Brothers and sisters,

Tonight’s celebration takes us from chaos and darkness to light and creation, from slavery to freedom, from alienation to covenant, and from death to life. We awoke this morning, many of us, with the thought of Jesus in the tomb, and began the movement from grief to expectation. This morning I found an extraordinary passage, which I later discovered comes from the Orthodox Morning Prayer for Holy Saturday. It reads: “Today a tomb holds him who holds the creation in the hollow of his hand; a stone covers him who covered the heavens with glory... Come, let us see our Life lying in the tomb, that he may give life to those that in their tombs lie dead... Unto him let us cry aloud: Arise, O Lord... for measureless...”

Tonight’s Gospel also takes us on a transition. It begins in the darkness; Mary Magdalene and the other Mary - there are many Marys in Jesus’s circle of disciples - set out at the first break of dawn. They are in despair, and follow their hearts to the tomb where Jesus was buried.

For our world today, I think it was less difficult than usual for people to think about Jesus in the tomb, and to enter into the Good Friday service, as a heavy shroud covers our land these days. We understand going to pray at a tomb. For those who have lost loved ones in the past weeks, where there could be no proper funeral, there is an extra resonance. Jesus too was not given a wake or funeral, but his body was simply placed in a tomb. Normally there is a finality to that.

But as G. K. Chesterton noted, our God is “a God who knows his way out of the grave.” Death does not have the last word. Our imaginations do well to ponder what it was like to be there. When the angel in brilliant light comes, removes the boulder from in front of the tomb, and sits on it (a wonderful detail!), Matthew says the two soldiers guarding it were terrified, “were like dead men.” Quite a response from those about to hear that the dead man whose tomb they were guarding was not dead anymore. And the two Marys, as the angel speaks to them and tells them that Jesus is risen, are at once terrified and overwhelmed with joy; and holding all that emotion, while they set out to tell the unthinkable to the other disciples, Jesus himself appears to them, and they fall down before him. And he says what the Risen Jesus so often says, “do not be afraid.” And then he sends them forth to go tell the others that he is raised from the dead, and that he will meet them in Galilee.

Bishop Rob Hardwick, the Anglican bishop of this territory, and I, have shared our Easter reflections, and I want to read a little excerpt from his powerful Easter sermon in the context of this pandemic. He notes: “Caiaphas, Pontius Pilate, the Soldiers at the tomb, Satan and the (political and) religious authorities of the day could not prevent the resurrection and, thanks be to God, neither can COVID-19.... The Good News that there is no sin we have committed bad enough, that through repentance, Jesus cannot forgive... There is no situation we are in, so dark, that the light of Christ cannot shine into it... There is no storm we can encounter that the Lord cannot calm... And there is no death that is beyond our Lord’s redeeming and resurrection. And even today, and even to us, into our locked, and isolating rooms; into our fear filled world; into our darkened and anxious homes..., the risen Lord enters and speaks his Peace to us and breathes the Holy Spirit into all who would receive.”

Amen to that.

This evening I want to offer you - people of God spread from Consul to Carnduff to Canora, and all places in between, and some beyond - two thoughts to ponder as we launch into the Easter season. The first takes its lead from today’s second reading, where St. Paul speaks about the implications of the resurrection for us. We who are baptized into his dying and rising will be united with him in the resurrection, insists St Paul; we will live with him; we are dead to sin; death has no dominion over him, and no dominion over us; we are to live in newness of life. Such strong statements. Paul is calling us to a new way of living, what I would call paschal living, life transformed by the dying and rising of Jesus. Of course we aren’t done with sin or death, but we’re somehow called to live ‘on the other side of death.’ Belief and trust in the resurrection bring with them an invitation to see this human life - including death - differently, and to live it differently.

There are some good reflections out there about how the COVID crisis is going to change us. I have read some good challenges, like “when this ends and we can go back to normal, we should be discerning which parts of normal are worth rushing back to.” In this intense period which creates a space for many to experience a lot of solitude and quiet and time for pondering, this can be a time of transformation. I think we all need that. We shouldn’t come out the same on the other end of it all.

Much more so, the experience of the resurrection should change us. Resurrection brings transformation on the deepest level possible, and its power is to be at work in our lives even now. So we do well to ask: Where is fear dominating in my life, and where is the grace of God inviting me to learn to live
with greater trust? Where do I still dwell in darkness, and how can the light that comes with the resurrection transform that? Where do sin and death hold sway in my world, and how can I participate in God's undoing of the power of sin and death? How does resurrection faith shape the way we are called to live in the midst of this pandemic? Resurrection faith is an invitation to live deeply, fully, generously, joyfully, justly, courageously, and compassionately, because that is how God deals with us. So, that's a first line of thinking for you to ponder in the coming weeks.

The second thought I want to set before you tonight is about witnessing. The women at the tomb went to see a dead Jesus, and what they found was a Risen one, who filled them with joy, but also gave them a task: go tell the others. The early church is a community which has a tangible experience of the resurrection, a series of encounters with the Risen Christ, and they want to share that with others. We too are called to be witnesses, but not witnesses in that same direct way because our experience isn't exactly the same. 2,000 years later, our witness is going to look different, but like theirs, it needs to draw on our experience of the Risen Lord. And it is here that most of us struggle a little, to name that experience.

Albert Einstein once observed, "The Lord God is subtle, but malicious he is not." God's ways with us, the presence of the Risen Lord and the Holy Spirit in our lives, is a presence that we don't always see, that we sometimes struggle to see, even though Jesus promised that he would be with us to the end of time. Next week we can ponder that further as we walk in the shoes of Thomas, who had to overcome serious doubts about the resurrection. But tonight, I simply want to encourage you to keep your eyes wide open to the presence of God in our lives. It is subtle, but not absent; it is hidden, but not invisible. I want to take my lead from William Wordsworth who writes of finding the presence of God (from his 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood'):

In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
I the faith that looks through death....
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

Wordsworth points to presence of God at the depths of our human experience, in the ordinarness of it and the beauty of it.

So I invite you to listen for the voice of the Risen Lord, and see the paschal dimension of life, in experiences, encounters and events that are part of our lives:

The exuberance of Spring,
the smell of the moist earth,
the feel of earth running through your fingers;
the song of the meadowlark, the first time you hear it in the spring;
the reality of birth,
and holding a newborn in your hands;
the vastness of the sky,
the smell of clover in the heat of the summer,
and the lights of combines on late august nights.
Acts of unexpected kindness,
the simple goodness of people.

moments of inherent excellence, of love which abides,
walking down a prairie road,
the embrace of a loved one,
dinner with the family, a conversation with a friend;

singing an old favourite song.
The way the Word sometime burns within us when he hear it, comes alive in a way that rounds with what we know to be true; the experience of forgiveness when we don't deserve it, and receiving mercy within mercy within mercy; the sacred memory of those who have gone before us, the ways they continue to be with us; the courage of people reaching out to those in need, and love, the giving of self, whenever we encounter it; the tender mercies of life, the blessing that sometimes comes after hard experiences; an elderly couple holding hands, a loaf of bread, a chalice of wine, sacramental graces;
kneeling in a holy place, where prayer has been valid; an astonishing sunrise, a gentle sunset; the return of the geese on still waters; tulips on the kitchen table;
the Easter candle burning;
the smell of Easter lilies...

Life is resplendent and full of dying and rising.
So too our experience, if we search it out.

St. Augustine invites us to search for God in order to find him in order to search still more. The Risen Lord is with us, there is a paschal character to all of our lives. This Easter season, let us ask for the grace to see it a little better, and find new ways to witness to that gift and blessing: Christ our Lord, Risen from the Dead, Living among us, Drawing us to himself, Revealing his glory.
OUR CHURCH AND COVID-19

Twenty Years Later, What will They Say...

By Archbishop Donald Bolen

A couple of days ago I started asking people a question: what would you like people to say 20 years from now about how we as church and society lived through this pandemic. Not what they probably will say but what we’d like them to say. It’s a way of asking what we should be striving for even now. I received an overwhelming number of powerful responses to the question. Here are 10 memorable responses, most of them cobbling together pieces from different people around themes that kept coming back.

1. In 20 years, I hope that people say that out of the turbulent times that we lived - the suffering that came with the virus and the shutdown of much of our society, the loss of work, the stress and the depression - in the midst of that, we learned something new about listening to and walking with those who are suffering; that it made us more compassionate; more attentive to what the marginalized live with all the time. And that out of this experience of suffering we came to understand our united humanity more deeply; that we are a part of something larger than our own lives; that we are in this together.

2. I hope that twenty years from now, when people will remember this time, they will say something like, “it was a time of profound longing for the sacraments, an extended Lent that carried on into Easter, a time of spiritual hunger and thirst, but it led to a revitalization of our faith. Longing led to deeper appreciation, as we realized the value of what we had lost, and stopped taking the great gifts of our faith for granted. After COVID-19 we had a renewed sense of the Eucharist as the center of the Christian life because of our experience of fasting from it. It all meant so much more to us. The joy now was connected to the longing then.” I hope they’ll say “we remember the incredible joy of the first full public Masses after the pandemic, a joy which was more contagious than the virus, in a more lasting way. When we went back, it was like Easter. We understood the death and resurrection in a new way, felt it from the inside.”

3. I hope they say it was a time when individuals, church and society, hit the reset button, that families and communities reset our priorities and took the opportunity to return to what really matters. When we stopped running around so much, when the frantic pace of our lives was halted from the outside, and the relentless to-do-lists sat idle, good things filled the void. As we released our grip on things of the world, we started to recognize the beauty of life in simpler ways. Less cluttered lives were more attentive to connection with God and with each other; with what it means to be a Christian; with the dignity and wonder of each human life. In that restored simplicity, we learned new priorities, remembered what was truly valuable and worthy of our time and energy, worthy of our lives.

4. When we look back, I hope we’ll say that when we couldn’t gather on Sunday mornings in our parishes, we learned that church isn’t just what happens in our parish once a week - as important as that is. During the pandemic we learnt anew that Christ was with us, even when we seemed alone. We told stories of how Satan and Jesus stood looking at the Globe, and Satan said “look, I managed to close the churches” and Jesus responded “yes but I ended up in every living room.” This experience truly expanded our horizons of what it meant to be Church, with a recovery of traditions which had given life to people in past generations, and a discovery of the power of the Holy spirit at work in exciting and life giving ways - right in our homes, in the heart of our families. God was nearer, more intimately present in our lives, than we had ever imagined.

5. May it be said that this was a defining moment for the Church, for Christians as a whole. In a season of deficit, of uncertainty and disruption and isolation, we yearned not only for the Eucharist, but for the community - and in that yearning, laid the seeds of a renewed commitment to the Church’s mission to reach out in loving service to the world, building up the common good. We noticed a hole at the center of our Christian lives when we were not able to offer ourselves to our brothers and sisters in prisons, hospitals, shelters, and support groups. A time that started out quiet and lonely became a time to re-ignite our faith and gave us a renewed sense of the mission of Jesus Christ and how each one of us is invited to be an integral part of it.

6. I hope it will be said 20 years from now that we turned a corner, as human community, in learning how we need to care for the natural world. The lock down caused us to take a great pause, and in that pause, we saw signs of the earth renewing itself. With our lives slowing down, we experienced anew how God speaks to us in the created world. We also saw that when one part of the world is wounded, we are all affected. The basic principles of Catholic social teaching became a road map for addressing injustices and bringing renewal and healing. Decisions that seemed too costly before the pandemic were seen as the responsible way forward after it.

7. I hope people will say that at this time of crisis, amidst the closure of all of our places of worship, we were able to connect more deeply with others Christians in our area, and that we saw how important it was to share resources and work together to build up the community. And that Christian faith leaders invited other faith leaders into dialogue, so that we could speak together to government and health officials, articulating our needs and the vital importance of faith communities and spiritual life, and how lost we are without them. May people look back on this as a time when polarization gave way to dialogue, where we took steps to heal divisions in our communities, parishes, and families. And how we learned to reverence relationships more, recognizing
that we survived through being supported by and supporting others.

8. Twenty years from now I hope we can speak about how we didn’t just survive the COVID pandemic, but how we learned how God’s faithfulness gave us the grace to be more resilient and courageous than we had thought possible. We found opportunities to be good neighbours, we found new ways to care for the sick, and for one another. In the isolation there were new artistic and intellectual masterpieces that celebrated the human spirit and uplifted us all. Humour flourished, creativity abounded, and we learned anew of the resilience that God places in the human heart.

9. May it be said that as our faith was revitalized by a renewed appreciation of the sacraments, it was also a time for a renewed pastoral outreach which bore great fruit. During the pandemic, pastors and lay leaders reached out in all sorts of ways to their parishioners, making phone calls to see how people were doing, offering help where needed, a listening ear, and relationships grew in wonderful ways. E-mail lists, livestreamed Masses, electronic resources made it possible to share the Word of God in creative ways. And we learned something about reaching beyond the pews, entering into contact, listening and ministering to those who don’t join us for Mass but nonetheless are yearning and searching for God, for faith, for a meaningful life.

10. Finally, from a time when much of the human race took a ‘time-out’, a time of quarantine, imposed solitude and retreat, when we recognized how vulnerable and fragile and not in control we are, may it be said that we have found time to listen to our hearts’ true yearnings; and that after the pandemic, our return to normal was different. We had come in touch with a humility proper to the human condition, recognizing how dependent we are on each other; and we became less angry, more even tempered, more willing to extend a gentle hand of love, caring and friendship. Prayer having found a greater place in our lives, we rediscovered the sabbath, and found a renewed joy in the simple dignity of being alive and loved by God.

Rich blessings in the Risen Lord.

Love Fills the Gap: Living Without the Eucharist

By Holly Gustafson

I’m going to be honest: trying to participate in online Sunday Masses has not been easy. Certainly, over the years, attending Mass with five children of varying ages never has been. But there’s something about the comfort of our living room that makes it particularly challenging: we seem to be spending the entire hour trying to keep the children from losing focus, and trying to keep the teenagers from going horizontal.

But we’re doing it, every Sunday, each week as imperfect as the week before. And that’s okay. Because love fills the gap.

This was the message of mercy of St. Faustina Kowalska, a twentieth century Polish nun whose visions of Jesus — and intimate conversations with Him — earned her the title “Secretary of Divine Mercy.” These visions and conversations, along with Faustina’s personal thoughts and prayers, were recorded over four years, from 1934 until her death in 1938, and published as her diary entitled Divine Mercy in My Soul. Within those pages of mercy, the one message that keeps coming back to me, especially now, is this: Love fills the gap.

St. Faustina never places herself on a pedestal, although, as Jesus’ personal secretary of Mercy, you’d think she’d have every right to. Instead, her diary is full of humble self-talk: she calls herself “a poor creature,” “a tiny violet” crushed underfoot, an absolute “abyss of misery and baseness.” She recognizes, consistently and continually, the enormous gulf that exists between the Creator and the creature, between her God, and her poor, abysmal, miserable self.

And yet: Love fills the gap.

“You are God, and I — I am Your creature,” says Faustina in one of her recorded conversations with Jesus. “You, the Immortal King and I, a beggar and misery itself! But now all is clear to me: Your grace and Your love, O Lord, will fill the gulf between You, Jesus, and me.”

That gulf between Creator and creature has never felt wider these days. I read the Gospel daily, and try to reflect on it the best I can. I pray the rosary when I remember, and I’m on day eight of a novena I started several weeks ago. I sit in my living room with my family every Sunday watching Mass on a laptop, trying to keep my teenagers from playing with
the lit candles or slyly sinking into a corner of the couch and falling asleep. We are daily doing our best, and simultaneously failing every single day. And we (at least my husband and I) are painfully feeling that gulf between the Creator and His creatures, between the Eucharist, and our poor, miserable souls.

And yet, as Faustina reminds us over and over, Love fills the gap. “Love compensates for the chasms,” she promises, “Love will fill the gulf.”

And so, we do our best (failing daily), and pray for God’s mercy to do the rest. And pray, too, that He will fill the Eucharist-shaped gap in our hearts.

Eucharistic Challenge of the Month

Join me in a 12-month challenge to grow closer to the Eucharist this year. This Sunday, make an effort to attend online Mass with reverence and attentiveness. (You might create an Easter display, light candles, print off the readings to help you follow along, or provide Gospel-related colouring sheets for the kids.) Do your best, and then ask God to let His Mercy do the rest.

Love is Creative

By Alison Bradish

Drive by confessions, Eucharistic Processions over the sky, websites to livestream homilies, when it comes to bringing Christ to the faithful, some priests and laity are getting creative.

Fr. Parker Love is adamant social distancing be followed. He wants to keep his parishioners safe. When Archbishop Don Bolen wrote the letter about public celebrations of the Mass being suspended, Fr. Parker knew he needed to think of new ways to bring Christ to the people.

At 31, Fr. Parker is the youngest serving priest in the Archdiocese of Regina. He is pastor of St. Augustine parish in Wilcox and chaplain for Notre Dame High school.

Thursday, March 19th, the Solemnity of St. Joseph, saw Fr. Parker doing something out of the norm. Encouraged by the president of Notre Dame High School, Rob Palmarin, Fr. Parker donned his vestments, organized a few altar servers and from the back of his truck (Fr. Parker uses a wheelchair) held up the monstrance as a volunteer drove through the streets of Wilcox.

“We had lots of people who came and stood on the streets near their houses and took in the 30 seconds are so that we were going down their street,” says Fr. Parker describing the scene.

Families watched from their living room windows. Some of the images stuck with Fr. Parker more than others. “One of the Hounds was practicing her hockey shots in her backyard and when we came down the street she stopped, and then as soon as we turned the corner, she was taking shots again. But to me, that was cool. Because if she knows anything about the faith, I don’t even know for sure if she’s Catholic, but she knows to pause in a moment like that...no matter who you are or where you come from you see this guy dressed in gold holding up this golden thing and three guys walking up front, clearly something is happening. It’s such a profound sign for people,” said Parker.

Fr. Parker laughs about some aspects of the experience. He admits next time he does a procession he will have a clear route planned. (He narrates trying to practice social distancing while also shouting to the driver what way to turn and then the driver shouting to get the message to the altar servers.)

“It was really the last time we could really do one of these things,” say Fr. Parker, noting how Notre Dame school was pretty much vacant of students by that time. “I wanted to do something like that. In small town Saskatchewan we have a huge chunk of elderly parishioners who are very faithfully listening to the suggestions to stay at home. I've had a couple of home bound people just on a regular basis and so here’s a way we can get to them, here’s a way we can get to all the families and kids who are barred from going to school.”

Fr. Parker says this is a time where Christians can become more visible. “I know a lot of people who have never posted anything about their faith before. And now they are,” says the priest who is also being inspired by many of the priests he was ordained with.

“One of my priest friends in Vancouver is livestreaming his Mass everyday on Twitch, a livestreaming platform that when it was originally founded it was for video gamers....for the first time ever, as Catholics , we are present on Twitch....if one


person gets reached through that what an amazing thing," says Fr. Parker.

Fr. Parker admits the restrictions put in place to protect us, also give him pause to really think about the great privilege of celebrating the sacraments.

“This whole part of my pastoral ministry, part of my job and beyond that my life and vocation is being kept from me and that’s hard and a struggle but ultimately I want to serve people and I truly believe that this is the best way to serve people right now. Stay at home,” says Fr. Parker.

He says now is when we are called to stay in and go out. “It’s bad that we can’t physically share space anymore. But that’s never stopped Saints from sharing the Gospel before,” says Fr. Parker.

He does worry about some of his parishioners who are shut ins, and maybe only receive a few visits a week, he knows maybe those visits will be less, and it will take effort on his part and the community to make sure all are cared for.

Fr. Parker is also hosting an event like Theology on Tap from his Facebook Live feed during this time. He’s calling it “Cold drinks, Quarantine and Christ.” He will discuss popular culture topics and open it up to discussion.

Some of the other ways people in the Archdiocese are responding to the new pandemic norms are by putting in place a contact person to make sure those who may not be connected virtually can be called and checked in on. One deacon from the Archdiocese is livestreaming the Divine Mercy Chaplet, a homily and the rosary every day at www.lntheredeemer.com. The Archdiocese of Regina is livestreaming daily and Sunday Masses from Resurrection Parish.

Archbishop Don's Letter to the Clergy and the Faithful re: Allowing of Mass During covid-19

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ of the Archdiocese of Regina,

Warm greetings in the Risen Lord. Today when the provincial government announced numbers of cases of COVID-19 in the province, we could see that at present there are no known active cases of the virus in Regina, nor anywhere else in the Archdiocese. That is exceptionally good news. Heartfelt thanks to frontline workers, and to all who have made sacrifices in order to minimize the spread of the virus and to protect the most vulnerable members of our communities. We continue to stand in solidarity with places and people that are less fortunate. And we pray especially for the people of La Loche, who have been hit hard by the recent outbreak there.

After much discussion and discernment, and provided that our situation remains stable within the Archdiocese, we have made the decision to allow Masses of up to 10 persons in our parishes beginning on the weekend of Pentecost at the end of this month. Detailed directives about how we are to proceed will be made available early next week. These will address the preparations that will need to be carried out prior to the celebration of the Eucharist, safety measures for during the Mass and the reception of communion, and cleaning to take place after the celebration, to ensure that all health directives are met. To keep the numbers at a legal limit, and to ensure that equal opportunity is provided to anyone who wishes to attend Mass, each pastor or administrator is going to need a system by which people can sign up to attend a particular celebration. The guidelines will be clear, consistent and concise, but will be somewhat onerous to carry out. That is the cost of doing everything we can to ensure people’s safety. The dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass will remain in place during this time when numbers are restricted by government and health authorities.
The decision to proceed was reached after long conversations with laity and clergy. The Archdiocesan Pastoral Council urged us to be very cautious in taking steps towards reopening our churches. The Council of Priests deliberated at length, and a working group reviewed input from other dioceses, as well as carefully studying the current health directives to make sure that what we were proposing was within the acceptable parameters. We continue to work with other faith communities in seeking clearer directives from the provincial government, which will shape how we proceed going forward.

We also listened to those who urged us strongly to reopen our liturgical celebrations to the extent legally possible for the spiritual wellbeing of the faithful, as well as those who recommended that we proceed with greatest caution for the physical wellbeing of people. Faithfulness to God has required listening to both perspectives, which are equally important.

Until Pentecost, much is still possible, as is detailed in the church and sacramental guidelines posted on the archdiocesan website, guidelines which have been in place for several weeks. These include celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation, private prayer in churches, celebrating baptisms and funerals - but always working within the limits set by the government directives currently in place. Some of these activities have been going on in your parishes in recent weeks, and that is a good thing. This has looked somewhat different from one parish to the next, as priests and parish councils have deliberated regarding what is appropriate and responsible in their particular contexts. Masses will continue to be livestreamed so that all in the Archdiocese are able to participate in Mass in that way. We continue to reach out, on parish and diocesan levels, to accompany you in whatever ways are possible.

Dear friends, these next steps are not going to be easy. Even after Pentecost, with numbers for gatherings restricted by provincial directives, only a small percentage of the people of the Archdiocese are going to be able to participate in person at a Mass any time soon. For some, that will be because you belong to large parishes. Others of you will not be attending Mass for health reasons or because you are part of the vulnerable sector of the population. Those who are able to attend a Mass are strongly encouraged to come bringing the prayers of others not able to be present, such as prayers for our Elect, who are eagerly awaiting their sacraments of initiation, and for the many people who are suffering or struggling at present. The Mass is not meant to be limited in numbers, and there are going to be tensions as we find a way forward. I would encourage you to remember that God’s grace is with us, as much now as ever. Let us be patient, show kindness and mercy to each other, and live this challenging time as generously and compassionately as possible.

I would like to close this letter with excerpts from two prayers that Pope Francis has been praying during this time of pandemic. The first is a prayer to Mary:

O Mary, you shine continuously on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope.
Help us, Mother of Divine Love, to conform ourselves to the Father’s will and to do what Jesus tells us: He who took our sufferings upon Himself, and bore our sorrows to bring us, through the Cross, to the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.

The second prayer includes excerpts of a much longer litany to Jesus:

Our Savior, God with us, faithful and rich in mercy
We adore you, O Lord.

King and Lord of creation and of history,
Conqueror of sin and death,

Friend of humankind, the Risen One, the Living One who sits at the right hand of the Father.
We adore you, O Lord.

Should sin oppress us Open us to hope, O Lord.
Should hatred close our hearts,
Should sorrow visit us,
Should indifference cause us anguish,
Should death overwhelm us,
Open us to hope, O Lord.

Protect your Church which crosses the desert,
Comfort us, O Lord.

Protect humanity terrified by fear and anguish,

Protect the sick and the dying, oppressed by loneliness,

Protect doctors and healthcare providers exhausted by the difficulties they are experiencing,

Protect politicians and decision makers who bear the weight of having to make decisions,
Comfort us, O Lord.

God bless you all.

+Donald Bolen, Archbishop of Regina
Steps Towards Reopening

Brothers and sisters in Christ of the Archdiocese of Regina, warm greetings in the Risen Lord on this fine Spring day. May Spring rains soon find their way to us to water our fields and gardens.

Yesterday we released directives regarding the next steps in the reopening of our churches, which will take effect on Pentecost weekend, just over a week from now. They are released in the midst of no small tension within our local church, which is an echo of tensions across the country and beyond. There have been a lot of shrill comments made as of late, arising out of the frustration and hurt that many are feeling. Critical comments are coming from many directions: from those who are upset that our churches were closed to public Eucharistic gatherings, and are slow to reopen; from those who don’t feel they are ready to reopen their churches to even small numbers at this time; from those who feel abandoned at this difficult time. I have also heard from persons who have long ago been hurt by the church, and who know well the experience of being cut off from the sacraments because of insensitivity and a lack of compassion, who feel their voices are never heard. I lift all of you and the entire diocese before the Lord and ask for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit over all of us as we prepare to celebrate the great feast of Pentecost.

The new directives begin by identifying underlying principles guiding our actions, including concern with the spiritual and sacramental life of our people, a concern for the physical health of all people, a desire not to contribute to the spreading of the COVID-19 virus, and the importance of following directives from Saskatchewan health authorities. I invite you to read the directives, which you will find on our website. They map out carefully what has been and continues to be allowed in our churches; the opening of our churches to Eucharistic gatherings of up to 10 people as of Pentecost; and the prospect of further steps in reopening. I also shared that faith leaders from across the province have requested a meeting with government and health officials, so that faith leaders can communicate their questions, concerns, and proposals, helping the government to help us through the phases of reopening. This will include a discussion about number restrictions as they apply to spaces for worship that could accommodate many more than 10 people while maintaining 2 metres distance between those gathered. Conversation with political leaders has begun, and a meeting is in the process of being set up.

Those called to exercise leadership at this time have used various metaphors to describe the challenges that it brings. We are in uncharted territory, we are building the plane while flying it. But those images don’t communicate the faith perspective, which reminds us that we are always needing the gentle promptings of the Holy Spirit, the guidance of the Risen Lord. That is very much the case today, but it is always the case. We need and depend upon the help of God.

When, like most dioceses around the world, we made the decision to suspend public gatherings of the Eucharist, it was not first and foremost because of government restrictions. It is true that we were not listed as a critical public service, not listed among those exempted from closure. It is true that leading up to Easter, both the Premier and the Chief Medical Officer encouraged us not to gather outside of our households, to find ways to celebrate in our homes. But it resonated most with us when we were encouraged to do everything we could to protect the most vulnerable in our societies, and to do our part for the common good of not spreading the virus. The Church is called to protect the most vulnerable, and we knew that we needed to do our part and to model that for others.

Now that we are able to take steps towards reopening, people are rightly asking us how we are making key decisions and scrutinizing each step. As with previous steps, so too with steps going forward. I would offer you this, acknowledging our limitations, sinfulness, and sense at times of being overwhelmed, here is where we put our trust. We place it firmly in the Holy Spirit, for whom no situation is hopeless or impossible, and who continues to communicate with us in many ways. Among them, we have heard the Spirit call us to listen to people who know more about epidemiology and virology than we do. We have listened to the sick and the vulnerable, including those who have tested positive with the virus, and those whose lives can be saved by a careful response to this crisis; we have sought to learn from communities near and far who have suffered outbreaks, and have kept them in prayer; we have listened to those who hunger for a return to the Eucharist, and those who have asked for us to reach out in other ways to address their spiritual needs. We have attended to directives and recommendations from the government, and have asked to open a respectful conversation so that faith communities can be included in phases of reopening. We have drawn on the authoritative, consultative bodies of laity and clergy to seek input. And we have been in regular communications with other Dioceses, learning from each other as we have prepared protocols and policies. In these and other ways, none more so than in prayer, we have sought the guidance of the Risen Lord and have felt his presence. In the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins, we can say, “and dost thou touch me afresh; over again I feel thy finger and find thee.”

From multiple perspectives, people will critique and carefully monitor the steps we are taking. That is fine, right, and good. But I kindly ask all of you to safeguard the unity of the Church in your questioning; to not underestimate the
complexity of the situation we are in; to not judge harshly those who, prayerfully and out of their own experience, see things differently than you.

Let me close with a quotation from John Henry Cardinal Newman, writing 150 years ago about decision-making in the Catholic Church. Newman writes that “Catholic Christendom is no simple exhibition of religious absolutism, but presents a continuous picture of Authority and Private Judgment alternately advancing and retreating as the ebb and flow of the tide; it is a vast assemblage of human beings with wilful intellects and wild passions, brought together into one by the beauty and the Majesty of a Superhuman Power, into what may be called a large reformatory or training-school, not as if into a hospital or into a prison, ... but brought together as if into some moral factory, for the melting, refining, and moulding, by an incessant, noisy process, of the raw material of human nature, so excellent, so dangerous, so capable of divine purposes.”

As we prepare to celebrate the great feast of the Ascension, let us ask the Triune God, who authors, sanctifies and redeems us, to put our humble efforts at the service of such divine purposes. God bless you all.

Leaders of four denominational regions met by videoconference in March to approve the agreement. Pictured here are (top row, l-r): Don Bolen, Archbishop of the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Regina and Mark Hagemoen, bishop of the Roman Catholic diocese of Saskatoon; Michael Hawkins, bishop of the Anglican diocese of Saskatchewan; Chris Harper, bishop of the Anglican diocese of Saskatoon; Rob Hardwick, bishop of the Anglican diocese of Qu’Appelle; Sid Haugen, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada’s synod of Saskatchewan; Albert Thévenot, bishop of the Roman Catholic diocese of Prince Albert; Bryan Bayda, bishop of the Ukrainian Catholic eparchy of Saskatoon.

The LAURC Covenant

By Alison Bradish

“Unlike Pontius Pilate who washed his hands I am thankful that the leaders of these denominations and this eparchy have not washed their hands. They’ve struggled with the difficult questions and in struggling with the questions we’ve come to love one another.”

Those were the words Bishop Robert Hardwick of the Anglican Diocese of Qu’Appelle used to describe the relationship between 10 bishops representing Anglican, Lutheran, Ukrainian and Roman Catholic dioceses in Saskatchewan.

The close relationships built between the bishops resulted in the April 2, 2020 signing of the LAURC Covenant, a document outlining how churches can and should work together. The covenant contains suggestions about creating partnerships in the spheres of prayer, study, action, social life and ecumenical leadership.

“Ecumenical relations build on what we hold in common,” says Archbishop Don Bolen about the covenant. “What binds Christians together is the profound faith that Christ is incarnate among us that God took flesh out of love for us, and Jesus gave himself fully in his dying, and in his rising. And in the sending of his Holy Spirit we find life. That is entirely common ground. As we approach the celebration of Easter, though we do have differences, that common faith is very much at the forefront.”

Bishop Bryan Bayda of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon says he see the covenant as an expression of the Trinity, “We reverence the Trinity a great deal in the East, we bless ourselves three times, etc. and I think this points to [the fact that our] individual identity is never lost but enhanced,” Bayda explains.

He uses marriage as an example to further explain of how the covenant does not erase one’s individualism but enhances it, “They see more fully who that person is. Baptism does that as well. Your identification as a baptized person is fulfilled, sharing in Christ’s [role as priest, prophet, and king], and so it’s very much an enhancement when we have a covenant like this where each of the individual denominations and churches, they are enhanced in who they are without losing their individual identity”
Bayda explains the document is not so much obligatory for parishes, but prescriptive as it is not a decree. “As a covenant it’s an invitation to respond,” says Bayda.

Bishop Sid Haugen of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada Synod of Saskatchewan says in his experience churches have known they should work together but at times recommendations are not implemented.

“What I am hopeful about with this covenant is that it really invites people on the ground to do something even if it is a simple thing, to just start to pray together or work together and see where that goes,” says Haugen.

Six practical commitments are outlined in the LAURC document and 23 recommendations about how to implement the covenant. Practical commitments include holding a prayer service each year in a different church, remembering the other churches and leaders during intercessions on Sunday, and finding ways to work and pray together in times of great need or emergency.

Recommendations include creating new traditions together, joint youth groups, social events and fostering regular communication between parishes and clergy.

“For me the relationship among the bishops right now is one of the most profound experiences I’ve ever seen or had...to be able to see bishops walking together is profound, it really is. That’s one of the reasons why this whole experience right now is a message of hope and especially in this covenant not only to Saskatchewan, but it can be a mark for the rest of the church,” said Bishop Christopher Harper of the Anglican Diocese of Saskatoon.

“We are definitely trying to do what we can,” says Bolen. “We’ve tried to make this covenant tangible, practical, realistic. It is built on decades of ecumenical friendship.”

Bolen hopes the covenant will grow and expand to include other ecclesial communities in the future. “We aren’t setting a boundary around us. We want to collaborate and work closely together with Christians of other communities as well,” he says.

The signing of the LAURC builds and expands the covenant signed in 2011 between the Anglican Diocese of Qu’Appelle and the Archdiocese of Regina.

Catholics and Evangelicals Chip Away at Wall of Misunderstanding

By Andrew Ehrkamp, Special to Archdiocese of Regina

The “Berlin Wall” between Catholics and Evangelicals in Canada is slowly but surely being chipped away, say two experts who are part of a group at the forefront with a metaphorical hammer and chisel.

“People couldn’t imagine what the end of the Cold War was going to look like, and then one day they woke up and no one was guarding the wall. People started taking it down. Christian unity has to be something like it. Until it’s achieved, it’s kind of unimaginable. You don’t know what it will look like,” said Brett Salkeld, the archdiocesan theologian for the Archdiocese of Regina.

“We’re chipping away at that wall. Absolutely,” added Jo-Ann Badley, the academic dean at Ambrose University in Calgary.

“I really do hope that this is a model and a gift that will take it up. I think as we do that, what we will find is ways of moving forward. That’s what I would hope for, that we would find common language to begin to affirm each other’s participation in the kingdom of God.”

Both are members of the Roman Catholic-Evangelical Dialogue of Canada, which has met twice a year for more than a decade. It has produced two documents in which Catholics reflect on Evangelicals, and vice-versa. It’s an attempt to chip away at centuries of misunderstanding and misrepresentation.

“Jo-Ann Badley, Brett Salkeld

“It’s a scandal to the world that Christians disagree and fight with each other,” said Salkeld, who co-hosts a podcast on theology for the Archdiocese of Regina. “So much of our disagreements are rooted in misunderstanding, misrepresentation. So much of Catholic-Evangelical relationships are built on literally centuries of mischaracterizing each other.”

The pair highlighted common Christian witness and agreement on social issues, while agreeing to disagree on
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others ranging from papal authority to the veneration of Mary. They shared their thoughts in an interview on the sidelines of a Jan. 24 presentation in Edmonton on the progress of Catholic-Evangelical dialogue, and capping off the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Both say Catholics and Evangelicals have realized they have more in common than they thought, especially as Christian witnesses in an increasingly secular world. The dialogue has also strengthened the convictions on each side. Their hope is that the national dialogue will be replicated at a local level.

“There’s a lot of people for whom this is permission and relief,” Salkeld said. “We know that we are Christians, but we have no tools for talking to each other. We don’t know how we’re supposed to do this. Thank you. What can we do next? How about you take the documents and read them together and talk about them? It was amazing to see how excited people were about that possibility.”

Why have the national dialogue at all?

“The first reason is Jesus was pretty committed to that. We think of some of the things he says in the Gospel of John, where the unity of the church is actually one of the pieces that make it credible, or incredible, believable or not believable,” said Badley.

“The second reason is that I think Jesus was probably right. In fact, the church’s witness in this time and place is more credible if in fact we treat our neighbours – particularly our Christian neighbours, as people who love the Lord and who are also trying to make their way in a world that increasingly doesn’t know the Lord.”

Over a decade ago, Canadian Catholic and Evangelical church leaders came together to speak out on Parliament Hill about common positions on social issues. It began with same-sex marriage legislation, and continues today on euthanasia and assisted suicide, as well as conscience rights for health-care workers.

“Obviously people don’t line up 100 per cent all the time, everywhere, but there’s a lot of common concern for what does it mean to be a public Christian in cultures that are increasingly secular,” Badley said.

“I think that people that you thought were a long way away from you turn out to be closer than people that are actually a long way away from you. So it turns out that people of faith in any context almost have more in common with you than people of no faith.”

Both Salkeld and Badley said the national dialogue, and meeting face to face, has helped dispel misunderstandings – so much so that there is more agreement in Canada than perhaps anywhere else.

“There’s a lot of competing for converts, for example, in Latin America,” Salkeld said. “Largely it’s Evangelicals converting traditionally Catholic populations, and that leads to a lot of tension. That’s not the same context that we have here.”

Nevertheless, there are some areas where the proverbial Berlin Wall still exists. Chief among them are papal authority and church structure – the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada is more loosely defined.

“The EFC is a collection of a wide variety of kinds of Evangelicals. We have no equivalent kind of authority structure,” Badley said. “Evangelicals would say the church is the gathering of those who have been converted and baptized, but the Catholics have much more of a sense that you’re born into this. ‘There is more of a sense that this is a community.’

“For Catholics, the church needs to have strong visible elements,” Salkeld added. “Things that Catholics can look at are things like sacraments. We know we are in communion with one another. Whereas, in an Evangelical vision of church, the church would be all the people who accept Jesus as saviour, which might include some Catholics but it doesn’t automatically include Catholics. For Catholics, if you’re baptized into this sacramental community, we can see the borders of the church. It’s more defined.”

Badley said the loosely defined structure of the Evangelical church made it more difficult for it to affirm the documents in the Roman Catholic-Evangelical Dialogue than it was for the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. Two other issues include the reading of Scripture and the Catholic veneration of Mary, which was the subject of the last Roman Catholic-Evangelical Dialogue meeting last December.

“At the end of the conversation, we concluded that we could see how what you’re doing makes sense … We still can’t see how it’s important or helpful or necessary. You come away with an understanding, a clearer sense of what’s going on here. But we’re still going to go ahead in our own two directions.”

Nevertheless, Salkeld said Evangelicals came away thinking that maybe Mary needs more attention. And on the reading and interpretation of Scripture, Evangelicals tend to have a wider interpretation than the Catholic magisterium.

“Evangelicals are going to be all over that map in how they read the Bible and how they understand what they’re doing when they read the Bible,” said Badley, who taught Scripture at Newman Theological College for nine years.

However, “there’s a very robust conversation in terms of re-reading early church fathers and re-reading early church materials that are coming into the mainstream of Evangelical thinking,” she said.

“It’s really an acknowledgement of our inheritance from the early church. It isn’t as if Protestant thinking starts at the Reformation and somehow what happened in the other 1,500 years is irrelevant. There’s really a sense that in fact it turns out John Calvin was very influenced by St. Augustine; who knew? You get more of a recognition of our common heritage.”

Today, the conversations continue at the national Roman Catholic-Evangelical Dialogue. Both Badley and Salkeld
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ;

In the Ash Wednesday liturgy, we are marked by the sign of ashes, by the sign of the cross. As individuals and as church, we acknowledge our failings and turn to the crucified and risen Lord and to each other in repentance, ready to walk a journey of healing and transformation. As church community, an essential part of that journey is walking with those we have wounded. This year, as last year, I have written a letter to victims of clergy sexual abuse within the Archdiocese, mindful of the tragic legacy of abuse in our region. Last year the principal focus of that letter was to offer an apology and to invite victims to come forward if they wished to report their abuse or if there was anything that we as church could do to assist them on a journey towards healing. This year’s letter revisits that apology, and it seeks any advice or guidance that victims would wish to share as the church seeks to be transparent and accountable and to accompany victims in a way that is helpful.

Making the church as safe as possible for all minors and vulnerable people, reaching out to those who have been wounded by the church, and striving to become more welcoming, transparent and accountable as a faith community, these are tasks for the church as a whole. I encourage you to attend prayer services for victims when they are held in your parish, to participate in educational events in your parish or deanery, and to take the time to read our policy on clergy sexual abuse. When the policy was promulgated last September, we invited feedback on the policy over the next six months. If you have read the policy and have suggestions to offer, please send them to my executive assistant Bernadette Gettis at bgettis@archregina.sk.ca

If you feel drawn to be more involved in this area work, please contact your pastor or our delegate, Fr. Brad Fahlman, at bfahlman@archregina.sk.ca

Wishing you a blessed season of Lent.

Bishop Don
Open letter to victims of clergy sexual abuse within the Archdiocese of Regina

A year ago on Ash Wednesday I wrote an open letter to all victims of clergy sexual abuse within the archdiocese. I begin this letter by repeating that apology for all that you have suffered, and continue to suffer, as a result of being abused, and as a result of the ways in which the church has failed you in its response. Last year’s letter noted something that I heard from several victims: that an apology is a starting point, not an end point. Now, a year later, I write to you again, asking for any wisdom and guidance you would wish to share regarding how the church can most compassionately and helpfully walk with you and other victims on a journey towards healing.

Over the past year, with the help and at the suggestion of several victims, we have taken some small steps:

- establishing a policy on clergy sexual abuse that is victim-centered and, in key sections, speaks directly to victims;
- providing a child sexual abuse trauma counsellor who is available, confidential and free of charge to you;
- continuing to host prayer services for victims;
- and organizing educational events which allow people to hear the voice of victims, addressing the prevention of abuse and accompaniment of victims.

We have a long journey ahead in learning to walk with victims and many more steps to take so that your encounters with the church today are experiences of healing and compassion.

What I have consistently heard from you is a desire to be listened to, that we take tangible steps so that such abuse never happens again, and that the church be transparent and accountable as it responds to victims and deals with the terrible legacy of clergy sexual abuse. I commit the church to continue to work diligently towards those ends, and to turn to victims for guidance in taking practical steps towards those goals. This letter is, indeed, an invitation to you as a victim to let us know what we could do that would be helpful on your journey towards healing. In addition to anything that you would want to offer as advice or recommendations, I would like to invite your reflections on two specific questions.

The first pertains to transparency and accountability. Some victims and some stories from the media have requested that dioceses post on their websites a list of names of members of the clergy who have been found guilty of abusing a minor or vulnerable person. Some have asked that those lists extend to those credibly accused, whether living or deceased, and many American dioceses have proceeded in this way.

Locally, we have heard diverse opinions from victims: that if we do post a list of clergy who have abused minors, we need to make sure that no other victim would be further hurt or re-victimized by our actions; that posting names could open the door to retaliation against or put pressure on other victims; that it would be best if action was taken on a national level in this regard rather than every diocese making their own decisions. Some cautiously encouraged the posting of names of those found guilty of abuse, and others felt strongly that there are better ways of inviting victims to come forward, other ways of acknowledging the legacy of abuse within the archdiocese and moving towards healing.

We are learning and coming to understand that victims heal in different ways and the path moving forward is unique to each person. The input of victims with different perspectives is vital in discerning how we would best move forward. With this letter I would invite any reflections you as a victim would have on the posting of a list, and on any other steps you would encourage us to take towards transparency and accountability.

Secondly, I am seeking your guidance on what steps would be most helpful in accompanying victims who have come forward, and in creating a space where victims who have not come forward might feel comfortable to do so. The steps that we have taken as a diocese over the past 3 years have all been suggested by victims, and we have come to recognize that healing and transformation can only come about by listening to and walking with those who have been wounded.

The invitation for you to offer suggestions or guidance is extended to those who were abused in Archdiocese, including those who are in the church and those who have been alienated by or from it. Along with our delegate and deputy delegate for clergy sexual abuse, I am ready to receive what you would wish to share in a way that would be most comfortable for you: a meeting with myself as bishop, or with our delegate or deputy delegate, accompanied by whatever support persons you would wish to bring; meeting with another victim or group of victims who would then share with us what you have asked them to share; meeting with a counsellor who would be able to accompany you through any trauma you might experience; or communicating with us in other way of your choosing. Whether today you find yourself within or outside the church, we want all victims to know that we recognize your suffering, and are profoundly sorry, and want to do what we can to offer you support.

In the Ash Wednesday liturgy, we as individuals and as church acknowledge our failings and turn to God and to each other in repentance. An essential part of a new journey is walking with those who have been seriously wounded by the church and by people within the church. As Lent is before us, the new journey has begun.

Profound thanks to the many victims who have shared their experiences, their insights, and who have been instrumental in the healing of other victims and the healing and transformation of the church.

Sincerely yours,

+Donald J. Bolen, Archbishop of Regina
This is a podcast brought to you by the Archdiocese of Regina where we attempt to navigate this winding road of faith in Jesus Christ so that we might know him more intimately, love him more profoundly and together serve him more deeply in our daily lives.

Have a question you’d like us to address on the show? Email Eric at: egurash@archregina.sk.ca.

PAPAL NUNCIO VISITS THE ARCHDIOCESE

The Church in Rural Saskatchewan: “Not Without Hope”

By Alison Bradish

Representatives from the Weyburn Deanery recently sat down with the Pope’s Ambassador to Canada, Archbishop Luigi Bonazzi, and Archbishop Don Bolen to discuss what is going well and what is not for the faithful living in rural areas.

About 60 people took part in the informal gathering where various parishes presented stories of their successes, hopes, and challenges about sharing the Gospel in a rural setting.

Following the reception, Mass was celebrated with the Papal Nuncio at St. Vincent de Paul, where roughly two hundred people participated, among them five priests who serve the area. The Deanery includes the main parishes of Sedley, Montmartre, Radville, Weyburn, Wilcox, and surrounding communities.

In his homily, the Nuncio told parishioners Archbishop Bolen made it clear a visit to the Archdiocese would be incomplete without meeting the faithful from the smaller centres.

Archbishop Bonazzi acknowledged concerns he heard from the rural faithful, including sadness felt about some parishes no longer having a resident priest or regions where churches have been decommissioned.

“IT is a painful time for many in rural Saskatchewan. Painful, but not without hope,” said Archbishop Bonazzi. He referenced the memories and example of former generations of the faithful who brought hope and new initiatives.

“What is important is our relationship with Christ and finding support from other believers,” he said, emphasizing the priority for the spiritual and pastoral care of the faithful.

Archbishop Bonazzi recognized the Filipino community in attendance, saying they bring newness of life to rural churches and the faithful thank God for them.

He continued to express the closeness of the Holy Father, saying as Nuncio he brought with him the blessings, encouragement, and affection of Pope Francis. “I’m sure he would be joyful to see all of you and your confidence and trust,” he said.

His homily centered on the Gospel of Luke 16:19-31, the story of Lazarus and the rich man. Archbishop Bonazzi said...
this was one of the most powerful parables. He pointed out how the rich man is never named in the story, whereas Lazarus, the poor man, is. “It is a parable stressing the contrast between someone who has everything but next to him is someone who needs everything,” he said.

He recalled a homily given by a Cardinal in 1980 when Archbishop Bonazzi was serving in Cameroon. “I remember him (the Cardinal) saying, Lazarus is Africa, for whom nobody cares.”

Archbishop Bonazzi said the Gospel parable of Lazarus and the rich man contains a paradigm of personal and collective applications. “It causes each one of us to sort out our indifference. We are so taken by ourselves we do not see the needs of our brothers and sisters next to us,” he said.

He went on to reference the love of the poor that Saint Vincent de Paul had, saying the Saint referred to the poor as his master. Archbishop Bonazzi noted there are many kinds of poverty, financial, spiritual and social, “It is up to us to fill the emptiness caused by these needs,” he said, using words of Saint Mother Teresa, “The fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service.”

“What an important call to really move from faith to love, from love to service,” said Archbishop Bonazzi.

Paraphrasing what he called a profound exhortation of Pope Francis, Archbishop Bonazzi continued, “The Church exists because we as disciples, we become relevant to the extent we fulfill our mission to keep alive in people’s hearts the memory that God loves them. To tell everyone that God does not forget you. He cares about you.”

Archbishop Bonazzi reflected how many today live as orphans unaware of the love of God in their life, “It is like a child who has no mother or father loving them,” he said, contrasting the image with a Christian who lives with the certainty of God’s love.

“My best wishes, dear parishioners of St. Vincent de Paul, to be courageous witnesses of the Church that exists to tell the farthest away that God does not forget you. He loves you,” said the Papal Nuncio at the conclusion of his homily.

The Mass at Weyburn was the last organized event of the Nuncio’s visit to the Archdiocese of Regina March 10th to 12th.

Nuncio Visits Sacred Heart School

By Alison Bradish
Photo Credits Gordon West

The Pope’s representative for Canada, Archbishop Luigi Bonazzi, had his first experience of a Traditional Tuesday thanks to the staff, students and Kookums (Cree for grandmothers) of Sacred Heart Community School.

Archbishop Bonazzi has been the Papal Nuncio for Canada for six years. He serves as diplomatic representative of the Holy See living in Ottawa. This was not his first time visiting the Archdiocese of Regina, but it was his first time visiting Sacred Heart Community School. The school’s new building was constructed in 2017.

Traditional Tuesdays are one way the school is putting into action some of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation commission. Each Tuesday Elder May Desnomie comes to the school and teaches Cree as part of the school’s effort to implement language reclamation. She visits classrooms and is present to students.

Once a month a group of kokums who are part of the Archdiocesan ministry “Aboriginal, Non Aboriginal Relations Community” meet with Sr ReAnne who is facilitator of ANARC, for their leadership circle. and they were also present as Archbishop Bonazzi and Archbishop Don Bolen took part in the schools’ Lenten celebration and assembly. Later the Archbishops met with the Kookums in sharing circle and smudging ceremony.

Fr. John Weckend gave a short homily based on the readings of the second Sunday of Lent. “We have to learn to appreciate each other”, he said. “A lot of our prayer is
about listening, He speaks to us in many ways,” he said. He spoke about how Lent was a time for everyone to see each other differently, and like the Apostles that meant going up the mountain to get another perspective and to see things more clearly.

Afterwards Archbishop Bonazzi, addressed the school, telling them he is 71 years old and that he has three sisters and one brother who are all married. He also noted how when he went to school, they never gathered for “a moment to listen to Jesus”.

“I thank Gilles (referring to principal Gilles Dauphinais) for this beautiful moment. What can I say to you…? This morning I woke up and I told myself ‘I am here in Regina, everything is new for me. Will I be capable of meeting the people, of being prepared with my broken English…? I don’t know if I am capable of doing such a nice dialogue for you…but I think sometimes I can do one thing. You know the things that I can do? That you also can do. The thing I can do in my life always is to love. I have the possibility to love,” said Bonazzi.

Archbishop Bonazzi said he was looking at future engineers, doctors, artists, poets, and pilots. He said not everyone can be a doctor or a pilot, “But there is something everyone of you can do and is capable of, and this is very important, it is to love. To do something good to your friend or to do something good in your family, to help,” said Bonazzi.

He shared that since 1980, almost every three years he has moved to a different country, (He served as a diplomat to the Holy See in Cameroon, Trinidad and Tobago, Malta, Mozambique, Spain and the United States), but he realized what was important was very simple, and that was to love, even while working, meeting people, etc.

Archbishop Bonazzi had a short tour of the school accompanied by Principal Gilles Dauphinais and Regina Catholic Schools Superintendent Stacey Gherasim. He visited the Grade 1 and 2 class of Mrs. Luce who showed the Archbishop the rosaries they made. Mrs. Luce had them hung, individually with their names and the Archbishop read each name aloud, looking for the student and blessed their rosaries. He reminded the students that in Italian their teacher’s name meant light.

He toured the library also, meeting Mrs. White, who would soon be retiring, and one of the students showed him the books he likes to read.

Later, a group of eight Kookums met with the Archbishop Bonazzi in a chapel area room. Elder May explained the meaning of the smudging ceremony. Sage is burned and the smoke rises to the Creator. The smoke symbolizes cleansing the heart and mind of negativity. She explained how sage was burned and those who wished to participate could do the actions of washing one’s hands in the smoke, and bringing the smoke to one’s eyes, lips, ears and heart.

The women spoke and Archbishop Bonazzi listened.
An impressive procession of priests, deacons and one of our seminarians from the Archdiocese of Regina made their way to the altar at Holy Rosary Cathedral March 10th for Mass with Archbishop Luigi Bonazzi, the Papal Nuncio to Canada.

As the priests, deacons and seminarian gathered behind the altar, Archbishop Bonazzi was accompanied by Regina Archbishop Don Bolen and retired Archbishop of Winnipeg Rev. James Weisgerber. Nearly 250 people sat in the pews before them.

In his opening remarks Archbishop Bonazzi said he was bringing greetings, friendship and blessings from Pope Francis. The Nuncio spoke about his admiration for Archbishop Don Bolen and encouraged the faithful to pray for their Archbishop and the church in Regina.

The Gospel read was Matthew 23:1-12. Archbishop Bonazzi focused on the verse, “You have but one teacher,” during his homily.

He spoke about the desire in each of us to be something great and how this greatness comes from drawing near to Jesus. It is Jesus, said the Nuncio, who teaches us to draw near to Him and to be servants, and friends, taking an interest in the needs of our brothers and sisters.

“The vision proper to the Gospel is to make our lives a gift to others,” he said.

Archbishop Bonazzi said this relationship could be taken back to Genesis, where it says a man will leave his mother and father and cling to his wife. He said we must cling to Jesus.

“Either we have the spirit of Jesus or the spirit of the world,” he continued.

He encouraged those listening to ask God for the grace to discover the privilege we have in Jesus, the teacher. He said Jesus the teacher speaks through those he has established as teachers, in particular the bishops, pointing out how this applies to our Pope, who appoints our bishops and reminds us of when Jesus says, “whoever rejects you rejects me”.

“It is very simple and very concrete. When I listen to the Bishop, I listen to Jesus. Pope Francis is the first of the Bishops,” said Archbishop Bonazzi.

He went on to speak of Lent as a time of healing, a time we can stand before the crucifix and say “Jesus you love me. Transform me.”

He described Lent as a time where we go from acknowledging we are dust and making the passage to new life. “We bring our fragile humanity to the humanity of Jesus,” referring to the path of God’s forgiveness in the sacrament of penance where he said God renews us from inside and purifies our life.

“Let us allow ourselves to stand up and walk and discover the joy of how God raises us from our ashes,” concluded Archbishop Bonazzi.

After Mass there was a reception where attendees lined up to share a few words with the Papal Nuncio and receive his blessing.
PAPAL NUNCIO VISITS THE ARCHDIOCESE

What Does a Nuncio's Pastoral Visit Mean?

By Pamela Walsh

In today's world, people are busy, yet in some places, certain people will be important enough for them to stop their busy lives and make time and gravitate towards that person. In the Archdiocese of Regina, a pastoral visit occurred with Canadian Papal Nuncio Archbishop Bonazzi coming to the region. With multiple full days, he actively engaged and participated with those in the church, through masses and meetings.

The first day there was a mass at the Cathedral. To quote Alison Bradish's article on the Regina Archdiocese website "An impressive procession of priests, deacons and one of our seminarians from the Archdiocese of Regina made their way to the altar at Holy Rosary Cathedral March 10th for Mass with Archbishop Luigi Bonazzi, the Papal Nuncio to Canada." I did not attend the mass. There was an open invitation to the faithful of the diocese. As a victim of clergy sexual abuse, outside and not in communion with the church, I don't fall into that category. I began to wonder what exactly is a Papal Nuncio pastoral visit and who is it aimed at. It was clear it was for those in the church, those in the clerical realm, but what about others, where did they fit into the mix?

On Wednesday evening Archbishop Bonazzi attended a specially designed gathering to allow him the opportunity to meet victims of clergy sexual abuse and attend a prayer service written by a victim. What differed allowing me to attend this event and not the mass? I was invited to attend even though I am outside the church. I would speak the words of another victim during the service. This was not easy; nothing is easy about being a victim, even walking into a church can be terrifying.

So why would I go and why was it important for the nuncio to be present? The first was to support those who attended and be a presence for those victims that could not attend for reasons ranging from depth of pain to being dead. Clergy sexual abuse is destructive. It takes so much from a person and leaves life long wounds. As a victim, I understand the need to walk with wounded people; sadly, so many do not see the privilege of doing so.

The second part was to give witness to victim's truths, hearing their voices, letting them know that although our experiences are different, victims often carry many of the same burdens, pain, hurt, blame, and shame, all placed on them, none of their making. No victim is in any way responsible for what happened; they did not ask to be abused or cause it. Yet there are still those that firmly believe that the priest was the victim; the church was/is the victim. It became important that Archbishop Bonazzi hear for himself the depths of pain that victims deal with, often daily. This was not an easy endeavour for me, or I suspect for any victim that spoke with him. Being in a church is a terrifying experience for me, but speaking my truth to the nuncio was far too important not to do so.

The evening also included a prayer service. I did not write the service. However, I was honoured to be able to speak the truth of the person that wrote it. The powerful words echoing at Holy Trinity Parish in Regina gave voice to the many aspects victims live with: pain, shame, worthlessness, being cast aside, and posing the question ‘are you there God?’ Crying out for god to not let go. The image of a broken heart with a broken person sitting beside it on the steps of the altar is an image of the reality that victims live with. With light being sent out the victim walks away with no light to guide them.

Unlike the Cathedral Mass there were not impressive amounts of priests or deacons coming to walk with victims or to hear the words. Somehow victims in their lives are less important, or perhaps it is the anguish and pain they turn away from. The ten or so priests that attended heard victim's words, they experienced pain and suffering. Not every priest is an abuser, and not every priest walks away or shuts the door to the church; some priests suffer greatly by walking with victims. They may experience shame and guilt for what others have done. Those are real experiences. However, it will never equal the pain, guilt, shame, and blame a victim feels.

For me it was important for the pope's representative to hear the words of victims, to know some have been tossed aside like garbage, to know there is a legacy of abuse in the Archdiocese of Regina and the impact victims live with. Perhaps one day, that impressive procession of priests, deacons, and a seminarian that paraded through the Cathedral will come to witness the depths of pain victims go through and begin to walk with those the church has come to disregard.
Beloved by many, Msgr. Hogan passed away peacefully on Tuesday, April 21, 2020 at the age of 100 years. He was predeceased by his parents, William and Louise (nee Madigan); sisters and brothers-in-law, Louise (Anthony) Stembridge, Mary (Connie) Fogarty, Kathleen (Michael) Flanagan, Eva (Michael) Casey, and brother in infancy, Patrick. Msgr. Hogan is survived by his nieces and nephews in Ireland and Canada. He was born on October 19, 1919 in Limerick, Ireland, the second in his family.

He completed his studies at Mungret College, Limerick. While at school, he had met Archbishop Monahan of Regina, SK, who had been visiting Ireland. Msgr. Hogan (or Fr. Mike, to those who knew him well) loved to tell how the Archbishop warned him that Saskatchewan could be difficult; sometimes, he cautioned, a priest might get his car stuck in the winter snow or the muddy country roads while driving to serve parishioners. Fr. Mike would joke that all he heard the Archbishop say was the word “car,” and he was hooked. Young priests in Ireland at the time were issued a bicycle—never a car. He arrived in Regina in August 1939, just at the outbreak of WWII. His passenger ship had been in a convoy that included the Athenia, directly behind. He witnessed as it became a casualty of war, with the loss of 1103 lives. A man of deep faith, he marvelled at the fragility and value of life, and he carried that respect with him in all his relationships.

Fr. Hogan’s life as a priest touched people in many communities, where he was a thoughtful and dedicated leader. He studied at the Regina Cleri Seminary and was ordained on June 13, 1943 at Holy Rosary Cathedral in Regina, SK. He first served as a curate at Blessed Sacrament Parish, Regina, from 1943–1947. His first assignment as pastor (1948–1959) took him to Kenaston, SK, where he built St. Andrews Church. From 1959–1968 he established Holy Cross Parish in Regina. He continued his ministry to serve faithfully at St. John the Baptist, Estevan, SK (1968–1971). He returned to Regina in 1971, and remained there until his passing. In Regina, he served at Christ the King, (1971–1980), St. Cecilia (1980–1989), and St. Martin de Porres (1989–1993). After his retirement as parish priest, he provided Sunday ministry at Regina Pioneer Village and the Pasqua Hospital.

Fr. Hogan was Vicar General from February 1975 until November 1993. In April 1994, after the death of Archbishop Charles Halpin, the College of Consultants elected Msgr. Hogan to be Diocesan Administrator. He held that position until July 1995, with the installation of the Most Reverend Peter Mallon as Archbishop.

Over the course of 77 years of priesthood, his accomplishments only hint at the depth of our Fr. Mike. Thousands were touched by his devotion and humanity. He was also a key member of our family in Canada. Many years ago, his cousin, Marie Nolan, came from Ireland to visit him in Kenaston, SK. She stayed in Saskatchewan, and met Walter Luchenski. They married, and began a family that loved him deeply and knew him well. He was our cousin, confidante, and dear friend. Since childhood, I (Tekla Luchenski) called him my Buddy-in-law, and we were close forever. We moved around as a family, so we would keep in touch with letters. I was always the designated letter reader in our family, since I was the only person who could read his writing. He married Walter and Marie, and was an important spiritual and personal support for them. In time, he buried them. He baptized and married us, their four children. When we started families, he baptized our children too. In between sacraments, he was always an anchor in our family. No celebration was complete without him. We spent many summers growing up visiting him at his rectory, wherever he was. He taught us chess, with his “special” rules. We had animated discussions about our faith, and he would always respond thoughtfully, and candidly, challenging us in return. We teased him with childish pranks, and laughed at his antics. We shared him with a community we couldn’tathom, but he was always our Fr. Mike.

Nephew Gerard Stembridge (Dublin, Ireland), sent words of condolence to his Canadian family that captured Msgr. Hogan’s character. He wrote, “It was truly a remarkable life and Fr. Michael, as we called him in Ireland, was a significant advertisement for the virtues of a life full of riches but lived in moderation. I remember his visits to Ireland and how impressed I always was with the considerable range of his intelligence and yet how lightly he wore it. His interests and knowledge were wide and he knew how to talk to anyone, anywhere. He had a keen wit which he balanced with a gentle manner. He ate with delight, but only just enough. He enjoyed a drink but only on occasion. Even when he walked... [it was] easy and relaxed; he strolled, never anxious or hurried, and yet he was always on time. He enjoyed visiting friends and relatives but never outstayed his welcome. I particularly enjoyed how he would announce his departure politely and then leave immediately—so unlike the Irish style of saying goodbye, but lingering, of almost leaving, then lingering again, ‘and just one more thing...’. I have no doubt that at some point yesterday he said to himself, ‘It is time to leave,’ and he went.”
Irland was always in Msgr. Hogan’s heart, and he returned regularly to visit his family. When the covid-19 crisis is over, he will find his final resting place in Limerick, together with his parents. Still, Saskatchewan was also his home. He said, “Regina is a marvelous place to live. Within 15 minutes, you can be almost anywhere. You have all the amenities you need for a big city and the people are just delightful. What more can you ask for?”

His was a life to be cherished, remembered, celebrated, and emulated.

Due to the covid-19 restrictions, a Private Funeral Mass was live streamed on Monday, April 27, 2020. To watch the livestream of the funeral Mass for Msgr. Michael Hogan visit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HbvKQmRg9I

Trinity Manor Chapel Blessing Invites Encounter with God in all of Life’s Moments

By Deacon Eric Gurash

While it may have been a chilly February day outside, the chapel of Trinity Manor at Westera in Regina was filled with the warmth of home and family as more than 80 residents, priests, staff and family members joined Archbishop Donald Bolen in blessing the chapel in Regina’s newest personal care and independent living residence located in the heart of Westerra.

Located at the corner of Alfalfa Street and Canola Avenue in Regina’s new Westera neighbourhood, Trinity Manor is modeled after a sister facility in Saskatoon, both of which are operated by Emmanuel Care, a healthcare ministry of the Catholic Church under the leadership and sponsorship of the Catholic Bishops of Saskatchewan.

The blessing, which took place on Thursday, February 6, provided an opportunity for, a gathering of various families whose lives will continue to share life and faith in the years to come; the residents and staff of Trinity Manor, the family members, the leaders and staff of Emmanuel Care, and the faithful of the Archdiocese of Regina.

Scott Irwin, president and CEO of Emmanuel Care, addressing those who gathered before the start of the Mass, shared how the community of Trinity Manor underscores their ongoing desire to “strive to meet unmet needs, create communities of caring and healing for all while following Jesus Christ.”

Currently counted among the growing number of residents from all faiths and backgrounds, are five retired priests of the Archdiocese of Regina and three religious sisters. Two additional religious sisters are also on staff providing care for residents.

In his homily, Archbishop Donald focused on the image of the incarnation, the heart of our Christian faith where St. John tells us, “The Word takes flesh and literally pitched his tent among us.” It is an image evoked in Israel’s own experience at the base of Mount Sinai where God first established a “tent of meeting...a place where God speaks to Moses face to face as a friend.”

“In the same way,” said Bolen, “this chapel is meant to be a place where all of you - residents and staff - can come to this ‘tent of meeting’ and encounter the living God.”

After the blessing, which entailed an anointing of the altar and walls of the chapel with sacred oil of Chrism. Francis Maza stepped forward to introduce and officially commission Trinity Manor Executive Director, Tricia Engel. Maza, who serves Emanuel Care as Executive Lead of Mission, Ethics, and Spirituality, introduced Engel as the much-loved leader of the Trinity Manor family.

Engel, served the Regina Qu’Appelle Health Region for twenty years, seven of those as Chair of the Provincial Palliative Care Steering Committee. She remains an active member of Holy Child Parish in Regina and sings regularly with their choir. For the residents and staff, Engel is more than a leader, “she embodies a true concern for the person, a care for their health and well-being. We’re led by someone who is such a vital asset to us!”

Trinity Manor at Westerra offers...
community-centered living, which includes modern one and two-bedroom suites, a warm and inviting central dining room with chef-prepared meals, health and wellness facilities, including a salt-water pool, a licensed bistro and coffee lounge, and personal care services for the activities of daily living. More information on making Trinity manor at Westerra your new home or arranging tours of their facilities can be found at https://trinitymanorregina.ca.

Congratulations Fr. Gaspar Lucas on Becoming a Canadian Citizen

On Thursday January 30, 2020 Father Gaspar Lucas took the Oath to become a Canadian Citizen. There were 43 members from St. Jerome and St. Peters parishes present to witness and celebrate this momentous occasion.

On February 3 St. Peters and St. Jerome parishes completed the celebration by welcoming Father Gaspar, our Parish Priest as a New Canadian Citizen. May the Pride and Hope he feels today stay in his heart Forever.

For Deacon Norbert Gaudet, Faith is a Lifelong Journey

By Alison Bradish

Deacon Norbert Gaudet struggled with his call. To purify his intentions he focused on Christ the Servant, Christ the sacrifice.

“The more I felt called, I struggled with the thought of am I doing this because of what people think of me or am I doing this because I am being called,” he explained.

Deacon Norbert serves at Sacred Heart parish in Raymore, Saskatchewan, a town north of Regina. He also travels with Fr. Valentine to the other parishes in the area which include the communities of Govan, Nokomis, Punnichy and Quinton.

He and his wife Carleen raised their eight children in the community, where Gaudet taught the French program for 30 years. They have 17 grandchildren, two of which Deacon Norbert had the honour of baptizing.

Deacon Norbert was ordained to the permanent diaconate in a historic ceremony with nine other men June 15, 2018. The journey to that moment was filled with prayer, reflection and a lot of questions.

Through it all, he realized the Holy Spirit was guiding him all along through the people he had around him. Raised in Bellevue, Saskatchewan Gaudet was taught by nuns and then attended St. Louis College.

“It wasn’t ever something that crossed my mind. It was a calling that suddenly appeared as the diocese was looking at having a deaconate program. Through the application process, there was a lot of reflecting and questions asked. When I look back on my life, where God was throughout my life, I thought ‘He’s been guiding me all along here, the Holy Spirit has been with me throughout all my life through the people I was surrounded with’.”

When asked who has impacted his faith the most, he says it is his wife Carleen, who he says kept him in a straight-line faith wise.

Deacon Norbert’s ministry outside of the parish walls is visiting the elderly, primarily at the local care home and those who are shut in.

He leads a prayer service once every three weeks. As part of the Diaconate program there is a pastoral care component, requiring deacons to spend at least 20 hours each month in ministry outside of the parish. “I felt called to work with the sick and elderly, they are happy to see me when I walk in. It’s a joint ministry with my wife because she’s the one who started bringing communion to the care home before I started these studies (for the diaconate).”

He enjoys working with seniors. “Seeing God working in them and working in me and bringing peace and joy. It’s amazing how the elderly are appreciative of someone being there. That’s very rewarding,” says Gaudet.

At times, he realizes he misses family time, as none of his children are in Raymore. Often his wife will be helping with the grandkids while he is taking care of his duties to his community. Deacon Norbert admits to learning to balance his family life with the duties of his calling.

Gaudet sees another need in his community besides the outreach he is already involved with. He feels called to create better communication with non-practicing parishioners. He is discerning how best to respond to those who do not frequent Mass and the Sacraments. How can the Church help them where they are at?

“Faith is lifelong journey,” says Gaudet reflecting on the people in his life who are not in the Church pews but understanding his role of going out to meet them.

Deacon Norbert knows rural parishes have unique challenges but says there is a great sense of community among the people who show up to Mass and prayer services.

He is honoured to be serving as Deacon in the community that helped him grow in his faith and listen to his call.