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Winter 2007

'A Blessed Christmas to All'



'Building the Prairie Church Together' was attended by 42 international and local priests at Elkhorn Resort in Riding Mountain park.

International and Local Priests in Dialogue: Intercultural Living in Faith

"We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another."

With this quotation from Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), Father Anthony Gittins C.S.Sp. introduced the 'international' and 'local' clergy workshop, "Building the Prairie Church Together," Nov. 21-23 at Elkhorn Resort in Riding Mountain National Park.

The participants included Archbishop James Weisgerber, Archbishop Daniel Bohan of Regina, and 42 'international' and 'local' priests serving in the dioceses of Winnipeg, Regina and Saskatoon.

The twenty-one international priests represented eight countries of origin: Ghana, India, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Philippines, Poland, Sierra Leone, and Vietnam.

The bishops and priests were invited to start the journey to examine together the issues presented by welcoming international priests in the dioceses.

Father Anthony Gittins, the workshop facilitator, is a member of the Spiritans, ordained in 1967. Originally from England, he served as a missionary for 10 years in Sierra Leone. For the past 20 years, Fr. Gittins has been a faculty member at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago where he is Bishop Francis S. Ford, M.M. Professor of Missiology.

Fr. Gittins framed the

'To respect and appreciate differences of culture, language, and worldview'

workshop as an opportunity to explore and embrace the continuous challenge in living with, negotiating, respecting, and appreciating differences of cultures, languages, styles, and worldviews in the onslaught of massive and rapid global change.

This workshop was an opportunity and challenge to really listen to and hear each other. The challenge is nothing less than a call to Gospel conversion, a radical rethinking. It involves commitment to peace, to love each other, not despite differences, but within the richness of differences.

The first evening concluded with participants viewing the first half of *A class divided*, a PBS documentary video on the work of Jane Elliott begun in 1968 with an experiment with her third-grade class in discrimination based on dividing students into two groups: those with blue eyes and those with brown eyes.

This exercise was filmed in 1970 and 14 years later these students are brought together for a reunion. The lasting effects of rejecting discrimination are startling.

This document is available online at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/divided/>

Facilitated and modeled by Fr. Gittins, the six sessions blended teaching through the lens of culture (with 10 handouts for further reading), illustrative stories, and small group interaction at six tables guided by questions. All were invited to speak up as well as to listen. Throughout the sessions, questions and responses were invited, giving rise to lively discussion.

The tone was open and informative, candid and questioning.

International priests expressed pleasure at being heard. The frequent and easy laughter suggested the workshop was a safe place for engaging in this dialogue.

The days were blessed with morning prayers and afternoon Eucharist. Meals together kept the conversation going.

With the upcoming Grey Cup a week away, Rider Pride and Blue Bomber rivalry coloured the conversation and even some of the clothing.

In the final session early Friday afternoon, priests met in their diocesan group to reflect on and develop the next steps. Their resolutions were modest, demanding, and hopeful, based on the need and desire to listen to each other, to get to know each other better, and to learn from each other.

Each group of diocesan

priests resolved to meet again in the New Year to probe how these days together had made a difference for them personally and interpersonally, and to ask how they might begin to share this intercultural way of thinking, relating, and living with other priests and with people of their parishes and dioceses. The priests expressed strong appreciation for the workshop and the opportunity for their voices – international and national – to be heard and listened to. A good be-

ginning.

This ripple, small as it might seem on the surface, has the potential for transforming priests and people into the Jesus who is stranger at the margin (Matthew 25) – in-between, God incarnate – welcoming all into the unconditional love of the Father, not despite differences but because of and in these differences.

The presence of international priests in the dioceses is an opportunity for responding again to God's call to go beyond, to love,

to be the universal church in its local manifestations, richer in its cross-cultural and intercultural living of the Gospel.

To live Christ's peace in ourselves, with each other and for the world.

This gathering of international and local priests was the initiative of Archbishop Weisgerber, and supported by a grant from an anonymous funder.

*Contributed by
Dr. John Thompson*



An advent wreath stand of considerable size was needed at St. Augustine of Canterbury Church in Brandon, as the ceiling reaches over forty feet in height. After some research, a design was chosen and the stand was made by the drafting and welding students at Crocus Plains High School. Live greens were used, and it took approximately three hours to build. Huge pinecones were added to give the wreath a natural look and wide satin ribbon in the liturgical colour violet finished the wreath. This was a collaborative effort by Heather Karrouze and Lorraine Kindle.

*Toward a Full, Active and Conscious Participation * A process of liturgical renewal in the Archdiocese of Winnipeg*

Communion from the altar and communion from the tabernacle are not the same thing!

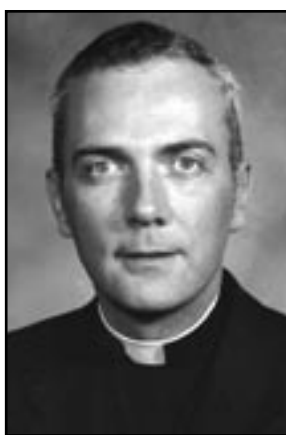
As part of the liturgical renewal currently taking place within the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, parishes have been encouraged to discontinue taking hosts from the tabernacle for distribution of Communion within the celebration of the Mass.

Some have maintained that it really does not matter whether the hosts distributed to the assembly come from the Eucharist consecrated at the Mass or come from the host consecrated at a previous Mass and now contained in the tabernacle.

Some have maintained that whether the Eucharist shared within Mass comes from the altar or from the tabernacle should not really matter since after all "it is all the same thing."

As much as we would like to conclude; "it is all the same," it is critical to understand that even though both forms are truly the Eucharistic presence of Jesus, their liturgical engagement within the celebration of the Mass is significantly different.

The celebration of the Eucharist is an extraordinary event in which bread and wine and the gathered assembly are changed and transformed into the presence of Jesus. It is accurate to say that the change and transformation that takes place in any Eucharistic celebration is not only about what happens to bread and wine, but is also about that which happens to those standing around the altar (the gathered assembly).



Fr. Darrin Gurr

Since the Eucharist is a celebration of change and transformation, it is critical to appreciate why the liturgical law of the church asks that the gathered assembly receive the elements of bread and wine from the very event in which they are celebrating. (The General Instruction on the Ro-

man Missal #85) In other words, communion at Mass should not be distributed from the tabernacle.

As true as it is to say that the hosts kept in the tabernacle are the true Eucharistic presence of Jesus, it must be appreciated that the elements contained in the tabernacle are not connected to the action occurring in the immediate celebration, but rather are a result of another Eucharistic celebration.

The intention of keeping consecrated hosts in the tabernacle has always been to provide communion and viaticum for the sick and dying. The consecrated hosts kept in the tabernacle ensure communion will always be ready to take to those in need. The consecrated hosts in the

tabernacle have also come to provide a focus for personal prayer and adoration outside of the celebration of the Eucharistic.

We all remember from our Sunday school days that the sacraments are an outward sign of an inner reality. In the Eucharistic celebration the bread and wine being changed and transformed into the presence of Jesus, is truly an outward sign of that which is taking place within each person who has gathered to celebrate.

Therefore in order to preserve the connection of the change and transformation of the bread and wine, with the change and transformation with those gathered, it is critical for the gathered participants to be fed by the food which reveals and makes present that which

is occurring within each of them.

The ultimate goal of each Eucharistic event is not merely the reception of Holy Communion. Rather the goal is to experience the change and transformation of bread and wine and the gathered assembly sealed in the reception of Holy Communion.

To separate this changing and transforming action from the Communion that is distributed is to lose out on the very essence of what the Eucharistic celebration is all about.

*Contributed By
Father Darrin J.G. Gurr
Director of Liturgy
St. Gianna's Church*

Archbishop brings message of sharing to students at St. Jean Brebeuf

On December 5, Archbishop James Weisgerber joined the students of St. John Brebeuf School to celebrate their Advent school Mass with a social justice theme.

Accepting the gift of a butterfly-themed Advent wreath, the archbishop spoke of the need for Christians to "see each other as butterflies," spending their lives working hard to live up to their full potential, but more importantly, sharing their "beauty" with others not only at Advent and Christmas, but throughout their whole lives.

The discussion of giving to oth-

ers continued during a question and answer session following the Mass for students in grades seven and eight.

Archbishop Weisgerber shared stories of his social justice work with aboriginal people and immigrants in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and described his recent trip to Indonesia where he ministered to victims of the 2004 Tsunami.

Especially in tragic situations like these, he said, "you see a strength; a light in people who are working to serve others," emphasizing to the students that the most important thing they

"If you give
you get a
hundred fold
in return."

can do as children of God is to help one another. In his experience, some of the happiest moments of his life have come through his social justice work. In serving others, he added, we can create a society where all can be respected.

Students at St. John Brebeuf

have taken these messages to heart, undertaking a number of social justice initiatives for the 2007/2008 year.

Thanks to the efforts of the SJB student body, Winnipeg Harvest and the Christmas Cheer Board will distribute personalized Christmas stockings for local underprivileged children. The Immaculate Conception Drop-In Centre will also receive the stockings, as well as warm socks, mitts and underwear for people in need. Refugees who have relocated to our city will enjoy a Christmas party and gift bags at the IRCOM Centre, and

World Vision will benefit from the proceeds of Marian angel sales. Other projects are in place for the remainder of the school year.

"If you give", stated Archbishop Weisgerber, "you get a hundred fold in return." That is what it means to be a Catholic School.

*Contributed by
Debbie Dusanek
Communications Coordinator
Community of St. Jean Brebeuf*



Prison Ministers Meet

At the beginning of December Archbishop Weisgerber met with the people involved in Prison Ministry throughout the Archdiocese. The meeting was an initial step to coordinate and share experiences and resources for those who minister in the various prisons and transitional ministries situated within our Archdiocese. Present at the meeting: seated from the left Deacon Phil Durant (Headingley Correctional Institution), Sr. Carol Peloquin, snjm (Next Step), Joseph Lintz (Winnipeg Remand Centre), Archbishop Weisgerber. Standing from the left Deacon Rudy LeMaitre (Remand Centre), Reverend Ceas Chmiel (Rockwood Institution), Greg Dunwoody (Headingley), Bernie Mullins (Brandon Correctional Centre) and Bo Gajda (Stony Mountain Institution).

Planning to Attend
World Youth Day
next summer in
Sydney, Australia?

Nicole Hoard at Our Lady of Perpetual Help is putting together a number of travel options.

Contact Nicole at:
youth@olphwinnipeg.ca or 803-6556.

**St. John
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For information
contact
Laura Carreiro
Principal
489-2115
(Ext. 242) or visit
www.sjbcommu-
nity.ca/school.**

St. Charles school initiates hockey program

Kyra Thiessen may be young, but she knows what she wants in life.

"I want to play hockey in college. I want to play for Canada's Women's Hockey Team ... and then I want to be the Women's team's coach!"

Her brother Dylan has similar aspirations. "I am going to play NHL hockey!"

Kyra, a grade three honours student, and her brother, a grade four honours student at St. Charles Catholic School, just may well achieve their dreams.

This year, a hockey skills development program was incorporated into the school programming at St. Charles Catholic School.

Each week, students have the opportunity to practice at the Kinsmen-Allard rink in Westwood during regular school hours.

The students are coached by Larry Bumstead, founder of the Northwestern Hockey Sports Camp, whose ultimate goal is "to give each young player the opportunity to fully develop - to go to the next level."

Dr. Penny Parzyjagla, Principal of St. Charles, is pleased with the new program.

"The program was initiated for a few reasons. First, St. Charles wanted to address the increased PE requirements, in a meaningful way, especially for

students who are gifted. Second, many of our students are either talented hockey players with serious aspirations, or athletes who would love to have a chance to learn how to play hockey well, without having to be members of a league. And, fi-



St. Charles students Kyra and Dylan Thiessen.

nally, our mission at St. Charles is to help each student achieve excellence from a moral, physical and

intellectual perspective. Larry Bumstead's program, through role-modeling and training, addresses all of these values."

The unique aspect of Bumstead's approach is that it can be used with students of all ages and abilities. The St. Charles programs includes students from grades three to eight and includes non-league players an community club players up to level A1.

Bumstead's assistant instructors are all qualified hockey players, including several members from the University of Manitoba Bison Hockey team.

Ed Schoore, manager of the Kinsmen-Allard Arena has been very supportive

of the program. When he was first approached with the idea earlier this year, he immediately agreed to help get it off the ground. Scheduling was difficult, as most of the practices are in the early afternoon and require the rink to extend its hours. Nevertheless, the school and the rink were able to find times that could work.

Kyra just wants to add one more thing. "Hockey is fun! I used to like school a lot. I can play hockey at school, too! I love it!"

Contributed by
Dr. Penny Parzyjagla
Principal
St. Charles School

'Firesides' presented by Sisters of the Holy Names

The call of love changes everything, says spiritual director, retreat leader and author Carol Ann Gotch.

"Love draws us to each other," Gotch explained, yet she admitted to knowing nothing about love and had temporarily dropped what she called the "over-used word" from her vocabulary.

Gotch was the featured guest at the October installment in a series of seven Saturday-morning 'Firesides' sessions held by the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary at their downtown Winnipeg House of Peace

Sr. Lesley Sacouman, from the Holy Names House of Peace, says that, "Firesides will hopefully encourage and empower people to be artisans of their own liberation and catalysts of justice and peace in their own midst." This is also part of the mission of the House of Peace, an urban centre of hospitality.

Firesides are held on the third Saturday of the month through April in the Marie Rose Hall at the House of Peace at 211 Edmonton Street, 10 a.m. until noon.

The sessions began in the fall of 2006, having morphed from a series of Friday evening gatherings that began soon after the centre opened in the fall of 2004.

The founder of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, Marie Rose Duchrocher, had a favourite gospel, Luke 12:49 "I have come to cast Fire on the earth. How I wish that fire were blazing." This scripture and the image of peacefully gathering around a fire and sharing life stories inspired the name for the series, 'Firesides.'

The topics for the sessions, planned by an outreach team, include justice and peace issues, addiction and redemption, forgiveness, life-threatening illnesses, simplicity and loving relationships.

Gotch began her session by playing the song *I Can't Help Falling in Love* to help participants get in touch with the mystery of love.

She has begun to speak the word 'love' again, but with a new understanding.

Using the backdrop of a 40-year-old friendship with a woman who is now dying, Gotch illustrated how relationships are important but that few of us are prepared to live so that real relationships are open. Emotional reactions prevent us from getting past the hurts of our lives so we can develop open, loving relationships.

"God will give us the grace for our baggage," Gotch said, explaining that a mature love is present at our core, but few of us take the time to discover it.

She led participants through an exercise of tapping into this inner place, often elusive in this hurried society.

Sacouman has found that the Firesides have been "a gift because the topics are relevant and bring together different cultures and faith groups." The presenters have shared candidly from not only their hearts, but also their lived experiences.

The secret of the series success, Sacouman believes, is that the speakers' honesty "has been powerful and called all of us to be more fully alive and present to people we encounter in our daily lives and to our brothers and sisters throughout the world."

Future Fireside sessions are:

January 19, 08 - Image of God - Karen O'Toole

February 16 - Al-Anon - Annette

March 15 - Social Apostolate - Ruth & Steve Chipman

April 19 - Wind-up Celebration - Michelle Garlinski

Contributed by
Suzanne St. Yves

Farida Lalbiharie of OLPH receives National Interfaith honour



Farida Lalbiharie, with Fr. Barry Schoonbaert, left, pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help and Msgr. Stan Jaworski, right, was honoured by the Montreal-based Canadian Centre on Ecumenism in a ceremony Oct. 16 at Government House for her work in interfaith relationships. Every September for the past decade, Farida has gathered together people of many faiths for an Interfaith Peace Prayer Gathering at OLPH.

Information Evening

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Sol Kanee Lecture: Earth at the Tipping Point

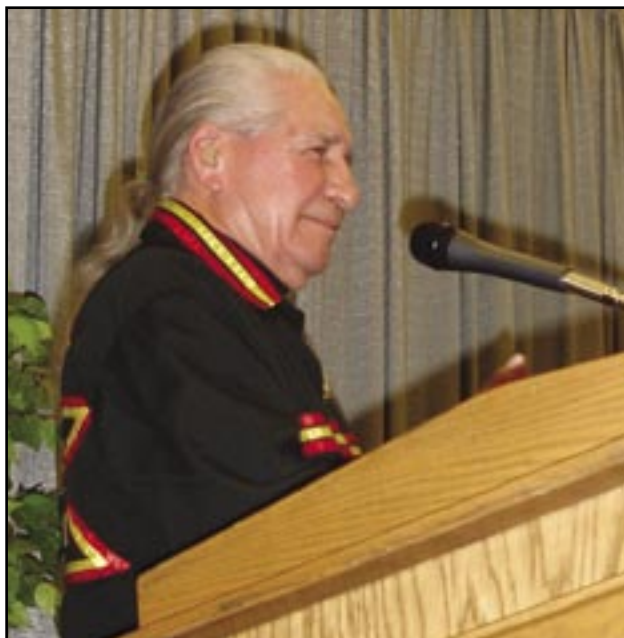
Chief Oren Lyons, an Aboriginal leader from northern New York state, has travelled the world championing spirituality, natural law and ethics to further the causes of indigenous peoples. He opened the fifth Sol Kanee Lecture on Peace and Justice Nov. 8 at the University of Manitoba. He spoke on the Politics of Human Beings Against Mother Earth: The Nature of Global Warming.

For almost 40 years, Lyons has served as faithkeeper and chief of the Turtle Clan of the Onondaga, one of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy.

"Leadership is given by the Creator through the peace maker," Lyons said. When a new leader is presented by the clan mothers and confirmed by the counsel of chiefs, the responsibilities of both the leader and the people are reaffirmed.

The leader must maintain a focus on what Lyons described as "peace, equity and power of the good minds. If you make decisions that are good for the seventh generation coming, then you will have peace." The people are given the responsibility to be supportive of and patient with the decisions of their leader, but the leader can be removed from power by the clan mothers if misconduct occurs.

As faithkeeper, Lyons maintains the values and traditions of the Turtle Clan



Chief Oren Lyons

while carrying the message of the Onondaga people to the world.

"The people have always had a long range view," he said. "We are people who give thanks to the earth. All life is in our hands. We look after everything to the best of our ability."

Although he noted the difficulties his people have experienced in North America and how they now represent less than one per cent of the population, Lyons affirmed, "We are still here!"

He encouraged indigenous peoples around the world to "know your cultures, language and people and be united in mind, body and heart." The understanding of world community and relationship is "all old business with indigenous people."

In his travels to Alaska,

Nunavut and Greenland, Lyons has heard first-hand reports that the ice is melting and all nature is being affected. He quoted former NASA researcher Jim Hanson, who said, "If we don't change we will push the earth to its natural reaction." Lyons said the earth is at its tipping point now.

He said consequences are being ignored in favour of market economics.

"We are facing a fierce time. We are wasting too much. Business as usual is over," he said.

He was critical of the mass media for underplaying the effects of current resource practices, noting that wildfires in Paraguay, Bolivia and Uruguay have gone unreported in North America while California burns.

Drawing from the example of the Six Nations,

Lyons noted the need for leadership and people that demand accountability. "The people are the backbone of any nation. They have more responsibilities than the chief. You have a duty to direct or change your leaders. The health of the earth is at risk."

He said the destruction of forests by the mountain pine beetle, unabated because they no longer encounter freezing temperatures. "You can't negotiate with a beetle," he said. "He will show no mercy."

In his meetings with economists, Lyons was dismayed to learn that "they do not see the earth's resources in

the bottom line. There is a need for profit demanded by stockholders." He asked, "When do you cease to become a CEO and become a grandfather?"

"We must prepare now and meet issues collectively as a group. We must change the thinking of nation states. You can't draw lines; they won't work any more. Drought and disease are democratic and can cross all borders."

At the conclusion of the lecture, Dr. Sean Byrne announced the inauguration of the Chief Oren Lyons Graduate Fellowship in Peace and Justice by the Arthur Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice at the University of Manitoba.

Contributed by
Barbara Fawcett



Nathanael program member Paulette Sullivan contributes to the Vision and Action Wall at the Social Justice Conference, Oct. 26 and 27.

Nathanaelites inspired to put faith into action

The 'Putting Faith into Action' Social Justice conference at St. Paul the Apostle parish in Winnipeg on Oct. 26-27 was a source of inspiration to many who attended from the John Paul II Winnipeg Nathanael lay formation program.

About 20 Nathanaelites participated with most attending on Oct. 26.

Kerry McGowan, from Portage la Prairie, took part in the Oct. 26 evening session and had the opportunity to share her ideas about social justice. She found the evening a good opportunity to connect with parishioners in other communities in the diocese. McGowan says developing relationships with other parishes helps individuals exchange ideas and learn how to work together. "It's a good way of collecting voices within the community to be heard," she said. "It gives us a flavour of every parish and it brings hope."

Paulette Sullivan, from Winnipeg, was uplifted after attending workshops on Oct. 27. She had taken a course at St. Ignatius Parish last year on social justice and felt passionate about the need to help others struggling with poverty, illness, and hunger.

One of the workshops Sullivan attended dealt with HIV/AIDS and focused on the work of those ministering at House of Hesus, a transitional home in Winnipeg for those living with HIV/AIDS. Sullivan is also a volunteer at House of Hesus, serving in her personal ministry. She was inspired by the work of Moe Feakes, director of House of Hesus.

"(Feakes) talks faith and how God pays the bills, the heating costs for the three-storey house," said Sullivan. "They always find the money."

Sullivan emphasized Christians need to answer the call to help oth-

ers. "If you don't see it, it's easy to stay ignorant," she said. "If people are doing things, you find things you can do." Sullivan also learned about human trafficking and discovered it is a global concern. "It is a huge problem," she said. "Mostly teenage girls are exploited."

Michel Touchette, from Portage la Prairie, was inspired to attend the social justice conference to increase his knowledge of areas of injustice.

Touchette participated in a workshop based on the idea of the aboriginal sharing circle. He hoped sharing ideas would help bridge the gap and encourage better communication between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people. "It's a good venue to share and I like the guidelines for speaking," he said. "You could respect the time for the other person to speak. There is a lot of wisdom in that system."

Sr. Johanna Jonker, the event organizer and director of Micah House, believes the Nathanaelites will be able to grow by listening to those who have been moved to acts of faith in an effort to promote social justice. She also hopes members from each parish in the diocese will begin to work together more.

"I hope it will deepen (the Nathanaelites) awareness of the basis of social justice," Sr. Johanna said.

"It will increase their knowledge and inspire them to follow Jesus. They've been put in touch with many passionate people whose faith called them to act out of the reality that we are all brothers and sisters."

Contributed by
Angela Brown
Portage la Prairie

See page 7 for more coverage of the Social Justice Conference



Peace on Earth

A Blessed and Joyous Christmas to All

As this year draws to a close, we would like to express our gratitude for your ongoing support.



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Holy Ghost CWL celebrates 60th Anniversary



Holy Ghost CWL has two, three-generation member families. Pictured at far left are Krystle Seymour, Stefania Kociolek and Rose Anne Seymour, and above middle are Bernice Stocki, Franciszka Zablocki and Freda Swereda. At far right is the Mass in Thanksgiving held Sept. 9.

Bishop Wiesner of Prince George addresses catechists



Archdiocese of Winnipeg Director of Catechetics Margaret Craddock, left, with Bishop Gerald Wiesner, O.M.I of St. George B.C., who was the keynote speaker at a catechists workshop entitled 'Sacraments: and the Journey of Sacramental Living' at Mary Mother of the Church Oct. 13. Bishop Wiesner reminded the over 100 catechists in attendance "our sacramentality depends very much on how well we know our Lord. How well we know Him will determine how we will make Him present. Our making the Lord present is in fact our sacramentality. We as catechists by virtue of our Baptism share in the mission of Jesus. We are to carry on and make present the mission and ministry of Jesus by our lives."

The Catholic Women's League of Holy Ghost Parish celebrated the 60th Anniversary of its establishment on Sunday, Sept. 9, 2007. This celebration commenced with Mass in Thanksgiving and God's blessings for both living and deceased members of The Catholic Women's League.

We were honored that Mrs. Albertine Moran, President of the Winnipeg Diocesan Catholic Women's League, and her husband, Roger, accepted our invitation and traveled from Brandon to join with us on this special day.

Albertine also graciously accepted to participate in the procession in the offertory of the gifts.

Following the Mass, a meeting and dinner for members and guests followed in our parish hall.

There were approximately 60 ladies present with special guests including Mr. and Mrs. Tadeusz and Jozefa Jendras. Mr. Jendras is the Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus, Frs. A & J Kulawy Council No. 9790. There were other special guests who assist our League in so many areas.

As attendees entered

the hall, each received Our Lady of Good Counsel League Prayer Cards which they are able to carry in their wallets.

Presently, our membership numbers at 100 and we were honored at this event to have two new members join our council.

We were also recognizing one of our members, although not active due to age, who was celebrating her 100th birthday at the Holy Family Nursing Home.

We also recognized that our council is honored to have two three-generation families which are mem-

bers of our League.

We are very happy with the increase of membership over the years. These ladies commit and dedicate their time and talents to serve and honour under their motto 'For God and Canada' under the guidance of their Patroness, Our Lady of Good Counsel.

Contributed by Betty Pietkiewicz, CWL President Holy Ghost Parish

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and
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continuous
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and wish you
a joyous
and blessed
Christmas.

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Dr. Rashid Omar delivers 2007 Hanley Lecture

In Muslim society, “why is peace so apparently elusive and eroded?” asked Dr. Rashid Omar, the first Muslim to deliver a Hanley Lecture at Winnipeg’s St. Paul’s College since the series began in 1980.

Omar noted that Islam is consistently linked to terrorist violence and that link is a grave challenge to Islam’s desire for peace.

“How disparate is the concept of peace? Our definition of peace is a lens through which we see the world,” said Omar.

“A negative, minimalist definition would be the absence of war. Positive peace is freedom from the recent structural violence that denies rights and dignity. To those who favored South African apartheid, Nelson Mandela was a terrorist.”

Omar is a professor and research scholar of Islamic studies and peacebuilding at the Joan B. Kroc Insti-

tute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame.

Born in Cape Town, South Africa, Omar served as an Imam in a mosque in Cape Town from 1985 to 2000, and is one of the city’s leading religious figures and community-based activists.

Under the overall theme of ‘Islam and the Challenge of Peace’, Omar’s first of three lectures explored ‘An Islamic Definition of Peace: Between Compassion and Justice. From the failure of the Oslo Peace Talks, to the events of 9/11 and the war in Iraq.’

“In Islamic terms, justice means ‘full portion’ and to act justly is an act of piety. One cannot be pious without justice,” Omar said.

“However, justice is not the preeminent value. The Qur’an speaks of compassion 300 times; Allah is described as ‘most compassionate and ever merciful.’



Dr. Rashid Omar

When navigating between two core values, compassion should trump justice. Otherwise, justice devoid of compassion mimics the oppressive orders being opposed.”

Islam’s anti-colonial and anti-Soviet Union struggles brought about a shift from a desire for compassion to a desire for justice, Omar said, yet over the years several proposals have been offered to allow Islam to recover compassion.

Omar called to Muslims everywhere to “never tire of decrying acts of terrorism, loudly and unequivocally.” He urged acknowledgment that extremists are not unique to Islam. “The extremists have co-opted the media to their cause because of their sensational appeal,” he said.

The need for Islamic study of peace and nonviolence is acute, Omar said, and although many Muslims are involved in “courageous peace initiatives, more Muslims need to till the soil of peace studies. Go deeper.”

Omar also noted a critical need for Muslim religious scholars. He said many of

them have been drawn into oppressive regimes and are no longer taken seriously by their people.

“They have abandoned the role of moral conscience of their societies,” he said.

New Islamic religious schools and new seminaries are needed to train Imams and to foster dialogue with Christians and Jews, he said.

“There is dire need for Abrahamic people to reach out through the healing embrace of theology.”

“World conditions currently favour extremists and marginalize those who seek peace,” he said. “Foreign policy fuels violence. There is a need for public debate, and religious activists need to speak up, even though the development of peace initiatives can be very difficult.”

During a spirited question period, Omar agreed that inter-religious dialogue is often easier than intra-reli-

gious dialogue.

“Islamic culture and tradition have limited progress in democratic rights and the empowerment of women,” Omar said. “In Islam, an imbalance exists; theology and spirituality have become much less important to Muslims than external conduct. Attention to theology and spirituality allows nurturing of the whole self.”

The Hanley Memorial Lecture Series has been delivered by scholars in theology and literature annually since 1980.

The series was established by friends and colleagues of Fr. John Hanley, S.J. who established the Department of Religion at the University of Manitoba.

Contributed by Barbara Fawcett

Thiessen Lecture: Food and Farming in Biblical Perspective

Throughout the Old Testament the health of the land reflects the state of the covenant relationship with God, said Dr. Ellen Davis as she began this year’s Thiessen Lectures at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg.

Davis, who delivered a series of four lectures on the topic, ‘Live Long upon the Land: Food and Farming in Biblical Perspective,’ then quoted Psalm 85: “Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.”

A capacity audience attended the lectures October 15 and 16.

Davis is a professor of Bible and Practical Theology at Duke University in Durham, N.C., and a prolific author renowned for her scholarship.

As a lay Episcopalian, she has been involved in inter-religious dialogue for more than 30 years.

Her first lecture at CMU explored Reading the Bible through Agrarian Eyes. Davis is interested in critical analysis of the Old Testament and development of a Bible-based response to urgent agricultural and ecological issues. She said that the Bible was the prime motivator for this project.

An examination of current North American land use practices in the light of scripture reveals “a failure of religious imagination,” said Davis. “The Hebrew prophets instruct our weak

imaginings and view the world with a wide angle lens from creation to the end of days.”

The prophet Jeremiah

‘Farmers are Biblical exiles and garden land is becoming wasteland’

uses the words “I have seen” four times to describe “wildness and waste,” predicting global disaster from 6 B.C. with the return of chaos and deconstruction of the created world. Davis explained that the modern concept of natural order was understood in Biblical terms as the work of God’s hands, a covenant existing between God and all creatures.

Davis said a prime example of deconstruction is the benignly-labeled practice of mountaintop removal in Kentucky, undertaken to reach thin veins of coal. Davis described the piles of mined earth “returned as formlessness and waste. The thin layer of grass covering it like pancake makeup on a ravaged face. Such destruction is emblematic but not isolated. The contempt for the work of God’s hands is rendered plausible and acceptable.”

Davis noted many simi-

lar examples including the collapse of the farming community, the transformation of the ‘heartland’ to the ‘flyover states’, the rise of agribusiness and the fall of the farm family, soil depletion, and the poisoning of water. “Farmers are Biblical exiles and garden land is becoming wasteland,” she said.

Biblical prophetic speech challenges our apathy, speaking directly to our hearts with the strength of its poetry, said Davis. She described the pain of insight as grace, noting a visceral response at the news that there is open water at the North Pole. The understanding of the magnitude of our loss leads to consolation and renewal, she said. We have violated an everlasting covenant made by God, “a universal disarmament treaty,” described



Dr. Ellen Davis

as a rainbow in Genesis. “Creation is bound by covenant and we are bound to other creatures. Our charity and commitment must not be short-sighted.

We take stability of climate for granted. The earth is not guaranteed,” said Davis.

Admitting astonishment at the amount of current economic theory needed to understand Biblical economics, Davis was not critical of farm families struggling to make good moral decisions in the face of “falsehoods and fantasies in modern economy.” She suggested compromise is needed in what she recognized as an uphill battle.

When questioned about the wrath of God, Davis answered, “When we destroy the gift of God, the response is rage,” and quoted an often-overlooked passage from Revelation (11:18)

“The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants

the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great, and for destroying those who destroy the earth.”

Davis noted that there are also many encouraging good works taking place but careful examination of national and international practices is needed to fully honour our covenant.

The J.J. Thiessen Lectures have been presented annually since 1978 in honour of a founder and long-time chairperson of the Canadian Mennonite Bible College, now the Canadian Mennonite University.

Contributed by Barbara Fawcett

The Catholic Foundation of Manitoba announces the 2008 Caritas Award recipient

The Board of Directors of The Catholic Foundation of Manitoba has named the Sisters of the Good Shepherd/Marymount the Caritas Award recipient for 2008.

They are being recognized for their years of dedication in providing care for our less fortunate youth and their families.

Marymount was established by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in 1911, with the mission of meeting the physical, emotional, spiritual, and social needs of young people at risk in the community.

They offer education, specialized foster care, group living and supported independent living.

The Sisters of the Good Shepherd/Marymount will be honoured at the 30th Annual Caritas Award Dinner on Tuesday, April 8, 2008 at the Winnipeg Convention Centre.

For further information or to arrange for tickets, contact The Catholic Foundation of Manitoba at (204) 233-4268 or e-mail: cfmb@mts.net

Social Justice Conference Oct. 26, 27

“Only when you love the poor will you recognize God’s love for you,” said Winnipeg Archbishop James Weisgerber as he opened the Winnipeg diocese’s Social Justice Conference Oct. 26.

“God never gives up, no matter how often we fail,” said Weisgerber. “Even if someone decides to destroy God’s plan, God can create a new one, better than the first.”

“We must love as Jesus loves,” he continued, admitting this can be difficult at times. “We don’t have to like people, but we do have to love them because people are made in God’s image. Love is a decision.” A decision, Weisgerber said, that allows us to serve, help and love.

Matthew 25, often quoted by social justice advocates, is not about those groups who deserve our attention and love, but those who need it, said Weisgerber. Today, he said, those groups are “the aged, the unborn, the trafficked, refugees, the addicted, and the mentally ill.” He made particular reference to the plight of many First Nations people, and their need for social justice.

The conference had been planned for more than a year by a team led by Sr. Johanna Jonker, director of Micah House, Winnipeg’s inner-city Catholic Centre for Social Justice. The

centre is operated under the auspices of the archdiocese, and its creation five years ago was largely due to the support of Archbishop Weisgerber.

In her opening remarks, Sr. Johanna said the conference had been a dream of hers. Seeing a crowd of more than 100 people on the conference’s opening evening she remarked, “sometimes you get more than you dreamed for.”

The opening Friday evening was followed by Saturday’s day-long schedule of workshops and presentations.

“In the fight for social justice, we always lose before we win. Before life, there is crucifixion,” said the Very Reverend Richard Soo, s.j., Chancellor of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Winnipeg.

Fr. Soo was speaking on social justice being “fundamentally a question of the spirit and the heart.”

“How do I defend myself against the attack of demons?” he asked. “When Jesus healed the sick and cast out demons, he was breaking evil’s hold on this world. We are anointed by Christ to be His heart, soul, and voice in this world. To follow Jesus, we must hang out with Him. I need to follow Him and be with the poor who are His friends.”

“It is not about politics,” said Soo. “It is about opening our hearts and letting



Sr. Johanna Jonker

God love us. It is not about keeping the commandments. The question is: ‘Am I loving and do I let God love me?’ ”

Bill Blaikie, for 25 years a Member of Parliament for the Winnipeg riding of Elmwood-Transcona, and a United Church minister, spoke on Faith and Politics.

He examined Christian diversity, and pondered how Christians could speak the truth to each other when they do not agree on the truth.

“Will Christian diversity be a tower of Babel experience, one of confusion?” asked Blaikie. “Or an experience of Pentecost, one of integration?”

Blaikie said throughout his years in office he had received many venomous letters and e-mails from

Christians. “I was not regarded as Christian, and if I was, I was doomed.”

At the same time, he received many thoughtful letters from Catholics who supported him on Central America, nuclear weapons, and peace and justice issues.

Blaikie said he’s read many Catholic writers and joked, “The Catholic Church has to take some blame for my Christian perspective.”

Blaikie provided a top 10 list of what Christians should do to for social justice which included: “Be humble; acknowledge Christian diversity; don’t question the integrity of other Christians; don’t generate your own stereotypes; build bridges rather than boycott; and look for stories to build unity.”

Blaikie announced last spring he will not seek re-election and plans to write a book about the relationship between faith and politics after he leaves Ottawa.

Other sessions during the weekend focused on issues such as trafficking of women, mental health, refugees, housing and AIDS.

Facilitators also led participants through a visioning session that will enable the archdiocese to continue the work that was begun at the conference.

Contributed by Suzanne St. Yves

The View from Micah House



He dwelt among us

“He came down and dwelt among us,” a simple sentence, an awesome reality.

To dwell among: what exactly does that mean? Think about it. Jesus, the Son of God, became man and dwelt among us. God, who created all things, walks with us. It is beyond our imagining. What words can describe that reality? Must we use the language of the poets or the images of the artists or the music of the choirs of angels? Jesus came down. . . claimed no status except to become man and to become as all are. . . The enormity of the event is beyond our comprehension. Few of us are willing to come down and dwell among people who are not like us, whose culture, race, education and intelligence are not like ours. Frequently we consider that our birth in a certain family or a certain country entitles us to all manner of things. We claim the right to own things. Most of us would not voluntarily give up our status in life unless it was for a ‘higher’ status. And yet, that is what Jesus did. He did not cling to his divinity but became as all humans are. Why? Because God so loved the world that He sent us His only Son.

Scores of people have been inspired by God’s love, to venture among a people they do not know so that they might walk with them, love them and be of service to them.

Just recently, I met someone who came from an isolated community. He expressed his admiration and gratefulness for the many Oblate priests, brothers and sisters who walked with the people in his town. They shared in the life of the community. They celebrated and sorrowed with the people. Far from their family and home community, they accepted the invitation of their God, “Go tell everyone, the news that the kingdom of God has come.”

Then there is the young couple who spent their sabbatical year in El Salvador so they could be of service to people in a country not their own, among people who spoke a different language. They brought their two young children to San Bartolome with them so that they, too, could experience another culture and learn to live among and love people who were not like they were. The family listened to stories of pain and suffering and visited caves where families had taken refuge during the civil war. They worked at numerous things in an attitude of service and formed friendships that increased the sum of understanding and peace in our world.

Jesus came down and dwelt among us out of overwhelming love. During this Advent are we too, being challenged to move beyond our usual boundaries? Are we being invited to love and share with people who are ‘unlike’ us? Are songs of peace and glory addressed to us? Are we called to enter into relationships of friendship and care with the homeless, the aged, the sick, the stranger? In moments of silence before the day starts, while you are driving your car ask Jesus what it was like to take on the nature of humans; to divest himself of his divinity and to walk on earth. Then act out of your own urgings.

Sr. Johanna Jonker is at Micah House
1039 Main St. Winnipeg
589-5393

Prison Ministry: Beyond Appearances

The St. Ignatius Prison Ministry has been active since 2003. Once a month, a group of men and women of various ages, with our pastor, visit Stony Mountain Prison. ‘Stony’ is a medium security prison, 25 kms north of Winnipeg.

The prison houses up to 506 men who are serving sentences for various offences. The only prerequisite needed to come as a volunteer is a security clearance check. The number of our volunteers varies from 8 to twelve parishioner a month and newcomers are always welcome.

What we do there is celebrate mass with the residents in the chapel and stay afterwards for coffee. The number of residents that come to the mass vary with the seasons and hockey games, but normally at

least a dozen men come to visit with us.

So what is it about prison ministry that makes us go? We stick out like sore thumbs there! Their life there is so different from our way of life. The men there have their own codes of conduct and follow their own set of rules. And yet every month, we go and celebrate mass with them. Why? Here is what a few of the volunteers said:

“As God’s children, we are called to reach out and to be present to one another, especially the suffering, wounded and marginalized. The message we bring to them is that they are not forgotten. This is what Christain community is all about.”

“It makes me feel good to know that I care for someone even though they made

a mistake in the past. We all deserve a second chance. One never knows when you will meet a new friend.”

“I feel needed there. I may only make a small difference in someone’s else life but it is sometimes those little differences that are the most profound and can even touch them whether they are aware of it or not.”

“I believe that our presence there as a whole can be transformative for these men perhaps in our quiet listening, respectful demeanor and our unconditional acceptance that they will somewhere know that they are loved.”

“No one is beyond redemption. I go because I know it is right.”

Indeed there is a lot to be said. At the least, we begin to appreciate basic things

we take for granted like our freedom.

It is our choice whether we extend an open hand to another. But in risking or own comfort, we open possibilities for the seemingly impossible.

We all need to eat. We all need to sleep. We all need to be heard. We all need to laugh. We all want and need to know that we are loved.

Looking beyond appearances we begin to see the divine spark of Christ and how connected to each other we really are.

For more info please contact shire4@mts.net

Contributed by Jessica Stratton
Prison Ministry
co-ordinator
St. Ignatius Parish



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Editor: James Buchok

As newly-elected president of Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
Archbishop Weisgerber leads Canadian delegation to Rome



The Holy father receives, from left, the vice-president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop Pierre Morissette of Baie-Comeau, Quebec, Archbishop Weisgerber and CCCB secretary-general, Msgr. Mario Paquette.

As newly-elected president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop James Weisgerber said coming to the Vatican to visit Pope Benedict XVI and curial officials "is always something that energizes us."

The archbishop led a delegation to the Vatican Nov. 6-12 for regularly sched-

uled annual meetings with Vatican officials.

He was elected CCCB president Oct. 16 at the Catholic Bishops of Canada annual conference in Ottawa.

Accompanying Weisgerber was the vice-president of the bishops' conference, Archbishop Pierre Morissette of Baie-Comeau, Quebec, and secretary-general,

Msgr. Mario Paquette.

Weisgerber told the Catholic News Service that the delegation's 20-minute private meeting Nov. 8 with Pope Benedict "went very well."

"He is a marvellous listener and very hospitable," he said.

He said they spoke with the pope about the problem of secularization and the

situation of the Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

The archbishop told the pope they hoped he would take part in the 2008 International Eucharistic Congress in Quebec in June.

He said when they asked if the pope was planning to attend "he just smiled very warmly, very nicely" and said his schedule for 2008 was not yet finalized.



Archbishop James Weisgerber met with the sisters of the Missionaries of Charity Nov. 2 while their superior, Sister Mary Nirmala, centre, was in Winnipeg to visit with six of the order's missionaries who work in the archdiocese. Sister Nirmala succeeded Mother Teresa as leader of the congregation in March, 1997.

The Archbishop's Christmas Message

As I put pen to paper, I must confess that not only the people I meet, but I myself have been taken over by the "Christmas spirit".

It's really quite wonderful. People seem to be warming up, opening up to each other. Strangers smile and greet each other. We seem to lose our fear for the future for which we save, insure, pile up.

Now we're willing to splurge, sometimes extravagantly, to please those we love. The poor, the homeless, the mentally ill, all often hidden and forgotten – these suddenly become important. Everybody wants to do something for the poor. We reach out to old friends, we make plans to bring our families together. We truly want to celebrate.

It is amazing that even in our jaded society the feast of Jesus' birth can still stir us up and call us to be something more than we usually are, to demonstrate some of the best of ourselves. What we need to remember is that the birth of Jesus some 2000 years ago was the beginning of a great mystery, a mystery which still transforms us and our world today. The little baby of Bethlehem is the same person whose love and power calls us and enables us to live generous, inclusive, hospitable and sacrificial lives not only in December, but throughout the whole year.

This is precisely why we gather each Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist through which the Risen Lord continues to transform each of us as he builds up the Church.

More and more, we come to understand the centrality of the Sunday Eucharist in our lives as Christians. This is a wonderful gift to the contemporary Church.

As Canadians, we will have the great honour of hosting the whole world for the 49th International Eucharistic Congress in Quebec City, June 15-22, 2008, where we will be able to worship the Lord and recognize his transforming power in the Eucharist, God's gift for the life of the world.

Bethlehem was the beginning, Jerusalem was the climax, and the Eucharist is the extension of this mystery throughout time and space. Let our hearts be filled with wonder and awe.

I extend to each and everyone my heartfelt wishes for a joyful celebration of our Savior's birth.

Christmas 2007

+V. James Weisgerber, Archbishop of Winnipeg

Archbishop Weisgerber's Schedule

December

23 5:30 a.m. Mass at Dawn, St. Edward's Parish, Wpg.
25 Midnight Mass, St. Mary's Cathedral
27 5:00 p.m. Priest's Christmas Party St. Joseph's Parish, Wpg.

January

1 1:00 p.m. – Lieutenant Governor's Levee – Winnipeg

3 to 6

Western Bishop's Conference Retreat Mission, B.C.

10 to 17

CCCB President's Visit to the Holy Land

22

7:30 p.m. – RCIA Presentation, St. Ignatius Parish, Wpg.

25-27

Permanent Diaconate Retreat, St. Benedict's Monastery, Wpg.

28

7:00 p.m. – Faith Formation Committee, Catholic Centre

30-31

CCCB Executive Meeting, Ottawa

February

5

10:30 a.m. – ACCCE Meeting, Catholic Centre

6

12:10 p.m. – Ash Wednesday Mass, St. Mary's Cathedral

10

2:00 p.m. – Rite of Election, St. Mary's Cathedral

11 to 14

USCCCB/CCCB Joint Meeting, Huntington, New York

15

9 a.m. – Mass with Interdiocesan School Teachers, St. Mary's Academy, Winnipeg.