

ECUMENISM

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Promoting dialogue and unity

Faith and Health

Canadian Council of Churches Justice Tour 2015



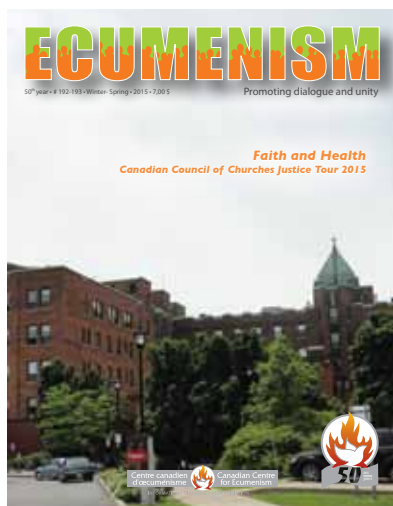
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ECUMENISM

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Editorial

From Quebec City to Paris: Toward Healing the Planet

David Fines

At the 3rd Green Church Conference held in Quebec City on April 14, 2015, the Churches joined forces as their representatives read aloud, in unison, a common declaration, a commitment “to create a climate of hope.”

Hope will certainly change the world, but at the same time, and it can never be said enough, the threats are real. Everyone who attended the conference, without exception, was concerned about the health of the Earth: global warming, the melting of the polar ice caps, the rising level of the oceans, the dramatic drop in biodiversity, overexploitation of natural resources...

In an article that recently appeared in the magazine *Actualités bibliques*, published by the Canadian Bible Society, André Beauchamp, a priest, theologian and environmentalist from the beginning of the movement, goes so far as to postulate the extinction of the modern human species. “The system can be expected to fall apart because it is in an unstable condition vis-à-vis its ecological base. Humanity will not end through some total nuclear folly but, rather, through the collapse of our consumer and technical civilization.”

The 21st Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change that takes place in Paris from November 30 to December 11 may well be the last chance for the people of the planet to respond to this threat. The human species has been “hugely successful”; it has conquered and dominated the world. “It remains to be seen whether human beings can now halt and conquer themselves.”

In this issue of *Ecumenism*, we will focus on how the Christian churches provide healthcare for physical health, psychological health and spiritual health.

A remarkable collective work published several years ago reviewed the approaches of religions – sometimes similar, sometimes different – to illness and healing, from Greek and Egyptian medicine to Chinese and African traditions, and including Judaism and Christianity. A question is asked in the introduction: “In the disarray that seems to be one of the aspects of our society, can medicine and religious traditions help us to deal with pain and suffering?”



Faced with an increasingly sick planet, we could rephrase this question and ask ourselves: “In the environmental crisis that is most definitely one of the characteristics of our times, can religious traditions help us heal the Earth?” Are there some faith-filled healers who will hasten to the Earth’s bedside? Will they be able to prescribe remedies, cures, medications, purges, or even a complete rest for convalescence and recovery?

We must hope so.

David Fines

Have a great summer!

News from the Center

News from the Centre

Symposium «Gospel, Christian Faith and Institutions - Past, Present, Future»

The Canadian Center for Ecumenism was a partner with ROAA (The Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas) and the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies of Laval University (Québec) for this symposium.

The Symposium was to be a bridge between two institutions – Church and University – which influence our spiritual and social space through reflexion and action.



Dr Gabriela Marcocci, Dr Brian Butcher, Dr Marc Pelchat, Dr Lucian Turescu, Dr Adriana Bara, Dr Laurentiu Tănase, Mgr Ioan Casian, Dr Gilles Routhier, Dr Ihor Kutash, Dr Lambros Kamperidis, Dr Gaëtan Baillargeon.

Inauguration of an iconostasis in the Catholic cathedral of St. Jerome, March 15, 2015

Our Director, Adriana Bara, participated to the inaugural celebration of the Saint-Jérôme Cathedral's iconostasis, on March 15th, 2015. It was a joyful Catholic-Orthodox celebration, within a Catholic mass, with an exceptional and inspiring homily given by the Apostolic Nuncio of Canada, Archbishop Luigi Bonazzi.

On the picture : The Apostolic Nuncio, Mgr Luigi Bonazzi, the Benedictine sisters of the Abbaye Sainte-Marie des Deux-Montagnes in Sainte-Marthe-sur-le-Lac (two of them painted the iconostasis), master Alexandre Sobolev, a Moscow iconographer living in Montreal, who taught the nuns the art of iconography, Mgr Pierre Morissette, the Bishop of Saint-Jérôme and Mgr Raymond Poisson, his auxiliary, Mgr Ioan Casian, the Romanian Orthodox Bishop, Fr. Elie, an Orthodox monk, the Very Reverend Dom André Laberge, Abbot of the Benedictine monastery Saint-Benoit-du-Lac, and our Director, Adriana Bara, at the centre.

It was indeed a very nice occasion, full of the joy of celebration!



Conference and discussion “Religious diversity within Judaism and Christianity today”

This conference was organised by Christian Jewish Dialogue of Montreal and Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom. On March 18, 2015, Dr. Adriana Bara as a Christian and Dr. Victor Goldbloom as a member of the Jewish community spoke about the types of diversity within their respective religious traditions.

Visit to the Armenian Prelacy of Canada

His Grace Meghrig Parikian, Bishop of the Armenian Church of Canada, invited His Grace, Ioan Cassian, Vicar Bishop of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas, and Dr. Adriana Bara for a visit to the Armenian Prelacy of Canada, on April 1st, 2015.

Program in Ecumenical Studies and Formation

June 23-26, 2015

Queen's House of Retreats
Registration fee: \$350

For more information and registration form, please visit the website, www.pcecumenism.ca or contact the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism at [306-653-1633](tel:306-653-1633) or admin@pcecumensim.ca. The Program in Ecumenical Studies and Formation is

an accredited three-year program, dedicated to forming Christians in the theology, history and practice of ecumenism with the churches of Canada and abroad. The intended audience of this program includes ecumenical officers; people in training for ministry; ministry practitioners whose work is located within an ecumenical setting; and lay people who wish to increase their knowledge of the ecumenical movement for greater participation. The program assumes no prior theological training and will be offered each year in Saskatoon during the final week of June. Students who complete all three years will receive a certificate in Ecumenical Studies and Formation from St. Andrew's College and the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism.

Letter

Christ is risen!

Dear Adriana and David,

I just received the issue of Ecumenism with the excellent report on the Ecumenical Institute. Congratulations on your work and on the attractive presentation!

I think it is important for the magazine to continue to carry in-depth informative articles like this, as well as more general ones.

Paul Ladouceur

New! The DVD of the Ecumenical Institute

The 14 conferences of the 2014 Irénée Beaubien Institute together with the question and answer periods are now available.

This collection of 4 DVDs is an excellent tool for promoting ecumenical awareness and education in church and action groups, in school and university classes, in discussions at many levels. Seeing and sharing the dedication of the speakers and the vitality of their interaction with the participants brings ecumenism and the vitality of their interaction with the participants brings ecumenism to life!

To procure the package of 4 DVDs for 40\$ please contact the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism, 2715, ch. Côte-Sainte-Catherine, Montréal, H3T 1B6. (514) 937-4986. Email: info@unitechretienne.ca



Green Church Conference 2015

An Ecological and Ecumenical Event

Theme: Creating a Climate of Hope

April 14, 2015 in Québec City
at Saint-Ignace-de-Loyola Church



IN RETROSPECT...

1-Introduction & Welcome

"All things came into being through the Word of God, all things we find in our environment: the St. Lawrence River, the Mont Ste Anne, belugas, aluminum, oil, all things came into being through the Word... Today, the Spirit of God is calling the Churches to be guardians of Creation. The solutions exist, we need to choose them courageously. Hence, we will be creating a climate of hope."
Mr. Norman Lévesque, director Green Churches Program, Canadian Centre for Ecumenism



"I am convinced that we are «ripe» enough to become a Green Church! I rejoice as I see the climate that exists between our Churches to reflect and help our members on this question, the respect of the environment, of Creation. We live on this earth that God generously created and gave us. Have a beautiful day and a great conference. Welcome to Quebec City."
Cardinal Gérald Cyprien Lacroix,
Catholic Archbishop of Quebec City



"I am a Huron-Wendat. My spirituality taught me to take care of the Earth, to see that all creatures are related to each other."
Ms. Diane Andicha Picard,
Director of the Maison Andicha, Wendake



2-Keynote Speech

"The Arctic sea ice is melting at an alarming rate, the frozen period is shorter, the average temperature is rising and it is affecting all life on Earth. Water, trees, and all life is connected. When we pray «Thy will be done on Earth,» we need to integrate land in our spiritual practice. Thus, we will be connected to each other and we can create a climate of hope.»

Alan K. Betts, PhD,
researcher in atmospheric science



3-Common Declaration

« Creating a Climate of Hope »

"We commit our churches to an ecological shift. On behalf of our faith, we are bringing improvements to our places of worship and we are acknowledging climate concerns. Confronted with this ecological crisis, we will strive to create a climate of hope."

We believe that our natural environment is spectacular, majestic and mysterious and that it is the work of God. We marvel at the signs of the presence of this God of kindness in nature's splendor, in the extraordinary richness of life on Earth which takes on so many forms.

Our religious tradition reminds us that the role of human beings on this Earth is to "till and keep" the environment (Genesis 2, 15), because human creativity enables us to "have dominion" over it (Genesis 1, 28) as never before. This mastery must be exercised with wisdom and intelligence in order to have lasting effects. We recognize that greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced (already at 400 ppm whereas the level was 280 ppm before the Industrial Revolution). Along with the IPCC, we recognize that "human influence



on the climate system is clear ". Ecological degradation has a greater effect on individuals impoverished by our system and our Churches' imperative to help and support the poor compels us to act.

We question our energy overconsumption and our dependence on oil, which drives industry to meet this demand, pushing it to encourage such highly polluting operations as tar sands. We are concerned about the growth of transportation of fossil fuels over vast territories, which is becoming a serious threat to the habitat and well-being of wildlife and flora and to the food sovereignty of human populations. In our view, any economic project must support life before profit. We pray for the courage to ensure a sustainable environment for future generations.

We commit our churches to an ecological shift. On behalf of our faith, we are bringing improvements to our places of worship and we are acknowledging climate concerns. We pray for a world of justice and peace. We pledge to act as good citizens in order to build a society which is greener and more concerned about the future of the next generations. Confronted with this ecological crisis, we will strive to create a climate of hope.

Adopted on April 14, 2015 during the Green Church Conference in Quebec City and signed by pastoral staff all across Canada

4-Workshops

- Heating with Biomass at St-Gilbert
- Re-imagining our Transportation (SafeStreet)
- Pages vertes de la Bible/Green Pages of the Bible (Canadian Bible Society)
- Orthodox Tradition and Ecology
- Small Farm at the Anglican Cathedral in Quebec City
- Climate Justice = Social Justice (Development and Peace)
- Voluntary Simplicity



5-Kiosks

Accès transports viables/Sustainable Viable transportation
Access : www.transportsviables.org (French only)

AmiEs de la Terre de Québec/Friends of the Earth : www.atquebec.org (French only)

AQLPA : www.aqlpa.com (French only)

Canadian Bible Society: www.biblesociety.ca

Clean Church, cleaning products : www.cleanchurch.ca

Craque-Bitume : www.craquebitume.org (French only)

Development and Peace : www.devp.org

ECORAD : www.ecorad.ca

Green Church from the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism: www.GreenChurch.ca

Manger Santé Bio : www.mangersantebio.org (French only)

Stop oléoduc : www.stopoleoduc.org (French only)



6-Ecumenical Service

« Jesus came from a small village whose inhabitants sustained themselves by farming and tending sheep. In many of his teachings, he refers to natural elements: the grain that grows, the mustard seed, the birds of the sky, the lilies of the field, the sheep, the wind and rain... He was attentive to the signs of weather (Luke 12, 54-56), but he was even more attentive to the signs of the coming Kingdom of God. Today, he wants us to be just as attentive to the signs of the times: the signs that bring to light the many confronting our Earth and to mobilize to reverse them; but above all, the signs that announce the restoration of Creation are near at hand, the signs like the ones we experienced together today, those that show that, together, we are creating a real climate of hope.»



Rev. David Fines, pastor of the United Church of Canada

We welcome your faith community to join the Green Church Network.

Theme: Faith and Health

When Faith and Healing mutually illumine¹

Seung Hee Kang

After having completed advanced studies in philosophy in England, Seung Hee Kang obtained an MDiv. from the faculty of theology, University of St. Michael's College, Toronto. An honorary member of the Cistercian community in England for more than twenty years, she received spiritual direction training at the Carmelite Monastery/the Haden Institute. As a certified CASC (Canadian Association for Spiritual Care; Association canadienne de soins spirituels) member, she has provided spiritual care in various health care settings; acute care, mental health, correction service and long-term care including spiritual direction for almost fifteen years. Her areas of research, workshop presentation and publication address spiritual growth in conflict management, emotional healing and quality of care, spiritual care and guidance for palliative care and the dying, Dementia and Alzheimer's disease, ethical discernment, moral distress and ethical dilemma in residents' care. She continues to provide spiritual care in a care home in Vancouver.

Is faith important in the healing process? I would like to start this paper by answering this question affirmatively. Firstly, the paper will look at how faith and healing are portrayed in the Scripture. Secondly, the paper will argue that as healing is a process, so is faith. Our health is sustained by our on-going efforts, and in this process, we become healed through exercising the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. Finally, the paper will talk about ways in which we foster and grow in faith which in turn aids healing in our life journey as a spiritual journey.²



The Meaning of Healing and Faith

I-Healing

Healing in Aramaic means "making whole". When it applies to a human person, it means the restoration of the original state of a human person.³ In Hebrew, אפר (rapa') means to heal or make healthy. This word is used in the Old Testament to denote healing an infirm person: "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved; for you are my praise." (Jeremiah 17:14), the restoration of a nation: "Make the mind of this people dull, and stop their ears, and shut their eyes, so they cannot see or hear or understand. If they did so, they might turn to me and be healed." (Isaiah 6:10)

and "Come, let us return to the Lord; for it is he who has turned us, and he will heal us; he has wounded us, but he will bandage our wounds, won't he?" (Hosea 6:1), and sickness: "The Lord will afflict you with the boils of Egypt, with ulcers, scurvy, and itch, of which you cannot be healed. The Lord will afflict you with madness, blindness, and confusion of mind." (Deuteronomy 28:27-28) from faithlessness: "For my people are foolish, they do not know me; they are stupid children, they have no understanding. They are skilled in doing evil, but do not know how to do good" (Jeremiah 4:22).

The fundamental meaning of this verb is to restore, to a previously enjoyed state of proper functioning, where Elijah heals (i.e. repairs) the altar of the Lord: "Then Elijah said to all the people, 'Come closer to me'; and all the people came closer to him. First he repaired the altar of the Lord that had been thrown down" (1 Kings 18:30). Also, the prophet Elisha heals (i.e. purifies) a spring that had gone bad: "Then he went to the spring of water and threw the salt into it, and said, 'Thus says the Lord, I have made this water wholesome; from now on neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it.' So the water has been wholesome to this day, according to the word that Elisha spoke" (2 Kings 2:21-2).

In the New Testament, the events of Jesus' healing are portrayed in a number of places. When a woman with twelve years of hemorrhages touches Jesus' cloak with total trust, Jesus responds to her faith, "Woman, your faith made you well. Now go in peace. And instantly the woman was made well" (Matthew 9:20-22). Then Jesus healed the two blind men when they asked for his mercy: "Have mercy on us, Son

of David!” Before Jesus healed the two blind men, he invited them by asking, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to him, “Yes, Lord.” After hearing their sincere faith, Jesus laid his hands upon their eyes, saying, “According to your faith let it be done to you.” Then their eyes were restored (Matthew 9:27-30).

Having drawn from the meaning of healing depicted in the Old and the New Testaments, we see that the word of healing or to heal (רפא [rapa]) is used to denote holistic (i.e. physical, mental, psychological and spiritual) restoration. The object of healing may be individual or communal, and it may apply to nation or to nature. Healing does not simply mean an external makeover. It comes from within (i.e. transformation and purification) and in turn brings about external changes.

2-Faith

Faith (πίστις [pistis]) means “substance of hope” and “conviction of the things that were not seen” (Hebrews 11:1 & 3). Faith accepts the things which appear unreasonable (Romans 4:17). It is the foundation of our hope. According to St. Paul, “hope that is seen is not hope.” He continues to say, “For who hopes for what is seen? But if we do hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience” (Romans 8:24-25). The same sense of hope and faith is found when St. Paul said, “We look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen... we walk by faith, not by sight” (2Corinthians 4:18 & 5:7). Faith is closely tied with hope. Faith also involves a sense of obedience (Romans 1:5, 15:18 & 16:26). As the word, obedience (obe-dire) in Latin presupposes authentic listening, it is listening to the word and the voice of God, as happened with Abraham, the father of faith (Hebrews 11, Acts 6:7). Abraham followed the way that God showed him. Although God’s promise was not seen by his physical eyes, he listened, when God called him, at age 75, he believed and trusted, obeying God’s word. He moved his family and his flocks to the place that he was called to. Abraham trusted God at the time he heard God’s call. God’s promise was neither tangible nor visible. Abraham’s act of faith came from his trust in God’s promise. His trust and faith in God gave him strength to endure the process whilst his work of faith was in progress like a faithful and wise servant who awaits his master’s arrival (Matthew 24:45-46).

The same idea is found when Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven”

(Matthew 7: 21-27). The work of faith is complete through love (charity); “the only thing that counts is faith working through love” (Galatians 5:6). Faith grows abundantly in times of afflictions and persecutions (2Thessalonians 1:3-4).

As we have seen in the Scripture passages, faith plays an essential role in the healing process. Through faith a person becomes healthy and whole, and is restored his (her) original state. As Scriptures speak about faith bringing healing, it should also be noted that there is a reciprocal relationship between faith and healing. As faith is the substance of hope, the work of faith comes from charity, which is the foundation of both hope and faith (1Corinthians 13:13).

A person with faith loves with God in total trust, even if the person is unable to see the things that are hoped for. Because of this, sometimes a person is able to bear physical and spiritual pain and suffering. This is when the genuineness of faith is tested by fire (1Peter 1:7). Faith is a gift granted by the Holy Spirit and it grows and increases abundantly when a person trustfully endures afflictions and trials as it is seen in grave illness and also in someone who is at the end of life’s journey.

As we have seen in the Scripture passages, faith plays an essential role in the healing process. Through faith a person becomes healthy and whole, and is restored his (her) original state.

When our soul is purified in pain and suffering, it brings us closer to God, by glorifying God in us. This happened to St. John of the Cross, when he was in the cell for nine months. His imprisonment did not destroy him; rather his pain and suffering were transformed by his faith and trust in God and His loving presence in the time of spiritual suffering. St. John of the Cross finds his dark night to be a pathway to “perfect union with God through love.”⁴ He believed that if we fail the test of the dark night, our soul is not purified.⁵ In his dark night of the soul, he did not so much wrestle with the dark night itself, rather he sought God in the darkness. In this process of seeking, he deepened his relationship with God. The process of transformation is only possible, when a person ascends to God, even if the promise is beyond the current human horizon. Faith as such always walks side by side

with hope guided by charity which is the foundation of the three theological virtues. As Merton remarked, “The function of faith is not to reduce mystery to rational clarity, but to integrate the unknown and the known together in a living whole, in which we are more and more able to transcend the limitations of our external self.”⁶ As faith and hope are thus mutually complimentary, so are faith and healing.

I have experienced many names of healing - restoration of physical health, self-forgiveness, forgiveness of others, restoration of relationships, restoration of missing links and self-transformation.

Faith grows through relationships, and it needs constant nourishment. We deepen our intimate relationship with God every day in every detail of our life, as well as our relationship with ourselves, and with others. The movement of the ascent to God is not always linear and it is multi-faceted and may be spiral. The healthy relationship takes place when we accept what is beyond our human understanding based on intuition and reasoning.

The Relation between Healing and Faith

In our current medical practice, research findings reveal “the positive effects of religious belief and practice on both mental and physical health.”⁷ Koenig’s research introduces the fact that the persons frequently say that “religion (faith in God, prayer, Scripture reading and church) comforts and brings relief from anxiety and despair.”⁸ Also, the same research data found that people with religion tend to be “less depressed, anxious, and cope better with adversity.”⁹ Furthermore, the practice of religious beliefs promotes mental health.¹⁰ In the Gallup surveys of 1990, 1995 and 1997, more than half of the Americans attested that religion plays a central role in their life, it helps especially when they are ill and that people who are dying want to have “warm and caring relationships with their physicians.”¹¹ The finding of the Pew Research Centre also suggested that 75 percent of Americans pray at least weekly, and 56 percent do so daily and the prayer is likely related to healing.¹²

Having realized that a patient’s spirituality is an essence of his/her health and that healing entails a lot more than medicine and techniques,¹³ Puchalski introduced a spiritual care assessment tool constituted by the acronym, FICA, which means F (faith or beliefs), I (importance and influence), C (community) and A (address),¹⁴ in order for physicians to be in touch with the spiritual components of medical practice so as to help the patients’ healing.

As Allport put it, Frankl found frustration in the will-to-meaning.¹⁵ The moment of comfort does not establish the will to live unless the prisoner is helped to make sense out of his apparently senseless suffering. It is here that we encounter the central theme of existentialism: to live is to suffer, to survive is to find meaning in the suffering. If there is purpose in life at all, there must be purpose in suffering and in dying. No one can tell another what this purpose is. Each must find out for himself, and must accept the responsibility that his answer prescribes. If he succeeds he will continue to grow in spite of all indignities. Frankl is fond of quoting Nietzsche, “He who has a why to live can bear with almost any how.”¹⁶

For any patient (resident) who does not find meaning in their spiritual pain and suffering, his/her spirit seems to be gradually destroyed. St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) is certainly the embodied spirit who gives us a witness to this truth. On her way to the termination camp, Stein said to her sister, Rosa “Come Rosa, let’s go for our people.” Then she walked to the gas chamber hand in hand with Rosa, atoning for humanity, just as Jesus Christ¹⁷ died for humanity out of love. She truly found meaning in her suffering and dying for the great cause of humanity, entrusting her spirit to God.

I have experienced many names of healing - restoration of physical health, self-forgiveness, forgiveness of others, restoration of relationships, restoration of missing links (metanoia or returning to the merciful God like the prodigal son) and self-transformation. Often, inner transformation comes with repentance of the heart, total surrender, and unconditional love.

My role has been the instrument, helping the patients (or residents) discover their healing, which involves interior as well as exterior change. I myself have to constantly purify my agenda by allowing the action of the Holy Spirit and emptying myself. I stand before the presence of God with patients (or residents) when I visit them, meeting with them, listening

to their pain/suffering with the presence of the Holy Spirit. Over the years, I have been privileged to serve many patients (and residents), meeting them in the sacred space, where I as an instrument of spiritual care, together with the patients/residents (the other) find each other mutually transforming in that sacred space with the help of the Holy Spirit. We are honoured to honour and witness the healing of many patients and residents in their many faces, such as letting go of fear and doubts, anxieties; restoring calmness, peace, and endurance; forgiveness; conversion; and healing of the dying.

One time, I had a referral to visit with a woman called Helen in her late eighties, who was at the end of her life journey. The nurse who cared for her heard from the family, saying, "My mother had moved away from the church for a while, now she asked me what she would say, when she meets Jesus after she dies." I was there to visit with the patient who was lying in bed unconscious and her son sitting at the bedside. I obtained his consent to visit with the patient first and after the visit, I invited her son to come into the room. Towards the end of the visit, we said a prayer together after acquiring the consent from her son. The visit and the prayer were oriented to comfort the patient and her son, and alleviate the patient's worries and anxieties. I had a call from my supervisor the next day morning that the patient had died early in the morning, and the family asked me to lead the memorial service. I had an impression that the patient was able to let go of fear and anxieties after the visit and was assisted as she passed on.

The second case was that of a terminally-ill patient called, Mary in the palliative unit. During the team visit, she expressed her last wishes. She wanted to eat her ethnic food before her departure. The palliative care team obtained a day pass from the unit, and assisted her to go to her ethnic restaurant. As she returned, the team was also able to connect with her long-lost son overseas. The relationship between the mother and the long-estranged son was momentarily restored over the phone before she died. The patient's hopes were richly fulfilled with the assistance of the palliative care team's efforts. She died peacefully.

There was another elderly woman named, Rebecca who was terminally ill in the palliative unit and who died peacefully after she had received Holy Communion with her beloved niece's presence in her room. This woman was single all her life and was a very devout Catholic. Her faith was an essential element in her life journey. She died comforted by receiving

the body of Christ, with the hope of meeting Him. This was aided by our communal prayer with her niece, as she was passing on.

I presently witness to the love of God day to day when I serve the residents in our facility. A resident, Irene in her late eighties suffers from constant migraine. As she walks to the chapel with her walker every day, she offers her pain to God, praying for the souls in purgatory. She finds purpose and meaning by doing so. One resident, aged seventy, Rachel who after a traumatic experience was brought by paramedics to our care home, has started to slowly come back to worship in the chapel. She goes beyond self-separation by moving out of her room and her physical and spiritual pain. When she moved in, she promised me that she would come out of her room and attend the morning liturgy every morning.

She died comforted by receiving the body of Christ, with the hope of meeting Him. This was aided by our communal prayer with her niece, as she was passing on.

Another resident, Milton, who is in his eighties wheels himself to the chapel in order to stand before Jesus every Sunday. Sometimes he arrives after mass. After receiving the Holy Communion, he stays on, praying with quiet reflection. This spiritual practice gives him hope and meaning. Sometimes he opens himself up, with tears running down on his cheeks, to talk about the traumatic memories of WWII and his miraculous survival during the war. Sometimes he brings a flower arrangement to the altar in order to offer it to God. His faith in God sustains him every day, and his unflinching prayer to God gives him hope for tomorrow.

Miriam, in her nineties, who was very depressed and did not wish to prolong her life with medications, gradually moved out of her depression with the support of the team and the words of encouragement and comfort offered at my visit. She opened her heart to accept my invitation to pray together in the dark night of her soul. Though she is strongly opposed to attending any communal liturgy in the chapel, she quietly opened herself up to her God when we met together in that sacred space and was able to petition God to live her life

fully with continued medical assistance until her departure though the time is unknown.

With age, faith becomes a constant companion to help us heal ourselves both interiorly and exteriorly. Faith needs to be aided by the grace of God. It requires the spirit of humility (humus), acceptance and patience because sometimes we need to patiently wait for God's time (kairos) to arrive. Every day, in prayer, we bring ourselves to God, surrendering ourselves to God's will and His plan. This leads to my third point. If faith helps healing, how do we foster and nurture this relationship on a daily basis?

When we let go of our anxieties, worries and fears, our intimate relationship with God grows, which means that we become more whole.

As I have experienced, personally and professionally, even if healing is achieved momentarily and instantly, it seems that we need to nurture our interior life through constant prayer and spiritual exercises in order to sustain its state. It is because spirituality is, as defined by the CHAC (Catholic Health Association of Canada), "the search for the sacred. [It is] a conscious striving to move beyond isolation and self-absorption to a deeper awareness of interconnectedness with the self, other human beings and the transcendent [all created beings, if I may add]."¹⁸ Nourishing the health and transformed state of a person through various spiritual exercises on a daily basis, gives the person an opportunity to move beyond separation and enters in union with God and the world.

If healing means making a person whole, it seems that it takes a life time of work to be whole. For those who are hospitalised, the illness and sickness can certainly be an avenue to becoming more whole. People may be healed or cured through medical procedures and other wholistic intervention.

Healing as a Life-long Process

With faith, murmuring and complaint become patient waiting "taking all into her heart," as Mary showed us; this reflects her spirit of fiat. In the process of saying yes, we let go of fear and doubt, allowing the Holy Spirit to rule our heart.

We become more in tune with the Holy Spirit. As our flesh becomes purified, our life bears much fruit.

It seems that our soul is in a constant process of growing, bringing our soul closer to God in our life journey. Faith is, as Merton said, not merely conformity; it is faith which embraces all areas of life. The purification of the soul is the process of the soul maturing as we have seen in the case of John of the Cross. We are created to be holy as God is holy. In times of trials and supplications, we are tested in fire. We may put the question to God, whether He is present or not in our darkness. By asking this question honestly, our relationship with God becomes more intimate and, as a result, we become closer to God with repentance for our doubt and distrust. As Merton rightly puts it the more our faith deepens, the more we become helpless.²⁰ In the darkness of our faith, "we bear fruit in the light of wisdom," as we, through faith, unite with a higher reality of truth.²¹

When we let go of our anxieties, worries and fears, our intimate relationship with God grows, which means that we become more whole. Good example would be the way the risen Lord loves Thomas who had doubt arising in his heart (John 20:24-29). The risen Lord did neither condemn nor accuse Thomas for his doubt but simply invited him to see and touch his wounds, allowing him to be in touch with his humanity. When Thomas' doubt melted away by the love of the risen Lord, he was instantly healed. The same gesture of love comes from Jesus as Peter was drowning in the sea. Peter had doubt in his heart. As the winds increased, he noticed it, and a doubt entered into his heart. Jesus saved him from drowning in the water. (Matthew 14:22-33)

When the prodigal son repented, he had the courage to return home to his father. Upon his return, the merciful father embraced his son and celebrated his return. His repentance took place when he came to his senses (Luke 15:11-32) in an interior work (transformation) and he returned home (exterior change).

In this process of spiritual growth, faith also seems to mature over time throughout the whole life-span. In the case of Joseph, the broken relationship between Joseph and his siblings was restored over a life time. Our personal relationship with God, neighbours, community grows over time and in this process, we are called to embrace more of the Holy Spirit, letting go of the fruits of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-26). By doing so, we become holier and are restored to the original state of the person we were created to be.

A person is blessed to flourish abundantly. Faith has to be nourished by food so that it may grow and bear fruit.²²

Healing likewise seems to take place over life, as faith continues to grow. When faith and healing mutually illumine, therefore, our soul's relationship with God becomes more intimate, and this in turn enables us to see ourselves and the world as God sees ourselves and the world. In both ways, faith seems to be essential to our healing process. As we anticipate the coming of the Holy Spirit liturgically, may the Holy Spirit sanctify us, purify us, heal us and make us whole.

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¹ This article is based on writer's own Catholic faith background. Faith and healing are not exclusive. Under the guidance of charity, faith perfects a human person in loving God more and in this process, a person is healed, becomes wholesome by restoring his/her original state. As St. Irenaeus remarked God is glorified, when man is fully alive.

² This idea is taken from Teilhard de Chardin, S. J. who shared an insight in his remark, "We are spiritual beings having a human experience."

³ I was inspired by St. John Paul II's insights which are embedded in his talks, *Man and Woman He created them*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006). As healing means, "making [a person] whole," it is truly the restoration to the original status of a person into which he or she was originally created, as John Paul II suggests.

⁴ *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, revised ed. trans. Kieran Kavanaugh & Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, D. C. ICS Publications, 1991), 358.

⁵ St. John of the Cross, *ibid.*

⁶ Thomas Merton (1972), *New seeds of contemplation* (New York, New Directions), 136.

⁷ Harold Koenig (1999), *ibid.*, 111.

⁸ Koenig, *ibid.*, 70.

⁹ Koenig, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Koenig, *ibid.*, 72.

¹¹ See Christina Puchalski (1999), Touching the Spirit: The Essence of Healing, *Spiritual Life*, Vol. 45, no. 1, 154 & Koenig, *ibid.*, 36, & Christina Puchalski & Anna Romer (2000), "Taking a Spiritual History Allows Clinicians to Understand Patients More Fully," *Journal of Palliative Medicine*, Vol. 3, 1, 130.

¹² Jane Teas (2010), "Medicine can give me a diagnosis, and faith can give me a different prognosis: faith and healing in the American South," *Explore*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Jan/Feb, 17.

¹³ Christina Puchalski (1999), Touching the Spirit: The Essence of Healing, *ibid.*, 154.

¹⁴ Christina Puchalski & Anna Romer, *ibid.*, 131.

¹⁵ Viktor Frankl, *Man's search for meaning: an introduction to logotherapy, from death camp to existentialism* (Beacon Press: Boston, 1959), preface by Gordon W. Allport & Translated by Ilse Lasch, x.

¹⁶ Frankl, *ibid.*, xi.

¹⁷ For Stein, "the fullness of humanity is actualized in a dual manner: in the person of Christ and in the entire human race. But Adam was united with Christ by grace." St. Edith Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*, trans Kurt F. Reinhart (Washington D. C.: ICS Publications, 2002), 524-525.

¹⁸ CHAC: *Health Ethics Guide* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2012), 129-30.

¹⁹ Merton, *New seeds of contemplation*, 137

²⁰ Merton, *ibid.*, 133-4

²¹ Merton, *ibid.*, 141.

²² Ann Shields, *More of the Holy Spirit: how to keep the fire burning in our hearts*, Frederick: The Word among us Press (2013), 50.

Spiritual Care in an Era of Pluralism and Lay Spirituality

Gaston Lachance

A spiritual care practitioner for more than 25 years, particularly in institutional and community psychiatry, the author has, in recent years, been in charge of the graduate microprogram in spiritual care and a lecturer in the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at the Université de Sherbrooke. He is also a clinical spiritual care specialist and a teaching supervisor of clinical internships in spiritual care for the Association des intervenantes et intervenants en soins spirituels du Québec (AIISSQ/CASC). He defended his doctoral thesis at Université Laval (Quebec City) in 2012, which was a descriptive study of the spiritual experience and the experience of recovery in mental health.

For many decades, the practice of providing accompaniment for the suffering in health care institutions was both homogeneous and compartmentalized. Homogeneous, in terms of the main expressions of a support practice that crossed religious traditions (being present with and listening to people, dispensing rites and rituals), but also compartmentalized (representation of each tradition at an institution). But, in recent years, we have been seeing a reinterpretation of the beliefs, rites and practices that are the new benchmarks for human thought and action in Quebec society. In this article, we will focus, first, on the socio-cultural context by recognizing, to begin with, diversity, pluralism and the spiritual quest of contemporary human beings and, second, the paradigm shift that has occurred in institutions in terms of spiritual accompaniment, raising different issues for practitioners, both lay and religious. The need for them to review their approach with users, and for trainers/supervisors to rearticulate the content of clinical training for trainees, suggests that there are numerous challenges to be met in these settings regarding the pertinence of having a compassionate presence that is open to all and present for all.



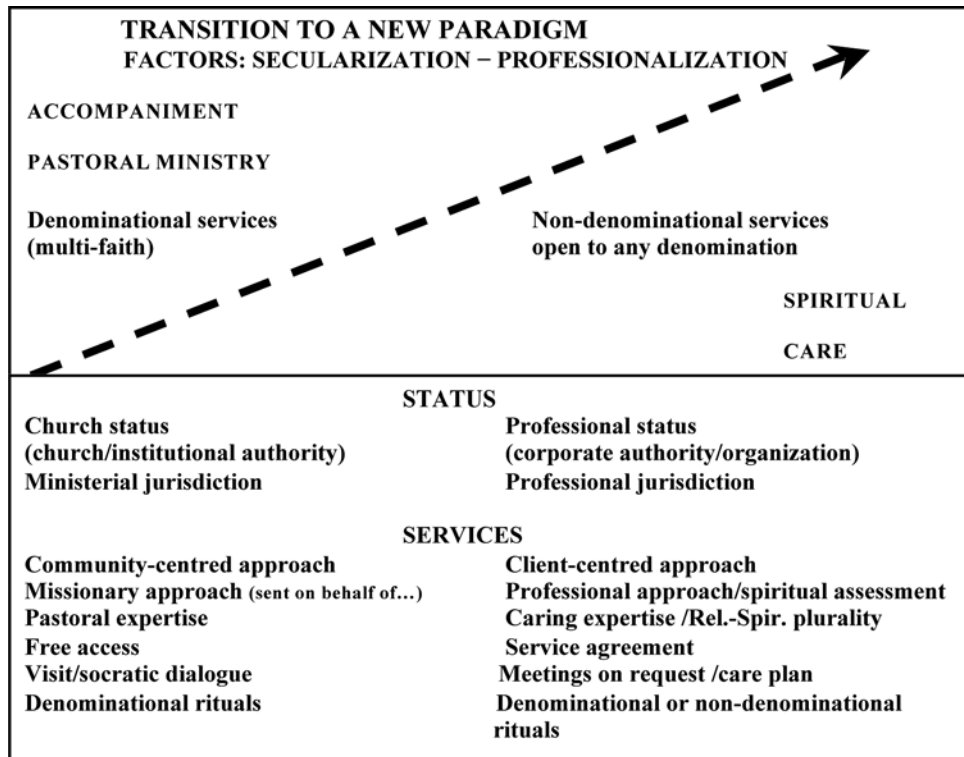
Taking into account cultural diversity, pluralism and the contemporary spiritual quest

In the past 60 years or so, there have been dramatic changes in Quebec society and in the entire Western world in terms of institutions and the socio-religious. Our contemporary context is characterized by pluralism in religions and spiritualities, where humans all share the same quest for personal and collective fulfillment.

For Aulenbacher and Moldo, the ideological field is characterized less by the split between clericalism/ anticlericalism [or clergy/laity, here in Quebec] than by an openness to pluralism in which religion is on the same footing as spiritualities. If a large part of cultural and religious heritage remains unknown today to recent generations, for these authors, we are witnessing a type of renewal in the way people live out their faith: personal journey, spiritual experience, allowing more room today for feeling and sensing, as if contemporary man's spiritual quest had become more mystical than intellectual, more individual than community-based, more personal than institutional. What is important now is self-actualization.¹

In 1999, at a pastoral ministry conference focusing on mental health,² Dr. Jean-Yves Roy, a psychiatrist, addressed an audience of spiritual care practitioners, suggesting an interesting metaphor for contemporary Quebec man, the *quilted man*. He recalled that our grandmothers used to make works of art with pieces of material. In our present society, people are looking for multiple experiences in order to move toward a greater unity of being. Quilted man therefore borrows from various traditions as he searches for the meaning of his life. In searching for personalization, the subject develops a system for interpreting belief and builds his own private domestic religion.³

The paradigm shift: from pastoral ministry to spiritual care
Two factors may explain this gradual paradigm shift: the public character of institutions and their transfer into lay hands; the increasing professionalization of spiritual care and the professional approach through competencies. Studies on spirituality and their impact on health have stimulated this change.



First factor: The public character of institutions and their secularization

Before the 1960s, health care, which was mainly in the hands of the religious orders that ran most hospitals at the time, was permeated with the prevailing religious vision. In Quebec, the Catholic Church generally met the needs of the sick using a denominational approach. After 1960, the phenomenon of the secularization of health care institutions and having the government take charge of hospitals accounted for most of the need for adjustment and transformation in pastoral ministry services.

For some 50 years, we have been witnessing dramatic institutional and socio-religious changes throughout the Western world. In Quebec, in particular, we have gone in recent decades from a national church to a secular society in which religion is now based on freedom of choice, with an abundance of spiritual currents to choose from. The best indicator of this movement has been the clients themselves, as we have met them in clinics, and whose homogeneous affiliation has eroded due to the free flow of various influences. According to some observers, the community requires services that meet the need for both spiritual and religious care. While visiting the sick in bygone days had

evangelizing or even missionary aims, since 1960, the public and secular nature of institutions, as set out in section 100 of the *Act Respecting Health Services and Social Services*, has called for compliance with the rules of a secular society through a non-denominational approach that is nonetheless open to denominational practice.⁴

Being a spiritual care professional in the Quebec context means meeting the challenge of pluralism and of having a non-denominational approach that is open to denominational practices. We will return to this later.

Second factor: The professionalization of care of the soul

In the past 60 years, we have experienced a number of changes in our field:

- We have gone from spiritual direction (mainly Jesuit- and Salesian-influenced) to spiritual accompaniment, following the contributions made by psychology and psychoanalysis (cf. Freud and Rogers).
- We are now moving from spiritual accompaniment to spiritual care through the contributions made by Jung and Frankl, and especially the resurgence of the cure

of souls practised as spiritual therapy (in the great tradition of Philo, the spiritual masters of the East, the Fathers of the Church, the Protestant Reformation). This resurgence began with William James and continued with Jung and his theory of individuation, taking the process of spiritual transformation into consideration.

These contributions have been incorporated into the clinical training for pastoral ministry in health care (spiritual care), training that dates back to the beginning of the last century, thanks to the American pastor Anton Boisen, one of its founders. Boisen maintained that specialized training was crucial to develop the skills of chaplains involved in caring for the sick. For Boisen, because every person was a “living document,” with their own complexity, mystery, unique character and specific journey, it was necessary for training, beyond theology, to provide efficient clinical accreditation for future chaplains so that they would be able to understand, accompany and help people recover from illness, drawing support from their own spiritual resources. For that, one condition: trainees had to get out of the rut of their own illusions about themselves in order to move toward their truth, to recognize themselves as a “living document” of their history, in relation with their culture and environment. In so doing, they might end up revealing not only the darker parts of themselves, but also the brighter ones (their own mystery, etc.). As can be seen, the perspective of therapeutic order had already been recognized in clinical training through the attention paid to the dynamic aspects of experience so that clinical trainees could operate the levers that facilitate spiritual transformation.

In Quebec, professionalization began in the 1960s, when clinical training in hospital/spiritual pastoral care was offered at two health care institutions by the *Association des intervenantes et interventants en soins spirituels du Québec* (AISSSQ, formerly AQPS/ACPEP, AAAPSQ, AAHQ), in partnership with university teaching institutions.

Following this acknowledgement of a new paradigm, we took on a new title as spiritual care professionals, officially since 2011 (and no longer pastoral animators or spiritual animators).

The increasing search for the benefits of spirituality on overall health

In addition to the preceding two factors, the rapid development of health sciences, which has radically altered the relationship between spiritual care and health care,

recognizes the spiritual component as part of the overall care⁵ of the individual. A long-overlooked component of health care, it is now taken into account in several disciplines, including medicine, as spiritual experiences can be associated with crises triggered by illness.⁶ Van Leeuwen *et coll.* has a long list of spiritual themes related to illness, such as a negative view of life, loss of life's meaning or significance, lack of faith and hope, anger with God, fear of death as well as wanting to just get it over with, inability to surrender or to accept leaving loved ones behind, etc. Research tends to focus on developing the relationship between spirituality and health, spirituality and illness, spotlighting the fact that it helps people deal WITH illness, make crucial decisions about their recovery, facing death, etc.⁷ It also gives life meaning and a sense of direction, as well as renewed hope and inner peace, which can translate into real reassurance. It is central to the process of acceptance that allows people to continue to journey with a serious problem (chronic illness, degenerative illness). It is recognized as an important coping strategy in the process of illness prevention and healing.

The approach taken by AISSSQ spiritual care professionals

Because, for many decades, institutions had a religious affiliation, the Churches trained, supported and authorized the people involved in caring for the sick. They issued a pastoral mandate, a sort of permit, that authorized the holder (priest, pastor or religious) to accompany the sick. Since the 1970s, in order to keep in step with contemporary reality, spiritual care professionals have become members of clinical staff and public sector employees. Their conditions of affiliation have changed as a result, to better reflect the secular nature and modernity of our institutions as well as the professional character of the function.⁸ The pastoral mandate has been eliminated.

In public institutions, spiritual care professionals are required, in the course of their duties, to show openness to any denomination or tradition, and not to engage in any religious proselytizing. They take a non-denominational approach but are open to denominational practices. On the same ethical basis as other professionals, they maintain a certain distance from their own faith tradition or type of spiritual life so that they can properly accompany patients, putting the focus on the individual, their suffering or their spiritual distress.

This approach is becoming better known, both among other caregivers and among individuals in hospital or in care who want to combat the prejudice of bias, favouritism and proselytism. It seeks to be receptive to and curious about the various spiritual currents in its presence. In accordance

with the principle of freedom of religion and of conscience, it shows openness to the unique and sacred character of every person, whatever his or her beliefs. It transcends our care programs and is concretely reflected in how we set up the areas for our activities (for instance, the chapel, which has had to become a place for spiritual renewal, an oasis of peace for all spiritualities and religions). To quote Marshall McLuhan, if the medium is the message, then our interior design is as well!

Clinical training of spiritual care professionals

The clinical internship in spiritual care prepares trainees to perform the professional duties of a *spiritual care professional* in Quebec's health and social services network. The AISSQ meets Canadian and U.S. clinical training standards and works in close partnership with the CASC-ACSS (Canadian Association for Spiritual Care – *Association canadienne de soins spirituels*) which, in turn, partners with U.S. associations. The AISSQ offers internships in Quebec, in French and English, as well as in Europe (CHUV-Lausanne).

Some of the descriptive elements of this internship are outlined below. The internship is given in partnership with the health and social services institutions as well as the teaching institutions.

The clinical internship in spiritual care is an introduction to the various forms of intervention for meeting the needs of patients and their loved ones. These include:

- meetings for spiritual care or follow-up, requiring a spiritual assessment or the preparation of a spiritual care plan;
- meetings for spiritual consolidation or maintenance by using spiritual methods;
- spiritual assistance to the family or other loved ones;
- leading denominational or non-denominational rituals (reconciliation, end of life, death, etc);
- small- or large-group sharing/discussion/assistance activities;
- community activities (spiritual renewal activities, religious services);
- advising caregivers;
- meetings as part of a multi/interdisciplinary team.

The trainee feeds back to caregivers on how to take the spiritual sphere of the person in hospital or in care into more consideration, particularly the person's view of life/illness/death/afterlife, the transformation of the person's calling/life mission, his spiritual way of life, his values, his image of God/the Other, his tradition and beliefs, his existential attitude and the existential issue arising from his present situation.

Profile of trainees

Since 2008, I have been supervising clinical training internships in spiritual care at the Université de Sherbrooke. Over the years, the internships have been spread out over the territory of the RUIS, covering close to a million people.⁹ The cohorts of trainees are made up of students from any religious affiliation or spiritual sensitivity: believers; agnostics; new or traditional Christian faiths (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox); Muslim faith; Buddhist spirituality, First Nations spirituality.

The trainees come from different cultural and religious backgrounds in the Sherbrooke area and the Greater Montreal Area. Making the groups pluralistic is an asset in clinical training in spiritual care because each person is encouraged to share the specific riches of their own anchor point as well as deal with differences in accompanying peers and the sick. The composition of the groups is a mutual benefit that helps everyone better respond to contemporary challenges.

However, what motivates the students transcends cultures and sensitivities. Learning how to offer quality spiritual care to a patient and the patient's loved ones becomes the crucible that gives each one an opportunity to make his or her unique contribution. The trainees have so much to offer, both in terms of cultural and spiritual differences and their individual takes on the themes encountered in clinical work: suffering, healing, end of life. In seminar activities (didactic, growth workshop, verbatim analysis), this wealth is shared in group exchanges – each one contributing to a view of life, health, illness and end of life – but also to sharing of spiritual resources, strategies and methods to meet the needs of others. The spiritual renewal activities, experienced first in the classroom group and then in the community of the health care institution, offer another opportunity to appreciate the unique contributions of each person.

Skills training

This is an ideal type of training because it allows trainees to mobilize, organize, integrate and apply their knowledge (clinical knowledge and knowledge of how to act, what to say and what to do) in a given clinical situation (contextual event).

The competencies are aimed at providing quality spiritual care to patients and their loved ones, while respecting the requirements of the clinical setting; achieving an optimal awareness of oneself and the other; developing a relational approach that shows a spiritual understanding of the reality of suffering experienced by the sick and their loved ones; an ability to communicate empathetically, while respecting others' differences; acquiring an ethical way of seeing and acting; developing the capacity to collaborate with other professionals and exercise professional leadership; a capacity to renew oneself through reading and continuous education.

Contemporary demands of spiritual care work in the health and social services network

Spiritual care work is based on the person and their culture. For some, respecting their tradition is central to the care given, which calls for a knowledge of the sacred texts and doctrines of their tradition, and their rites, practices and codes (moral codes, dietary codes, etc.). For others, respecting their spirituality (lay or other) means taking it into consideration and validating it by listening without judging and knowing its values, principles and beliefs.

“Spiritual care” means, among other things ...

- establishing an authentic relationship with the other person, based on empathy and an inclusive approach;
- helping the other person to name their suffering ... moral/spiritual (worry, guilt, conflict of values) and promote a metabolizing of it;
- helping the other person to face their losses, their discomfort, their new living conditions;
- helping the other person to reveal their real need, their deepest desire, their basic aspirations;
- helping the other person to move toward salvation i.e., inner healing, change;
- helping the other person to mobilize their inner or spiritual resources to move toward recovery, or redefining themselves, or the end of life;
- helping the other person to find an inner sense of well-being, harmony and unity.

...which calls for:

- knowledge of theology, religious and spiritual traditions, cure of souls, spiritual therapy or spiritual care (spiritual experience, spiritual component of health, illness and recovery; knowledge of the dynamics of spiritual transformation);
- professional action based on having professional skills, a working method based on models of spiritual care, a framework, professional standards of practice, a code of ethics.

Challenges in spiritual care...

...being able to take the new faces of religion and spirituality into consideration

In order to offer denominational services to meet religious needs, we have developed approaches that are sensitive to users' expectations. Wherever there are populations representing one or several denominations, human resources are present in the institution, or agreements have been reached to provide services. Furthermore, regarding the provision of spiritual care, the *Quebec Act respecting Health Services and Social Services* stipulates that institutions are required to meet the religious and spiritual needs of users. Certainly, one of the challenges to be met is the ability to take into account the new faces of spirituality, to be receptive to the other's experience, which draws from the one Source of Love to satisfy their thirst. In this pluralistic context, spiritual care needs to be able to recognize the aspects of immanence and transcendence in each person's unique experience, which is often interpreted as an experience of something beyond oneself. In clinical work, it is not unusual to meet people with sensitivities that are both Western (opting for a religion) and Eastern (opting for a spiritual philosophy or wisdom). On the jacket of their book, authors Scheuer and Gira point out the Western situation of persons with multiple affiliations:

“...a new phenomenon is gaining ground right before our eyes: a growing number of our contemporaries are refusing choices that mean exclusion. They no longer want to be Christian or Hindu, or Christian or Buddhist but instead want to drink from the wells of several religions without denying any of them.”¹⁰ [translation]

For the spiritual care professional, this means accompanying each pilgrim respectfully in their search for meaning (of illness, healing, death, afterlife).

...being able to recognize a fundamental spirituality in each human being

Kees Waaijman, a Carmelite professor at Titus Brandsma Institute who is well known for his work to systematize spirituality, encourages exploration of the very foundations of any spirituality, whether it is lived out in a religion or not.¹¹ For him, over the centuries, we have neglected to take lay spirituality into account, something that has always been present in contexts of secularization or religious aridity. Often misunderstood or not understood at all, it nonetheless frames everyday life for many people in our day. If it has endured in this manner, crossing the centuries, it is because it is “original” to human existence, in the sense that it touches the origins of human beings and society.

Waaijman traces the following elements in fundamental spirituality: a deep and personal relationship with the divine reality, mediated by prayer and other rituals; life itself and the goodness of the creator; discernment of what gives life or leads to death; a sense of community with the cosmos and all living things; a sense of community with dear ones who have left us.

In this secular world, this author lists various situations for health professionals that illustrate primordial spirituality: listening and compassion shown by care staff and volunteers; respect for patients and their integrity; care as a mediation of divine love; the pertinent use of sacred texts, prayer and rituals; sharing, solidarity, concern for justice and equity; promotion of values and ethics, etc.

Along the same lines, Jacques Grand'Maison, in his book *Une spiritualité laïque au quotidien*, clearly shows that the generations after us, even if they do not declare themselves to be Christians or the followers of any religion, have their own spirituality and this spirituality is authentic.¹² A veritable compendium of spiritual humanism, this book presents nine gateways to the spiritual which Grand'Maison recognizes as fundamental for all human beings: nature and the feeling of transcendence in realities that go beyond us; noble values and their transmission to the next generation; the search for meaning and wisdom; the belief that life is worth living; the attraction of silence and the interior life; the beauty and expansion of human beings; awareness of and listening to the inner voice; the challenges to be met in the human adventure; authentic engagement.

...knowing how to be a companion for someone in encountering the One

The main issue for anyone involved in the experience of illness, recovery or end of life has to do with spiritual healing. For most, this journey will lead them by means of spiritual care from suffering and distress to improved or complete spiritual well-being, i.e. a state of peace and inner joy. In this experience (which may extend over several years), some people may be led to a broadening of their spiritual horizons. According to the work of James Fowler on the stages of faith, these people have transcended the boundaries of religion and spiritual wisdom to achieve a universal and unifying vision.¹³ Like the mystical path, the path of long-suffering lived in openness to the Greater than I or the Transcendent helps them go beyond their house, their institution, their school of faith, and open themselves to all the wealth of others. Suffering may then be the royal road that brings together the many into One in the breath of love.¹⁴

¹ Aulenbacher, Christine and Robert Moldo, Ni coach, ni thérapeute, ni gourou : L'accompagnateur spirituel, un guide fraternel, Paris, Médiaspaul, 2010, p. 22-23.

² A conference held annually by the Comité en santé mentale de l'Association québécoise de la pastorale de la santé, now the Association des intervenantes et intervenants en soins spirituels du Québec.

³ Villepelet Denis, L'avenir de la catéchèse, Paris, Les Éditions de l'Atelier/Lumen Vitae, 2003, p. 28

⁴ See the brief from the Association des intervenantes et intervenants en soins spirituels du Québec (AISSQ), submitted and presented to the Bouchard-Taylor Commission in 2007. [Online, French only] http://aiissq.org/pdf/memoire_comm_bouchard_taylor_aiissq_7.1.1.2007.pdf (page consulted on April 24, 2012).

⁵ Tremblay Joël et al, Évaluation des croyances et des besoins spirituels et religieux des usagers du Centre de réadaptation Ubaldo-Villeneuve, CRUV, CRAT-CA, CPSSS, Québec, 2009.

⁶ Wardell Diane Wind and Joan C. Engebretson, "Taxonomy of Spiritual Experiences," *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 45 (2), 2006, p. 215

⁷ Van Leeuwen René, Lucas J. Tiesinga, Henk Jochemsen, Doeke Post, "Aspects of Spirituality concerning Illness," *Scand J Caring Sci*, 2007, Vol. 21, p. 482-489

⁸ The principle of secularism is not incompatible with the users of a public service expressing their religious convictions. It does not mean forbidding religion, just not promoting it.

⁹ The clinical territory of the RUIS (the integrated university health care network) of the Université de Sherbrooke covers the Estrie, part of the Montérégie and the Centre-du-Québec areas of Quebec.

¹⁰ Scheuer Jacques and Dennis Gira (ed.), *Vivre de plusieurs religions : promesse ou illusion?*, Paris, Éditions de l'Atelier/Éditions ouvrières, Coll. «Questions ouvertes», 2000.

¹¹ Waaijman Kees, "Challenges of Spirituality in Contemporary Times", *Lectures Series 3 on Spirituality*, 2004. [Online] www.isa.org.ph/pdf/Waaijman.pdf (document consulted on May 7, 2015).

¹² Grand'Maison Jacques, *Une spiritualité laïque au quotidien. Neuf voies d'accès au spirituel*, Montreal, Novalis, 2013.

¹³ Fowler James, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1981.

¹⁴ Scheuer Jacques and Dennis Gira, *Vivre de plusieurs religions : promesse ou illusion?*, Paris, Éditions de l'Atelier, 2000, p. 175.

Being a Spiritual Caregiver in the Quebec Healthcare System: With or Without a Denominational Affiliation?

Mario Drouin

From the age of 10, I wanted to be a priest. But it was only after studying horticulture and a few years of work that my old dream came back to me. After studying theology and spending five years in a Cistercian monastery, I felt a need to share the joy I felt: my life had meaning. God had filled me with good things, and I was happy following him.



I had the privilege of ministering to young Catholics in the Diocese of Joliette (Quebec). I inevitably had to adjust my theological vocabulary to be understood by young people, and focus my pastoral care on listening to their concerns. During those years, the liturgical function of my ministry was temporarily on hold. My everyday life was filled with listening and discussion. I felt at ease among the young people who, like me, wondered about the meaning of life and especially about their future. It was through these young people that I had my first contact with the Mennonite Church in Joliette as well as with other Christian churches. The young people and I attended several “youthquakes”, which consisted of an evening of prayer interspersed with singing and preaching. Through them, I discovered unity in diversity.

It was a Mennonite minister who helped me realize that a rainbow is made up of many colours as well as mixtures of colours. The same is true of our faith. I have my own colour, and when it is joined with other people’s colours, it contributes to the beauty of the rainbow. There are days that I may tend more toward another colour but, basically, I remain the same. I very much liked this image which, for me, perfectly describes the unconditional respect and openness that the young people showed each other. Through these encounters, I always looked for what brought us together,

what we had in common. I understood that Christ, through the Bible, is central, and that I am not the only one to make him the centre of my life.

Discovering Suffering

It was not until a few years after my ordination that I started to work in a healthcare setting. I discovered suffering in everyday life through people who were looking for meaning in it. I also came to realize that their suffering very often extended beyond physical pain.

This led me to begin my education as a clinical spiritual caregiver through the CAPPE (Canadian Association for Pastoral Practice and Education), at Notre-Dame Hospital, part of the CHUM superhospital system in Montreal. Through this training, I came into contact with a supervisor who was a United Church minister from the Canton de Vaux, in Switzerland. Our cohort of interns also included a female candidate for ordination in the Presbyterian Church who belonged to the Anglican Church of Canada. It was during this time I realized that when I talked about my faith and beliefs, other people did not necessarily understand what I meant and did not systematically subscribe to them. This was a defining phase in my education, during which I became more intensely aware of the uniqueness of my spiritual relationship with God. I understood that God was with me in a unique way, with all my strengths and my limitations, at a given moment, and that he acts the same way with all of us. It was through being in contact with these different shades of colour that I learned to distance myself from my own points of reference, spiritually speaking, so that I could be more attentive to the other’s unique colour.

Armed with what I had learned during this first internship, I left for Switzerland and found myself at the CHUV (the Vaux university hospital centre) in Lausanne. It is an area in which Catholics and Protestants have coexisted more or less harmoniously for many generations, and this climate of divergence colours even the relations between families.

During this second internship, I realized that I wanted to help people find and give meaning to their lives, or at least to what they were going through. Focused more on the person than on his beliefs, the alliance between two people transcends denomination and religious affiliation. It is by listening at length to other people expressing their needs and sharing their inner resources that I have discovered my own needs and my own potential. I realized that within each person's specific beliefs and rituals, there is common ground: the place where we enter into contact with transcendence, where our deepest desires exist, a place of communion between people. Through these encounters, my theology came alive and confronted the reality of what I was experiencing in my life. In contact with death and suffering on a daily basis, my concept or image of God changed. People in hospital recounted their NDEs (near-death experiences) to me, similar to ones that can be read about on the Internet or in books. It goes without saying that their stories called my concept of God into question, as well as many of the convictions I had acquired during my theological studies, which were often the product of highly intellectual concepts from the Middle Ages.

Encounter and Sharing

During those years spent accompanying the suffering, I learned to open myself more to others by going toward the transcendent that is within me and within the other, each of us with our own beliefs. Our convictions, although often different, are often very complementary, like the colours of the rainbow. I also realized that even though most of the people I accompany have been baptized in the Catholic faith, each one has a very personal relationship with the denomination they were born into and with its beliefs.

Throughout my training, I came to identify what makes me happy and how personal these sources of joy are. I concluded that, since it is so personal for me, then the journey of the other must most certainly be so as well. Just as it is for me... You will probably tell me that this is not such a startling revelation. But it is! Let me explain through the following example. No doubt it has happened to you that after eating a dish you particularly enjoyed, you have wanted to give the recipe to people you know so that they can discover it and enjoy it too. By doing this, you want to share some of your happiness and pleasure with them. However, it is very possible that you may not. Everyone is different and has their own way of doing things, their own way of making progress, often one step at a time. I have learned, over the course of my experiences of accompanying others, that what is meaningful to me will not necessarily have the same emotional impact for someone else. Once I have understood this nuance, I must be all the more attentive in listening to

the unique person I am accompanying so that I am careful not to push him to like *my* recipe but instead together to find dishes that he will like.

One morning, I was called to a patient in the palliative care unit, a man of 57, the father of three young adults. He wanted to live and was angry with God, with life, with everything. He asked me for "A WORD." "Give me A WORD, that's what you're there for!" I told him that there was a Bible right beside him, wasn't he able to find A WORD for himself? He told me that he had read Romans 8:18 that morning: "*I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.*" Although this man was accustomed to reading the Bible and being fed by the Word, that morning, he could not make sense of that verse. Instead, it added to his anger and distress. His anger was understandable. Disease and the closeness of death were preventing him from getting on with his plans for his life. After this reading, I understood why he wanted me to give him "a word." But instead, I chose to give him a lot of time listening to what he had to say. Listening to how the disease was taking away his life, preventing him from walking alongside his children and his grandchildren; listening to how the disease had broken his loving relationships with his wife and family.

Learning to respect the journey and needs of the other is an art that must be developed. It requires having trust in the one I am accompanying, that I can let him find his own path, by encouraging him to go down the road, bringing his resources and inspirations, according to his abilities. It may look like leaving him to suffer, but rather it is believing in him and what is strong and deep inside him.

I also remember a woman who was afraid of dying. After exploring her fears together, we concluded that she was afraid of God's judgment. She feared having to spend a lot of time in "purgatory." She remembered being told as a child that if she touched the host with her teeth during communion, Jesus would bleed. She still had some of these beliefs from her childhood. In her head, she knew that they did not make sense, but the fear she felt was stronger than her. She needed to be reassured. She needed to build her self-confidence, to become a spiritually mature adult before God and with God. We spent some wonderful time together, in which I discovered a woman who was rich in life experiences, in relationships and in love. She had simply forgotten to let God grow up in her relationship with him. Before she died, she promised me that, if she could, she would show herself to me first. She died while I was on vacation, and I can tell you that I knew the moment that she entered into new life, because she made me aware of her presence.

Experiences like these have shaken my faith and my convictions, but they have truly fed me, both spiritually and as a human being. Being close to death every day also means being close to life every day. Little by little, these meaningful encounters have taken me from a speculative theology to a life-giving one.

Am I still Catholic?

Today, after all these encounters, am I still Catholic? I will say yes, but not in the same way. Now, I believe that we all have a common base. As in painting with colours, there is a common white base that is used to mix the colours, and there is someone bigger than I am who is there with me, who invites me to go beyond myself in what I am experiencing in terms of life, relationships and love. That is who gives me both my singularity and my unity. This is how I can be a spiritual caregiver. And I hope that this is how the people I meet in the course of my work can find meaning and give meaning to what they are living.

Being close to death every day also means being close to life every day. Little by little, these meaningful encounters have taken me from a speculative theology to a life-giving one.

Through my education, I learned to listen to what and who people believe in. I learned to listen to the great joy their faith in their God had brought them, and I learned to listen to the great suffering that some of them had experienced by being a member of one religion or another. Once again, beyond all beliefs, there is a person who has an experience with the other and with the Wholly Other, and that is meaningful to him or her.

After my training as a spiritual caregiver, I began to train as a supervisor of interns in clinical spiritual care. Once again, my supervisor was a United Church of Canada minister. My openness to differences came naturally, and I continued to apply this basic principle, which is to be concerned first about the person rather than his or her religious denomination. I have had the privilege of supervising interns from a variety of faiths. The internship formula was designed to have a cohort of six students from different denominations. The culture shock and collision of beliefs is very revealing and edifying.

At the health centre where I currently practise as an internship supervisor, one of the first things I look at with the interns is the concept of spirituality and the concept of the hospitalized person's spiritual sphere.

Recent literature shows that the term "spirituality" has acquired many definitions which are aimed at the same goal, which is to express an essential part of the person without direct reference to his religious affiliation, particularly through the concept of "spirit."

Here are three definitions of spirituality which the Lausanne research group considered:

"It can be defined as having a dynamic and personal relationship with God. What a person considers to be the most important thing in his life may be considered his god, i.e., the central purpose of his time and life."

Canadian Nurse, 1980 [translation]

"A set of beliefs and practices specific to the spirit and the soul."

Riopelle et al., Soins infirmiers : un modèle centré sur les besoins, McGraw-Hill, Québec, 1984 [translation]

"... beyond language, ritual and religion, the spiritual is that secret space in which each one builds the meaning of their life, by wondering about their presence in the world and the possibility of transcendence. The spiritual is our original identity with an immanent dimension for relating to the other in feelings and emotions, and a transcendent dimension, rooted in man, connecting him to the sacred within him."

Dr. Claude Rougeron, March 2001 course on the spiritual dimension in care [translation]

Analyzing these various definitions led the group to consider six key words to characterize the spiritual sphere of the sick person in hospital:

Meaning: what guides us; how the person sees and understands what he is experiencing; everyone's need to have a reason for living.

Transcendence: relating to the ultimate; element(s) that go beyond the person and in relation to which the person names his dependence or his existential relation.

Values: what characterizes goodness and truth for the person; the things and beings that are important in a person's life.

Identity: what a person understands about himself and his place in the world and the afterlife.

Belonging: to whom and to what the person is attached; the types of relationships and ways a person feels connected and supported in his life and his person.

Ritual: something that helps to mark the passage of time, celebrate important moments and show what is important in life.

After reading many articles¹ and discussing the matter at length, the group arrived at the following definition of the spiritual dimension:

“The spiritual dimension of a hospitalized or frail person is determined by the system formed by the above six terms, namely meaning, transcendence, values, identity, belonging, ritual. The balance between these elements of the system contributes to the person’s overall well-being.” [translation]

This balance is related to various models of spiritual development (more or less structured), described in literature. These models at times lay emphasis on the person’s structuring relationship with transcendence, and at times on the connections between two of the other terms named above (meaning and values) as well as with a way of understanding the person’s moral/ethical actions and reasoning.²

Re-examining my faith

I would like to add a word here about the concept of *believing*, in human beings. Science helps humans understand the *how* of things and situations. But human beings also ask the question of *why* things happen. This question leads them to connect with the human ability to build a belief system that helps them attribute meaning or respond to the “why” of things and situations.

This path leads to defining spirituality as follows:

“The spirituality of a hospitalized or frail person is defined by the particular consistency that he makes known when he declares the meaning of his life, displays his values, designates his transcendence, acknowledges living in relationship and expresses all this through actions that structure his life. This consistency provides a basis for the person’s identity through his relationship to believing.”

In the course of their internships, students are encouraged to re-examine their beliefs using the chart for the spiritual sphere suggested to them. This is a very interesting exercise in which they each discover what is essential in their lives. When shared, this intimate information creates mutual listening and respect and sometimes raises questions. That is where the work of ecumenism comes in. By having deep respect for the other, openness to differences often leads to questioning that leads in turn to what is deepest and most basic inside each of us.

The work of the trainer/supervisor is also a concrete action in his personal pursuit of a faith journey. Supervising interns from every denomination has prompted me to update my own spiritual journey by regularly reviewing who and what I have come to believe in at this moment of my life. I also



know that I will constantly be called to put my beliefs into perspective during the course of events and throughout my relationships with the people around me. And it does not end there. Being a trainer is very stimulating for me in terms of personal and professional achievement, but also in terms of spirituality. If that were not the case, I would not be doing this work.

God is the one who heals

A 16th-century French surgeon, Dr. Ambroise Paré (1509-1590), said: “I bandage the wound: God is one who heals it.” These words of a surgeon not known to have been Catholic or Protestant are written on one of the walls of the CHUV in Lausanne. This maxim has given me food for thought not only about physical care, but also about spiritual care. Today, I can say with Ambroise “I give spiritual care and, with the

Wholly Other, healing is taking place.” That is what informs me when I encounter people at the hospital.

I offer them a space to talk where they can tell me their story, tell me what is wrong, share their worries and frustrations, their anger and even their feeling of being abandoned. By listening and through my insight into the spiritual sphere, I offer them an interpretation of their life experiences through which I show things that are life-giving, that are resources for the individual in his present situation. This accompaniment is done based on the emotions prompted by being hospitalized. These emotions carry underlying needs that are often signs of a deeper hurt that reveals a basic desire to be met. It is by delving into what is inside the patient that together we reach this level of intervention. In my opinion, it is at this level that healing takes place.

I often accompany people at the end of life who do not want to die because life is too good or they still feel that they have things to do for their family. Under these circumstances, how can I be with them in their deep desire to live while also remaining in the truth of the situation? Human beings are made to live, and our exchange can be a good time to share what life offers them and how they have been fulfilled through the different events in their life. It can also be a time to explore the concept of the beginning of life and the continuation or end of that life. Exploring the stages of life and everyday changes are another theme that can be brought up. Death is an important stage in life and, in some faiths, is not the end, but a transition to another reality.

Other challenges

After all these years as a spiritual caregiver, I still encounter challenges. I question certain types of spirituality, especially those that do not include a relationship with transcendence and that try to explain certain phenomena of life (illness, health, death) in terms of our own responsibility and our power alone. When I find myself facing these forms of spirituality, I am uncomfortable and I find myself focusing on the shortcoming I perceive in these types of concepts, because I have noticed that they very often generate moral suffering and feelings of guilt in the individual. On the other hand, when transcendence is made responsible for everything, thereby letting the individual off the hook, I feel this same deficiency. Again, this shows the degree to which I am overly attached to my convictions, to the effect that we are a body with a spirit that is in relation with the transcendence. This limitation prevents me from completely listening to the other in his or her reality, and it is detrimental to my aspiration

to help the person restore a balanced, harmonious life. My discomfort, based on what I have identified up to now, seems to result from the fact that, in these situations, I get the impression that the spirituality to which the individual I am accompanying adheres no longer gives him inner freedom but instead causes feelings of guilt and/or victimization.

The challenge for me is to remain focused on the person and try, with his assistance, to understand his belief system. Together, we look at how he has used these tools in the past, and how that helped and benefited him. In that way, we might draw a parallel with the present situation so that the person I am accompanying does not feel judged but rather accepted in who he is and what he is experiencing. The important thing will be to create an optimal climate for the journey within which, I dare to hope, the person I am accompanying will be put in touch with his resources so that he can continue along the path to the deep well-being or happiness he is seeking.

Forty-three years later, I can say that the little boy of 10 who wanted to be a priest has come a long way. Solidly anchored in my Catholic faith, I have allowed myself to be guided by the Word. Along the way, I have met some people who were very different from me and yet complementary and stimulating to me on my path. My encounters with people who had a different faith from mine helped me better understand myself as a Catholic priest. They helped me to serve the suffering who needed comfort. I am confident that as I continue my journey, I will meet other people with whom I will travel for a time toward the endless joy that I still seek with all my being.

¹ For instance, for Amandarajah G et al., spirituality is a complex and multidimensional aspect of the human experience that includes: cognitive or philosophical aspects that cover looking for meaning and truth in life, beliefs and values; aspects related to emotions and/or experiences in life including love, hope, inner peace, security, which are often related to personal resources, the connections between myself, the community, the environment, nature and transcendence (namely a power greater than myself, God, a cosmic consciousness etc.); behavioral aspects related to how an individual outwardly shows his beliefs and his spiritual evolution.

² One of the great strengths of problematizing the spiritual dimension of a hospitalized person in this way (i.e. by postulating that each individual's spiritual dimension is a sort of combination of the elements mentioned above) is that it permits overall phenomena to be seen, as well as a person's unique life experiences in his spiritual sphere.

Spiritual Care: The Human Contact Comes First

Brian Walton

Brian Walton was ordained as a minister in the United Church of Canada in 1977. His ministry has included work in rural and urban congregations; chaplaincy education and service; and an interim position as part-time faculty at St. Andrew's College, Saskatoon. In addition to undergraduate degrees in psychology and divinity, Brian completed an STM in pastoral counselling and was certified a Teaching Supervisor by the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care in 2000. He provided units of parish-based Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) during his tenure at St. Martin's United Church in Saskatoon. In 2004 he accepted the position of Spiritual Care Educator at St. Paul's Hospital in Saskatoon where he has provided CPE education for the past eleven years. In 2009 he accepted a concurrent appointment as Project Lead (Interim Director) of Spiritual and Cultural Care in the Saskatoon Health Region.

My work has two main emphases – oversight of spiritual care provision and education of spiritual care interns. As Educator I recruit, educate and oversee interns who provide spiritual care within St. Paul's Hospital. St. Paul's Hospital in Saskatoon has a twenty year history of providing spiritual care education in the form of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) to ministry students,



interested lay persons and individuals who have discerned a vocation as spiritual care professionals. Over 300 students have received education during this period. A new development, initiated by the Board of Directors of St. Paul's Hospital, has been the establishment of a Residency Program intended to equip individuals with the educational and practice requirements for certification by the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care (CASC). The hospital provides a stipend and students are placed throughout the health region to gain clinical experience by providing spiritual care to a diverse group of patients and residents. I am very privileged to be in an ecumenical milieu in which a hospital owned and operated by the Roman Catholic Church employs myself, a minister ordained by the United Church, to provide spiritual care education to a diverse group students representing a range of Christian traditions and which has, on occasion, included individuals from a Buddhist and a Unitarian background.

Each unit of Clinical Pastoral Education is comprised of 400 hours including 200 hours spent in the classroom and 200 hours in the provision of spiritual care to patients and residents. CPE is designed as an 'adult education program' and recognizes that students come to this education already possessing knowledge and life experience. This education experience emphasizes reflection on practice and requires students to present their visits as 'case studies' for feedback from myself and the learning group. There is also an emphasis on self-understanding and self-development as the student's personhood is the 'tool' that the student takes into the contact with a care-receiver. In addition to the case work and self reflection formal input is given in such areas as active listening, grief, suffering and a variety of personality theories.

Responding to the Needs

As Project Lead I support the Department of Spiritual and Cultural Care by 'imagining', administering and facilitating the provision of spiritual care throughout the health region. I oversee a staff compliment of 7 spiritual care practitioners who work in acute and long term care settings. The primary role of these practitioners is to provide spiritual care to those patients who do not identify a specific religious community. The department also facilitates the connection between patients/residents and their community pastors and/or denominational chaplains. An initiative begun four years ago recruited aboriginal individuals to the Department of Spiritual and Cultural Care to provide culturally appropriate spiritual care to aboriginal patients throughout the health region. This new initiative has also resulted in the facilitation of 'smudging', an important aboriginal spiritual ceremony, in designated locations throughout the health region.

The emphasis of spiritual care is to provide the patient with a supportive individual who is willing to hear their story with illness and the associated challenges presented by illness. Patients express a range of concerns including the challenges of being in pain, of grief and loss, of suffering, of being separated from loved ones, and of re-evaluating their life in the face of illness. Patients may also speak about spiritual dilemmas, about the meaning and purpose of life, about their relationship to a faith community or about their understanding of and relationship to God or a greater Power. Sometimes Spiritual Care Practitioners are able to help patients identify sources of hope that sustain them during their encounter with poor health. Hope may come in the form of a new perspective, the constancy of family and friends or through religious beliefs or spiritual practices. Spiritual Care Practitioners are willing to pray with patients should they so desire, or to refer them to their own faith community for support. The Department keeps a list of close to 200 registered visitors from a variety of churches, temples, mosques and synagogues. They also attempt to reach Aboriginal Elders for patients who desire such contact and when our own Aboriginal staff are not available.

Close to fifty per cent of patients don't identify any religion preference although many acknowledge that they remain spiritual while not religious.

Close to fifty per cent of patients don't identify any religion preference although many acknowledge that they remain spiritual while not religious. Our staff attempts to make a priority for contact those with without other spiritual supports. In addition to bringing an open-ended concern to the patient we absolutely respect the patient's right to decline our service. Ironically the Spiritual Care Practitioner might be the only hospital staff who respects the patient's request to be left alone!

Generally the Spiritual Care Practitioner has a good working relationship with the rest of the multi-disciplinary team. We receive some referrals and convey relevant information (as

permitted by the patient) with other members of the health care team. There is an ongoing need for interpretation as many people do not understand the difference between spirituality and religion fearing that we come to proselytize or convert people. On the contrary, the Spiritual Care Practitioner is focused on learning how the patient defines purpose and spirituality for themselves and seeks to help the patient look for hope within their own world view.

Somebody Who Cares

The Department of Spiritual and Cultural Care has been engaged in a modest research project with a colleague from the University of Saskatchewan. The project was designed as a structured interview with a small sample group to determine what patients experience when they receive spiritual care. Of the eight patients involved in the survey the following items were identified as one or more of the benefits received from spiritual care: (1) feeling supported in difficult circumstances - "somebody who cares," (2) feeling supported all round - "care also for the family," (3) feeling understood and validated - "understands what I am going through," (3) expressing the existential nature of the illness crisis - "shared *darkest days*," (5) restoring a sense of calm and hope - "bring along a sense of peace, warmth, soul," and (6) connect with a transcendent reality - "give me a chance to *open up* spiritually."

As spiritual care continues to find its place among the allied health professionals the ongoing emphasis on appropriate training and competent practice seeks to address issues of spiritual distress. In the evidence-based world of medical care, much work needs to be directed toward determining the best educational methods which will lead to the kind of practice which promotes spiritual health as an adjunct to physical and psycho-social well-being.

God does not want suffering – An Orthodox approach to suffering

Paul Ladouceur

Dr Paul Ladouceur is an Orthodox theologian and writer living in Québec. He teaches in the Orthodox theology programs at Trinity College, University of Toronto, and at the Montreal Institute of Orthodox Theology (affiliated with the Université Laval). He is responsible for the Orthodox website Pages orthodoxes la Transfiguration (www.pagesorthodoxes.net) and is a member of the Faith and Witness Commission of the Canadian Council of Churches.

The Early Church Fathers and Suffering

In the seventh century Saint Isaac the Syrian wrote: “God does not want humans to suffer. He wants you to offer your own suffering as a sacrifice of love. This is perceived by all those who love God... In effect, those who choose to live in the fear of God support affliction and endure persecution. And he accords them his hidden treasures.”¹



As pastors and theologians, the early Church Fathers had two major concerns: first, the salvation of the faithful; and secondly, the safeguarding of the true faith against erroneous teachings. Behind their theological writings constantly lay their concern for salvation and the proper expression of the teachings of Christ as transmitted in the Church. The Fathers often appealed to philosophical concepts to express their ideas, but the ultimate grounding of their theology was in sacred writing, particularly the Gospels.

The Fathers' attitude towards suffering is closely related to their thinking on evil. For them, “evil” includes both moral evil and other negative acts or events, including suffering. Two questions dominated the Fathers' thinking on suffering: What are the origin and the nature of suffering? How should Christians regard suffering and deal with it?

The historical and social context in which the Fathers lived is important in understanding their approach to suffering. Suffering, especially physical suffering, was much more prevalent in the early centuries of the Church than in modern times – medicine was in its infancy; pain control was rudimentary; communicable diseases were virtually uncontrollable; infant mortality rates were high; violence was widespread; slavery was acceptable; the administration of justice was harsh, with frequent application of torture and physical punishment. As a result, life expectancy was considerably less than in modern times. Thus the Fathers had a much closer contact with physical suffering than we do today. In modern societies, psychological suffering is more prevalent than formerly, while physical suffering is greatly diminished.

The Origin and Nature of Suffering

For the Church Fathers, it was clear that God did not create suffering: suffering did not form part of God's intention for Creation, nor will suffering exist in the Kingdom of Heaven, where God wishes that humans enjoy the happiness of the fulfilment of divine-human communion (theosis). Part of the Fathers' argument is based on Genesis 1, where it is said of every day of creation: “God saw that it was good”; and at the end of creation: “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed it was very good” (Gn 1:31).

To believe that God created evil and suffering was heretical for the Fathers and they attacked this doctrine in its various forms over the centuries: Platonism, Gnosticism, Manichaeism, Neo-Platonism, Pelagianism. Instead of this pernicious doctrine which casts doubt on the goodness of God, the Fathers taught that suffering (especially of the innocent), like other forms of evil, is contrary to nature and consists of an

absence of good. For the Fathers, the first-created humans were not subject to suffering and were beyond both pain and pleasure, experiencing rather spiritual joy and happiness in their communion with God.

The Fathers' consideration of the nature of suffering focuses extensively on the relationship of suffering and sin. There are two major aspects of this relationship: first, suffering is a consequence and effect of ancestral sin,² the sin of the first humans, who turned away from communion with God, bringing evil into the world, and with it, suffering and death. Gregory of Nyssa writes:

The misfortune in which man is now involved he caused of his own will, having been swept away by deceit. He himself became the inventor of evil, he did not discover it after it had been invented by God. Nor did God create death; man, in a way, is the founder and creator of evil.³

This thought occurs over and over in the ancient Fathers, such as the later Father John of Damascus:

Should he [man], on the other hand through his disobedience, turn his mind away from his Author I mean God and tend rather toward matter, then he was to be associated with corruption, to become passible rather than impassible, and mortal rather than immortal... he failed to keep the Creator's commandment and was stripped of grace and deprived of that familiarity which he had enjoyed with God; he was clothed with the roughness of his wretched life... and put on death.⁴

The principal consequence of ancestral sin was the introduction of death into human nature and into the world in general, and everything associated with death, such as illness, pain, suffering and aging. The Fathers refer to this state as "passibility," that is, subject to change, in contrast to "impassibility," not subject to change, a characteristic of God.

The other major consequence of ancestral sin is a tendency towards evil. This tendency is not an immutable "law" or fact of human existence, but a natural inclination which requires the exercise of free will in order to be actualised, to turn an inclination into reality. And with God's help, this natural tendency can be overcome. For the Fathers, death is above all spiritual death: "Death is, properly speaking, separation from God, and the 'sting of death is sin' (1 Co 15:56). In taking it on, Adam was banished at once from the tree of life,

from Paradise and from God, whereupon there followed of necessity the death of the body."⁵

The Fathers identify two other sources of suffering, personal sin and diabolical activity in the world. "Just as night follows day and winter follows summer, so do sorrow and pain follow vainglory and pleasure whether in the present or in the future," writes Maximus.⁶ But at the same time suffering is not necessarily a direct effect of personal sin; suffering is not a divine punishment for sin, but it may be a natural and necessary consequence of sin.

The second major aspect of the relationship of suffering and sin is the role of suffering as a source and "occasion" of sin. It is often thought that the ancient Fathers had a generally negative view of pleasure, especially physical pleasure, but they had an equally negative view of pain and suffering. For the Fathers, both pleasure and pain appeared in human nature as a result of ancestral sin, since man became "passible" and ultimately subject to death. Passibility is not evil of itself, since all sin requires the exercise of free will. In the Orthodox tradition, even if suffering is inscribed in fallen human nature, men and women born after Adam do not somehow bear the responsibility or guilt for ancestral sin; responsibility for sin is personal and cannot be transmitted. All humanity, the children of the first parents, inherit the *consequences* of the ancestral sin, but not the *guilt* associated with it:

Now, those passions are natural and blameless which are not under our control and have come into man's life as a result of the condemnation occasioned by his fall. Such, for example, were hunger, thirst, fatigue, pain, the tears, the destruction, the shrinking from death.⁷

The natural tendency of human beings to seek pleasure and to avoid pain lies at the origin of a modification of moral conscience, and exercises a tyrannical influence on humans, favouring an inclination towards sin and evil passions. Hence, pleasure and pain can be exploited by diabolical influences to turn humans away from God.

The Fathers saw Job of the Old Testament as an important example of dealing with suffering: The devil uses suffering as a source of temptation for Job to denounce God, but Job's attitude towards suffering makes him a precursor and a prefiguration of both Christ and Christians. In his *Commentary on Job*, John Chrysostom admonishes his listeners to look with equanimity on both benefits and hardships:

Why did [the Lord] give good things? Not because we deserved them. So let us not grieve now, either, as though we suffer hardship without deserving it. He would have been quite within his rights in giving us only bad things; if instead he has given us also good things, why are we upset?... It is sufficient consolation for us that it is the Lord who brings it upon us; let us not speak of justice or injustice.⁸

Christ's Victory over Suffering

There are two important aspects of Christ's attitude towards suffering: first, the suffering which Christ himself endured; and secondly, his attitude towards suffering, especially those in direct contact with him. The Fathers consider that Christ's human nature was impassible in principle, but that Christ voluntarily accepted suffering and ultimately death in order to free humanity from them. This is in keeping with a key patristic principle: "That which was not assumed is not healed; but that which is united to God is saved"⁹; "He assumed all that he might sanctify all."¹⁰ Christ voluntarily took all the consequences of ancestral sin, including suffering and death, upon himself in order to free humanity from them. Christ's victory over suffering and death destroyed the power of suffering and death over humanity, and over diabolical influences which attempt to utilise suffering to turn humans away from God. In patristic thought, just as Adam, bearing in his nature that of all humanity, caused all to suffer the consequences of his sin, so Christ, as the New Adam, recapitulating all humanity in the human nature which he assumed, benefits all humanity through his own victory over suffering and death (cf. Rm 5:12-17). This is dramatically highlighted in John Chrysostom's Pascal Sermon:

Let no one fear death, for the Saviour's death has set us free. He that was taken by death has annihilated it! He descended into Hades and took Hades captive! ... O death, where is thy sting? O Hades, where is thy victory? [1 Co 15:54-55] Christ is risen, and you are overthrown! Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen! ... Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice! Christ is risen, and life reigns! Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in a tomb! For Christ, being raised from the dead, has become the first-fruits of them that have slept [1 Co 15:20].¹¹

Christ did not consider that suffering is a necessary consequence of personal sin, as is shown clearly in the Gospel episode of the man born blind. In response to the question of the disciples "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus replies "Neither this man nor his

parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him" (Jn 9:2-3).

Certain words of Christ have been interpreted to mean that he justified and even exalted suffering: his remarks concerning the sickness and death of Lazarus (Jn 11:4); the second Beatitude (in certain translations) (Mt 5:4); and his statement concerning the necessity for his follower to carry his cross (Mt 16:24; Mt 10:38; Lk 9:23; Lk 14:27). The Church Fathers rejected the "dolorist" interpretations of these passages and attached a spiritual rather than a literal meaning to these texts, and certainly do not read these passages to mean that Christ calls on his followers to seek suffering as a necessary condition of salvation.

On the contrary, the will of Christ is that humans should no longer suffer. Christ's objective is the abolition of suffering; the final realisation of this will occur only in the Kingdom of Heaven, when the human body will resurrect as a spiritual body and the human soul, freed from the constraints of fallen human nature, will no longer be subject to natural passions. By healing the suffering and infirmities of those who came to him, Christ already prefigured the abolition of suffering. It ensues from the attitude and actions of Christ that Christians have the duty to ease suffering in all its forms, physical, psychological and moral. This is confirmed in the Parable of the Last Judgement: those who feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, clothe the naked, care for the sick and visit those in prison will be saved, while those who refuse to do so will not. Christ identifies himself with those who suffer; "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me" (Mt 25:45).

Suffering in the Life of the Christian

Christians, even though they are members of the Church and participate already in some way in the Kingdom, are subject to the consequences of sin which keeps the cosmos in a certain disorder. Christ has given us effective means to face suffering on a spiritual level in order not only that suffering will not interfere with the Christian life, but that Christians may draw spiritual benefit from suffering. Incorporation into Christ by baptism provides Christians with the means to resist temptation towards evil often associated with suffering and in this sense Christians are as privileged as the Just of the Old Testament such as Job and indeed even more so.

Among the temptations associated with suffering are sadness, defeatism, discouragement and especially revolt against God,

blaming God for suffering, blasphemy and denial of Christ, and also sins against other persons in the form of anger, criticism, resentment, envy, ill-will etc. The spiritual attitude of the Christian towards suffering should be one of detachment – just as it should be towards physical enjoyment of all sorts, pleasure and even intellectual and spiritual satisfaction. The Christian should not allow suffering to alter his spiritual attachment to Christ, nor to be dominated and tyrannised by suffering. In this way, the Christian can turn suffering to spiritual advantage, as a means of progressing in the spiritual life, of seeking purification, of being liberated from negative passions and of warding off new passions.

The Fathers frequently emphasize the purifying function of suffering, following Saint Peter: “He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin” (1 Peter 4:1). This purifying effect comes not from suffering itself, but from divine mercy; God manifests his compassion and elicits an attitude of repentance in the midst of suffering. John Chrysostom, writing after he was exiled from his see as archbishop of Constantinople, just prior to his death in exile, cites as examples of patiently endured suffering Job, the Apostles, Lazarus, Joseph, Abel and John the Baptist and concludes: “All suffering brought about by one man against another delivers the one who suffers from his faults and leads to justification. The utility of suffering is proportional to the greatness of spirit of those who endure it.”¹² Maximus the Confessor writes: “Humility and distress free man from every sin, the former by cutting out the passions of the soul, the latter those of the body.”¹³

Suffering is not a goal of the spiritual life or even a means to be sought and Christians should not seek suffering for the purpose of spiritual benefit: “To value suffering not only as a goal but as an essential means of the spiritual life is foreign to the spirit of the Greek Fathers in general.”¹⁴

Other means are available for spiritual growth, but should suffering occur, then it can become an occasion for spiritual benefit. The positive side of suffering is thus that suffering can provide the Christian with the means to develop and practice Christian virtues, especially patience and humility, which in turn foster steadfastness in faith and hope, as Paul highlights: “We also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rm 5:3-5). Suffering also provides an occasion to intensify a Christian’s prayer life.

The conditions for the derivation of benefit from suffering

are thus patience, hope, prayer and love of God. These characteristics are thus both conditions and outcomes for a Christian approach to suffering in the context of spiritual growth and development. For the Christian, Christ is the model and the pedagogue in dealing with suffering. The person who suffers is also helped by the hope and even the certainty not only that the suffering will cease, but will be followed by eternal joy and beatitude in God. Maximus the Confessor writes: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith’ (He 12:2), let us valiantly support all that happens to us. For the end of all tribulation is joy, of all pain, rest, of all dishonour, glory. In short, the end of all suffering endured for the sake of virtue is to be with God in all things and to enjoy eternal rest.”¹⁵

Does God Suffer?

A theme related to human suffering is the notion of the suffering of God. This raises philosophical and theological issues: While Christ can and did suffer in his human nature, does God suffer in his divinity? Do human actions cause God to suffer? Does God suffer with suffering humanity? The starting point of theological reflections on God’s suffering is the philosophical notion of divine unchangeability or impassibility, a notion inherited by patristic theology from Greek philosophy. Yet the Old Testament contains numerous references to divine affliction in the face of human failings and suffering.¹⁶ These have traditionally been interpreted as a sort of residual anthropomorphism, which is trumped by the doctrines of divine transcendence, immutability, impassibility and perfection. In this light, God cannot suffer in his divinity, because suffering implies physical and psychological pain and emotion, characteristics of material and sentient creatures but not of the transcendent and perfect God. Thus, it was often argued, Christ was subject to physical distress and suffering (he was hungry, tired etc.) and even psychological pain (he cries over Lazarus’ death, sweats blood in Gethsemane) in his humanity, but this does not affect the impassibility of his divine nature, united with the Father and Holy Spirit. John of Damascus summarises this doctrine:

God’s Word Himself, then, endured all things in His flesh, while His divine nature, which alone is impassible, remained unaffected. For, when the one Christ made up of both divinity and humanity suffered, the passible part of Him suffered, because it was of its nature to suffer, but the impassible did not suffer with it. Thus, since the soul is passible, it does feel pain and suffer with the body when the body is hurt, although it itself is not hurt. The divinity, however, being impassible, does not suffer with the body.¹⁷

The idea of the “suffering God” has been explored by modern

Orthodox theologians. Sergius Bulgakov (1871-1944) argues that Christ in his divinity suffers, not only in his humanity, notably during the Passion: “The Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ spiritually co-suffers in relation to the fleshly passion of the hypostatic Word, for the nature cannot fail to suffer if its hypostasis [person] suffers.”¹⁸ He grounds this contentious assertion on the unity of Person in Christ, and in particular in the formula of the Council of Chalcedon (451) that Christ’s two natures are united “without confusion”: there cannot be incoherence between Christ’s human nature and his divine nature, nor for that matter between the suffering of the Son and that of the Father and the Holy Spirit, because of the unity and “connection of love in the Holy Trinity.”¹⁹ Bulgakov rejects the philosophical notion of divine impassibility as “an abstraction” and erroneous “for in creating the world and providing for it, God interacts with the world and enters into a relation with the world process and with human freedom.”²⁰

The theme of the “Suffering God” was taken up by several French converts in Bulgakov’s entourage, especially Fr Lev Gillet (1893-1980) and Elisabeth Behr-Sigel (1907-2005), and later, Metropolitan Kallistos Ware (b.1934). Olivier Clément (1923-2009) refers to Lev Gillet as a “great theologian of the Suffering God and Limitless Love.”²¹ In the face of human suffering, Gillet, Behr-Sigel and Ware, all pastors as well as theologians, boldly ask the question: Is the traditional notion of divine impassibility adequate in the light of human suffering on the one hand, and infinite divine love on the other? Is Christ’s suffering limited in time to his physical presence on earth? Or is Christ the Lamb of God immolated from all eternity?²²

The issue arises dramatically in a pastoral context: Is God indifferent to the real suffering now of his creation, especially men and women? Lev Gillet puts his finger on the pastoral dilemma: “Do we have the right to say to the man or woman who is suffering: ‘God himself, *at this very moment*, is suffering what you suffer, and is overcoming it?’”²³ Gillet presents several arguments to support his contention of the “Suffering God”: first, God’s knowledge of human suffering is more than an abstract awareness; rather, it is an intimate comprehension of this suffering; secondly, divine immanence in creation places God at the heart of suffering; thirdly, God suffers actively and voluntarily, an apparent breach in divine perfection, but which does not compromise it: “God’s suffering is divine love *freely creating* its own burden.”²⁴ Gillet’s last argument is derived from the notion of time, human and divine. Whereas our notion and experience of time is a series of successive events, in God “there are neither events nor history... God’s

eternity is a single point, in which everything is present... an eternal present.” Gillet applies this reflection to Christ’s passion and death: “The crucifixion is more than an event in time. The cross transcends time... Even though historically the Passion came before the Resurrection, yet Good Friday and Easter are but one in the eternity of the divine life. God triumphs over suffering *through* suffering.”²⁵ At the same time, Gillet recognises the inadequacy of human language to refer to divine suffering: “the suffering of God is a mystery about which we can only speak by analogy and approximation.” He continues:

The statement ‘God suffers’ does not describe the same experience as the statement ‘I suffer’... The suffering of God is a reality, as much as and more than the suffering of man... The assertion ‘God suffers’ is the only possible translation, though a miserably inadequate one, of something which exists in God – and which is God in God and not man in God.²⁶

Orthodox thinking is divided on the subject of divine suffering. Metropolitan Kallistos Ware has been taken to task for expounding the notion of “the Suffering God.” One line of critique is that Ware departs from mainstream patristic teaching which stresses divine impassibility: “The attribution of human emotions to God, whether of a negative kind or borne of sympathy for human suffering, is foreign to Orthodox theology.”²⁷ At the same time, the author leaves the door open, unintentionally perhaps, to Lev Gillet’s apophatic approach to divine suffering: “The impassive nature of the Godhead does not suggest insensitivity, of course, but moves us away from imagining that mere human emotions or sentimentality are adequate to grasp or express the expansive, transcendent aspects of the Godhead, including Divine Love.”

* * *

The ancient Fathers of the Church taught that death and suffering are inherently unnatural, not willed by God in the first instance, but rather tolerated as a feature of the common human condition in the present life. Suffering is an aspect of human mortality, a waystation on the road to the fulfillment of human existence in communion with God. For the Fathers, the primary cause of suffering and death is estrangement from friendship with God, the source all life and happiness. By his death and Resurrection, Christ conquered death and opened the way for those united with him to pass beyond suffering and death into the fullness of the Kingdom of God and eternal life. Despite the negative aspects of suffering, a

Christian can turn suffering into an occasion for spiritual growth, through prayer and the exercise of patience, humility, faith and hope. God is not indifferent to human suffering, but in a mysterious way understands and shares in our suffering, not only at the historical moment of Christ's Passion and death, but at this very moment.

¹ Isaac the Syrian, *The Ascetical Homilies*, Boston MA: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1984, p. 271. Homily 54: "Your toil, then, is in vain if, when you endure these sufferings, you do not understand that God wishes your toil only when you offer him your tribulation as a sacrifice of love. All those who love God display this distinctive mark, that they submit themselves to afflictions for love of him. For those who with fear of God are pleased to live in Christ Jesus choose afflictions and endure persecution. He then gives them authority over his own secret treasures."

² In this article, we avoid the use of the expression "original sin," because the teaching of the Greek Fathers on the sin of Adam and Eve is different from Saint Augustine's notion of original sin transmitted in the Western Church.

³ Gregory of Nyssa, *Ascetical Works: On Virginity*, 12:2 (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1967), 43.

⁴ John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, II:30-III:1 (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1958), 266-267.

⁵ Maximus the Confessor, *Selected Writings: The Four Hundred Chapters on Love*, II:93 (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1985), 60.

⁶ Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Hundred Chapters on Love*, II:65, 56.

⁷ John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition*, III:20, 323.

⁸ John Chrysostom, *Commentaries on the Sages. Volume One: Commentary on Job*, II (Brookline MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2006), 61.

⁹ See Gregory of Nazianzus, *Critique of Apollinarianism and Apollinarianism*, Epistle 101:32 (letters 101:5): "For that which he has not assumed he has not healed; but that which is united to his Godhead is also saved." (Ep. 101: 32. SC 208, 50).

¹⁰ John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition*, III:20, 324.)

¹¹ This translation from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paschal_Homily (11.05.2015).

¹² Jean Chrysostome, *Lettre d'exil à Olympias et à tous les fidèles* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1964) (SC 103), 75-81.

¹³ Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Hundred Chapters on Love*, I:76, 43.

¹⁴ Jean-Claude Larchet, *Dieu ne veut pas la souffrance des hommes* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1999), 114.

¹⁵ Cited in Jean-Claude Larchet, *Le Chrétien devant la maladie, la souffrance et la mort* (Paris: Le Cerf, 2004), 161.

¹⁶ See references in Lev Gillet, "Does God Suffer," *Sobornost*, 3, 15 (1954), 117; and Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 63.

¹⁷ John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition*, III:26, 331.

¹⁸ Sergius Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God* (1933) (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 259.

¹⁹ Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, 260.

²⁰ Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, 260-261.

²¹ Olivier Clément, "Le père Lev Gillet, Grand théologien du Dieu souffrant et de l'Amour sans limites," Un Moine de l'Église d'Orient (Lev Gillet), *Au Cœur de la fournaise* (Paris: Le Sel de la Terre/Le Cerf, 1998), 9.

²² See Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, 129, 171, 338 etc.; and Sergius Bulgakov, *The Comforter* (1936) (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 219.

²³ Lev Gillet, "Does God Suffer," 112. Kallistos Ware picks up this exact question in *The Orthodox Way*, 63.

²⁴ Lev Gillet, "Does God Suffer," 118.

²⁵ Lev Gillet, "Does God Suffer," 119. The last sentence is a reformulation of part of the Pascal troparion: "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death."

²⁶ Lev Gillet, "Does God Suffer," 119.

²⁷ Hieromonk Patapios, review of *The Orthodox Way* in *Orthodox Tradition*, 16, 3&4, 30-51. Online: <http://orthodoxinfo.com/phronema/review_tow.aspx> (27.03.2015).



People with Disabilities in the Church: The Need for an Ecumenical Approach

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People living with a disability are often facing extra challenges completing daily activities, depending on the nature of the disability, i.e. physical or intellectual, or a mental illness, just to name a few. The challenges could range from being limited in your movements, memory loss, or not being able to express your ideas as you would like to, to emotional stress dealing with your life in general. Thanks to modern science and medicine, many of these challenges can be alleviated to a certain degree and many governments around the world are implementing legislation to promote the inclusion and accommodation of people with disabilities in professional and public life. However, following up on this legislation largely depends on the seriousness of the respective governing bodies to address the situation of people with disabilities. For example, various educational institutions provide some kind of accommodation for students with a disability, even though it often barely surpasses the mandatory minimum required by the government. Budgetary restrictions are often cited as a reason for these mostly insufficient provisions. In any case, removing physical barriers is only one part of being able to participate fully in daily life. The other part is removing the emotional barriers, as many people with disabilities still feel stigmatized by their "otherness" in society.



Situation in Churches

This situation appears to be mirrored in church life as well. Recent publications by scholars who have personal experiences with disabilities report of a lack of understanding of the challenges that people with disabilities are undergoing¹. This may range from leaving a wheelchair parishioner at the back of the church to denying someone with an intellectual disability full participation in church life based on an assumption that he/she will not fully grasp the nature of worship etc. Accommodation of people with disabilities is then limited to i. e. building a ramp for parishioners who need to use a wheelchair to get around, because legislation mandates churches to provide such accessibility. Certainly, many older churches were built in a time period when such accessibility was simply unthinkable, but herein also lies the root cause of why so many people with a disability don't feel welcome in their own church, and this does not only apply to the traditional churches. According to Erik W. Carter's research on inclusion of persons with disabilities in faith communities in the United States, 52% of people with disabilities do not attend any church, while simultaneously 87% of them indicate that faith plays a large role in their life. 56% cite a lack of support in their community for not attending worship, while 32% changed their place of worship for the same reason. Only 18% of congregations were found to offer adequate support to persons with disabilities².

My son suffered from a lack of oxygen at birth, which led to

some degree of learning disability. Since the age of four, he has undergone a variety of stimulation programs to ensure he would be as independent as possible. However, at times it was necessary to circumnavigate difficult situations. Considering his experience as a Roman/Coptic Catholic, he did not have many negative experiences with his participation in church life as his condition is not clearly visible. When it came to the sacrament of First Communion in the Catholic Church, we were asked by the local priest whether he would be able to properly understand the meaning of those sacraments. We felt that at that point it was more beneficial for him to complete this sacrament in his mother's Coptic Catholic parish, where he received his First Communion without any questioning. A few years later, his confirmation went smoother at the local parish, as there was more cooperation from the parish priest. Today, I can say with confidence that my son is very well rooted in his Christian faith and probably could teach other people something about it.

With modern medicine being able to better treat and manage various disabilities and illnesses, the challenge for churches seems to now be how to translate this improved understanding to an improved inclusion and feeling of belonging of persons with disabilities within their faith communities.

Why do churches struggle so much with people with disabilities in their midst? Whatever happened to Jesus' approach to the ill and disabled, the lame and the blind, the 'impure' and otherwise outcast of society in the Bible?

Jesus' Attitude

The synoptic gospels of Mark, Luke and Matthew account for numerous episodes where Jesus comes in conflict with Jewish authorities for allegedly breaking purity legislation, by coming in contact with individuals who by Levitical tradition were considered unclean through their physical condition: Healing of 'leprosy' (Mark 1:40-45 par Luke 5:12-16 par Matthew 8:1-4); Touching a woman with excessive menstrual flow (Mark 5:21-43 par Luke 8:40-56 par Matthew 9:18-26); Exorcising 'demons' (Mark 5:1-20 par Luke 8:26-39 par Matthew 8:28-34); Touching a deceased person (Luke 7:11-17; 8:54); Healing a paralysed man (Mark

2:1-12 par Matthew 9:1-8 par Luke 5:17-26; and last, but not least Healing on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-6 par Matthew 12:9-14 par Luke 6:6-11)³.

It appears though as if early Christianity returned to pre-Christian attitudes towards people with disabilities that were deeply rooted in attributing illness and disease to divine punishment and therefore brought about the exclusion of these individuals from the community⁴. Fourth century church father Augustine denied people with disabilities owning a soul due to God's perceived perfection and therefore denying them access to salvation. Furthermore, derogatory comments by 16th century reformer Martin Luther about people with disabilities as being conceived by the devil seem to sustain deeply rooted prejudices⁵.

While there clearly has been improvement in the perception of people with disabilities over the centuries, there were also periodical setbacks. The current debate about physician-assisted death is monitored very closely by advocates for people with disabilities, as humanity already went through a time period in the 20th century when the life of a person with a disability was deemed unworthy. This is a topic for a separate article though. However, underlying misconceptions are hard to erase and appear to still contribute to subtle prejudices, even in modern Christianity. Especially the image of God creating perfection seems to conflict with the biblical notion that we are all created in God's image, regardless of physical appearance. Nancy Eiesland's groundbreaking book *The Disabled God*⁶ has opened many eyes to a different perspective of how people with disabilities view themselves.

With modern medicine being able to better treat and manage various disabilities and illnesses, the challenge for churches seems to now be how to translate this improved understanding to an improved inclusion and feeling of belonging of persons with disabilities within their faith communities. It appears though that most churches do need some assistance of their own to accomplish this task. A number of organizations are promoting inclusion and belonging of people with disabilities in church life. The best known is probably L'Arche, founded by Jean Vanier, with a distinctively ecumenical outlook and also operating internationally⁷. In Ontario, *Christian Horizons* is actively "Building Communities of Belonging" with a toolkit for churches available on its website⁸. *Friendship Ministries*, an affiliate member of the Canadian Council of Churches, based in Michigan/USA and operating in North and Central America, is also offering programs involving persons with

disabilities in their churches⁹. Erik Carter proposes that churches apply a similar model to that school boards use to implement inclusion of special needs children into the classroom¹⁰.

Acting Ecumenically

All these approaches and programs provide valuable help for congregations that seek improved inclusion of people with disabilities into their midst. However, I believe we can go one step further, which brings me to the subtitle of this article: The need for a broader ecumenical approach. Most of the above initiatives address individual parishes or congregations. This is indeed very useful, as this would be the actual location of any intended inclusion of a person with a disability. As we all know though, Christianity is not a homogenous entity and is divided into many denominations for centuries now. There are 25 of them alone that form the Canadian Council of Churches, each one with its own structure, policies, and statements in place regarding people with disabilities¹¹. I do not propose to rewrite all these policies and statements that are all made with good intentions, but there does appear to be a certain disconnect between the letter of the policies and the practices of the individual congregations. How else would we explain the rather high level of discontent among persons with disabilities with their faith communities? Could it be that the available programs and initiatives mentioned above do not all resonate equally in the different denominations that make up Christianity? What may work for a thoroughly grassroots evangelical community may not have the same impact on a hierarchically structured traditional church parish. Just as good public speakers will need to consider the needs of their audiences, we may have to adapt available inclusion programs to respond to each denomination's structure and promote inclusion through their church leadership as well. If we can make the inclusion of people with disabilities in our church midst as important a priority as already existing popular campaigns against i. e. poverty, human trafficking or climate change, we will be able to improve the life of a great number of disenfranchised members in each of our congregations. In any case, the end result should be the same in every denomination: *Moving from ministry to, to ministry for, to ministry with, and finally to ministry by people with disabilities* (Erik W. Carter).

Further resources¹²:

Stephen J. Bedard, *How to Make Your Church Autism Friendly*, Cambridge, ON: Hope's Reason, 2015.

Terry A. DeYoung – Mark Stephenson (Eds.), *Inclusion Handbook: Everybody Belongs, Everybody Serves*. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformed Church Press, 2011.

John M. Hull and Bob Callaghan, *Disability: The Inclusive Church Resource*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2014.

Tony Phelps-Jones et al., *Making Church Accessible to All: Including Disabled People in Church Life*, Abingdon: Bible Reading Fellowship, 2013.

¹ See a. o. Amos Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church. A New Vision of the People of God*, Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2011 and my review in *Theoforum* 44, 2013, 377-381; Edgar Kellenberger, *Der Schutz der Einfältigen Menschen mit einer geistigen Behinderung in der Bibel und in weiteren Quellen*. Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2011 (my review to be published in *Review of Biblical Literature*); Thomas E. Reynolds, "Theology and Disability: Changing the Conversation", *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 16:1, 2012, 33–48.

² See Erik W. Carter, *Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities. A Guide for Service Providers, Families, & Congregations*, Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes, 2007. Statistics presented at 'Building Communities of Belonging' conference in Burlington, ON, May 9th, 2015.

³ Thomas Hentrich, "The Forgiveness of Sins as Healing Method in the New Testament", Rupert Breitwieser (ed.), *Behinderungen und Beeinträchtigungen / Disability and Impairment in Antiquity*, *Studies in Early Medicine 2* = *British Archaeological Reports S2359*, Oxford: Archaeopress, 2012, 111-117, here 112f.

⁴ See Thomas Hentrich, "Abgestempelt". *Religion and People with Disabilities in the Ancient Near East*. Saarbrücken: SVH-Verlag, 2013.

⁵ See Kellenberger, *Schutz*, 137f.

⁶ Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*, Nashville: Abington Press, 1994

⁷ For more information see www.larche.org.

⁸ For more information see www.christian-horizons.org/churches/resources-for-churches

⁹ For more information see www.friendship.org

¹⁰ Keynote speech at above mentioned conference in Burlington, ON; also Carter, *Including People with Disabilities*, 3f.

¹¹ For a list of church statements, see Carter, *Including People with Disabilities*, 203-207.

¹² Thanks to Christine Jenkins' workshop on Autism and the Church at same conference in Burlington/ON, May 9th, 2015.

Witness

Trials Give Birth to Hope

Jacques Labadie The author is a retired United Church of Canada minister who lives in Montreal.

Popular sayings often have more than a grain of truth in them. For example: “You don’t know what you’ve got till it’s gone!”

I am speaking here personally of the loss of my health. When I was young, I thought I was indestructible and behaved as such. My lifestyle included many things harmful to my health, like tobacco, alcohol and drugs. This was not unusual behaviour, far from it, in the visual arts milieu I belonged to. I did not remember much of my Catholic religious upbringing. In any case, nothing could have prevented me from ruining my health. I was completely irresponsible and paid no attention to the people who warned me about the risks I was running.



From a faith perspective, I was swimming in a mixture of half-baked Eastern religious thought and pantheistic dreams. My generation, the baby boomers, was heavily influenced by the hippie movement. If someone had asked me at the time if I believed in the Christian God, I would have said no. At the time, I thought that all religions had things to offer that were just as valid as Christianity and perhaps even more so.

My Journey

In fact, I defined myself as an agnostic, not wanting to either affirm or disavow the existence of God. And yet I locked horns with a graphic design instructor at the École des Beaux Arts, who gave us an assignment to illustrate the book of Genesis by eliminating everything that had to do with the preexistence of God. He believed, and told us, that man had created God and not the other way around. I could not get him to admit that I had the right to believe the contrary because, I said, his belief that God had been created by human beings was just as impossible to prove as mine was. He managed to win all the other students to his point of view. Seeing that he would not yield, I decided to drop the course and risk not getting my diploma since it was a compulsory

course. The instructor promised that he would make me fail my year, but thanks be to God, that did not happen and I was able to complete my studies in peace and earn my diploma. This little anecdote shows that I was able to defend my convictions but was still far away from the Christian faith. I could not have imagined that a personal drama would change everything: the death by drowning of my little son, age six. Through a spiritual experience at my child’s casket, I became aware of the presence of Christ beside me and his unconditional forgiveness. I had not been looking for him in the right places, but he found me where I was at that precise moment of my life.

Since then, faith in the risen Lord has guided my life and has not left me.

I had found my faith again, but I needed to combine this new hope with knowledge; so I bought myself a Bible and started reading it by myself. Going through the Bible, I sometimes discovered words of comfort and at other times found passages that condemned the way I was living: married but living with another woman... I saw myself as lost and condemned to hellfire. But fortunately something happened to pull me out of this impasse. I wanted to marry the woman with whom I had been living for several years and with whom I was deeply in love.

I decided to find a church that would accept this failure and allow me to continue my path with the assurance of God’s forgiveness and not to remain burdened for the rest of my life by an error of youth. I could finally turn the page and go on with life.

And so we got married, my wife and I, at the Lutheran Church of the Reconciliation in Montreal. Our two families were very pleased with the ceremony, which was hard to distinguish from a Catholic mass, to the point where a number of people received communion without seeing the difference!

Pastor Daniel Pourchot welcomed us with warmth and understanding, and naturally my wife and I returned to attend

Sunday worship and ended up becoming regular members. In addition to the liturgy, I especially appreciated the solid teaching on all aspects of the Christian faith. For me, it was a revelation to learn from reading Paul's epistles that we are forgiven by the grace of God!

This major change in my life soon resulted in an irresistible attraction to the ministry. It took me five years of study to reach my goal of becoming a pastor.

Going back to school at the age of 35 is not an easy thing to do, and there were many difficulties. The financial aspect of our marriage was one, but with the support of my wife, I threw myself enthusiastically into this adventure. The first thing I had to do was sort through the religious and cultural ideas I had accumulated. After I successfully completed my studies, in 1982 I was ordained a minister of the United Church of Canada... in the Catholic cathedral in Sherbrooke, Quebec! Truly the Lord's ways are not always our ways!

I was then appointed to a shared ministry between the Presbyterian Church and the United Church. A joint worship service was held in the United Church in Belle-Rivière (near Mirabel, north-west of Montreal). The little church was filled to bursting with people from all over. Father Duquette from Sainte-Scolastique, the neighbouring village, honoured us with his presence and offered the assembly a warm and fraternal message. He made everyone laugh by saying that if his predecessors had seen him, they would have excommunicated him on the spot. Under the circumstances, I could only view my ministry as an ecumenical one, and I always got involved in joint activities with people of all denominations. It was in this context that I met Father Emmanuel Lapierre, o.p., the former parish priest of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce who later became a director of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism. Our close friendship remained intact until Father Lapierre's death.

Ministry to the Sick

Any pastoral ministry involves visiting the sick, and I carried out this duty with conviction and compassion, and with all my heart. While visiting the sick, encountering them in their sufferings and sharing their fears and worries by helping to bear their burdens, I always felt that I was receiving more than I gave them.

Sickness and health are two inextricably linked realities of human life. All life on earth inevitably meets obstacles that put it in peril.

"As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more." (Ps 103:15-16)

It is a universal reality: we are mortal and even in life, we are fragile and vulnerable. Sickness is a cruel reminder of our mortality. If life is limited to life on earth and the life of the physical body, as a materialistic perspective would have it, then it is truly a dead end! What everyone wants is to keep going: it is the instinct for self-preservation that we share with all living beings.

For the sick I visited in hospital, the hope that life does not end with death gave them incomparable strength. Those with faith could go through the worst illnesses and give meaning to situations that seemed not to have any.

Only faith in the words of Christ who promises eternal life to all who believe in him can be an effective antidote to the fear of death that poisons everything throughout our life. Fear paralyzes and prevents us from living abundantly the life that God has given us.

This state of uncertainty can and must cease. This is possible if we trust God, but the real problem is that we often have a false image of this Being no one has seen. At best, it is sweet baby Jesus in the manger; at worst, it is the sadistic police officer who is waiting to catch us red-handed and punish our slightest transgression. To be loved by this angry and demanding God, we must be perfect and never give in to temptation.

It was an extraordinary discovery for me that my false image of a severe and vindictive God was one I shared with Martin Luther. The fervent 16th-century German monk did not feel that he was right with God. He was tormented more and more by his conscience and came to feel that he was surely lost and bound for the flames of hell. It was an untenable situation for someone like Luther who had devoted his life to God and felt rejected by Him.

But the God he feared so much, he finally came to understand a little better.

His position as a professor of Holy Scripture at the University of Wittenberg and his knowledge of the Bible enabled Luther to discover an immutable truth: justification by grace through faith. This formula may seem complicated for someone who is not familiar with this type of theological vocabulary. But the reality it expresses is clear and simple: we do not need to be pure and sinless to be acceptable to God.

What Luther realized while rereading Paul's epistles is that grace is what God gives freely and human beings cannot pay for. We must stretch out our empty hands to God so that he can fill them, as the Magnificat says so well: "He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty." (Luke 1:53)

Losing our Health: The example of Job

To find God, we have to feel a need for him. One day or another, we all find that we're missing something essential, especially in the difficult days that occur without warning in each of our lives. Pascal said that within every human heart there is a God-shaped hole that can only be filled by God the Creator who has been revealed to us by his Son Jesus Christ.

When our health fails and we fall ill and lose our strength and our physical or mental abilities, we realize that we cannot get through this on our own and we need help. Realizing our inadequacy is the ideal state in which to implore the Lord to come and help us.

Some people say faith is a crutch, but when you have lost the use of your legs, as happened to me, then you need to have some kind of prosthesis.

When we realize that we are not in control of things, it is time to realize how much we need the help that God is waiting to give us. Understood this way, illness can be useful for helping us progress in our spiritual life. It was not until I was struck down by illness that I truly understood the truth that something bad that happens to us can be for our great good.

"We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." (Rm 8:28)

Sometimes we hear people say: "What did I ever do to God for this to happen to me?" The idea that illness is a punishment for our sins has a long history. In the Book of Job, the three friends who supposedly come to comfort Job try to make him feel guilty by telling him he must have committed some sin, because God would not punish an innocent. But Job has a clear conscience and rejects his friends' suggestion. The central issue in the Book of Job is why the righteous suffer when they know they do not deserve it.

To this question Job does not receive the answer he is expecting, but he comes to the realization that there is no point in asking it because he cannot understand the thoughts and ways of the Lord.

An American rabbi, Harold S. Kushner, wrote a commentary on the Book of Job called "*When Bad Things Happen to Good People*." He wrote the book after the premature death of his 14-year-old son who suffered from a terrible illness called progeria, which causes rapid aging. This book has helped many people find meaning in the scandal of human suffering that cannot be explained. None of our human reasoning can explain why there is sickness, suffering and death; we would have to be God, and we aren't!

Rather than get bogged down trying to understand what infinitely exceeds our understanding, it is better to try to see what we can do with this unavoidable reality. Suffering can offer us an avenue to deepen our faith because by allowing ourselves to be vulnerable we can acquire the humility that alone is the way to God's mercy. As surprising as it may seem, suffering from this perspective can become a springboard rather than an insurmountable obstacle. Understood this way, illness can become an opportunity for personal and spiritual growth instead of a catastrophe.

"Do you want to remain here?"

If I speak of this here, it is because it has been a painful experience for me. As I said earlier, I had excellent health when I was young, but as I got closer to 50, things started going wrong: diverticulosis followed by a colon operation ushered in a dark series of health problems. In 1997, after some unaccustomed exertion, I ended up in the emergency room, where I had to have surgery to replace a defective heart valve. Unfortunately, I developed an embolism in my left leg, which turned black and swelled to double its usual size. The doctors talked to me about amputating my leg just below the knee. I was terrified! A priest friend came and prayed for my healing, and my leg started to return to its normal colour. Only my five toes stayed black and had to be amputated. I had managed to avoid the worst, and one of the doctors said that I had had a "small miracle." It is true that losing my toes was the lesser of two evils!

It took me a long time to recover from my open-heart surgery. One fine morning, they put me in a chair to encourage me to activate what was left of my mobility. But when I got back into bed, I had to give myself a little push, and the effort was too much for my heart. I fell into a coma.

Right at that moment I heard a nurse shouting "Code blue, code blue!", which means Emergency! But I was no longer in my body; I was floating in space through a dark tunnel at the end of which I saw a bright light. When I reached that place, I found myself in a circle of very intense but not blinding light: a light that gave off infinite love. Just then a voice or voices said

to me: “Do you want to remain here with us or go back?” I remember thinking that I was much better off in this place than on my bed of pain. And yet I heard myself answer: “I have to go back; my wife needs me.” I woke up in my bed, just as the nursing staff were putting away the defibrillator.

I had returned, as I realized later, from what is called a near-death experience (NDE). Much has been written on the subject. The first person to have studied this phenomenon was Dr. Raymond Moody, an American psychiatrist, in his book *Life After Life*, published some 30 years ago in millions of copies and translated into many languages around the world. Dr. Moody spent numerous years compiling and analyzing thousands of accounts from people who had had this type of experience, which all seemed to have certain similarities. What I experienced certainly seemed real, and most importantly for me, it has affected the rest of my life until now. As a result of this astonishing experience, my outlook on life, death, health and illness has completely changed. Instead of being considered fatalistically, as something we can do nothing about, illness can become a unique opportunity

for spiritual growth. The trials of life, especially those related to our health, can bring hope.

We must change our perception of God. By rereading the Gospels, we see that the God Jesus showed to his listeners was compassionate and full of mercy, ready to open his arms to all who returned to him. The father in the parable of the prodigal son reveals that his incredible forgiveness also extends to sinners like us and to illness.

For my part, the suffering I have experienced in faith has been fruitful. It has helped me become more human, more open to the suffering of others and more and more Christ-like. Just as in childbirth, there is pain, but this pain helps us be born into a new life that is full of hope.

“Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus!” (Eph 3:20-21)

Connecting with God through silence

Luiza Carreirao

Christian meditation provides a different spiritual exercise for Catholics in Montreal. Scientific Studies have shown meditation can benefit physical and mental health, change people’s brains, improve memory, increase the feeling of social connection and provoke many other positive responses in one’s life. But meditation can also be practiced as a spiritual act, a way to connect with God and with ourselves. The Christian tradition of meditation proposes just that: to be in silent union with God.

Brought to Montreal by the Benedictine monk, John Main, in the 1970s, Christian meditation is practiced by people all over the world, sometimes in groups. “The objective of meditation is to make more place in your heart, mind and life for God,” says Mary Trautman, a member of Unitas, an ecumenical center for Christian meditation and spirituality based in Montreal.

Bimal Thambyah, member of the Menonite Fellowship of Montreal who has been attending Unitas’ practices for ten years, says it is a “totally different thing than going to church. It could never be an end in itself in terms of religion.” He states that meditation should not be about trying to accomplish anything. “For me, it is a different way to relate to God. You’re

not asking Him for anything. It is not about cause and effect; it’s about being.”

Another group offering Christian meditation practices in Montreal is Meditatio. “We meditate twice a day, in the morning and in the evening, alone or in a group, never for more than half an hour,” explains Polly Schofield, who has been practicing for 30 years and is currently the archivist at Meditatio. She says meditation is a personal discipline that allows people to be in union with God, without talking to Him. “You have to leave yourself behind, give up your prayer, thoughts, hopes, empty yourself.” Schofield explains meditation is a different kind of prayer: “As St. Paul said, God knows what we need before we do. The ultimate prayer is the prayer that goes on in your heart at all times.”

John Main made Christian meditation popular after discovering the writings of John Cassian, a fourth-century monk. Cassian, who strongly influenced Saint Benedict, practiced a form of meditation using a mantra – the repetition of a word with the objective of silencing the mind. Main “rescued” this lost practice and brought it back to practice within the church.

4th World Down Syndrome Day Conference: «My Opportunities, My Choices» United Nations Headquarters, New York, USA.

Empowering adults with Down syndrome to pursuing higher education

Mariella Valdivia Castillo.

Mariella V. Castillo holds a BA in Human Relations as well a double minor with a concentration in Law and Society, and Political Science from Concordia University. Her primary areas of coaching are organization development, human relations, systems thinking, situational leadership, law and politics. She also oversees operations of the project, Empowering adults with Down syndrome to pursuing Higher Education. She is the Founder and Director of the Multidimensional Organization By The Way (B.T.W), a non-profit organization whose main focus is accessible education for adults with Down syndrome. She was requested to be a panelist during the Employment Workshop “Ready, Willing and Able” for the Association du Québec pour l’intégration sociale (AQIS) in Montréal, Québec. She was also requested to be a speaker during a conference for the Rights of People with intellectual disabilities at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, US. Ms. Castillo has written and lectured widely on all aspects of social justice and equality. Her work has being published by L’Association pour l’intégration sociale (Région de Québec), the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism and, the Canadian Association for Community Living. Ms. Castillo is a member of the Decision Science Institute (DSI) and the National Women’s Liberal Commission. Over a long volunteering history, she has served as a volunteer for the Miriam Center Foundation, Concordia Model United Nations (CONMUN), the Social Justice Committee of Montréal, the Centre de recherche interdisciplinaire sur la violence familiale et la violence faite aux femmes (CriViff) and Project Montréal.

The Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms ARTICLE 86 states the right of people with disabilities to achieve social, school and workplace integration. There is a social responsibility to allow every human person; regardless of their disability, to reach his or her fullest potential in society and higher education can be considered one of those many ways. As mentioned in Ephesians 4: 1-16, “I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.” This project is dedicated to those living a life of humble service to others and, to those striving to make a positive impact on the world in which we live by following the principles of Christ’s living Word.

Human beings are living social entities who are constantly changing their feelings, identities and perceptions of the

world. In the same way communities are a growing “living” organism that is constantly transforming or changing its way of interacting with the environment. As the size and complexity of today’s most human systems increase, new approaches must be developed to effectively design and create solutions that seek to create a positive impact on our society. The purpose of my project was to model the importance of encouraging adults with Down syndrome to pursuing higher education in a university by highlighting people’s capacities as community builders. For this project, a new type of teaching and learning was created. This project highlights that adults with Down syndrome can learn new ways of thinking and behaving towards future goals and dreams as professionals in the workforce. I strongly believe that it is important to have learning principles to back up your opinion, but also it is essential to know how to apply those principles to facts.

In order to understand how these learning principles apply to facts, a person needs to be encouraged to be part of the decision-making so we can accomplish creative solutions. Being there as a facilitator and coach, I ask questions which will promote a deeper understanding about the subject. My project uses a cycling questioning (continuous feedback with the student), which applies positive reinforcement in an optimistic environment where family, professor and classmates work together. This type of learning can transform even the direst conditions. There is no absolute solution to, and certainly no justification for, denying accessible education for adults with Down syndrome, but it is important that nations, authorities, universities, high schools and leaders of our global community play their own small roles in bringing people with disabilities into society and the workforce.

The importance of parents' input about the autonomy and quality of life in adults with Down syndrome is a key component for making inclusion work. It is important to take in consideration that as the world has become globally interdependent, nations, authorities, communities and most of all people, are embracing a holistic and open perspective about accessible education which will enable an effective dialogue. Making connections between people and their community's authorities can be accomplished by understanding and appreciating differences between both groups. Choosing to work together by respecting our differences is a critical choice that will shift an individualistic view into a more collective one.

The importance of self-discovering

To commit to being a facilitator, one must create time to reflect in order to understand the big picture when facilitating university students with Down syndrome. The project's mission is to encourage a safe and welcoming environment in a university, where participants can feel comfortable to flourish without judgement. In addition to discussing the foundations of accessible education in Canadian universities, I also introduce a new method of learning which highlights the importance of self-discovering when trying to attain a deeper understanding about specific issues. Important elements include understanding what it means to be part of a community (i.e. a university) as well as defining what makes a university student- university's code of rights and duties, accreditations, tuitions fees and certification. Having a shared vision and a common purpose will make participants active agents of change. In fulfilling this role, participants will learn the importance of autonomy, perseverance and hard work which will boost his or her



sense of security. This is a tremendous responsibility, as well as an opportunity to reinforce self-reflecting values such as confidence, self-acceptance and skills in problem-solving. Gaining a sense of control and recognition by others can also make the participant feel more comfortable when facing daily challenges as a university student, which can encourage them to take on more difficult tasks in order to learn from them. The project's goal is to envision a community that will leave any stereotypes towards adults with Down syndrome at the door and embrace the opportunity for them to get involved. Paving the way for strong-minded and self-confident adults through cognitive, physical and emotional growth.

Introducing adults with Down syndrome in the workforce will boost Canada's social capital which is a beneficial for all constituents. Moreover, adults with Down syndrome have several capabilities that are being misused. We need a shift of focus in order to show the world the joy and benefits they can bring to our society. It is important to highlight that adults with intellectual disabilities, such as Down syndrome, have the right to participate fully in the society and to have an independent living. This project will argue that the right to higher education is an essential principle of full integration.

As mentioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 29 (UDHR): “Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his or her personality is possible.” Rights and freedoms are key themes related to inclusion and quality of life. Well-being is restricted if individuals do not have freedom, rights and responsibilities within society. This applies clearly to adults with Down syndrome. As with the general population, people can exercise rights if they have basic abilities and opportunities.

Adaptability includes major sets of relations: between a person with a physical impairment and the university; between the university and its departments; and between departments and extended social fields concentrating on more than just the physical expression of skill will enable us to present and develop exciting challenges and problems

The importance of learning

Learning is an essential part of being human. An inclusive society seeks to have a united society, confident and strong where all people, regardless of their disability, gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status must be equally valued members of society. As mentioned in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Article 24: “Persons with disabilities should be guaranteed the right to inclusive education at all levels, regardless of age, without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity.” Human beings are purposeful in that they display the capacity and freedom to make conscious choices. Facilitators, parents, universities, schools and the whole community need to understand that adults with Down syndrome have purposes of their own, which are anchored within a system (i.e. a university) that has its own dynamic and properties. Adults with Down syndrome can make their choices regarding ends and means relevant to the requirements of a university. As mentioned by Russell Lincoln Ackoff, “if parts of a system are to be treated as purposeful, they must be given the freedom to choose, to act.” Adaptability includes major sets of relations: between a person with a physical impairment and the university; between the university and its departments; and between

departments and extended social fields concentrating on more than just the physical expression of skill will enable us to present and develop exciting challenges and problems. These can be presented in an enjoyable way which will assist not only the physical impairment, but also the social, emotional and cognitive growth of the individual. Following a major principle in Human Relations, facilitators need to be aware that each system interacts continuously with its environment (ex. The department of Political Science in a university could interact with an International organization engaged in social services.) This is a very holistic perspective of system thinking which explains how important is to take into consideration the whole (i.e. universities, students, government organizations, and most of all people.) Therefore, we need to see the whole rather than its parts.

Clarifying the level of empowerment is a key component when working with adults with Down syndrome at a university level. It is the role of the facilitator to help the person determining the extent of his or her empowerment in each decision. This is ideally done by designing a specific action plan that will promote mutual problem solving. Focusing on a person’s capabilities and assets rather than deficits will help us in shifting attitudes in our society. This ideology advocates for equal rights and responsibilities by supporting adults with Down syndrome to have a life as similar to other members of the wider community as possible. As mentioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 1: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights; they are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” These ways of thinking require the application of inclusive practices. Having a communication workshop with a strong positive reinforcement will help adults with disabilities to acquire social skills they may be lacking. Every workshop will have a routine and when the participants know the routine this will help them improve their self-esteem and confidence. Moreover, positive reinforcement will teach adults how to communicate effectively as well as the significance of teamwork and cooperation, goal-setting, self-discipline, respect for others, and the importance of rules. The communication workshop will also enable adults with Down syndrome to take risks and learn how to manage failure and success in a safe and supportive environment. The facilitators’ role will be to provide important role models by encouraging an open, fun and non-judgemental environment.

Globalization and diversity

Education is an important factor for a person's sense of self-esteem and control over their lives. We seek to encourage adults with Down syndrome to achieve a high level of autonomy in their community by promoting a deeper understanding about specific issues. It is important to highlight that a person with an intellectual disability encounters two types of difficulties when moving towards a state of autonomy. On the one hand there is the difficulty represented by the person with disability and on the other, attitudes of fear and the ambivalence of the environment (i.e. universities, the student body). This last could interfere with the attainment of the level of a person's potential for success. This project seeks to decrease a protective and solicitous attitude towards future university students with Down syndrome in order to encourage a high level of autonomy and independence. Understanding the different level of support offered by a facilitator requires a shift in focus from "you can't be part of it" to "you can't do it now but we will work together so you can be a part of it." Moreover, facilitators need to be aware of the competing forces of globalization, diversity and multiculturalism when creating the actual program design. It is important to emphasize that a program is a design structure containing a set of experiential learning opportunities which includes: goals (what you want to achieve), objective (how you will get there) and evaluation (see the effectiveness of the program.) I strongly believe that a well-designed program will produce long lasting changes (i.e. sustainable development) in people's life by improving the conditions in which they live.

As the world has become globally interconnected, nations, authorities, communities and most of all people are embracing a holistic perspective about inclusive education which extends over a lifetime and involves more than books and classrooms but, provides opportunities for adults with Down syndrome to pursue their passion. There is no obstacle that cannot be overcome if we decide to work together. I encourage community leaders, nations, NGOs, universities, schools and parents to meet together and to celebrate adults with Down syndrome's interest and claims by highlighting the right to inclusive education in universities. As mentioned by Nelson Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon that can change the world." Why should the world care? The world should care because of a basic human principle "self preservation" in a global community. There is the need for legitimate authorities in order to have a more effective force. People's conflict resolution cannot be taken alone or

separated from each other's social environment nor the institutions that represent them. As mentioned by Thomas Hobbes (XVII-8, 108), "to a man nothing is so pleasing in his own goods as that they are greater than those of others." Conflict resolutions need to take into consideration the whole society; including those adults with Down syndrome who are hoping to have a brighter future through education.

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Rev. Dr. Susan Johnson



Rev. Dr. Willard Metzger



Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton

Justice Tour 2015

A delegation of church leaders, members of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) traveled, in April and May, in eight cities across Canada in what was called the Justice Tour 2015.

The Justice Tour visited Vancouver, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Kitchener, Halifax, Montreal and Ottawa. The delegation reported to the members of the Governing Board of the Canadian Council of Churches on May 13th at their meeting in Ottawa.

-Vancouver, (April 13), with special guests: Chief Bobby Joseph, Reconciliation Canada, Markku Kostamo, A Rocha Canada, and Deborah Littman, Metro Vancouver Alliance;

-Edmonton (April 14), with special Guests: Mark Holmgren, chief executive officer, Bissell Centre, Bernadette Iahail, executive director, Creating Hope Society, and Randy Haluz-DeLay, professor of sociology, The King's University;

-Saskatoon (April 15), with special guests: Angie Bugg, Energy

Conservation Coordinator, Saskatchewan Environmental Society, Dr. Christopher Hrynkow, St. Thomas More College, and Helen Oliver, Saskatoon Public Health Region;

-Winnipeg (April 16), with special guests: Mark Burch, Simplicity Institute, Tasha Carriere-Spillet, William Whyte School, and Shaun Loney, BUILD, Inc.

-Kitchener-Waterloo (May 10), with special guests: John Milloy, Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, Lynn Macaulay, Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group (HHUG) Initiatives, and Caterina Lindman, Citizens Climate Lobby.

-Halifax (May 11), with special guests: Valerie Getson, The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, and Donna Geernaert, Sisters of Charity.

-Montréal (May 12), with special guests: Élisabeth Garant, Director of the Jesuit Centre Justice et Foi, Richard Renshaw, from ROJeP (Peace and Justice Ecumenical Network) and Daniel Paradis, social work.

Each evening, a public engagement forum raised the profile of faith communities engaged on issues of climate justice and poverty. Members of the delegation responded to public questions. The evening event also included elements of music, worship, and prayer.

The goals of this Tour was to:

a) share information about poverty in Canada and climate justice;

b) listen to reflections on regional realities that inform action plans for local engagement and advocacy,

and c) assess material for a Church Leaders' Pastoral Statement to be developed through this process.

Background

In 2011 important interfaith statements were issued on both these themes, yet most people in the pews were never made aware of their content. Citizens for Public Justice, an affiliate member of the CCC and co-organizer of the Justice Tour, has used these statements in various educational and awareness-raising opportunities, including publishing two booklets of reflections and action suggestions, to encourage the work of the churches and engage faith communities in further action. However, we found too few participants who knew of these statements by their leaders, or had used them in congregational education and action strategies. Our churches can resolve to do better in this regard.

These two priority issues for the CCC's Commission on Justice and Peace are especially strategic in 2015 with the civic engagement that will occur during the federal election, and because of two key international events: the UN climate conference in Paris (December), and the Ottawa: "The cries of the earth and the cries of the poor are the voice of God in our time. Are we listening?"

The announcement that Pope Francis has released the first-ever encyclical on the environment in July may also give these issues greater weight among Roman Catholics and others.

The Justice Tour heard from dozens of experts, local politicians and church members passionate about issues of climate change and poverty in Canada, at events attended by over 700 individuals. At the risk of simplifying this tremendously rich experience, it could be said that we heard five main messages repeated over and over again.

What we heard first, it is clear that people in the Canadian churches really care about poverty and climate change. Many people are involved in ministries addressing these concerns in myriad ways, and they called for moral leadership and even risk-taking from their faith leaders as well as substantive action from their governments.

Secondly, people clearly see links between climate change and poverty concerns, acknowledging that Indigenous rights are intertwined with and must be taken into account as we respond. It was often remarked that poverty has many faces, including the faces of Indigenous peoples and newcomers to Canada, but it is the poor that suffer most from climate disruption. We heard that the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor are one and the same, or in another's words, "nature is the new poor." In addressing both issues, it is climate justice and justice for the poor that is required, rather than limiting our churches to charitable responses.

Third, the Justice Tour heard a communal lament due to the breakdown of relationships: with God, with creation and with each other. Canada, it seems, has changed, but there is a yearning to revitalize communities. It was recognized that faith communities can and must play a role in changing the dominant discourse and allowing the bridging of cultures, reestablishing hospitality and re-creating community.

We were also firmly and repeatedly invited to work in partnerships. This included working with other denominations, other faith groups as well as engaging partners in civil society. While acknowledging that collaboration makes our voice stronger, there were numerous calls to avoid dominant structures but to proceed by always including people with

lived experiences of poverty and climate injustice in our efforts.

Finally, we always discerned the presence of hope. People are not giving up, but instead, accompanying all the analysis there was urgency expressed in the need for action for change. Justice Tour participants focused on the CCC's two priority issues (climate justice and ending poverty in Canada), because the 25 members of the CCC firmly believe Psalm 24: "the earth is the Lord's and all that's in it, the world, and those who live in it."

Next steps

Drawing on what was learned during the listening tour, a Church Leaders' Pastoral Statement on Climate Change and Poverty in Canada will be developed and shared this summer for study and response from church constituencies, candidates for political office and the public. We would ask all CCC member churches to set aside time to participate in the approval process efficiently. Locally-led engagement activities will follow the Statement, resulting in various local engagement and advocacy plans, such as meetings with candidates, reflections/prayers/hymns and liturgical activities, etc. We hope our congregations will all receive and reflect upon the Statement and we look forward to your feedback, which will ensure this listening and engaging process does not simply end with the visits to these eight cities. Canadian church leaders will participate in, and report back from the UN meetings with international faith-based partners.

A federal election resource, including sections on these two priority issues, has already been prepared by ecumenical coalitions. It is available on the CCC website, and we encourage you to ensure its broad circulation and use.

The Justice Tour 2015 delegation included: Rev. Dr. Susan Johnson, National Bishop of the Evangelical Church in Canada, Rev. Dr. Willard Metzger, Executive Director of Mennonite Church Canada, Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton, General Secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches, Joe Gunn, Executive Director, Citizens for Public Justice

On May 13 the experiences you organized and shared with church leaders Susan Johnson, Willard Metzger and Karen Hamilton were brought to a meeting at the Office of the Prime Minister, the 50 Governing Board members of The Canadian Council of Churches and to the 130 participants attending the Ottawa Justice Tour evening at Christ Church Anglican Cathedral.

On May 14 a delegation of Governing Board members led by the church leaders brought those messages to meetings with

Federal Members of Parliament from the New Democratic Party, the Liberal Party, the Green Party, and the Ministry of State of Social Development.

On May 15 Joe Gunn and Peter Noteboom joined Mike Hogeterp, Chair of the Commission on Justice and Peace of The Canadian Council of Churches and Ed Bianchi, Program Manager at KAIROS to share stories and plan to facilitate faith community engagement in climate justice and ending poverty in Canada in the months ahead.

On May 19 the leading ecumenical and justice charities in Canada released a shared 2015 Federal Election Resource that may assist you and your friends' and colleagues' civic engagement in the coming months.

We won't be able to keep up this pace! The next major organizing moment is a meeting on June 16 of the Commission on Justice and Peace and the Canadian Interfaith Conversation to organize our common efforts - including a 2015 statement on climate and poverty drawn from the experiences you organized - to engage faith communities during the important conferences and events scheduled for this Fall.

We also want to express my deep appreciation for the partnership with Citizens for Public Justice that made this all possible. We wish you many blessings in your work for justice.



Alessandra Santopadre, social justice officer (Laval, QC), with Bishop Noël Simard

Canada's Current Military Mission in Iraq and Syria **Canadian Council of Churches**

Easter Monday, 6 April 2015
The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON

Re: Canada's Current Military Mission in Iraq and Syria

Dear Prime Minister Harper,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ.

With you and all Canadians we are deeply troubled by the rise of what has been called by several names: the Islamic State (IS), the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This group has been responsible for brutal killings and kidnappings, and other deliberate and massive violations of basic human rights including the displacement and murder of historic Christian communities and the targeting of other religious minorities. These atrocities amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. We commend the Government of Canada for recognizing the gravity of this situation. We also have serious questions about how Canada is responding. Military intervention will not bring an end to the conflict without a broader internationally sanctioned strategy for achieving sustainable peace in Iraq and Syria. Our partners in the region have expressed concerns about acts of violence that will foster new or renewed grievances, further fracturing the social fabric of Middle Eastern society and making the restoration of peace a more difficult task. We are convinced that military efforts to end or limit the present atrocities must be accompanied by other steps.

We have consulted widely with Churches and our other partners and agencies in the Middle East since the summer of 2014 to hear their concerns and receive advice on how we as Canadian Churches, and Canada as a country, can make the most constructive contribution to building peace in Iraq, Syria and in the wider Middle East region. Members of The Canadian Council of Churches continue to reflect on the

implications of extending Canada's military mission to Syria. Our views are informed by deeply rooted beliefs in the sanctity of human life and dignity, the need to protect vulnerable people from atrocities, and cautions about the past effectiveness of international military interventions in the region. Our partners in the region have expressed gratitude for the short-term relief and protection which many feel that some recent military missions in Northern Iraq have provided. At the same time with our partners in the region we recognize that military involvement in Iraq has had far-reaching effects and has led to tragic consequences.

As a result, we urge the Government of Canada to strengthen its diplomatic efforts, increase humanitarian assistance and support for refugees, support civil society organizations, control arms, and focus on the protection of the rule of law and respect for human rights especially through inclusive government structures in Iraq and Syria.

Diplomatic efforts

Broader diplomatic work is needed in order to stop the flow of resources and weapons to ISIS and to build a comprehensive international political framework that is supported by countries in the region and by the United Nations and international law.

We encourage the Government of Canada to make its diplomatic efforts for peace in the Middle East better known, so that we and other Canadians are more informed and can, in turn, share and discuss these efforts with our Church communities and partner agencies in the Middle East.

Humanitarian assistance and support for refugees

We commend the Government of Canada for providing a substantial amount of humanitarian assistance to displaced Iraqis, Syrians and others in the region. Sadly, the needs continue to be enormous. We believe Canada can and should do more. Members of our churches continue to give generous financial support for humanitarian efforts throughout the Middle East.

We commend the Government of Canada for its assistance to date for those who are internally displaced and refugees in Iraq, Syria and surrounding countries. More needs to be done. Canada's current policy of receiving refugees from the region is unclear and so we seek reassurance that the commitment to sponsor Syrian refugees is not at the expense of resettlement and support for refugees from other countries. Members of our parishes and congregations across Canada, as well as other organizations and volunteers, are eagerly waiting to receive Iraqi and Syrian refugees. Accordingly, we urge you to consult with the Sponsorship Agreement Holders Association to discuss how to coordinate a response in Canada to the refugee crisis. If there is a way we can do more to assist in this matter, we would be pleased to meet with the appropriate officials.

Civil society organizations

A robust civil society is vital for the establishment of peace and the longer term social development of society. Canada can do more to build the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Iraq and Syria through support to Canadian and other international CSOs with partners in the region.

Arms Control

Iraq, Syria and the Middle East region in general are awash in arms. We lament but are aware that Canada has been adding to the stores of lethal and non-lethal military equipment, therefore Canada must ensure that these supplies are not diverted to other parties in the conflict.

The rule of law and respect for human rights with a special focus on promoting inclusive government structures in Iraq

The police, the judiciary, and other arms of government can be educated and equipped so as to respect human rights, to follow fair practices, and to strengthen commitment to the rule of law, thereby giving people a security they have lacked far too long. Freedom of conscience and religion and respect for human rights more generally are essential to the emergence in Iraq of an open, peaceful, and democratic society. These principles represent a basis for building security for countries, for citizens, and for communities. Canada should take leadership in the protection of human rights by working with established and emerging community

leaders giving special attention to the rights of minorities, women, and children.

A belief in God's mercy is shared by Christians, Jews and Muslims. We have come together in one another's presence to raise our voices in prayer for peace for Iraq and Syria. We are committed to dialogue with Muslim communities in Canada, recognizing that violent distortions of Islam are causing misunderstanding and suffering in the world and in Canada for peaceloving Muslims, as well as in non-Muslim communities. We condemn any attempts to demonize Islam and peaceful, law-abiding Muslims. We pray for all the victims of this conflict, for those who will aid in their relief and resettlement, as well as our enemies, for we desire their good as well as our own. As you and the Government of Canada, along with all Members of Parliament, participate in ongoing decision-making on Canada's role in Iraq and Syria please be assured of our prayers for you and all who bear this important responsibility.

Co-signed by the leaders of member denominations of The Canadian Council of Churches:

The Most Reverend Fred Hiltz, Archbishop and Primate, The Anglican Church of Canada

+Very Rev. John Philip Renato Miclat, OMHS, Apostolic Catholic Church of Canada Overseer

His Grace Bishop Abgar Hovakimian, Primate, Armenian Apostolic Church Canadian Diocese

The Rev. John Tonks, President, Canadian Association for Baptist Freedoms

The Rev. Tim McCoy, Executive Minister, Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec

The Rev. Jeremy Bell, Executive Minister, Canadian Baptists of Western Canada

+Paul-André Durocher, Archbishop of Gatineau and President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
Elaine Bishop, Clerk, Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Rev. Richard E. (Rick) Hamilton, Interim Regional Minister,

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada

The Rev. Darren Roorda, Canadian Ministries Director,
Christian Reformed Church in North America

L.K. (Rev. Fr.) Messale Engeda, Head Priest and Administrator
of The Ethiopian Orthodox Church of Canada

The Rev. Susan C. Johnson, National Bishop, Evangelical
Lutheran Church in Canada

His Eminence Metropolitan Sotirios, Archbishop Greek
Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto (Canada)

Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Bishop of the North
American Diocese, Mar Thoma Church

The Rev. Willard Metzger, General Secretary, Mennonite
Church Canada

+Irénée, Archbishop of Ottawa and the Archdiocese of
Canada, Orthodox Church in America

Rev. Zbigniew Kozar, Polish National Catholic Church of
Canada

The Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris, Moderator of the 140th General
Assembly, The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Commissioner Susan McMillan, Territorial Commander, The
Salvation Army Canada and Bermuda Territory

The Rev. John Kapteyn, Clerk, Regional Synod of Canada,
Reformed Church in America

His Grace the Most Reverend Lawrence Huculak, O.S.B.M.,
Archbishop of Winnipeg and Metropolitan Ukrainian Catholic
Church in Canada

His Eminence, The Most Rev. Metropolitan Yuriy (Kalistchuk),
Archbishop of Winnipeg and the Central Eparchy, Primate of
the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

The Right Rev. Gary Paterson, Moderator, The United Church
of Canada

c.c.: The Honourable Thomas Mulcair, The Leader of the
Official Opposition

Justin Trudeau, MP, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada

Elizabeth May, MP, Leader of the Green Party of Canada

Louis Plamondon, MP, Acting Leader of the Bloc Québécois
in the House of Commons

The Honourable Robert Nicholson, Minister of Foreign
Affairs

The Canadian Council of Churches represents 25
denominations of Anglican; Evangelical; Free

Church; Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox;
Protestant; and Catholic traditions.

Together we represent more than 85% of the Christians in
Canada. The Canadian Council of Churches was founded in
1944.



The Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France

Sarah Hinlicky Wilson



Strasbourg was named for its location at the crossroads of Europe, as the word literally means: the city of streets. Situated on the Rhine, in the borderlands between German and French cultures, Strasbourg has a long history of dispute and reconciliation. It was a major center of the Reformation—and not incidentally for some time the home of Johannes Gutenberg, inventor of the printing press. A free imperial city during the Middle Ages, it has been traded between Germany and France for centuries, starting with King Louis XIV's invasion in 1681. As recently sixty years ago locals would never have expected abiding political peace to settle on the city. But today it is the home to Council of Europe, the European Parliament, and the European Court of Human Rights—all witnesses to the extraordinary achievement of ceasefire and lasting peace in this long-disputed territory.

Impact of Vatican II

It was for much the same reason that the Institute for Ecumenical Research landed in Strasbourg. In 1963, in the light of the burgeoning ecumenical movement and especially the Second Vatican Council, a global assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (which represents 72 million of the world's Lutherans in 144 churches distributed across 79 countries) approved the founding of a house of studies devoted to the theological scholarship necessary for ecclesial rapprochement. Strasbourg and the surrounding region of Alsace is home to the largest community of Protestants in France as well as the see of the Catholic archbishop, along with their respective theological faculties at the university. The setting itself declares that reconciliation is possible.

The Institute (French *Centre d'Etudes Œcuméniques*, German *Institut für Ökumenische Forschung*) has a mandate extending to three areas: theological research into causes of division in doctrine and church order and on the meaning of Christian unity; dialogue with other Christian churches and theologians; and ecumenical communication to the churches through such means as the hosting of an annual Summer Seminar or teaching visits around the world.

Staff members of the Institute were key figures in the composition of the 1999 Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, the only binding doctrinal document that the Catholic church has ever signed with a Protestant body. The international Lutheran-Catholic dialogue subsequently worked on a long study on apostolicity and has just released guidelines for joint commemoration of the 2017 anniversary of the Reformation in *From Conflict to Communion*. The Institute is also cooperating with the Catholic Johann-Adam-Möhler Institute in Paderborn, Germany, to produce a detailed, multi-volume commentary on each of Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses, with supporting background research on the history and theology of the early sixteenth century.

Institute staff were instrumental in authoring the Leuenberg Agreement, which is not well known in North America but is probably the farthest-reaching ecumenical fellowship to date, initially establishing full communion between Lutheran and Reformed churches across Europe. There are presently 94 member churches, including now also Waldensian, Methodist, Brethren, and United churches. As with the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, Leuenberg mandated ongoing joint theological study, assuming that the declaration of fellowship was the beginning, not the end, of the common task of articulating the gospel. The resulting group is called the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (even though some of the signatories are Latin American churches!), which has recently produced two major studies: one on "Ministry, Ordination, and Episcopé" and another on "Scripture, Confessions, and the Church."

Important initiatives

The Institute also provides consultants to the various dialogues of the LWF. The Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission has been meeting since the early 1980s and issued a number of joint statements. Currently the topic is the “The Mystery of the Church,” and a statement on the ordained ministry is expected later in 2015.

The Institute’s staff helped to draft the study *Healing Memories: Reconciling in Christ*, the first-ever jointly authored history of their sixteenth-century interactions by Lutherans and Mennonites. Discovery of Lutheran maltreatment of the Mennonites’ Anabaptist forebears led the Lutherans to issue a public apology and request for forgiveness at the LWF’s assembly in 2010, to which the Mennonite World Conference responded with a statement of full forgiveness. Currently the LWF is engaged in a “trialogue” with Mennonites and Roman Catholics on the topic of baptism, only the second time there has been an international-level trilateral conversation (the first was one on marriage in the 1960s between Lutherans, Reformed, and Roman Catholics).

From 2004 to 2010, the Institute conducted a “proto-dialogue” with a handful of interested classical Pentecostals. The resulting study, entitled *Lutherans and Pentecostals in Dialogue*, paved the way for a formal international dialogue between the two parties, which will convene the first of five projected meetings later this fall. This dialogue has already begun to highlight the emerging challenge of dialogue with nondenominational congregations and networked Christian movements.

So far all of the work described here has focused on the task of doctrinal consensus between church bodies, but the Institute’s mandate includes the equally challenging work of reception. For this reason, the Institute has offered every July since 1966 a Summer Seminar which gathers both clergy and laity for a week to discuss a topic of ecumenical significance. Past topics have included Spirituality, Liturgy, Mission, and the Saints. This year’s is “Ecumenism in the Arts.” The speakers are drawn from a wide range of church bodies and nations, and accordingly the Seminar attracts attendees from all over the church and all over the world. It is probably no small part of the success of the Seminar that it also includes spending time in the beautiful city of Strasbourg, trips to see Matthias Grünewald’s Isenheim altarpiece in neighboring Colmar, and a wine-tasting!

The Institute has also produced a number of books, many on

focused scholarly topics but equally many of broad popular interest. The recent book “Table Fellowship is Possible” (*Abendmahlsgemeinschaft ist möglich*) was a bestseller in Germany, as was a *Commentary on the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*. The Strasbourg Institute staff also contributed significantly to the editing of the three “Growth in Agreement” volumes, familiar to any student of ecumenism. A guide to Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, written with a Lutheran audience in mind, is anticipated within the next year.

The Institute welcomes individual scholars on sabbatical as well as groups. Doctoral students working on subjects such as the reception of Leuenberg, the Women’s World Day of Prayer, and political theology in southern Africa have resided at the Institute while undertaking their studies. Groups of pastors or congregations come to Strasbourg several times a year for intensive ecumenical formation through workshops and discussion. And for those who can’t come to the Institute, the Institute can come to them: the staff have travelled to nearby points in Slovakia and Italy, and as far away as Hong Kong and Addis Ababa, to offer lectures and courses.

For more information, please visit www.strasbourg-institute.org/en.



In memory of bombing victims, Geneva

Ecumenism at the Abbaye Sainte-Marie des Deux-Montagnes

Sister Bernadette-Marie Roy, o.s.b. - Abbaye Sainte-Marie des Deux-Montagnes

Ecumenical relations have had a discreet but intense place in the life of the nuns at Sainte-Marie des Deux-Montagnes for close to 50 years. We shall begin with the ties linking us with our Orthodox brothers and sisters before going on to those that exist with the Anglican Communion.

Blessing of the icons at Saint-Jérôme cathedral

On Sunday, March 15, 2015, at the cathedral in Saint-Jérôme, Quebec, a solemn celebration of an ecumenical nature crowned many months of work, with the blessing of five large icons written¹ by two Benedictine nuns. Sister Louise Lussier and Sister Martine-Marie Roy had created a *deesis*² representing Christ Pantocrator, in a grouping with the Holy Mother of God and Saints John the Baptist, Peter and Paul. After the homily, Archbishop Luigi Bonazzi, Apostolic Nuncio in Canada, blessed the icons, censed them, and then, in a spontaneous gesture, kissed the heart of Christ. The celebration was further enriched by the presence of three more bishops: Msgr Pierre Morissette, Bishop of Saint-Jérôme, his auxiliary Msgr Raymond Poisson, and His

Grace Bishop Ioan Casian of Vicina, Vicar Bishop for the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas. Bishop Casian was accompanied by Brother Élie, an Orthodox monk from Protection-de-la-Mère-de-Dieu monastery in Wentworth, located within the diocese of Saint-Jérôme. Among the concelebrants was the Father Abbot of Saint-Benoît-du-Lac, Dom André Laberge, showing his solidarity with his Benedictine sisters. In the sanctuary were Mother Abbess Isabelle L. Thouin and a delegation of Benedictine nuns from Abbaye Sainte-Marie des Deux-Montagnes in Sainte-Marthe-sur-le-Lac. The Irénée Beaubien Institute of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism was represented by its Executive Director, Dr. Adriana Bara.

Questioned before the inauguration, Bishop Casian expressed pleasure at this initiative: "Religious art is a place of encounter, and could be regarded as ecumenical. This is a gesture that gives us great joy." For his part, Bishop Morissette commented that: "We did not at first think of the icons from an ecumenical perspective, but seeing that Romanian Orthodox faithful wished to attend the inauguration, it does say something ecumenical."³ Mother Abbess Isabelle Thouin and the Benedictines considered this commission from the diocese of Saint-Jérôme as a prophetic gesture that would make a quiet but very real contribution to the journey to Christian unity.

Joy shone on each face, on March 15, as everyone contemplated the figures and expressive faces of these images of Christ, the Holy Mother of God and the saints that surround them! One parishioner spoke for many others when she said: "Since the icons have been there, the cathedral has come alive!" Everyone found that the sanctuary had been transformed by this luminous Presence. Christ is represented full-length; a three-dimensional effect makes it look as if his pedestal is coming out of the icon. The eye is drawn by the red of his tunic and the blue of his mantle, but especially by his face, which gives the impression of looking back at those looking at him. Only one thing is needed in order to be touched: just to look, and look again... then something happens to us that has happened to millions of people for centuries: we can no longer separate ourselves from the icons. Then, when we consider that they are *written* with natural products: the colours are made with crushed stone, diluted in egg yolk,



applied with vodka, beer, white wine, rabbitskin glue, with a squirrel hair brush... Through these many operations, we experience that it is no longer an image, but the Person represented who is looking upon us with love. The Presence made tangible by the icons touches the hearts of those who enter the cathedral, to such a extent that Bishop Morissette and Bishop Poisson are considering placing icons of the Evangelists inside four medallions overlooking the sanctuary. The sister iconographers will no doubt be eager to get back to work.

What attracted the nuns of Sainte-Marie to ecumenism?

The Benedictine order is the oldest monastic order in the Roman Catholic Church: the Church counts on us in the area of ecumenism because our monastic roots are very close to those of Eastern monasticism; furthermore, the Rule of St. Benedict assigns an important place to hospitality, which becomes a place of encounter with our brothers and sisters of other Christian denominations. To enter into ecumenical dialogue, one must first be rooted in one's own tradition: the living practice of monasticism lived out day to day is a place for exchange and dialogue. Like other monasteries of the Congregation of Solesmes, the Abbaye Sainte-Marie des Deux-Montagnes celebrates the Roman liturgy in Latin and in Gregorian chant. However, Dom Prosper Guéranger, who restored Solesmes in the 19th century, included many excerpts from Eastern liturgies in his comments in *The Liturgical Year*, which kindled a love for the Byzantine liturgy in the souls of his sons and daughters.

Why and how did the Benedictine nuns learn the art of icons?

Our first contact with Orthodoxy dates back to 2004. To provide a structure for this movement toward ecumenism, Mother Abbess Isabelle Thouin formed a committee for ecumenism and interfaith dialogue on January 25, 2006. At meetings of the *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum* (CIB), Mother Abbess Isabelle, as a delegate of the contemplative Benedictine monasteries of North America to the CIB, had heard certain monks promote ecumenism and advise practising it by learning iconography. Studying icons alongside the Orthodox, they said, was a privileged avenue to talk with each other, to understand each other better and to learn doctrine by writing icons. Mother Abbess conceived a desire to have some of the Sisters learn the art of the icon. And so in August 2006, Sister Louise Lussier and Sister Martine-Marie Roy began to study iconography with an Orthodox master iconographer from Moscow who had moved to Montreal, Alexander Sobolev. In January 2009, a third Benedictine, Sister Agnes Valderrama, began to study iconography with Master Sobolev.

Two Benedictine iconographers visit Russia

Each year, Alexander Sobolev offers his students an opportunity to travel to Russia to study icons *in situ*; the two Sisters were given the gift to be able to go, and they left on June 7, 2007 for Moscow. They came back exhausted, of course, but radiant. Something of the grace of the holy *starets* will perhaps enrich Canadian nuns! Among the highlights for them were their visits to four monasteries, two for men and two for women. With the nuns of Novodivitchy near Moscow, Sister Louise and Sister Martine felt right at home; at Trinity-Saint-Sergius, after meeting a monk who was a bishop, wearing a pectoral cross, they asked for his blessing. He gave it to them, tracing a cross on their foreheads, and then asked to have a picture taken of himself with the two Benedictines, saying: *Tri moniales* [three monastics]!

Occasional celebration of Byzantine vespers at Abbaye Sainte-Marie

Our ecumenical relations have been shared with the public through various events, especially the Byzantine vespers celebrated at Sainte-Marie by Bishop Ioan Casian, Hegumen Cyril and several Orthodox monks and laypeople from the Romanian community; we have also enjoyed talks given by Bishop Casian and Hegumen Cyril. These two have been present in the sanctuary of the abbey church for the Eucharist. For their part, our sisters have often attended liturgical feasts at the Wentworth monastery. In fact, some Byzantine celebrations had already taken place at Abbaye Sainte-Marie in 1967, when Fr. Joseph Ledit, s.j., founder of the "little Russian church" in Montreal on Guizot Street, had celebrated with us the triduum of the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, sung by the nuns in Slavonic.

Everyone loves cake! Visits and gifts

Mutual visits with an exchange of gifts became more frequent, giving us the joy of enjoying fellowship together. Our sisters have also had a chance to visit the community of Greek Orthodox nuns in Brownsburg several times. Then there was an encounter that brought us closer to Patriarch Daniel of Romania, when we met Father Corneliu Andrasco, a young priest from the patriarchal cathedral of Bucarest, delegated in 2012 by Patriarch Daniel to visit Hegumen Cyril. The Romanian priest gave our sisters an icon of Saint Nectarius and a tapestry sewn by Romanian nuns. A week later, Sister Martine received an e-mail from Father Andrasco: "I wish to thank you for your sincere good wishes on the occasion of the great feast of Easter. His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel has received your wishes and wishes you a happy Easter, full of divine serenity."

Friends, brothers and sisters from the Anglican Communion

The practice of ecumenism at Sainte-Marie truly began in 1970, when an Anglican religious, Father Francis Dalby, wrote to ask if he could correspond with one of the nuns. Mother Abbess Agnès Goyer assigned this correspondence to Mother Maura Anne-Marie Chabry, one of the French foundresses, from Abbaye Notre-Dame de Wisques (Pas-de-Calais). Born into a non-practising family, Anne-Marie had asked to be baptized when she was 15; during her adolescence, she also had an Anglican friend. Her cultivation, her knowledge of English, her humility, her respect for the convictions of others and her spiritual wisdom made her a beloved friend to many Anglicans. As a result, the Sainte-Marie community received visits from Father Dalby, the former superior general of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist (founded in Oxford in 1866), then residing at the Bracebridge, Ontario mission; Brother Anselm, choirmaster and teacher of Gregorian chant at his community's college in Oxford; their friend, Bishop Henry Gordon Hill (1921-2006), who was a bishop of the Anglican diocese of Toronto before becoming auxiliary bishop in Montreal; and Anglican sisters from the Order of Saint John the Divine (founded in Toronto in 1884).

Mother Maura once said: "I would like to die for the cause of Unity." She left for the Father's house on December 29, 1982, on the feast day of Saint Thomas Becket, an English martyr for unity. So many times did she say, in speaking of her Anglican friends: "They come here to seek God and

find Him, nothing more, nothing more!" For their part, the Anglicans were charmed by the discreet and otherworldly nature of Mother Maura. Twelve of them came to her funeral on December 31. Bishop Hill, sitting in the sanctuary in choir dress, proclaimed the second reading, and shared from the abundance of his heart his recollections about Mother Maura. For his part, Father Dalby wrote: "I told Mother Maura how much I valued her friendship, which surrounded so many of the people she met through the Society of Saint John the Evangelist. It was a marvelous thing to have known her." Brother Anselm said: "Her letters were one of the great joys of my life, and I thank God for giving me the gift of her friendship and the happiness to have met her 10 years ago." Sister Nora, an Anglican sister of Saint John the Divine, said: "It was a privilege for me to have known her and, through her, to experience more of the joy of Our Lord."

There are many more such recollections, and they open a door to the future. The strength of these fraternal ties makes us desire full and visible unity more ardently, as Hegumen Cyril has said, admitting that it causes him pain not to be able to concelebrate the Eucharist at Sainte-Marie: "We must suffer even more in order to want healing and to see the Sister Churches achieve intercommunion."

¹ In iconographic language, *write* means *paint*.

² *Deesis*: a Greek word meaning "prayer" or "intercession"; in an iconostasis, the term *deesis* designates a row of icons representing Christ in majesty, flanked by the Virgin (to his right) and Saint John the Baptist (to his left) and other saints interceding for the salvation of souls.

³ Mario Bard, *Rayonnement œcuménique pour les nouvelles icônes à la cathédrale de Saint-Jérôme*, Proximo, Radio VM, March 13, 2015.



Ecumenical News

International News

Two Canadians on the Ecumenical Jury at the 68th edition of the Cannes Film Festival

This year, two Canadians were among the members of the Ecumenical Jury at the Cannes Film Festival. Jonathan Guilbault is Associate Editor at Novalis, a publishing house specializing in religious books and magazines. Andrew Johnston is a minister of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and currently a board member of KAIROS Canada, an ecumenical initiative that unites 11 religious communities and supports projects that promote ecology and human rights. He has been a member of the Ecumenical Jury in Cannes, Berlin, Montreal and Locarno. The Ecumenical Jury, which has existed at Cannes since 1974, is composed of six members (three Protestants and three Catholics) from different cultures and countries and who change every year. They are skilled in the area of film as journalists, critics, theologians, researchers or teachers. The Ecumenical Jury draws attention to works that have a certain human quality that touches the spiritual dimension of life, such as justice, human dignity, respect for the environment, peace, solidarity and reconciliation. These Gospel values are largely shared in all cultures. The ecumenical worship service in Cannes was on May 20 and the awards were given on May 23. *AMéCO/Audivec/Thérèse Miron/cannes.juryoecumenique.org*

2015 Christian Unity Gathering brings inspiration, focus, spectacle

The National Council of Churches held its second annual Christian Unity Gathering, May 7-9, in Washington, DC with over 200 Christian leaders, scholars, activists, and ecumenists present from across the United States, to focus on the NCC's priority of interfaith peacemaking. The NCC pursues two main areas in its ecumenical work: to build interfaith relations with an emphasis on peacemaking, and to end mass incarceration. On the evening of May 7, more than 2,500 people gathered at the Washington National Cathedral for a moving worship service sponsored by the NCC commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, and His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, spoke. The homily was delivered by Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of the World Council of

Churches. Rev. Dr. Olav stressed the necessity of Christian unity on behalf of all humanity, because it is only in unity that the Christian churches can ultimately proclaim the fullness of the Gospel. "Let us talk of a Christian unity that serves a wider unity of all people, all creation, unity for the sake of the world," he proclaimed. *National Council of Churches*

Conference in preparation for the Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church, co-sponsored with the Orthodox Theological Society in America (OTSA)

In 2016, the leaders of the autocephalous Orthodox churches from around the world will gather at the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople/Istanbul for a much discussed and anticipated council. This conference is a series of panel discussions addressing several themes from the agenda for the Great and Holy Council. *Fordham Orthodoxy*

Congress on Women in the Church in April 2015 at the Pontifical University Antonianum

The congress took place in April 2015 at the Pontifical University Antonianum. "Let's do less talking about women in the Church and more talking with them." There was some strong language at this congress, the only one to be directed by a woman, an Italian Franciscan, Sister Mary Melone. *Radio Vatican* reported that four embassies located near the Holy See – those of Chile, the US, Great Britain and the European Union – collaborated to put on the event. The congress was the subject of keen interest and was attended by not only women but many men as well. For Sister Mary Melone, the time is ripe for an open, constructive and unbiased dialogue. Encouraged by Pope Francis, women want to be heard and recognized as an integral part of the Church. *Radio Vatican*

Jean Vanier receives Templeton Prize

The prestigious Templeton Prize was awarded this year to Jean Vanier, the founder of L'Arche, for his innovative discovery of the central role of the most vulnerable in creating a more just, inclusive and human society. Previous recipients include Mother Teresa, Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama. The Templeton Prize is one of the most important honorary distinctions in the world, with a value of close to

\$1.7 million. Jean Vanier is the son of Georges Vanier, former Governor General of Canada, and Pauline Archer. *AMéCO/ François Gloutnay*

“Ecumenism of Blood” unites us through the witness of Christians of all denominations

Pope Francis spoke of the suffering of persecuted Christians around the world when he welcomed, in April, the members of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. It was an opportunity for him to point out that the world urgently needed the common, joyful witness of Christians, from the defence of life and human dignity to the promotion of justice and peace, reported Radio Vatican. In his statement, the Pope acknowledged that the goal set by Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Ramsey almost a half-century ago, namely full communion in truth, had not yet been reached, and discouragement was gaining ground. “The cause of Christian unity is not an optional undertaking,” he said, “and the differences that divide us must not be seen as inevitable.” Pope Francis then returned to the theme of ecumenism of blood, affirming that there was a bond of unity between Christians that went beyond any division: the testimony of persecuted Christians. “The blood of these martyrs will nourish a new era of ecumenical commitment ... The witness by these our brothers and sisters demands that we live in harmony with the Gospel and that we strive with determination to fulfill the Lord’s will for his Church.” *Actualités +/Auvidéc*

Christian papyrus discovered from the 6th century

On September 4, 2014, at a conference devoted to its papyrus collection, the University of Manchester library let the cat out of the bag, reports *Aleteia*: historian Roberta Mazza had discovered a papyrus fragment dating back to the 6th century, written in Greek. It is the oldest example of the Eucharistic liturgy being used as a protective charm, and attests to the practices of early Christians. Roberta Mazza, a Research Fellow with the John Rylands Research Institute, found it in the John Rylands Library, the largest in the UK, which also holds a fragment of the Gospel according to Saint John, the oldest original of the New Testament. Dated roughly 300 years after the conversion of the Roman emperor Constantine to Christianity, the first word the historian was able to translate emphasized its Christian essence: manna, the bread that God caused to come down from heaven to feed the people of Israel during their exodus. She explained that the rest of the text was a mixture of passages from the Old and New Testaments. *Auvidéc Média/Aleteia/Vida Nueva*

World Council of Churches calls for prayer for peace

A message on the website of the World Council of Churches (WCC) calls on congregations around the world to observe an International Day of Prayer for Peace on September 21. This day coincides with the United Nations-sponsored International Day of Peace. The participants are especially asked to pray and act together to nurture lasting peace in their communities, countries and the world. It was in 2004 that the WCC began to observe an International Day of Prayer for Peace as part of its Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2010), following an accord between the WCC and the UNO. *COE-Nouvelles*

Taizé

For Taizé, 2015 is an anniversary year: the 100th anniversary of the birth of Brother Roger, the 10th anniversary of his death and the 75th anniversary of the community. Brother Roger was born on May 12, 1915. A celebration is planned to mark the day in Taizé, but friends around the world are encouraged, wherever they live, to lead a prayer and imagine an action of solidarity to recall the memory of Brother Roger and put into practice his call to follow Christ. *Taizé*

US Conference of Catholic Bishops endorse sainthood cause for Fr. Paul Wattson

On November 11, 2014, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops at their fall meeting in Baltimore endorsed the cause for canonization of Father Paul Wattson, SA, founder of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement. Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York sought the consultation of the American Bishops, which is the first step in the Catholic Church’s canonization process. Father Paul is remembered for his work with people who suffer from alcohol and drug addiction as well as his worldwide ministry in ecumenism. He founded what became the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 1908, which the Church still celebrates today. The ministry of Atonement has blossomed into an exemplary dialogue within the Christian church as well as interreligious dialogue with Jews, Muslims and other world faith communities. Fr. Paul’s landmark homeless shelter, St. Christopher’s Inn at Graymoor in Garrison, NY, has grown to minister to the marginalized of our society, by offering care to those who suffer from homelessness and substance abuse. *Franciscan Friars of the Atonement/cruXnow.com*

Anglican-Catholic Commission to hold next year's meeting in Canada

The fifth session of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission concluded this week with a decision to hold next year's meeting near the city of Toronto. The group, known as ARCIC III, met at a retreat house south of Rome from April 28 to May 4 to discuss relations between local, regional and Universal Churches and how moral and ethical decisions are made within each tradition. The Anglican and Catholic scholars have also been reviewing the substantial progress made by earlier ARCIC groups and are preparing to publish commentary on five jointly agreed statements from the previous phases of the dialogue. During an audience with the group on Thursday, Pope Francis said these discussions remind us that ecumenism is not a secondary element in the life of the Church and that the differences which divide us must never be seen as inevitable. Archbishop Longley says the group has been discovering the richness of the work achieved by the earlier ARCIC groups which is now being put forward again for reception by the two communions. Finally the two leaders spoke of next year's meeting in Canada and announced that the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, is expected to visit the Vatican in 2016 in the context of celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the Anglican Centre in Rome. *Vatican Radio/Prairie Centre for Ecumenism*

National News

A gathering for learning, sharing and fellowship for those involved or interested in ecumenical dialogue, in Saskatoon from June 22 -25

The Canadian Forum on Inter-Church Dialogues is organized in conjunction with the Canadian Council of Churches, the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism and the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism. The keynote speakers are Dr. Donna Geernaert, SC, of Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Dr. Timothy George of Beeson Divinity School, Homewood, Alabama.

The Green Church Conference adopts a common declaration: "Creating a Climate of Hope"

As it said in the call for signatures: "The year 2015 is our chance to show that the Churches are concerned about

climate change." The representatives of six Christian Churches were involved in adopting the declaration signed by religious authorities and participants at the conference. The organizers invited everyone involved in pastoral ministry across Canada to sign the declaration. Cardinal Gérald Cyprien Lacroix, Archbishop of Quebec City, was the first Catholic to sign.

Workshop focuses on prayer and music

The sharing of prayer texts and hymns between Christian denominations is a grassroots ecumenical encounter that can lead to deeper reflection and understanding. That was the message brought to life at a workshop held to open this year's De Margerie Series on Christian Reconciliation and Unity in Saskatoon. A presbyter in the United Methodist Church and a professor of worship, Dr. Karen B. Westerfield Tucker described her own experience as an "accidental ecumenist." Her own first encounters with other Christian traditions came through music. In the workshop, entitled *With One Voice: Prayer, Song and Christian Unity*, Westerfield Tucker explored Scripture, translations, prayers and lyrics and what they reveal about our theology and belief, inviting participants to consider and discuss the content of the church's prayer and song from a range of sources and denominational perspectives - with sharing and influences at times stretching back over centuries. At the conclusion of the workshop, Westerfield Tucker introduced the ecumenical depth of a profound and theologically dense Christus Paradox hymn by United Church of Canada minister Sylvia Dunstan, contrasting it with a praise and worship song, *Lord I Need You*, by Catholic musician Matt Maher, as an example of a genre that easily transcends denominations among youth. *Prairie Messenger*

Regional News

Quebec

The *Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec* (Quebec council for religious heritage) announced that its next forum on religious heritage would take place on November 5 and 6, 2015 in Quebec City. The fourth edition of the forum will mark the Council's 20th anniversary and will offer an opportunity to address the major issues in Quebec religious

heritage. The Forum on Religious Heritage has become an annual meeting place for people concerned about the future of religious heritage. It includes professionals, citizens and experts from areas as varied as architecture, urban planning, culture, municipalities and religious authorities, who, through speeches, round tables and discussions, share what is happening across Quebec. Whether it is in the form of contributions to knowledge or different types of experiences, achievements or concrete projects, the Forum on Religious Heritage provides an update on the situation across Quebec and offers sustainable solutions. A portion of the religious buildings in Quebec are owned or rented by Protestant and Orthodox congregations. *Actualités +/Conseil du patrimoine religieux/Auvidec*

Gathering in the name of Jesus in Montreal

On June 20, at Ahuntsic Park in Montreal, hundreds of Christians from every rite and denomination will be attending a "Christian Gathering," in solidarity with Christians around the world. The purpose of the event is to provide an opportunity to get together and socialize, to encourage Christians to take their rightful place in the public space, to ensure that Christian values, the founding values of the Quebec identity, continue to inspire personal and social choices through dialogue, and to maintain the Christian heritage, which requires witness. The special guests include the Most Rev. Christian Lépine, Archbishop of Montreal, Antoine Malek, President of ACCOM, Pastor Jeff Laurin, founder of the church *La Bible Parle* and Douglas Farrow, Professor of Christian Thought at McGill University. *Diocese of Montreal/Auvidec*

Interfaith Celebration for World Peace in Montreal

An Interfaith Celebration for World Peace, organized by Canadians for Coexistence, was held on April 26 in Montreal. Representatives of six religions were present. The masters of ceremonies were Rev. Arlen Bonnar of Saint James United Church, and Father John Walsh, a Catholic priest of the Archdiocese of Montreal. *"...religion can now become the solution if we all declare that no matter which religion we follow, we recognize that we are all God's children, and He would not want us to continually break His commandments. As religion has divided us, so it can now unite us."* *Canadians for Coexistence*

Talk on religious diversity in Judaism and Christianity in Montreal

The talk was organized by the Christian Jewish Dialogue of Montreal in collaboration with the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism. The issue addressed by Dr. Adriana Bara as an Orthodox Christian and Dr. Victor Goldbloom on behalf of the Jewish community had to do with the forms that religious diversity takes within Judaism and Christianity today. The talk was followed by a discussion.




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