is done for purely commercial purposes. As well, for many of us, these lights are simply a question of aesthetics, colour, and celebration, mostly devoid of any religious meaning. However, even here, there is still something deeper going on. Why do we put up lights at Christmas? Why do we light our homes and our streets with colourful lights at this time of year?

No doubt, we do it for colour, for celebration, and for commercial reasons; but we also do it because, more deeply, it expresses a faith, however inchoately this might still be felt, that in Christ a final victory has been won and light has forever conquered darkness. *"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it."*

## Sacred in cyberspace

(continued from page 4)

it will not show Western Jerusalem and much of the modern parts of Israel, they try to focus on places that trigger these kinds of ideals."

The Holy Land lives on as an archetype and is hardly imagined as a real, changing and developing place. Socioeconomic culture is continuing to transition with the advancement of technology. In the midst of this landscape of change, modern man's relationship with religious tradition can be difficult to navigate. What is real, and what is illusion? What remains the same?

"The Church has been suffering now from decades of scandals and mistrust," said Mr. Golan. "Also a sense of stagnation has been a criticism that many Catholics feel about the Catholic Church and has been giving rise to a lot of Facebook groups that we've been noticing as well that have been growing to try to meet this problem."

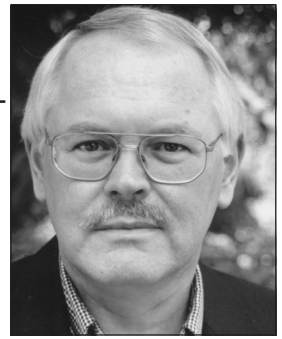
The media put forth from the Vatican is about more than simply sharing the truth, it is also an effort to restore the image of what the Church truly represents. It aims to restore the wonder and charisma surrounding the beautiful tradition, sites and spirit of the faith. After all, though geography and socioeconomic connection are changing rapidly before our eyes, those things eternal remain the same, the audience heard.

Here we are, in an era where truth and evil have never been closer within our hands, eyes and ears. Our consumerism molds us unceasingly into new and different people, and the Church is not hesitating to try and bring the image and words of Christ into our hearts daily. Phone apps, such as Click To Pray, and social media platforms, such as the pope's new Instagram, are just some of the ways the Vatican is reaching out to the digital world and is encouraging the faithful to continue spreading the good word into a new generation and cyberspace.

The online event was funded in part by the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion and is available for viewing on CSSR [Canadian Society for the Study of Religion's] YouTube channel.§

## In Exile

RON ROLHEISER, omi



Our Christmas lights are, in the end, an expression of faith and in essence a public prayer. Nevertheless, we might still ask, to what end? What difference can this possibly make? Putting up lights as a symbol of faith can seem like a very insignificant and naïve thing to do in the face of the seeming overwhelming darkness of our world. We look at our world and we see millions suffering from the war, millions of refugees on borders around the world, and hundreds of millions suffering from food shortages. As well, when we know that thousands of people every day are dying from domestic violence, drug violence, and gang violence, and when we see tension everywhere within our governments, our churches, our neighbourhoods, and our families, we might ask ourselves, what difference do our little string of lights, or indeed all the Christmas lights in the world, make?

Well, in the words of the late Jesuit Michael Buckley, *prayer is most needed, just when it is deemed most useless*. These are words to hang onto. Given the magnitude of our world's problems, given the magnitude of the darkness that threatens us, now more than ever, it is imperative that we express our faith publicly, as a prayer. Now, more than ever, we need to show publicly that we still believe faith works, that we still believe in the power of prayer, and that we still believe that, in Christ, the power of darkness has been forever overcome.

This is expressed wonderfully in a poem John Shea inscribed inside his Christmas card this year.

*Our Christmas trees want to talk to us. The greater darkness of December can take its toll and strengthen what afflicts us. Our Christmas trees beg to differ. Their branches are full, leafy, strung with lights. The brightness is defiant. We want a perfect world. But that is not always what we get. We may experience catastrophic weather; a pandemic; threatened health; overstressed work, dipping finances, struggling relationships, and society and world either slightly or wildly insane. Our Christmas trees glow. Their lights whisper; "Give all the things that afflict you their due, but do not give them your soul. You are more than the surrounding darkness."*

While struggling to overcome apartheid in South Africa, Archbishop Desmond Tutu was sometimes confronted by military personnel who came into his church while he was preaching, flashing their guns to intimidate him. He would smile at them and say, "I'm glad you have come to join the winning side!" In saying this, he wasn't talking about the apartheid struggle; he was talking about the forever victory that Christ has won for us. The most important of all battles has already been won, and our faith puts us on the winning side. Our Christmas lights express this, however consciously unaware of it we may be.

Karl Rahner once wrote that, at Christmas, God gives us sacred permission to be happy. Christmas also assures us that we have more than sufficient grounds to be happy, regardless of what might still be happening in our lives and in our world. We can be defiant in the face of everything that demands we be downcast. Our Christmas lights express that defiance.

*Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author. He can be contacted through his website [www.ronrolheiser.com](http://www.ronrolheiser.com) Facebook [www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser](https://www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser) §*



# Book delves into Vatican history of prohibition

By QUINTON AMUNDSON  
The Catholic Register

*The Catholic Church Index Librorum Prohibitorum (List of Prohibited Books)*, the list of publications deemed blasphemous or morally reprehensible in the view of the Sacred Congregation of the Index, is the subject of a new deep-dive academic research novel from St. Thomas University professor Dr. Robin Vose.

Dr. Vose, who teaches history courses at this post-secondary institution, unveiled *The Index of Prohibited Books: Four Centuries of Struggle over Word and Image for the Greater Glory of God* at the Fredericton school December 9.

Entire works from more than 550 authors were completely blacklisted by the Index, which was instituted in 1559 and underwent revisions through the centuries up until the last edition was unveiled in 1948. Pope Paul VI formally abolished this catalogue on June 14, 1966, just over six months after the conclusion of Vatican II.

Both religious and secular texts were subject to the congregation's scrutiny. There was a particular vested interest in countering the Protestant Reformation, beginning with German priest and scholar Martin Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* in 1517, which condemned corrupt practices in Catholic hierarchy.

Catholics were also forbidden from reading certain or any works from many famous European intellectuals. John Calvin, John Locke, Voltaire, Montesquieu, David Hume, Immanuel Kant and Ernest Renan were some of the heralded names censored by the Index Librorum Prohibitorum.

Dr. Vose first studied the Index when he was a graduate student at the University of Notre Dame in the late 1990s. His alma mater purchased a large number of written materials from the Inquisition that spawned the blacklist. He immersed himself in the documents as he assisted the school in cataloguing the material.

"That was exactly the time when the Vatican decided to open up the archives of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome in 1999," said Dr. Vose. "I was perfectly placed to look at Inquisition history. I did a fair bit of that in the late '90s and early 2000s as a graduate student. ... I was always wanting to find a way to share what I learned from these documents with a broader audience."

"I think many know about the Index and

the censorship, but there are so many stereotypes and simplistic assumptions about it," he added. "Since the archives opened just at the turn of the century, we really aren't sophisticated yet in training graduate students on how to go use these documents."

Fast forward 10 years. Dr. Vose worked alongside Scott Van Jacob, a librarian for Notre Dame, to complete a project close to the late Mr. Van Jacob's heart, which was developing a website to serve as a comprehensive introduction of these Inquisition materials. A section of this intro chronicles book censorship. Reaktion Books approached Dr. Vose around 2017 with a proposition for him to expand his work into a fully-fledged book.

Dr. Vose delves into how the Index both "struck terror into the hearts of authors, publishers and booksellers around the world, while arousing ridicule and contempt from many others, especially those in Protestant and non-Christian circles."

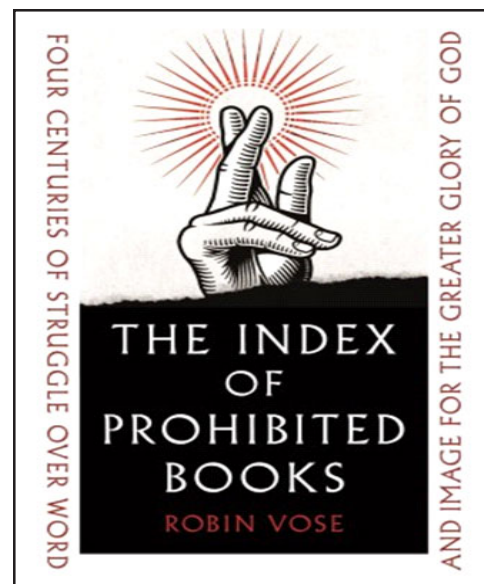
He examines the dark side of the congregation's decision-making, while refuting stereotypes promoted by critics who viewed the Index as "this really blunt exercise in just hateful condemnation of anything the Catholic Church had any problem with whatsoever."

"There is an assumption that the exercise of censorship was much broader, blunter, more anti-intellectual than it turns out it actually was," said Dr. Vose. "Without apologizing for the mistakes and the bad things, which of course led Paul VI to terminate the Index and John Paul II to apologize for some of the excesses of the Inquisition."

Despite these excesses, the Index is not without its merits, Dr. Vose said.

"I certainly don't want to make light of the mistakes and dark side of this story, but this censorship story of the Index is also one of quite brilliant intellectual work," said Dr. Vose. "Some of the great geniuses of the early modern period took the work quite seriously in evaluating books, mainly theological books, on their merits. They examined which texts were problematic enough that they should not be in the hands of believers, which texts were in fact fully acceptable and which ones fall into the middle ground of being largely acceptable except for a few mistakes and unfortunate passages that can be extricated or removed."

Dr. Vose said when the process worked at its best, the editing of the Index was akin to the legitimate contemporary practice of peer-reviewing academic, literary or scientific research.



He would like to see readers ponder the content and determine what lessons can be applied to today's debates over freedom of expression and cancel culture. §

## Census

(continued from page 3)

possible. "Let's take the lessons we have learned during the pandemic and allow them to truly change and transform us as a Diocesan Church," he said. "May we enter this diocesan census, and the feasibility study that will follow with an eye towards truly coming to know our people and helping them come to know Jesus and the Church."

Bishop Riesbeck is grateful for the participation of the faithful and the collaboration of parishes in both the census and the potential campaign that will follow. "The good fruits of this effort will bless our diocese for generations to come," he said. "I am counting on your fervent prayer for this restoration campaign through the intercession of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, as we give God permission to move powerfully in our diocese."

Donations towards the Cathedral Restoration in the form of either a one-time donation, multi-year pledge, securities, bequests or life insurance are a tremendous blessing and will aid significantly in the success of this campaign. Donations can be mailed to the Cathedral Heritage Foundation, 1 Bayard Drive, Saint John, New Brunswick, E2L 3L5. Email money transfers can also be accepted, see the diocesan website at [dioceseofsaintjohn.org/donations](http://dioceseofsaintjohn.org/donations) for more information.

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

# Closing the doors after 122 years

SAINT JOHN — *The New Freeman* was the oldest, continuously published Catholic newspaper in Canada until its final publication, this issue, December 23 & 30, 2022. It was been the voice of the Diocese of Saint John since 1900, but its roots began earlier in the 19th century with an Irish immigrant.

In 1849 Ireland was suffering from famine and fever. Dr. Boyle Travers immigrated to Saint John from Ireland in search of better opportunities. Dr. Travers encouraged his old school mate from Clonakilty, County Cork, Ireland, Timothy Anglin to immigrate with him.

On July 12, 1849, the city of Saint John held the Orange Day Parade, which marks the victory of Prince William III & II of Orange, (a Protestant) over King James II of England, (a Catholic) at the Battle of Boyne in 1690. It won Prince William III&II of Orange the title of King

gust 29, 1877 but this time as a daily newspaper.

On November 2, 1878, due to the high cost of publishing, the paper scaled back its publishing schedule to once more become weekly newspaper. *The Morning Freeman* was not a Catholic newspaper at the time, but it supported Catholic views and, in turn, was supported by the Catholic population.

In 1884, Mr. Anglin moved to Toronto where he founded *The Weekly Tribune*. He became the Speaker of the House of Commons while his son became the Chief Justice of Canada and his daughter became a well-known actress. On August 2, 1884, the publication of *The Morning Freeman* was suspended yet again.

Six years later on January 6, 1900, the newspaper resumed its publication as a weekly newspaper under the name, *The Freeman* with editor, W.K. Reynolds. The name, *The Freeman* derives from a famous Irish newspaper. Mr. Reynolds believed the weekly newspaper was needed in order to better serve the Catholic Church.

Mr. Reynolds brought *The Freeman* to audiences that would otherwise have had no access to a Catholic newspaper, and believed that *The Freeman* was a vehicle of discussion on questions and issues from the Catholic perspective.

*The Freeman* was not the only business venture Mr. Reynolds took part in, prior to the resurrection of the paper, Mr. Reynolds was the publicity director at the Intercolonial Railway in Moncton. And in 1852 Mr. Reynolds built the suspension bridge in Saint John. This bridge survived until 1915 when it was removed. Mr. Reynolds skill in new business endeavours most likely comes from his father who owned a mill at Lepreau, west of Saint John, and operated the first street car system with horses in Saint John.

Mr. Reynolds himself was a convert to Catholicism. After establishing the newspaper, he returned to his previous position of publicity director at the Inter-colonial Railway. He transferred his stock to The Freeman Publishing Company Ltd.

Mr. Reynolds later returned to *The Freeman* and was in charge of current events in Saint John. He passed away during his time at *The Freeman* on December 3, 1902. At this time the newspaper was located in the Ritchie Building on Canterbury Street, which was also known as Newspaper Row. *The Telegraph Journal* and *The Evening Times Globe* were also located on Newspaper Row. *The Freeman* relocated to Orange Street then to St. Malachi's Hall for a short period of time before it returned to Newspaper Row.

*The Freeman* experienced financial difficulty

as it was expensive to produce. It was also in competition with another Catholic newspaper, *The Saint John Monitor*, which was under the direction of Timothy O'Brien.

*The Saint John Monitor* was published from 1899 to 1910 when Mr. O'Brien left *The Saint John Monitor* for *The Saint John Globe*. Mr. O'Brien was an authority on the history of the Catholic Church as a member and president of the New Brunswick Historical Society.

From 1902 to 1903, *The Freeman* was reorganized and renamed *The New Freeman*. It was now one of six newspapers in Saint John, two of which are still in existence: *The Telegraph* and *The Journal*, which are now *The Telegraph-Journal* following their amalgamation.

In 1903, *The New Freeman* was incorporated as a limited liability corporation. It became the official newspaper of the Diocese of Saint John. *The New Freeman* was financially unstable until Most Reverend Timothy Casey, bishop of the Diocese of Saint John at the time (1901-1912) became one of its main stockholders.

Since Bishop Casey's time, the bishop of the Diocese of Saint John has been the official publisher of *The New Freeman*, recognizing its importance to the Catholic community.

During a meeting of the stockholders at the Admiral Beatty Hotel in 1949, it was decided that *The New Freeman* would continue to be managed by its board of directors whose first president was Most Reverend A.B. Leverman, bishop of the Diocese of Saint John and would be vested in the corporation of the Diocese of Saint John.

At this time, Parnell McCafferty was editor, Thomas Nagle was the vice president, George Flood was the chairman, and Thomas McGloan was the secretary of the board.

*The New Freeman* was not only the official newspaper of the Diocese of Saint John, but also for the English speaking parts of the Archdiocese of Moncton, the Diocese of Bathurst, and the Diocese of Edmundston.

Since its establishment in 1900 *The New Freeman* has had twelve managing editors: W. K. Reynolds (1900-1902), George McInerney (1902-1903), John Carleton (1902-1903), H. McInerney (1903-1906), D. O'Keefe (1907-1914), C. McLaughlin (1914-1916), Parnell McCafferty (1916-1965, until his death), Christine Fewings (1966-1971), Bob Merzetti (1971-1992), Theresa (Nowlan) Suart (1992-1994), Bill Donovan (1994-2001) and Margie Trafton (2001-2022).

Christine Fewings, also known as Gussie Fewings, was the first female editor of *The New Freeman* from 1966 to 1971. She began her career in banking; but later left to pursue investing.

(continued on page 13)



**SAINT JOHN — J. Ferard McDonald (left) was a journalist during Parnell McCafferty's tenure as managing editor. (Circa 1950). (Archive photo)**

William III&II of England, Scotland, and Ireland. It was after this parade that Mr. Anglin raised the funds to begin publishing *The Weekly Freeman*, though not an officially Catholic newspaper, its creation was viewed as a Catholic rebuttal to the Protestant Orange Day Parade.

At the time, *The Weekly Freeman* was one of nine newspapers being published in Saint John. It discontinued its publication in 1850. Publication resumed on February 4, 1851 three times a week as *The Morning Freeman*.

On June 20, 1877 the Great Fire of Saint John destroyed the business district of Saint John, including *The Morning Freeman* plant.

After the rebuilding from the Great Fire, *The Morning Freeman* resumed publishing on Au-





**VATICAN CITY — The Nativity scene is pictured in St. Peter's Square after a lighting ceremony at the Vatican December 3, 2022.**  
(CNS photo/Paul Haring)

## Keep the creche in Christmas, pope urges

By CINDY WOODEN  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Stopping to gaze at and perhaps pray before a Nativity scene is one of the best ways to remember the real meaning of Christmas, Pope Francis said.

"In its genuine poverty," the pope said, "the creche helps us to rediscover the true richness of Christmas and to purify ourselves of so many aspects that pollute the Christmas landscape."

Pope Francis met with the artisans who carved the 18-piece Nativity scene in St. Peter's Square; the donors of the white pine Christmas tree; the residents of a psychiatric rehabilitation centre who, along with a group of students and grandparents, created the ornaments; and with representatives of the government of Guatemala, which set up another Nativity scene in the Vatican audience hall.

"Simple and familiar, the Nativity scene recalls a Christmas that is different from the consumerist and commercial Christmas. It is something else. It reminds us how good it is for us to cherish moments of silence and prayer in our days, often overwhelmed by frenzy," Pope Francis told them during a midday gathering.

Meeting with the donors, Pope Francis encouraged everyone to find some quiet time to spend before a creche at Christmas.

"Silence encourages contemplation of the child Jesus," the pope said, and "helps us to become intimate with God, with the fragile simplicity of a

tiny newborn baby, with the meekness of his being laid down, with the tender affection of the swaddling clothes that envelop him."

"If we really want to celebrate Christmas," he said, "let us rediscover through the crib the surprise and amazement of littleness, the littleness of God, who makes himself small, who is not born in the splendour of appearances, but in the poverty of a stable."

To truly encounter Jesus, the pope said, people must meet him in the manger, leaving their own vanity and pretence behind. "Prayer is the best way to say thank you before this gift of free love, to say thank you to Jesus who desires to enter our homes and our hearts," he said. "Yes, God loves us so much that he shares our humanity and our lives."

"Even in the worst moments," the pope said, "he is there, because he is the Emmanuel, the God with us, the light that illuminates the darkness and the tender presence that accompanies us on our journey."

The lights on the Christmas tree, he said, are a reminder that Jesus came "to lighten our darkness, our existence often enclosed in the shadow of sin, fear, pain."

But, the pope said, the tree also should make people think about the importance of roots.

Like a tree, he said, only a person who is "rooted in good soil remains firm, grows, matures, resists the winds that shake him and becomes a point of reference for those who look upon him."

The Christmas tree, Pope Francis said, is a reminder of the need to remain rooted in Christ. §



# Was there religious interference in Miramichi election?

By SHAWN McCARTHY  
Correspondent

MIRAMICHI — In 1890, the Manitoba legislature ended public funding for the province's separate Catholic school system. Pressure was placed upon the federal government by Catholic bishops to pass a remedial bill, in order to compel the province to resume funding. In January 1896, mere months before a scheduled federal election, Prime Minister Sir Charles Tupper set out to pass the remedial bill that would re-establish publicly funded Catholic schools in Manitoba, but a filibuster by the opposition prevented the legislation from making its way through the House of Commons before the parliamentary term expired.

With an election now scheduled, opposition leader Wilfrid Laurier made his now oft-quoted statement about using "sunny ways" to reach a conciliatory conclusion on the matter, evoking the Aesop fable in which the sun and the wind compete to see which can force a man to take off his coat — the wind makes the man to cling more tightly to his garment, while the sun's warmth induces him to take it off. Against this, pastoral letters encouraged Catholics to vote for candidates who supported remedial legislation.

Even on the Miramichi, the matter was cause for much comment, and the results of the election itself were somewhat contested, due to the participation of members of the clergy. The contest for the local seat in parliament was being contested between Conservative James Robinson, a member of the provincial legislature for Northumberland County, Liberal John Morrissy, a former such member, and Independent Liberal Peter Mitchell, the seventy-two-year-old former long-time Member of Parliament for the county.

The bishop of Chatham at the time, James Rogers, was in support of the remedial bill. Bishop Rogers was no stranger to debates concerning provincial government authority over education, as 25 years before, in 1871, he had opposed the New Brunswick Common Schools Act.

Yet, when Mr. Robinson was declared the victor after the votes were tallied, Mr. Morrissy contested the result of the election, as he felt that a letter circulated by Bishop Rogers had unduly swayed the voters.

The issue addressed in the bishop's letter arose out of a meeting between the bishop and three politicians — provincial member Lemuel Tweedie, and William Lawler, who represented Victoria County as a member of Parliament, and federal Minister of Marine and Fisheries, John Costigan. These men claimed that the priest at St. Mary's Church in Newcastle, Father Patrick W. Dixon, had approached Mr. Costigan about a deal that would have seen Mr. Morrissy drop out of the race in exchange for political favours. They further alleged that Mr. Morrissy was using Fr. Dixon's name in his canvas within the Newcastle community, telling voters that the priest had told Mr. Morrissy to request their votes.

Bishop Rogers having already issued his own letters expressing support for the remedial legislation proposed by the government, renewed his encouragement to Northumberland County voters to cast ballots in favour of Mr. Robinson, the government's candidate. He reaffirmed his esteem for both Fr. Dixon and Mr. Morrissy and expressed regret if the accounts of Mr. Tweedie and Mr. Lawler were true. He also stated that while he had long treated personal political matters among the clergy with great delicacy, upholding freedom of conscience, he was upset if Fr. Dixon, and those like him, openly advocated against the course recommended not only by himself, but

by the Archbishop, and by the Church hierarchy throughout Canada.

Fr. Dixon responded to the allegations in a letter of his own. He accused Mr. Tweedie and Mr. Lawler of fabricating accounts of political solicitation in order to get Bishop Rogers to publicly express his support for Mr. Robinson over Mr. Morrissy. He claimed that he had spoken to the Fisheries Minister at Mr. Costigan's own instigation, and that it was Mr. Costigan who was seeking political support, to which Fr. Dixon suggested a political proposition could be put to Mr. Morrissy to persuade him to withdraw his candidacy.

Further, Fr. Dixon said he spoke with Mr. Morrissy, who assured him that he had not used the priest's name in the course of his campaigning. On the contrary, it was alleged that it was Mr. Robinson's campaign that gratuitously used Fr. Dixon's name in association with Mr. Morrissy, in order to convince voters to question the opposition candidate's judgement. He subtly noted that the bishop should have conducted further investigation, but acknowledged that, having such a high moral character himself, Bishop Rogers could not have expected Mr. Tweedie and Mr. Lawler's manipulative ends in visiting him.

Fr. Dixon concluded by writing that he had not once, in the course of the election, openly expressed an opinion on either the matters under debate by the opposing parties, nor of the merits or faults of any of the candidates.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible that, while the circular letter of the bishop did not help Mr. Morrissy's electoral chances, the choice of Mr. Mitchell to run as an Independent Liberal, after losing the party's nomination contest to Mr. Morrissy, could have also split the vote. The Liberal party won the election nationally, and Mr. Laurier began his 15-year tenure as Canada's prime minister.

By November, the Laurier-Greenway Compromise allowed religious instruction in the Manitoba's public schools, under certain conditions, for half an hour at the end of each day.

Mr. Robinson would sit in the House of Commons until 1904 and was noted for being astute and capable of taking a larger view of matters. In 1908, Mr. Morrissy would be appointed New Brunswick's minister of Public Works, in which capacity he would oversee the construction of the Morrissy Bridge, which opened in 1914. Bishop Rogers would begin to step back from his duties in the years following the election, placing more authority on Co-adjutor Bishop Thomas F. Barry, who succeeded him upon his death in February 1902.

Fr. Dixon would continue to minister at St. Mary's until shortly before his death in 1928, and was described by his curate, Father Benedict J. Murdoch, as having been "kind, generous, punctilious, and quick-tempered."

*Shawn McCarthy is the Miramichi Region correspondent for The New Freeman. He can be reached at cletus\_1773@hotmail.com.*



**Bishop James Rogers**  
(St. Michael's Museum photo)



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# Christmas fundraiser hopes to become an annual event

By SHAWN McCARTHY  
Correspondent

MIRAMICHI — On the weekend of December 16-18, a Christmas fund-raiser was held at the churches of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish entitled *Scenes from the First Christmas*.

The performance centred around a series of tableau vivant (living pictures) showing important sequences in the Christmas story, the Annunciation, the Visitation, Joseph's initial incredulity at the news of the Incarnation, Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem, the Nativity, the presentation in the Temple, and the Epiphany.

Each sequence was introduced with seasonal music, and followed by an Old Testament reading, meant to demonstrate the fulfillment of messianic prophecy through the events depicted, along with some historical context, to ground the scene in the events of the day.

A reflection accompanied each tableau, drawn from the writings of Pope Francis, Father Justin Kerber of the Congregation of the Passion, Dr. Christine Wood of the Catholic Distance University, Brother John M. Samaha of the Society of Mary, Sister Julie Ann Sheahan of the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity, and several others. Each sequence closed with a prayer.

The cast included Jillian Harris as the Blessed Virgin Mary, David Malley as St. Joseph, Krista Page as St. Elizabeth, Walter O'Toole as St. Simeon, Nancy Cripps as Anna the Prophetess, and Edward O'Donnell, Nor-



**CHELMSFORD** — A Christmas fund-raiser was held at the churches of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Miramichi entitled *Scenes from the First Christmas*. The cast at St. Edward's Church in Chelmsford were (l to r) Edward O'Donnell, Norman Colford (kneeling), Danny McDonnell, Krista Page, Jillian Harris (kneeling), David Malley, Nancy Cripps, Walter O'Toole, Melissa O'Donnell, Cathy Hackett and Bradley Lynch. (Cheryl Harris photo)

man Colford, and Danny McDonnell as the Magi. Narration was provided by Melissa O'Donnell, Bradley Lynch, and Cathy Hackett

The feature was presented on the evening of December 16 at Most Pure Heart of Mary Church in Barnaby River, the following evening at St. Edward's Church in Chelmsford, and finally, on December 18, at St. Patrick's Church in Nelson-Miramichi. Each presentation collected donations for the needs of that church.

The organizers would like to thank the cast and narrators for their work and rehearsal in the weeks leading up to the presentation. Special thanks are also extended to Fr. Anthony Dass Papu H.G.N. for his support through-

out the process, and to the volunteers at each of the three churches, who organized receptions following each performance. A special acknowledgement was also extended to the St. Mary's Prayer Shawl Ministry, who offered shawls to each of the three ladies in the cast, and to Father John Beaumaster and Paroisse Notre-Dame-de-l'Espérance for the loan of several albs.

In light of the success of the presentation, it is hoped that it might be shown again in future years.

*Shawn McCarthy is the Miramichi Region correspondent for The New Freeman. He can be reached at cletus\_1773@hotmail.com.§*



**GRAND BAY-WESTFIELD** — The Sacrament of Confirmation was conferred on the youth of Holy Spirit Parish (St. Matthew's Worship Site) on Tuesday December 13 by Bishop Christian Riesbeck, CC (sixth from the right) of the Diocese of Saint John, with Father David Martin, (left) pastor present. The names of the newly confirmed are (not in order) Natasha Belyea, Carter Donald, Hudson Vail, Ryan Hillier, Will Mason, Alex McCarthy, Trevor Megarity, Alex Peacock, William Quinn and Thatcher Theriault. (Submitted photo)

# Global church is seeing how the pope's vision of synodality involves everyone

By DENNIS SADOWSKI  
Catholic News Service

Canadian and U.S. Catholics will convene in a series of online meetings from mid-December through the end of January as part of the Pope Francis' ongoing call to synodality in the church.

The gatherings are part of the continental phase of the synodal process in advance of the first session of the Synod of Bishops on synodality scheduled next year for October 4-29 at the Vatican.

Pope Francis in October of this year announced a second session for October 2024, saying he did not want to rush the process of discerning how the Holy Spirit is calling the church to grow in synodality.

Overall, 12 North American meetings are planned — up from the original 10 because of the high level of interest in both countries, according to the synodal process coordinators.

The meetings — seven in English, three in Spanish and two in French — will give participants the time to hear from one another in hourlong "listening circles." They then will have the opportunity to discuss their hopes, desires and concerns for another 90 minutes.

Similar gatherings — some in person, some online and some hybrid — are planned in six other regions of the world in the run-up to the synod.

They are being guided by the *Document for the Continental Phase*, a document released in late October echoing the themes that emerged from all the national syntheses of synod listening sessions and the contributions of religious orders, Catholic movements, Vatican dicasteries and nuncios from around the world.

Each continental group has until March 31 to submit a summary report to the Synod of Bishops, which will prepare the documents.

The regional representatives responsible for the continental phase met in Rome November 28-29. The gathering included a two-hour meeting with Pope Francis the first day.

The pope encouraged the representatives to allow the Holy Spirit to guide the church into the future, said Richard Coll, who attended the meeting and is coordinating the synodal process for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB].

In North America, the USCCB is collaborating with the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops [CCCCB] to convene the dozen online gatherings.

Julia McStravog, a consultant to the U.S. bishops on the process, said sessions scheduled to begin December 14 will run through late January. Finally, a team from both countries will convene February 13-17 in Orlando, Florida, for a "writing retreat" to draft the document based on what was discussed in the gatherings. That document will be sent to the Vatican.

Overall, 990 people, chosen by Canadian and American bishops, will participate in the North American continental phase, she said.

In advance of the continental phase, dioceses around the world spent nearly a year convening formal and informal listening sessions after Pope Francis announced the synod on synodality in October 2021. Thousands of local listening sessions gave Catholics and non-Catholics the opportunity to discern the church's role in the world.

The listening sessions revealed that U.S. Catholics continue to feel wounded by the clergy abuse crisis, seek a more welcoming church in which their "lived reality" is prioritized over rules and regulations, and desire lifelong spiritual, pastoral and catechetical formation as disciples, according to the synthesis report submitted by the USCCB to the Vatican in August.

Participants in the process also expressed concern that the U.S. Catholic Church is deeply divided and that a lack of unity exists among the

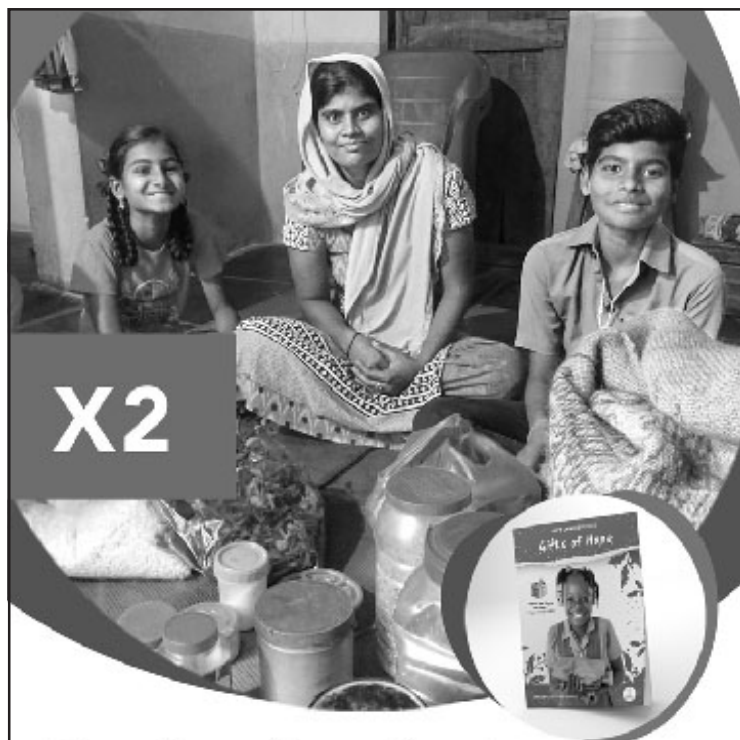
bishops, spoke of a desire to "accompany with authenticity" LGBTQ+ persons and their families, and voiced hope that laypeople's gifts would be more widely utilized in a spirit of collaboration throughout the church, the report said.

Syntheses reports from around the world paralleled the U.S. expressions. "The listening is an opening movement toward a wise discernment locally, regionally and nationally about what our deepest concerns, our deepest hopes are right now at this moment in time," Bishop Daniel E. Flores of Brownsville, Texas told Catholic News Service when the report was released.

He said the process that unfolded and led to the 16-page report enabled people to respectfully listen to each other and develop a new understanding of what life in the church can be like.

"It's an important step that gives us an experience as a local church," Bishop Flores said.

Even though the diocesan phase ended with the synthesis report, Bishop Flores explained that the experience of synodality is just beginning within the church. "The local work doesn't become obsolete because we published a national synthesis," he said. "There are many things that can be addressed immediately. ... There are some issues raised that can be resolved at the local level. We don't have to wait for the outcome of the Synod of Bishops." §



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# Closing the doors

(continued from page 7)

With the Great Depression of the 1930s, she was unable to continue investing. She was offered a job at *The Telegraph Journal* and *The Evening-Times Globe*, setting up a library. Working at the newspapers, she learned about the publishing process. She was able to continue working at the newspapers, doing special reporting, radio commentary, and compiling special first editions on cooking and style. Eventually, she became the assistant editor of *The Evening-Times Globe*.

Following her retirement from *The Evening-Times Globe*, she was offered the position of managing editor of *The New Freeman* by Bishop A.B. Leverman. During her five years at *The New Freeman*, Ms. Fewings made changes to the newspaper, specifically advertising as well as changing its format and editorials, and adding international news in addition to diocesan news.

Bob Merzetti was managing editor of *The New Freeman* from 1971 to 1992. Mr. Merzetti brought change to *The New Freeman*. He hired two new employees, Greg Bonner, associate editor and Marie Dallon, office manager. Two events occurred during his tenure at *The New Freeman* which catapulted the popularity of the newspaper.

First, Father Charles Curran held a controversial lecture on morals in the auditorium of Saint Malachy's Memorial High School. The article covering this lecture engaged readers and *The New Freeman* received telephone

calls to master them with the help of his office manager, Joan Bastarache.

After 21 years, Theresa (Nowlan) Suart replaced Mr. Merzetti as managing editor of *The New Freeman*. Under Ms. Suart's leadership the paper covered important events, such as the 150th anniversary of the Diocese of Saint John, the Association of Roman Catholic Communicators and Atlantic Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults conferences. She was the managing editor when "technology and finances met." Ms. Suart did deal with the financial difficulties of the increasing costs of distribution and publication. She also was responsible for navigating technology changes in publishing such as computer programs, which allowed for more control over the publishing process.

After Ms. Suart left *The New Freeman*, Bill Donovan took over her role as managing editor from 1994-2001. In his journalism career, Mr. Donovan was a journalist and editor at *The Telegraph Journal* and *The Evening-Times Globe*. He was also a prominent sports personality in New Brunswick, having been admitted into the Saint John and New Brunswick sports halls of fame for baseball as an athlete and coach. During his seven years at paper Mr. Donovan oversaw the 100th anniversary issue of *The New Freeman* in 2000.

Beginning in 1995 Margie Trafton worked with Bill Donovan as the office manager of *The New Freeman* in what he described as a "partnership." As office manager, Ms. Trafton was instrumental in bringing the finances for the paper from loss to profit.

When Mr. Donovan retired in 2001, Ms. Trafton replaced him as the managing editor of the newspaper.

Under Ms. Trafton the paper has covered the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI in 2005, followed by the election of Pope Francis. In 2011, Mary Hancox joined the staff as office manager assisting in the coverage of the 175th anniversary of the Diocese of Saint John in 2017, and the realignment of the Dioceses of Saint John in 2018.

When the March 2020 COVID-19 pandemic shuttered churches, schools and business' throughout Canada and the world, *The New Freeman* temporarily ceased publication. In a quick re-structuring, the paper resumed its publication on April 24, 2020. The format changed, distribution was greatly reduced and an online presence through the Diocese of Saint John's website was created.

Since April 2020, the paper maintained its modified format including this issue, the final issue of the printed, paper copy of *The New Freeman*.

*The New Freeman* continued to be published weekly, with special issues as large as thirty-two pages and full colour used in every issue. *The New Freeman* contained local, national, and international advertisers, which contributed to its financial stability over the years. Its distribution was concentrated in New Brunswick; however, it included other Canadian provinces, as well as other countries.

*The New Freeman* was printed and delivered from St. Croix Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd. in St. Stephen.

The paper's office was located at 1 Bayard Drive, Saint John in the Chancery offices of the diocese. There were three correspondents located in the three regions of the Diocese of Saint John: Fredericton, Miramichi and Saint John.

In debates on local, national and international issues, *The New Freeman* reflected the position of the Catholic Church as well as the positions of local and national politicians.

Letters to the Editor reflected the fact that these debates were still relevant within the Church, and that members of the Church were involved and passionate.

*The New Freeman* itself remained a method to educate and explain the issues of the world today from the point of the Catholic Church and its teachings. §



**The Board of Directors of The New Freeman in 1994 consisted of (front row, l to r) Thomas Higgins, Lynda Farrell and Thomas McGloan. (Back row, l to r) Peter Glennie, Paul Daigle and Monsignor George Martin. (Archive photo)**

calls and letters for months. Mr. Merzetti published the letters, which added fuel to the controversy. The newspaper received requests for subscriptions and advertisements, and for the first time in years, parishes sold out of the issue.

The second major event for the paper was when Bishop McNeill was appointed the archbishop of Edmonton, AB and Father Arthur Gilbert, then the vicar general for the diocese, was appointed bishop of the Diocese of Saint John.

Articles on the two bishops and these appointments were wildly popular among readers.

Another change that hit *The New Freeman* during this time was the introduction of computers to replace type writers. Mr. Merzetti was deter-

# Canadian Christian singer-songwriter back in his performing element

By QUINTON AMUNDSON  
The Catholic Register

WINNIPEG — Canadian Christian singer-songwriter Steve Bell is back on the road and sharing his music with live audiences for the first time in two-and-a-half years.

Like all musical performers, Mr. Bell's ability to stage live shows was impeded by the unpredictable ebb and flow of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I am just so overjoyed to be back performing in person," said Mr. Bell, who resides in Winnipeg and recently wrapped up a short pre-Christmas tour.

"It is a wonderful time to be in front of people because despite of how commercialized Christmas has become, and of how far away it has drifted from its origins, there is still a turn towards thought and introspection at this time of year, especially Advent. I can just feel it in the audience. They really want you to move them into a contemplative space, and I am happy to do so."

The 30-plus-year performing veteran's schedule has been chockful of concerts the past few weeks in the prairie provinces. He entertained at Manitoba Christian churches in Gimli, Winkler, Steinbach and Winnipeg in late November. Mr. Bell appeared in Alberta at Calgary's St. Michael Catholic Community and Edmonton's Corpus Christi Parish on December 2 and 4 respectively. He wrapped up his pre-Christmas shows in Saskatchewan with appearances at Holy Child Parish in Regina on December 9, Gravelbourg Church of Christ on December 10 and Ebenezer Baptist Church in Saskatoon on December 11.

In 2020, Mr. Bell released the 12-track album *Wouldn't You Love to Know*. The release date was November 1, which was right in the thick of the first fall lockdown. Now, over two years later, he finally gets to see how a live audience responds to his newest material.

*Because We Hunkered Down* is the song connecting with people on a deep level, said Mr. Bell. It is a musical adaption of a poem written by Mr. Bell's friend Malcolm Guite in his 2016 published collection *Parable and Paradox: Sonnets on the sayings of Jesus and other poems*. Mr. Bell said the poem predates the pandemic by nearly four years, but the lyrical content suggests it easily could have been conceived during the periods of social isolation in 2020 and 2021.

"It talks about we can emerge, even if we are tarnished and beat up, because we didn't

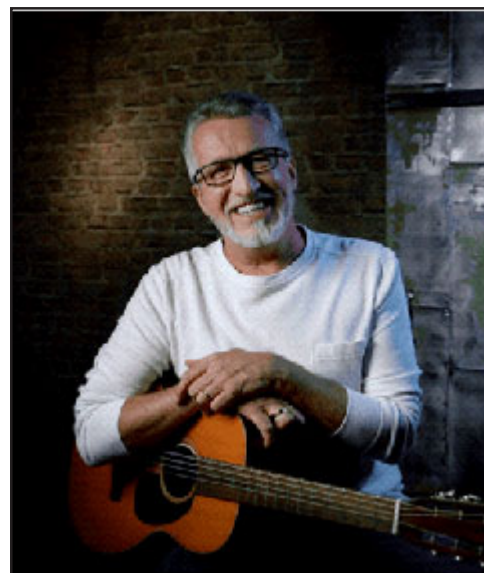
let go as a community. We shunned the impulse to alienate each other," he said.

"Coming back to the concerts, I'm looking out at these audiences. Some in the crowd are left politically, some are right politically. Some supported the (Freedom) Convoy and others are anti-convoy. And some are pro-vaccine and others are anti-vaccine. All groups have been online, chirping each other and making people angry. There is something lovely about all getting back in the same room to laugh and sing. It is a counter narrative to the division. Our deepest truth is the unity we enjoy because of the Spirit of God."

In late October, Mr. Bell debuted the music video for another recording featured on *Wouldn't You Love to Know* called *In Praise of Decay*. He said the song is a musical reply to humanity's "callousness towards God's created beauty and order." He said this song calls for us to heed the wisdom of John the Baptist: "repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."

Back in February, Mr. Bell released his song *The Divine Image* as a video single. This song, imbued with themes of love, mercy, peace and connecting with God, is a melodic translation of English poet William Blake's 1789 poem of the same name.

It has been possible for Mr. Bell to rou-



Steve Bell

tinely churn out content during the pandemic because he and his team enhanced their in-house production skills and built a fully-fledged video studio.

"The question is now, what could we do with that, and how do we steward that," said Mr. Bell. "I think 2023 will see us sit back and take a look at these assets we developed to consider the best use for them to promote the Kingdom of God."§



**SAINT JOHN — Knights of Columbus Assembly 1940 recently made a donation to Bobby's Hospice, Saint John for the amount of \$4,713.38. (L to r) Jean-Marie McGraw, faithful navigator, Drew Hennessey, Bobby's Hospice, Alfred Babineau, past faithful navigator and Kerrie Komikat, Bobby's Hospice. (Submitted photo)**



# Citing pressure on archbishop, Montreal abuse commission co-chair resigns

By FRANÇOIS GLOUTNAY  
Catholic News Service

MONTREAL — The retired judge who has co-chaired the Montreal Archdiocese's committee to implement abuse procedures has resigned, saying serious problems remain in the application of "regulations, policies and procedures approved by the archbishop."

"I began my mandate as co-chair with real enthusiasm and the hope that I would be able to make important changes that would make the Catholic Church in Montreal an example of transparency and accountability to victims of abuse," Pepita G. Capriolo wrote in her resignation letter, dated December 7 and published as an appendix to the Fifth Ombudsman's Report for the Archdiocese of Montreal. The ombudsman's report was submitted to Montreal Archbishop Christian Lépine the same day.

She said "the numerous difficulties highlighted in the ombudsman's last reports" led to her resignation.

Two years ago, Capriolo signed an incriminatory report on the handling of Father Brian Boucher's case by Montreal archdiocesan authorities and even Vatican officials. Her report included 31 recommendations to better the management of procedures and accountability in complaints concerning abuse. Ms. Capriolo co-chaired the implementation committee until her resignation.

Among other examples, she deplored the "inexcusable delay" before the recent removal of an episcopal vicar, given that "the archbishop and the two vicar generals had been made aware of serious faults and breach of confidentiality nearly three months earlier." She said she was "revolted by the inadmissible treatment" by the archdiocese of an employee who worked closely with the ombudsman.

"I cannot continue to participate in a body that is subject to contradictory pressures, possibly emanating from persons and bodies who are not privy to our discussions and don't seem to share the same vision of an open, transparent church that is concerned with the well-being of the most vulnerable people," she said.

In a phone interview with the Montreal-based *Presence info*, Ms. Capriolo confirmed that her decision was quite recent.

"The main reason for my resignation is that I didn't want to appear to condone what was being done. As long as I thought I could play a positive role and that my advice served its purpose, I stayed. I fought," she said.

Recently, she said, she noticed "pressure exerted on the archbishop." She said people encouraged him "not to act," to "slow down" the pace of change, to "not do things as clearly, transparently and strongly" as he intends it.

She said it took six months for the implementation committee to write "procedures and protocols for the management of sex abuse com-



**Pepita G. Capriolo** (CNS photo/François Gloutnay, *Presence*)

plaints in the archdiocese and for the formation of all pastoral personnel." All of this had been agreed to by the archbishop, "including a policy for sanctioning those disregarding what is planned" in these decrees and documents. However, "these sanctions are not applied."

Ms. Capriolo stressed the solitude of Archbishop Lépine in all of this. "Up there, he's very much alone. There's an impermeable wall between the faithful and him."

She said people stop her in the streets, write her letters and comments, to thank her "for what we are doing. They tell me it gives hope to faithful Catholics to see someone who wants change."

"I think that if the archbishop could see through that impermeable wall and listen to the people, he would realize they support him," she said.

She explained the pressure as "clericalism resurfacing and a fear of transparency." Some church people say to her, "You have to understand, it's a cultural change." She said she recognizes such a change is necessary — but she will not accept "the slowness and dysfunctions."

Despite her resignation, Ms. Capriolo remains optimistic. "If the archbishop is able to do what he wants, he will succeed. And I'll tell you why: because he has the support of the people, the faithful. And if he needs me, I will always be ready to help him. But I can no longer endorse the system in place."

Archbishop Lépine did not verbally comment the judge's resignation. However, in the news release provided with the ombudsman's fifth report, Archbishop Lépine said: "Capriolo's contribution has been invaluable, first in preparing that comprehensive report, and afterward in implementing the recommendations contained in it. Important steps have already been taken in developing awareness and providing a program of formation and mobilization for staff and volunteers working in the Catholic Church of Montreal, in order to eliminate any and all abusive situations."

"We continue to pursue these efforts with determination," he said.

*Mr. Gloutnay writes for [www.presence-info.ca](http://www.presence-info.ca) in Montreal.*

## At Christmas we are committed to love

*Below is the full text of the Christmas message from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.*

On behalf of all my brother bishops in Canada, I offer you best wishes for peace, joy and health! May the memory of the birth of Emmanuel be for us the echo of our call, by the same Saviour Jesus Christ, to Redemption!

2022 has been a year of great events for the Church in Canada, for Canadian society in general, as well as for our Indigenous sisters and brothers. At the end of March, the three Indigenous delegations (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) who met in private audience with the Holy Father at the Vatican, ending with a general audience forming an assembly of about 150 people, combined with the Apostolic Visit of Pope Francis to our country in July, have been the culmination of an important process of reconciliation. Several other steps have been taken to enable these events and to pursue joint projects.

The Holiday Season around Christmas and New Year's Day is traditionally a time of strong emotions, encounters and sharing. In these moments, our personal circles of relationship

also provide opportunities for reconciliation. Daily life, with its joys and difficulties, also brings tensions and impatience. By listening to the heart, these give way to stronger friendships and an even greater commitment to love.

In the same fashion, what is true of each person is true also of communities. Thus, our "walking together" as brothers and sisters, sharing the same living environment, leads us to greater solidarity, fraternity and respect for cultures and heritages. Canada is multicultural. Its citizens come from all walks of life. Our common mission is to create a generous society which is respectful and committed towards each and every person.

May the Lord Jesus not only accompany us, but also guide us on this path of growth.

Best wishes!

+The Most Reverend Raymond Poisson  
Bishop of St-Jérôme-Mont-Laurier  
President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops §

# New Ascension yearlong podcast starts January 1, will present entire catechism

By JULIE ASHER

Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Beginning January 1, Ascension Press will launch "The Catechism in a Year," taking listeners through the four parts of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and "providing explanation, insight and encouragement along the way."

Over the course of 365 daily podcast episodes, Father Mike Schmitz will read the entire catechism. Throughout 2022, the priest has hosted the popular *The Bible in a Year* podcast with Scripture scholar Jeff Cavins.

Fr. Schmitz read every verse of the Catholic Bible in 365 days, using a reading plan based on Mr. Cavins' *Great Adventure Bible*

difference for accessibility," she said at a November news conference via Zoom. "Our audience is saying do the same thing for the catechism: 'We know we should like it, we know we should read it (and) struggle to do so, so help us out.'"

In the 30 days before the news conference, the Bible podcast had reached an audience of 1.5 million people via various electronic devices, such as a cellphone, a tablet with downloaded episodes or YouTube.

According to Chartable Global Reach, a podcast measurement company, *The Bible in a Year* was No. 1 in 2022 in the religious/spiritual category.

Ascension also has released a new print edition of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Its four sections have navigation features for the reader, including colour-coded corner tabs, key words and citations from Scripture, church councils, popes and/or doctors of the church.

There is an extensive glossary and appendices, which include a timeline of ecclesiastical writers who contributed to the development of doctrine throughout the church's history.

There also is an accompanying foldout chart, *The Catechism at a Glance*, which is "like a road map if you will," John Harden, senior product manager at Ascension, explained at the news conference.

"The back side shows how all the sources of Scripture and tradition flow into the catechism," he said, "and the front side shows how the four parts are arranged — what we believe, how we worship, how we live our lives as Christians and how we pray as Christians."

He called it a joy to work on this edition of the catechism. "I really hope people learn to grow in love and appreciation for all we believe as Catholics."

Mr. Harden also "gave a big shoutout and thanks" to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops for working with Ascension on the issue of copyright and permissions that allowed the Ascension volume to go forward. He noted that there will be an ongoing theological review of the *Catechism in a Year* podcast content and the podcast itself.

Each country's local bishops control permissions and copyrights for the catechisms disseminated within their country. For this reason, Ascension currently only has permission from the USCCB to sell Ascension's edition of the catechism within the United States. Ascension said it hopes to work with other episcopal conferences to receive their approvals in the future.

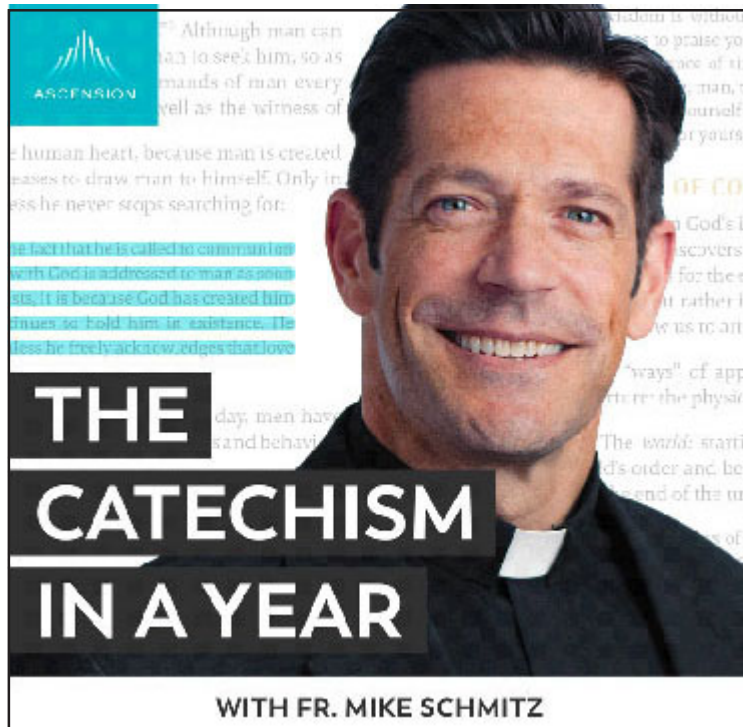
The catechism recognizes "that what God is doing in this world didn't end" with Chapter 28 of the Acts of the Apostles in the Bible, Fr. Schmitz said. The fifth book of the New Testament tells of the founding of the church. "God continues to reach out to his people. ... (With the catechism) we get to love him more," he added.

"What we did with the Bible, we're going to do with the catechism," the priest said about the podcast. "For 365 days, we are going to take a little section of the catechism every single day."

"We're going to read it, explain it, and expand upon it so that by the end of this year we'll be able to say, 'I know what the church believes, I know what God's plan is for my life, I know how to talk to God, I know how to listen to his voice, and I know how to worship him.' It's going to be incredible."

"For us to grow as Catholics, we need to know what our faith is. We need to articulate our faith in order to share it," said Mr. Cavins, who will host a new program titled *The Bible Timeline Show*.

In 60-minute episodes, he'll unpack questions raised by listeners of  
(continued on page 17)



**DULUTH, Minnesota — Father Mike Schmitz, a priest of the Diocese of Duluth, Minn., and a popular speaker and author, is seen in this 2022 promotion for Ascension's *The Catechism in a Year* podcast, launching January 1, 2023. The priest will host the podcast, reading the entire Catechism of the Catholic Church over the course of 365 daily podcast episodes. (CNS photo/courtesy Ascension)**

**Timeline.** The reading plan organizes the 14 narrative books of the Bible into 12 periods to help readers understand how they relate to one another and to God's plan for salvation.

A priest of the Diocese of Duluth, Minnesota, Fr. Schmitz is a popular Catholic speaker and author. He and Mr. Cavins created the Bible podcast with the backing of Ascension.

"We don't think it's an accident that after *Bible in a Year*, the No. 1 requested thing from our audience was a *Catechism of the Year*," said Lauren Joyce, communications and public relations specialist at Ascension, a multimedia Catholic publisher based in West Chester, Pennsylvania.

Helping the faithful understand and read the Bible with Cavins' timeline learning system and the podcast format "made such a big



# Church needs new look at role of men, women in church, theologian says

By CINDY WOODEN  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Recent popes have used the concept of a "Petrine principle" and a "Marian principle" to describe the important role women and men together play in the Catholic Church, but a biblical scholar writing in the Vatican newspaper said it is time to talk about the discriminatory and stereotypical notions behind it.

The question must be asked: "Doesn't the Marian-Petrine principle express an ideology and rhetoric of sexual and gender differentiation that has now been exposed as one of the covers for patriarchal privileges?" wrote Marinella Perroni, a retired profes-

sor of biblical theology at the Pontifical Atheneum of St. Anselm in Rome.

Her article in mid-December in *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper, was in response to Pope Francis' most recent use of the dual principle in an interview with the Jesuit-run *America* magazine in late November. (See *The New Freeman*, December 2, 2022 issue, page 8.)

As he has done frequently when asked about the role of women in the church and the possibility of ordaining women deacons or priests, Pope Francis insisted that "the Marian principle, which is the principle of femininity in the church, of the woman in the church, where the church sees a mirror of herself because she is a

woman and a spouse" is more important than the Petrine principle, which refers to ordained ministry in succession to St. Peter and the apostles.

"The church is more than a ministry. It is the whole people of God. The church is woman. The church is a spouse. Therefore, the dignity of women is mirrored in this way," the pope told *America* magazine. "Why can a woman not enter ordained ministry? It is

because the Petrine principle has no place for that. Yes, one has to be in the Marian principle, which is more important."

Ms. Perroni said the Petrine-Marian principle was first formulated by the Swiss theologian Father Hans Urs von Balthasar in the 1970s to combat an "anti-Roman" sentiment among some Catholics and to insist that the hierarchical structure of the church and its living community of believers called to holiness and to bringing Christ to the world must go together.

Sts. Paul VI and John Paul II as well as retired Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have used the principle "to talk about the life of the church and, above all, about the participation in it of women and men," Ms. Perroni wrote.

In the formula, she said, "it is immediately intuited that Mary is the prototype of the feminine and Peter is the prototype of the masculine, and it is clear that when the popes use the formula of the 'Marian-Petrine principle,' they want to affirm that everyone, women and men, should feel at home in the church because it is a place where the relationship between masculine and feminine is one of close reciprocity."

"At the beginning of the third millennium, however, a reciprocity that assigns to women the charism of love and to men the exercise of authority should at least give us pause," she wrote.

Ms. Perroni quoted Pope Paul's 1974 document on Marian devotion where he explained that with Mary, God "has placed in his family, the church, as in every home, the figure of a woman, who in a hidden manner and in a spirit of service watches over that family and carefully looks after it until the glorious day of the Lord."

The popes, including Pope Francis, have insisted that the Marian principle and feminine role in the church is more important than the ministerial and authoritative role of St. Peter and his successors, Ms. Perroni wrote, even if the Marian principle characterizes the role of women as "maternal" and "domestic."

Acknowledging the church needs a more profound "theology of women," she said, Pope Francis "struggles to free himself from the patriarchal vision" that reserves authority to men and loving to women.

Using the binary Petrine principle and Marian principle is "seductive" because it is simple, Ms. Perroni said.

But it is problematic because it stereotypes the differences between men and women and gives them a hierarchical value, she said. The feminine is presented as domestic, interior, welcoming and spiritual, while the masculine is presented as ministerial, authoritative and powerful.

However, Ms. Perroni wrote, it is "quite clear that forms of the mystical exaltation of the feminine are directly proportional to the refusal of public recognition of women's authority."

"The masculine-feminine bipolarity," she said, featured "obsessively" in Catholic theology when it was "totally androcentric and patriarchal," but it has lost credibility "since women first became the 'women's issue' and then, having shaken off this offensive expression, became full protagonists in social, political and ecclesial life."§



**ROME — Marinella Perroni, a retired professor of biblical theology at the Pontifical Atheneum of St. Anselm. (CNS photo/Alessia Giuliani, Catholic Press Photo/handout)**

## Yearlong podcast starts January 1

(continued from page 16)

the *The Bible in a Year* podcast with Father Schmitz and other guests.

*The Catechism in a Year* podcast will be available for free on all major podcast platforms as well as the Hallow app. Ascension also is providing Catholic schools and parishes free materials promoting the podcast, including flyers, posters, media graphics and bulletin announcements.

*Editor's Note: More information about The Catechism in a Year, the new catechism edition and resources available to parishes and schools can be found at <https://ascensionpress.com>.§*





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**FREDERICTON** (photo left) — Sister Mary Beth McCurdy (left) received the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal from New Brunswick Lieutenant-Governor Brenda Murphy (right) at Government House October 21. Based in Saint John, Sr. McCurdy has been congregational leader of the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception [SCIC] since 2010. The honour recognizes her “exceptional commitment to the cause of social justice and her efforts to improve living conditions for those living in extreme poverty.” She received it on the 168<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her congregation’s founding in Saint John in 1854. Sr. McCurdy said she was humbled and grateful to receive the honour on behalf of all the Sisters. She was accompanied by her sister, Jane Arseneau of Quispamsis, and by Sister Margaret MacLean, SCIC of Saint John. (Steve MacGillivray photo)

## Annual concert kicks-off the festive season in Miramichi

By **SHAWN MCCARTHY**  
Correspondent

**MIRAMICHI** — On December 4th, the talent of the Miramichi region began the festive season at St. Mary’s Church in Newcastle, part of Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys Parish, with the famed production, *A Christmas to Remember*. As in the past, this year’s event was organized by Susan Butler and held in remembrance of former Miramichi mayor, Gerry Cormier, who started the fund-raising con-

cert in 1999, and passed away in June 2016. In previous interviews concerning the event, Mr. Cormier said that the event was conceived of as a way for him to give back to the community. Proceeds of nearly \$5,000 went to local charities that had been close to Mr. Cormier: the Miramichi Emergency Centre for Women, the Miramichi Youth House, and St. Mary’s Christmas Hampers Program.

*Shawn McCarthy is the Miramichi Region correspondent for The New Freeman. He can be reached at cletus\_1773@hotmail.com.*



**SAINT JOHN** (Photo left) — Bishop Christian Riesbeck, CC of the Diocese of Saint John is seen with an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The image was painted by students at Divine Mercy Catholic School in Saint John for the bishop under the direction of local artist, Fabiola Martinez. (David Halpine photo)



**MIRAMICHI** — The Villagers Chorus performs at this year’s production of *A Christmas to Remember* in Miramichi. (Rose Thériault photo)



**MIRAMICHI** — Krista Hutchison (left) and Dillon Ryan perform at this year’s production of *A Christmas to Remember* in Miramichi. (Rose Thériault photo)