by MOST REVEREND
GERARD BERGIE

In the Book of Revelation, St. John is writing to the seven Churches of Asia at a time of great persecution. Our Lord wishes to speak to these Churches through the writing of St. John and offers words of both praise and condemnation. The praise is for those Churches that are making an effort to live by the faith; the condemnation is for those Churches that are not. To the Church of Laodicea John writes, “So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.” (Rev.3:16)

Laodicea is a wealthy city in the province of Phrygia (modern-day Turkey). It was famous for its aqueducts that brought fresh water into the city. The people enjoyed cool, flowing water that was refreshing and in great abundance; stagnant water was avoided because it was always lukewarm and less pure. Jesus considers the inhabitants of this city to be spiritually ambivalent like ‘lukewarm’ water. They are apathetic toward things of faith and this has created a spiritual blindness. They do not see a need for God and simply rely on themselves. So much time and attention is given to gaining wealth and very little effort is made to gain heaven. I believe that this situation is not unique to Laodicea and can still be found today in many other places, including our own country.

A 2015 Angus Reid survey in Canada stated, “Largest group puts itself in the ‘mushy middle’ on religion; ranks of those embracing faith are shrinking.” The statistics speak for themselves: 24% inclined to reject religion, 30% inclined to embrace religion, and 44% somewhere in-between. The studies show that…

Chapter 1: In the Light of the Word (8-30)

...the pope begins with the Holy Scriptures…as a meditation on Psalm 128 (which appears in the Jewish wedding liturgy as well as that of Christian marriages). (1) It impels us to reflect on how the family is not an abstract ideal but rather like a practical trade which is carried out with tenderness but which has also been abandoned because it was always lukewarm and less pure. Jesus does not rebuke the Church of Laodicea but rather like a practical trade which is carried out with tenderness but which has also been abandoned because it was always lukewarm and less pure. Jesus does not rebuke the Church of Laodicea but rather like a practical trade which is carried out with tenderness but which has also been...
When we think of holy sites, the door of our parish church might not be the first place that comes to mind. But during this Jubilee year, that door takes on a sacred significance. To inaugurate the Holy Year of Mercy, Pope Francis pushed open the Holy Doors of St. Peter’s Basilica, doors of mercy for all the faithful to enter. When I walk past Saint Peter’s Square these days, I see thousands lining up to pass through these doors of mercy, peoples of every nation, language and colour, each one with a story, each one somewhere on their journey with Jesus. When Pope Francis pushed open these holy doors, he invited everyone to come inside, imitating Jesus who did the same in his first century Palestinian world.

These doors of mercy also hang on our own parish churches. Through those doors many of us were carried by loving parents who presented us for baptism. Others have walked through these doors themselves having completed the RCIA. We entered the church as outsiders and through baptism we became insiders, members of the parish community and disciples of Jesus. It is Jesus who opens the door of our parish Church to welcome us because, as John the evangelist writes, Jesus is the door. It is Jesus who opens the door of mercy, Jesus who opens the door to mercy for all who enter. And Jesus is Jesus who opens the door of mercy, Jesus who opens the door of mercy, Jesus who opens the door of mercy.

Jesus confronts Simon with a question: “Who is the guest of one who is a sinner?” Simon would shut the doors of mercy. The priest refused to let the baby be baptized and therefore could not cross the threshold. When people have this kind of self-interest, lack of mercy, or closed attitudes prevail, they are shocked. (pg 71, The Name of God is Mercy)

Pope Francis knows that even in our own time there are those who would follow the example of Simon the Pharisee and those grumbling outside Zaccheus’ house. But the doors of mercy that Jesus has opened cannot be closed because Jesus himself is the door.

The doors of our parish Church is indeed a sacred portal. Pope Francis has pushed open those doors for all to enter, following Jesus’ mission who opened them centuries ago to Zaccheus, to the anonymous woman and to many others who walked straight through that door to become members of Jesus’ community. We have done the same through our baptism, whether that baptism was this past Easter or years ago. We came through the church doors of our parish to be claimed for Christ. Sunday after Sunday we repeat that sacred moment wherever we find ourselves along our journey toward Jesus in our own lives. Jesus opens the door to us, the door is open, and we all open it together.

In the gospels we read how Jesus passed through numerous doors so he himself might become the door of mercy for those inside that home. He went into the home of Peter’s mother-in-law who then was touched by Jesus’ merciful healing. He visited Martha and Mary and challenged a distracted Martha to choose ‘the better part’. He even visited the home of Zaccheus, a tax collector and a traitor to the Jewish people—a Roman collaborator. As Jesus entered his home, Zaccheus exclaimed: “Half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor.” Jesus then responded: “Today salvation has come to this house.” (Luke 19:1-10)

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Faithful Make Pilgrimages to the Holy Door

The faithful process through the Holy Door at the Cathedral of St. Catherine of Alexandria. Photo by Denis Cahill.

For the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis gave bishops permission to designate a Holy Door of Mercy at their local Cathedral.

The Holy Door at the Cathedral of St. Catherine of Alexandria was a front entrance that had been closed for over 20 years. It was reopened in the fall of 2015 and that entrance was restored.

To date, various parish groups, including pastoral councils, CWL, families and schools have come through the Holy Door. A prayer service and/or tour of the Cathedral can be arranged or the visit can simply be private.

As well as coming in through the Holy Door, Pope Francis has indicated what needs to happen to receive the plenary indulgence. He wrote in a pastoral letter last fall: “It is important that this moment be linked, first and foremost, to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and to the celebration of the Holy Eucharist with a reflection on mercy. It will be necessary to accompany these celebrations with the profession of faith and with prayer for me and for the intentions that I bear in my heart for the good of the Church and of the entire world.”

Pilgrimage to the Holy Doors

Throughout the Jubilee Year of Mercy

Cathedral of St. Catherine of Alexandria
67 Church Street, St. Catharines
will be open weekdays 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Saturdays 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Sundays 7:30 a.m. – 9 p.m.

Parishes or organizations who want to come on a pilgrimage to the Holy Doors may call the Cathedral office at 905-684-3964

Monday – Friday 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. to book a date and time. A tour and prayer service can also be arranged.

A Holy Hour of Mercy will be celebrated throughout the Jubilee Year of Mercy on Wednesdays at 7 p.m. with Adoration, Benediction and Reconciliation.

Apostolic Exhortation: Cont. from Page 1

fruitfulness and procreation. It speaks in a profoundly spiritual and psychological manner about welcoming new life and about the love of a mother and a father. It also speaks of the expanded fruitfulness of adoption, of welcoming the contribution of families to promote a ‘culture of encounter’ and of family life in a broad sense which includes aunts, uncles, cousins, relatives of relatives and friends.”

Chapter 6: Some Pastoral Perspectives (199-258)

...in this chapter the pope treats various pastoral perspectives that are aimed at forming solid and fruitful families. ...it reiterates that families should not only be evangelized, they should also evangelize. ...on the one hand, the psycho-affective formation of seminarians needs to be improved, and families need to be more involved in formation for ministry.

...The pope deals with the preparation of the engaged for marriage, with the accompaniment of couples in the first years of married life, including the issue of responsible parenthood.

...Mention is made of accompanying abandoned, separated or divorced persons, ...a marriage between a Catholic and a Christian of another denomination (mixed marriages) and between a Catholic and someone of another religion (disparity of cult). The last pastoral poignantly portrays ...is on the theme of the loss of dear ones and of widowhood.”

Chapter 7: Towards a Better Education of Children (259-290)

...this chapter is dedicated to the education of children: their ethical formation, the learning of the discipline which can include punishment, patient realism, sex education, passing on the faith and family life as an educational context.

...The notable section on education in sexuality is very expressively entitled: Yes to sex education.”

Chapter 8: Guiding, Discerning and Integrating Weakness (291-312)

...the eighth chapter is an invitation to mercy and pastoral discernment in situations that do not fully match what the Lord proposes. The pope uses three very important verbs (guiding, discerning, integrating), which are fundamental in addressing fragile, complex or irregular situations.”

Chapter 9: The Spirituality of Marriage & the Family (313-325)

...this chapter is devoted to marital and family spirituality. ...The pope clearly states that those who have deep spiritual aspirations should not feel that the family detracts from their growth in the life of the Spirit, but rather see it as a path which the Lord is using to lead them to the heights of mystical union.

...No family drops down from heaven perfectly formed: families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love...All of us are called to keep striving towards something greater than ourselves and our families.”

As can readily be understood from a quick review of its contents, the Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia seeks emphatically to affirm not the ‘ideal family’ but the very rich and complex reality of family life. It provides an openhearted look, profoundly positive, which is nourished not with abstractions or ideal projections, but with pastoral attention to reality. The text is a close reading of family life, with spiritual insights and practical wisdom useful for every human couple or persons who want to build a family. Above all, it is patently the result of attention to what people have lived over many years. Indeed, it speaks the language of experience and hope.
**RCIA: A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF FAITH**

by BOB FOLEY

What is the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults?

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is a formal program of catechetical instruction and liturgies whereby adults, those unbaptized and those baptized in other Christian denominations, are formally admitted into the Church and receive the Sacraments of Initiation—Baptism (for those not already baptized) Confirmation and Eucharist.

During RCIA, individuals follow a spiritual journey of ‘steps’ accomplished through defined periods punctuated with liturgical rites. The first period is that of inquiry (precatechumenate) where inquirers learn about the faith and what the Church teaches. If the individual wishes to continue into the next phase there is the Rite of Acceptance into the order of catechumens where inquirers are formally introduced to the parish community. The unbaptized are now called catechumens; those already baptized are called candidates. This Rite of Acceptance begins the period of the catechumenate during which the catechumens and candidates receive further instruction and faith sharing.

The Rite of Election is the last liturgical ceremony before the Easter Vigil. At this rite, upon the testimony of sponsors and catechists, and the catechumens’ affirmation of their intention to join the Church, the Church makes its ‘election’ of the catechumens to receive the Sacraments of Initiation. In the presence of the bishop they inscribe their names in the Book of the Elect at the cathedral as a pledge of fidelity. Now the catechumens are called ‘the elect’ and begin a period of purification and enlightenment—the final, intense preparation for the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation. The candidates, those already baptized, are acknowledged and presented to the bishop and the congregation.

On the next five Sundays of Lent, three scrutinies (rites for self-searching and repentance) and the presentations of the Creed and The Lord’s Prayer take place. This period concludes with the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil.

After the Easter Vigil, the newly baptized and confirmed members of the Church are called neophytes and they enter the period of post baptismal catechesis or mystagogy. The neophytes grow in their understanding of the mysteries of the faith and strengthen their bond with the rest of the faithful. They should enter more fully into the life and unity of the Church. This period ends at Pentecost.

RCIA is a spiritually moving process beneficial to the whole parish community. If one wishes to gain a better understanding of the Catholic faith there is no better way than to get involved in the parish RCIA program as a catechist, a sponsor, or just to journey with those seeking to join the community. This is the time to invite those who may be interested in exploring Catholicism to seek out a parish that has an RCIA program.

**St. Kevin parish establishes Holy Name Society**

Standing (l-r) Nick Bruch, John Gaspari, Tom Higginbotham, Ray Pellerito, Luciano Della Smina, Paul Gatt, Tony Kuckusa; seated: Rick McAllister; Allie Mackenzie, secretary; Paul Koczula, president; Garrett Smits, vice-president. Bishop Gerard Bergie witnesses a catechumen, with his sponsor by his side, signing the Book of Elect on the First Sunday of Lent at the Cathedral of St. Catherine of Alexandria. After the signing, the catechumens are called the elect.

**St. Alfred Parish hosts Shroud exhibit**

Bishop Gerard Bergie witnesses a catechumen, with his sponsor by his side, signing the Book of Elect on the First Sunday of Lent at the Cathedral of St. Catherine of Alexandria. After the signing, the catechumens are called the elect.

by LOUISE MINNITI

On March 1, 2016, the Man of the Shroud exhibit, an extensive exhibition on the history, science and significance of the Shroud of Turin arrived at St. Alfred, St. Catharines. Accompanying the exhibit were display boards and replicated artefacts related to the Crucifixion of Jesus.

During the week that the exhibit was at the parish two shroud scholars educated each visitor as to the authenticity of the Shroud. Barrie Schwortz, the first of the two presenters, related science and forensic information that points to the authenticity of the Shroud. Schwortz, on the team that first studied the Shroud in 1978, informed audiences that there are no pigments, paints, inks, caulks or dyes which in any way contributed to the formation of the image.

John Iannone, who has studied the Shroud since 1978, corroborated all of Schwortz’s findings, but took it a step further relating the Shroud image to the phenomena of the Resurrection. The findings of many scientists have concluded the image was formed by an extremely high density, short duration burst (milliseconds) of radiant energy. Here science and faith meet.

Despite vast amounts of published forensic and scientific proof to the contrary, the single radiocarbon dating test of 1988 has been accepted by most of the media and the world as proof of the Shroud’s medieval origin. Now, two new informative and enlightening videos that deal specifically with that radiocarbon dating are available on line at www.shroud.com.

In one, A Grave Injustice, directed by David Rolfe, reveals how the C14 laboratories that tested the Shroud failed to follow their own protocols to ensure a definitive dating and failed to place their result in the context of this fact and of the weight of other evidence that contradicts it. In Coldcase: The Shroud of Turin, produced and directed by Francesca Saracino, the video explores the provocative question, “Who’s afraid of the Shroud of Turin?”

After this exhibit experience, visitors have claimed they will carry with them the image of the Shroud. The Shroud is meant to evoke and inspire.

The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself.

John 20:4-8
13TH ANNUAL GALA SUPPORTS CATHOLIC EDUCATION

by JENNIFER PELLEGRINI

Niagara Catholic District School Board (NCDSB) celebrated its rich history and tradition and the gift of Catholic education on April 1, 2016, during the 13th annual Bishop’s Gala at Club Roma, St. Catharines.

The event, which raises funds for the Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education, is a signature event for NCDSB. More than 250 supporters of Catholic education, including NCDSB staff, foundation board members and clergy, were on hand for the celebration.

Three Knights of Columbus assemblies were represented and served as an honour guard for dignitaries at the event.

Representatives from the French Catholic School Board, St. Catharines Mayor Walter Sendzik and Pelham Mayor Dave Augustyn also attended.

The evening’s musical entertainment was provided by Port Colborne’s Lakeshore Catholic High School Drum line, Jazz Band and Jazz Ensemble. The talent of the musicians was matched by the vocal gift of Grade 12 student Bronwyn Leitch, who sang “Canada and other solos.

Bill Amadio spoke on behalf of the Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education, thanking attendees for attending, noting that their compassion and generosity allows the foundation to provide scholarships and bursaries to students attending college or university, helps purchase tools for students who are entering apprenticeship programs and provides support to students with special needs so they can enjoy full participation in school life.

During his opening address, Fr. Paul MacNeil, trustee chair, shared an anecdote about a four-year-old whose mother had been teaching her child to pray formally, when the youngster insisted on showing her mother that she had learned how to make up her own prayers at her Catholic elementary school instead.

"The world needs to hear the natural love, the pure faith, the unquestioning hope that comes from the hearts of little ones, especially as they explore their faith. If there is any reason to support Catholic education, that’s it," said Fr. MacNeil.

"And we, as educators and adults, need to listen to the prayers of children, not silence them, but we must also join in their prayers, not ignore them.

Is there anything more Catholic or speaks more clearly of the presence of Jesus than the faith of children?" he asked.

John Crocco, NCDSB director, also offered thanks to attendees and spoke about the Niagara Catholic family’s call to be a united voice committed to Catholic education.

"Tonight is one of the hallmark celebrations of the gift of Catholic education, and the graced opportunity that we have to celebrate and contribute to our strong foundation," he said. "We continually speak about the Catholic High School, Port Colborne, provided entertainment at the Bishop’s Gala.

Under the direction of Fraser Hebert, members of the Drumline, Jazz Band and Jazz Ensemble from Lakeshore Catholic High School, Port Colborne, provided entertainment at the Bishop’s Gala.

Photo by Jennifer Pellegrini

Baldasaro, superintendent.

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Photo by Jennifer Pellegrini

NCDSB administrative staff seen with Bishop Gerard Borgie at the 2016 Bishop’s Gala are: (l-r) standing - Dino Sicoli, trustee; Scott Whitwell, controller of facilities services; Mark Lefebvre, superintendent; Ted Farnell, superintendent; Giancarlo Vetrone, business and financial services; Frank Iannantuono, superintendent; seated – Lee Ann Fosyth-Bells, superintendent; John Crocco, director; Fr Paul MacNeil, trustee chair; Yolanda Baldassari, superintendent.

Photo by Jennifer Pellegrini

Diocese of St. Catharines and NCDSB being a family. To have all of you present tonight speaks in a strong, united voice to your belief and commitment to Catholic education. The Catholic community in Niagara is blessed to have each one of you here tonight."

In his address to guests before Grace, Bishop Gerard Bergie spoke passionately about God’s mercy, as it relates specifically to education, and the way in which NCDSB schools and Niagara communities have embraced the Syrian refugees.

"Education is a merciful act," said Bishop Bergie, "and God’s mercy does flow and is flowing in our midst. I see the face of God when I look around this room. Thank you for being the face of God.”

He also referenced the musical performance by making note of the good fortune we in Niagara have to experience “what is good and true and beautiful; to experience the wonderful world around us.”

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Photo by Jennifer Pellegrini
JADALLAH FAMILY FINDS A HOME AT ST. HELEN’S

by JOANNE MCDONALD

The simple pleasure of stretching their legs on a backyard swing is a joyful memory of the first days in Canada for 10-year-old twins Souheill and Rita Jadallah.

They arrived February 6, 2016, with their parents Shadi, Souad and Rita. Members of St. Helen, Beamsville, waiting like expectant new parents for the call that came just days earlier, were eager to pick them up the next day in Toronto.

That first tentative greeting between strangers—the young Syrian family of four, standing with their bags in a hotel lobby, the small group of St. Helen parishioners carrying tiny passport photos and searching the faces of the many refugees huddled in tight knit groups around the room—is now a poignant memory as the family works hard to make adjustments to a new life in Canada.

It was a long and difficult journey that brought them from their city roots in Damascus, through Lebanon and Jordan to their new rural residence in Vineland.

St. Helen pastor Fr. Philip English, and associate Fr. Bob Colburn, C.S.Sp., along with the congregation responded quickly and generously to the call to bring a family to Canada. For over four months, parish volunteers met at coffee shops and each other’s homes, planning in anticipation and good faith to care for the family’s needs when they arrived. Parish volunteer drivers signed on to help and are committed to a weekly schedule for all the transportation needs from school to grocery runs and medical appointments.

Rita and Shadi attend English classes every day in St. Catharines and the children are enrolled in the local Catholic elementary school. At a recent parent-teacher meeting they learned their children are doing well, working hard and on par with the other students in the class. The teacher said the students all love the twins and she feels blessed to have them in her classroom. They were glowing proud parents and Shadi, through a translator at the meeting, was able to share that Souheill was the top math student in his class in Damascus.

While Shadi and Rita work diligently to learn English, the words peace and safety are most often on their lips. “We feel the peace and the safety for our children,” says Shadi.

“They have new friends and they’re safe. Now they can go out to play and have the possibility to leave the home and there is nothing dangerous about it.”

“In Damascus, we always stayed at home because it was too dangerous to go out. Rita just stayed inside with the children. You could never leave them alone.”

Often they woke in the morning to the sound of bombs. “We tried to protect the children from the realities around them,” she said.

“And now in Canada,” said Shadi, “I’m here for my children.”

Rita is named for St. Rita, and a photo of the saint, one of the few possessions she carried from Damascus, sits on a window ledge with a rosary nearby. Rita’s parents waited 10 years to be blessed with a baby and when Rita was born, she was named in gratitude to St. Rita, the saint of parenthood, to whom her parents had prayed.

Rita’s mother, Ilham, has passed away and that is a deep sadness in her heart. Her father, Gapy, remains in Damascus with the hope he will see his daughter again.

Shadi’s father, Souheill, is also deceased and he speaks lovingly of his mother, Souad, and other family members living in the war-ravaged country he left with the hope and faith of a new beginning in Canada.

The twins recently celebrated their 10th birthdays at the home of a parishioner. Slowly, they are coming to welcome every knock at their door as they build new friendships and a future.

While the experience “has been amazing,” they share the heaviness, depression even, of being away from their culture and family; but they are so grateful to be safe and know their children are happy.

They are also grateful for the medical care they have been receiving, for it, along with education, had been very neglected. They are finding it difficult at times, but keep saying, “thank God for everything.”

Shadi is studying for his driver’s license and is anxious “to find good work to take care of my family and stay in Canada.”

Rita is feeling safe and at peace here. That first day while the children played outside, Shadi instinctively walked the perimeter of the property, quietly and unobtrusively doing a quick check of the outlying buildings, watching, “to see if there were any mistakes, anything dangerous. I felt fear, but not now.”

NCDSB WELCOMES REFUGEE CHILDREN INTO SCHOOL SYSTEM

“Niagara Catholic District School Board’s (NCDSB) process of welcoming Syrian newcomers into schools is consistent with the way in which all newcomers to Canada are integrated into any of the Catholic elementary, secondary and continuing education schools. NCDSB uses the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program to engage students, families and assist with their smooth integration into communities.

“NCDSB’s English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching teams assess students’ English-language proficiency. This team supports teachers to provide differentiated instruction for English-language learners, and to students, to ensure the classroom instruction they receive supports their English-language development and other learning needs.

“Students within NCDSB, schools hail from 110 countries around the world and speak 57 different languages. The inclusiveness and diversity of newcomers into NCDSB is an enriching experience for all of the school communities, and truly represents the assertion that all are welcome.”

Statement on refugee policy from John Crocco, director, NCDSB.

St. Patrick, Niagara Falls welcomes refugee family

St. Patrick, Niagara Falls welcome Stephanie (daughter) Ayman and Souzi Krait to Canada.

Maureen Young (left) and Fr. Gerard Power, O.Carm. (right)

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NAHAT FAMILY SETTLING INTO THEIR NEW HOME IN NIAGARA

Tony Nahat was born in Damascus, Syria, July 10, 1986. Micheline Doummar was born November 25, 1987. Tony and Micheline were married in Damascus. Soon after they returned from their honeymoon, Tony was drafted to serve in the army to fight rebels. Since then they have not lived a normal life. He was treated like a slave and saw horrific things while he was in the army. He was kept from his family, and saw the birth of his son. He had to pay someone to visit his wife and son.

From the time their son Bassam was very young, he has had a fear of losing his father. Every time Tony leaves to go somewhere, little Bassam thinks he is gone forever.

Every time Tony leaves to go somewhere, little Bassam thinks he is gone forever.

Tony and Micheline have moved into a furnished home in Niagara Falls. Tony, Micheline and Bassam, do not have a second home. "The newcomers live in fear, many don't trust life anymore."

Fort Gerard Power, O.Carm., pastor, St. Patrick, Niagara Falls, has arranged for Tony's family to live with another recently arrived Syrian family until some time in the future. Fr. Gerard Power, O.Carm., pastor, St. Patrick, Niagara Falls, has arranged for Tony's family to live with another recently arrived Syrian family until some time in the future.

The newcomer's interaction with people from countries around the world can be daunting. Londono says: "You must learn how to understand the worries and needs of people from everywhere. So I talk and live my own experience and I believe I have the right words for everyone." Maria Londono believe I have the right words for everyone.

Maria Londono knows what it is to be a refugee. She was one herself. She and her family took flight from Colombia in the late 1980s, their permanent exodus from a country engulfed in class struggle, and economic and political upheaval. They learned what it meant to be victims of violence and kidnapping.

Londono says her lived experience ensures she can walk with people in the talk. When she spoke at a meeting convened by the Diocesan Refugee Committee at the Diocesan Catholic Centre, Thorsil, she did so carefully and with conviction. Her mouth spoke the words, but the words came from her heart.

"A refugee can be anyone," she said. "We should welcome people with our hearts. We should help them learn how to believe again, how to trust again."

Londono, 50, spoke at the meeting as co-ordinator of Chez Marie Refugee Assistance Centre in St. Catharines, one of two that are part of the diocese's refugee ministry (Casa El Norte, Fort Erie is co-ordinated by Londono). Londono has been co-ordinator at Chez Marie since August 2014.

After fleeing Colombia, the Londono family lived in Brentwood, New York, on Long Island for a few years, and then went to Buffalo, New York, before crossing the border and into Fort Erie in 2004.

Eventually she went back to school, attended Niagara College, and studied social services. She immersed herself in volunteer work with the church, as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) at the border, and with people agencies: "I was a volunteer 24/7. The Red Cross was my second home." Londono says, "newcomers live in fear, many don't trust life anymore."

"The newcomers need help in the adjustment process, it is very important. This is about peoples' lives. If they don't have friends or family members, they need this life support; otherwise they won't survive."

The sponsorship by parishes of Syrian refugee families is a good, but small, response to that country's humanitarian crisis, she says. There will be a long learning curve in her opinion. But the parish sponsorships will help make the transition to life in a new country a little softer, she believes.

Londono divides her time between the two refugee centres: Monday, Wednesday and Friday she is at Chez Marie; Tuesday and Thursday she spends time at Casa El Norte.

She involves her husband Miguel, 54 and their three children, two daughters and a son, when she needs assistance.

The eldest, 22, graduated from university in June and is planning a mission trip to Africa while her younger sister, 21, is in her third year at the University of Toronto. The son is hoping to attend university in the fall to study marine biology. "My whole family has been involved in the refugee ministry. I am so proud." Throughout her own experience, Londono says she remains thankful for having an invaluable anchor—her faith. "My faith has kept me fighting and surviving the storm brought to me and my family. If I did not have my faith I wouldn't be sitting here today. I would be struggling somewhere, I wouldn't be as conscious as I am about life and living, I wouldn't be in a position to help other people move on in their lives."

WANT TO HELP?

Contact: Marilyn Nabilsi, refugee coordinator, at Refugeeeministry@saintcd.com, or contact Marilyn Nabilsi, chair of the Diocesan Refugee Committee at diocese@saintcd.com or 905-684-0154

Refugee Centres

within the
Diocese of St. Catharines

Casa el Norte
281 Central Avenue
Fort Erie, ON 905-871-4483

Chez Marie Refuge
16 Pelham Road
St.Catharines, ON 905-682-5795

The Diocese of St. Catharines has been actively engaged in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. In the last six months, the refugee ministry has been in high gear, and in that time a great deal has been accomplished.

Three families have arrived and been welcomed by parishes in Niagara Falls, Vineland and St.Catharines. Private sponsorship applications for another 12 Syrian families were filed before March 31, 2016.

The Canadian government has reached its goal of welcoming 25,000 Syrian refugees. At the end of February they no longer covered the cost of flights and medical exams. At the end of March, they abruptly cut back on staffing and service, no longer giving the same high priority to Syrian refugees. Private sponsors across the country had expected Syrian families to be arriving within a few months of their applications being processed. In some cases now there is a longer wait.

Of the 46 parishes in the diocese, 22 are participating in sponsorship efforts. Some parishes are twinning with other parishes to raise funds and form sponsorship committees.

Hundreds of volunteers have come forward to raise money and raise awareness, to find housing, to collect clothing and household goods; to offer language, health, transportation and employment services for Syrian newcomers. Diocesan efforts are being supported by Niagara Catholic District School Board students and staff; the Canadian Muslim Women's Association; the Ananias Mission; and the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The diocesan response to the Syrian refugee crisis started off strong and is getting stronger.

The Vineyard April 2016
PROPOSED LAW FOR MEDICALLY ASSISTED DYING IN CANADA IS FATALLY FLAWED
by WILLIAM MATHIE

A year ago, the Supreme Court struck down Canada’s law prohibiting doctors from helping patients commit suicide. The court turned what was a medical tragedy into a human rights issue, and a few doctors who did not wish to kill, and the right of patients to die when they wanted, could be sanctioned by a new law, or by rules established by doctors themselves. The court did not approve assisted suicide for the young, or the use of advance directives that could operate without the actual consent of patients at the time of their assisted dying. Parliament was given until June 6, 2016, to draft the law that would govern assisted dying.

In fact, the joint committee established by parliament to recommend a new law has gone far beyond what the public health experts intended. Within three years, competent minors will be eligible for assisted suicide and assisted dying will not be restricted to the terminally ill. The psychologically distressed and depressed will be eligible even if they are in perfect bodily health without any psychiatric assessment as to whether they are competent to consent to assisted dying. Advance requests for assisted dying will be allowed regardless of the patient’s condition or favours continued consent at the actual time of death.

Physician assisted dying will become ‘medically assisted dying’ and all health care providers—doctors, nurses, pharmacists—will be forced to assist patients who want help in killing themselves; they will be required ‘at a minimum’ to send their patients to someone who will. All publicly funded care institutions, including hospices and Catholic hospitals, will be required to provide assisted suicide. And the process must not require prior review and approval.

Do the joint committee’s recommendations ensure safeguards to prevent the grave abuses that have occurred whenever assisted dying has been accepted?

Four members of the committee say they do not. They say the committee’s report has glaring flaws. The recommendations open the door to assisted dying for minors, lack stringent safeguards for the mentally ill, accept requests for assisted suicide where adequate palliative care has not been made available to the patient, permit advance directives and dismiss the conscience rights of doctors and others. The MPs’ point out Canada would be the first country in the world to establish the rule of ‘effective referral’—the requirement that any doctor who refuses a patient’s request for reasons of conscience must send that patient to someone who will comply with the request.

Defenders of Canadians who are vulnerable by reason of physical or psychological health (groups like L’Arche) are also alarmed by the committee’s recommendations. In response, they have developed something they call the Vulnerable Persons Standard. This standard, they say, should be the yardstick against which our new law should be measured. Assisted suicide should be available only at the end of life. Consent should be clearly voluntary. The causes for any request should be examined, and there should be an arms-length review before assisted suicide is authorized.

Jean Vanier, the founder of L’Arche insists, “Physicians need to not only weigh competency, but also to take into account the possibility of coercion and what psychologists call ‘unconscious inducement.’ In this latter situation, individuals facing terminal illness [may] come to believe that hastening their own death is a socially acceptable, and responsible act. An ethos that may subtly support such thinking can lead to a deep and subversive betrayal of an individual’s right to live their life out to its natural end.”

EVIL OF ABORTION THEME OF RIGHT TO LIFE DINNER
by WILLIAM MATHIE

The enormity of the evil of abortion—over 300 million babies aborted in China, 58 million in the United States, and 4 million in Canada in the past half-century—and why we can hope for an end to that evil, were the themes of Brad Mattes, guest speaker at the 2016 annual dinner meeting of the St. Catharines Right to Life Association. Greg Slingerland, president, Right to Life, echo that hope.

Nearly 400 new and long-time members—the old and the very young, clergy, students and teachers—gathered at the Holiday Inn Parkway Convention Centre in St. Catharines, February 27, 2016, to hear Mattes and Slingerland’s presentations and to share in the encouragement and fellowship.

Mattes, president of Life Issues Canada, Right to Life International, and a close friend of Jack and Barbara Wilke, ‘the parents of the right to life movement in the United States, recalled the wisdom of Wilke’s choice of a profession for the pro-life movement: Love Them Both.

He also recalled the error he and Wilkes and so many made in those early days when they feared that the involvement of so many in the practice of abortion would erode the power of the pro-life movement. ‘Love Them Both.’

In the past year videos showing leaders of the abortion industry boasting of the sale of baby body parts salvaged from aborted babies, has forced the founding of Planned Parenthood in many states.

Public opinion favours restrictions on abortion and some have been made law. Mattes quoted the cover of Time Magazine, a long-time supporter of abortion: 40 Years Ago Abortion Rights Activists Won an Epic Victory With Roe v. Wade. They’ve Been Losing Ever Since.

Greg Slingerland, coming to the end of a two-year term as president, sounded a similar theme. He observed that the baby parts selling scandal at Planned Parenthood has stoked the debate like never before and reinforced the critical importance of what the Right to Life association accomplishes.

He spoke of the association’s work in producing over 20 pro-life billboards in Niagara, many transit ads, distributing 1,000s of copies of its newsletter, in organizing speaker workshops, and sending the association’s trained speakers into area schools.

Slingerland spoke also of the importance of the association’s participation each May in the March for Life held in Ottawa. He recalled how his own heart was touched when, as a Grade 10 student in 1999, he joined a crowd of the contaminants from every age and background, to hear from women who had had abortions, to learn how abortions were performed, and to realize that Canada was without a single law restricting abortion.

Slingerland thanked those present for their support through prayer, training and giving that has saved lives, penetrated the darkness that surrounds abortion, and brought hope and light to this continuous battle.

Those attending included members of the CWL from a dozen area Catholic churches and members of many other churches, Right to Life groups, students from NDCDS high schools and Knights of Columbus councils from Grimsby and St. Catharines.

BISHOP’S THEME AT RESPECT FOR LIFE MASS: “BE NOT AFRAID”

The Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord, April 4, 2016, saw the Cathedral of St. Catherine of Alexandria filled with pro-life faithful to celebrate the annual diocesan Respect for Life Mass. “Be not afraid,” Bishop Gary Bérgey addressed to Mary at the Annunciation were the text for Bishop Gerard Berger’s homily. He spoke of the role fear plays in tempting young women facing an unexpected pregnancy to consider abortion, and those suffering serious illness to consider assisted suicide.

“Fear is leading us to the culture of death,” he said. Bishop Berger encouraged those fighting against the culture of death to find hope in the risen Christ and urged the congregation ‘to be Christ’ in supporting girls considering abortion and comforting the vulnerable and dying.

March for Life
Thursday, May 12, 2016
Ottawa, Ontario

For information:
St. Catharines Right to Life
905-684-7505
Welland Port Colborne Pro-Life
905-714-0547
or visit ChooseLife.ca

The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy, he will be named Son of God.”

Luke 1:35
Gosnell, discovered in 2010, of women and their babies of the most powerful voices abortion have become some suffered the consequences of. Women who have themselves would create a powerful the involvement of so many days when they feared that error he and Wilkes and so movement: Love Them Both. of a motto for the pro-life Wilke, ‘the parents’ of the friend of Jack and Barbara Issues Institute and Right to fellowship.

Slingerland, president, Right Mattes, guest speaker at the babies aborted in China, 58 by WILLIAM MATHIE

Patients at the time of their without the actual consent of directives that could operate be reconciled by a new law, or kill, and the right of patients to said that the conscience rights called it assisted dying. distress, into a human right and most see as a human tragedy, suicide. The court turned what from helping patients commit Court struck down Canada’s by WILLIAM MATHIE

Nearly 400 new and producing over 20 pro-life accomplishes. the Right to Life association’s participation in organizing speaker restrictions on abortion and states. salvaged from aborted babies, of the sale of baby body parts showing leaders of the abortion has increased as a of abortion. Opposition to drugs in his Philadelphia

Grimsby and St. Catharines. of Columbus councils from high schools and Knights churches, Right to Life and members of many other critical importance of what stoked the debate like never at Planned Parenthood has theme. He observed that the abortion has increased as a of abortion. Opposition to drugs in his Philadelphia

In fact, the joint committee said that the conscience rights called it assisted dying. distress, into a human right and most see as a human tragedy, suicide. The court turned what from helping patients commit Court struck down Canada’s by WILLIAM MATHIE

The court knew its ruling what from helping patients commit Court struck down Canada’s by WILLIAM MATHIE

A year ago, the Supreme

8 April 2016 The Vineyard
St. Michael Dunnville Marks 130th Anniversary

On March 12, 2016, a Mass was celebrated at St. Michael, Dunnville, to mark the parish’s 130th anniversary. Bishop Gerard Bergie was the presider with Bishop Anthony Tonness, bishop emeritus, Diocese of Hamilton, and Fr. Sunny Sebastian, pastor, con-celebrating. In his homily Bishop Bergie recalled the sacrifices of the parishioners from past and present for the upkeep of the beautiful church building. He thanked Fr. Sebastian and the parishioners for their commitment to this parish community. Following the Mass Bishop Bergie, Bishop Tonness and priests from neighbouring parishes joined parishioners for a St. Patrick’s Day dinner and concert.

“Build up, build up, prepare the way, remove every obstruction from my people’s way.” - Isaiah 57:14

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April 2016 The Vineyard
**THE BULLETIN BOARD**

**Coming Events**

**Pilgrimages 2016:** April 24-May 2, Portugal & Spain – students and friends of Notre Dame College School, Welland, includes a 4-day Camino walk from Melide to Santiago de Compostella; July 31-August 5, Norrey way – with Fr. Frank Wagner; September/October, Ireland – with Fr. Gerard Power, In the Footsteps of St. Patrick. For booking information contact Inke at Brinkman Travel, www.brinkmantravel.com or 905-988-9100.

**Quebec Pilgrimage:** The Italian Association at Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, Thorold, will be hosting a 4-day pilgrimage to Quebec departing July 24, 2016. Destinations will include St. Joseph Oratory, Mont Royal; Notre Dame-des-Neiges, Montreal; Notre Dame Basilica, Coburg (Montreal). Some 2016 dates, topics – 9 p.m at Mt. Carmel Spiritual Centre, 7020 Stanley Avenue, Niagara Falls. For information contact Fr. Chris 905-356-4113 at Mt. Carmel Spiritual Centre, Niagara Falls, 7-8 p.m. For information contact Fr. Chris 905-356-4113 or separatedanddivorced@saintcd.com. For information contact Margaret Cosentini 905-227-9236 for information.

**On-Going**

**Diocesan Separated & Divorced:** This support group meets the 2nd & 4th Monday of the month, 7 - 9 p.m. at Mt. Carmel Spiritual Centre, 7020 Stanley Avenue, Niagara Falls. Some 2016 dates, topics and presenters are: April 25 – Coping With Grief from Separation & Divorce – Dino Sicoli; May 9 – Forgiveness as Part of the Healing Process – Dino Sicoli; May 24 – New Relationships; June 13 – Facing Fears After Separation & Divorce; June 27 – Loving & Respecting Yourself. For information contact Mt. Carmel 905-356-4113, Diocesan Catholic Centre & Respecting Yourself. For information contact Mt. Carmel 905-227-9236 for information.

**Marriage Encounter:** For married couples looking to restore communication and rekindle romance, this program is designed to help share concerns, feelings and expectations in a non-confrontational way. A very private experience called a weekend of discovery, leading to a lifetime of love. Visit www.wmoe.org for information and registration.

**Marriage Preparation:** Engaged couples planning to be married in the Catholic church are expected to take a marriage preparation course or an Engaged Encounter weekend. Parishes have the 2016 schedule with information about dates and places www.saintcd.com.

**Retrouvaille:** If you are considering remarriage in the Catholic Church at some point, or hoping to enter a marriage with someone previously married, you should speak to a priest or contact the diocesan Catholic Marriage Tribunal in St. Catharines, 905-687-8817 or tribunal@saintcd.com.

**Natural Family Planning:** For information contact Chris & Lena Turner (Serna) 905-643-3375 or Joan Kenny (Billings) 905-680-4154.

**Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Shrine:** Open year-round, 4700 Miller Road, Port Colborne, situated in a rustic wooded area providing a special place where people can gather to reflect or enjoy solitary prayer. From May-October the rosary is recited Thursday at 7 p.m. followed by Mass. The shrine has large grounds, a meeting room and gift shop; donations of gently used religious articles are gratefully appreciated. The facilities are available for retreats and gatherings. For information call Cathy Kruger 905-732-7479 or visit www.rosaryshrineniagara.com.

**Retrouvaille:** If your marriage needs help, Retrouvaille could be a lifetime. This is a process designed to heal and renew troubled marriages. The focus is on communication and provides couples the opportunity to rediscover themselves and their marriage relationship. For information, in strictest confidence, contact Joyce and Larry Webb 905-664-5212 or retrouvaille.hamilton@oeco.ca.

**Mt. Carmel Spiritual Centre**

7020 Stanley Avenue  
Niagara Falls, Ontario L2G 7B7  
905-356-4113  FAX 905-358-2548  
email: mtcarmel@mtcarmelniagara.com  
www.mtcarmelniagara.com

**2nd Tuesday of each month**  
May 14  
History & Development of the Scapular, Niagara Falls (2005-2006) and St. Denis, St. Catharines (2007-2008) with an intermittent 1-year recall to Nigeria between those two assignments. He served as pastor at St. Martin, Smithville (2008-2015) and had been appointed pastor to St. Patrick, Port Colborne, August 2015.

Fr. Anyanwu was a good and faithful priest filled with enthusiasm, joy and love for the Lord. A memorial Mass for the repose of Fr. Anyanwu’s soul was held at St. Patrick, Port Colborne on April 15, 2016.

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cmatovic@hotmail.com or  
289-271-8534  
http://serraca.coma

**Preparations under way for WYD 2016**


**IN MEMORIAM**

The Diocese of St. Catharines was deeply saddened and shocked by the sudden death of Fr. Obioma Anyanwu who died in Nigeria, Africa, April 9, 2016, while on a visit there. He was 52 years of age.

One of eight children, he was raised, studied and ordained (1996) as a Spirituan (Holy Ghost Congregation) in Nigeria, West Africa. He served as pastor and associate pastor to three parishes in Nigeria before moving to Canada in 1999 for missionary work in Gattineau, Quebec. In 2005 he joined the Diocese of St. Catharines. He assisted for a few months at St. Thomas More, Niagara Falls, St. Vincent de Paul, Niagara-on-the-Lake, before being appointed associate at Our Lady of the Scapular, Niagara Falls (2005-2006) and St. Denis, St. Catharines (2007-2008) with an intermittent 1-year recall to Nigeria between those two assignments. He served as pastor at St. Martin, Smithville (2008-2015) and had been appointed pastor to St. Patrick, Port Colborne, August 2015.

Fr. Anyanwu was a good and faithful priest filled with enthusiasm, joy and love for the Lord. A memorial Mass for the repose of Fr. Anyanwu’s soul was held at St. Patrick, Port Colborne on April 15, 2016.

May he rest in peace.

Surrounded by his family, Deacon Patrick O’Brien died February 6, 2016, at the Greater Niagara General Hospital, Niagara Falls. He was 70 years of age.

He was survived by Ethel, his wife of 44 years and children Michael (Michelle) O’Brien; Chris (Denise) O’Brien; Kathy (Todd) Saunders; Maggie (Dave) Scott; Tim O’Brien; James (Cathy) O’Brien. He will be missed by his grandchildren: Aidan, Mary, Matthew, Kimberly, Riley and Owen. Dear brother of Imelda (David) Barker and Sean (Olga) O’Brien and brother-in-law of Nat (Marilynn) Gozansky and Rose (Gero) Gozansky.

Deacon O’Brien retired from Holy Cross Secondary School, St. Catharines, where he taught for many years.

He was ordained to the diaconate May 29, 2010, by Bishop John O’Mara, bishop emeritus, Diocese of St. Catharines. Deacon O’Brien’s ministry was as a chaplain at Greater Niagara General Hospital and his liturgical ministry was at St. Patrick, Niagara Falls.

May he rest in peace.
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

This issue of Vineyard includes the simplified financial statements and budget for our diocese. The information includes a pre-audit summary of income and expenses for 2015 and budget information for 2016 in the form of a pie chart and a ledger. It is provided for your information.

Income in 2015 was slightly above budget, thanks to some very generous donations from parishioners. Expenses, for the most part, were in line with the budget. Due to unforeseen expenses, some parishes were in financial need and required some assistance from the diocese. This resulted in an overall deficit of $310,000, which is $239,000 above our budget target deficit of $71,000. For 2016, we are projecting a deficit of $130,000, a figure we will endeavor to improve upon as the year progresses.

Since being appointed bishop of the Diocese of St. Catharines over five years ago, my fiscal objective has been to achieve a balanced budget on a year-to-year basis. As you can see from the information provided, more effort is required. Revenue generation ideas and cost reduction initiatives continue to be priorities. The five-year plan for the diocese shows improvement in the coming years. With God’s blessings, and our renewed efforts, a balanced budget will be a reality in the not-too-distant future.

I wish to thank the people who serve on the diocesan finance council. They give so generously by sharing their advice, wisdom, time and talent for the benefit of the diocese. In addition, in this diocese, we are blessed with so many generous parishioners who support parishes and the diocese, giving unselfishly their time, talent and treasure. Thank you to all who make the Diocese of St. Catharines a community where faith is growing and charity abounds.

May God continue to bless you.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

+Gerard P. Bergie
Bishop of St. Catharines

Department/Category | Expenses | Income
--- | --- | ---
Diocesan administration | $199,398 |
Salaries – administration | 134,910 |
Support services for parishes | 493,542 |
Salaries – support & services | 164,890 |
Diaconate | 16,000 |
Marriage Tribunal | 98,000 |
Clergy education & renewal | 162,623 |
Office of Religious Education | 120,623 |
Brock University ministry | 69,530 |
Youth ministry | 65,835 |
CCCB & ACBO assessments | 70,000 |
Refugee ministry | 297,800 |
Vineyard | 38,000 |
Depreciation | (45,000) |
Write-offs | (50,000) |
Investment expense | (40,000) |
Total expenses | $1,526,441 |
Total income | $1,398,800 |
Surplus (income less expenses) | ($127,641) |

In this period of crisis today, it is important not to turn in on ourselves, burying our own talent, our spiritual, intellectual, and material riches, everything that the Lord has given us; but, rather to open ourselves, to be supportive, to be attentive to others. Set your stakes on great ideals, the ideals that enlarge the heart, the ideals of service that make your talents fruitful. Life is not given to us to be jealously guarded for ourselves, but is given to us so that we may give it in turn.”

Pope Francis