

Remi De Roo: Pilgrim of The Second Vatican Council

By Cardinal Michael Czerny S.J. (homily at St. Andrew's Cathedral, Victoria) Feb. 12, 2022

I speak to you today as one who was fortunate to get to know Bishop Remi De Roo and be inspired and challenged by him. We knew each other through the second half of his long life. So I am speaking to you now about an admired friend. I also bring you the warm greetings of Pope Francis, who joins us in mourning and thanksgiving, and who sends his blessing.

Remi De Roo was 38 when Pope John XXIII made him a bishop in October 1962 – thus, the youngest bishop in the world, and the first sent to the Victoria diocese who was born in Western Canada. He attended all four sessions of Vatican II.

Remi came across as decisive, frank and even abrasive at times. He was also complex, controversial, and faithful to his convictions until the end. Above all he was a Council Father who dedicated the subsequent 60 years to continually rediscovering what it means to live as a Council Christian and as a Council Church ... and now indeed as a Synodal Church.

Bishop Remi called himself “a pilgrim of the Second Vatican Council”. It decisively shaped both his unwavering vision and his lifelong mission. His conciliar conscience found expression in various directions, but above all became concrete in his constant habits of proximity and closeness, encounter and engagement.

He believed that the Church in Canada should divest itself of its instinctual suspicion of the modern world, and instead always seek to dialogue with contemporary culture, to accompany the path of ongoing cultural and social transformation, and to enlighten society with the “living substance” of the Gospel.

I believe that the following elements were key to Bishop Remi's pastoral choices:

- The decision to visit the indigenous communities of his diocese, with whom he maintained a sincere bond of friendship throughout his life.
- His commitment to the promotion of social justice, which led him – as chairman of the Canadian bishops' social justice committee – to question the political world about its social policies and the business community about its responsibilities.
- Encouraging lay people to become aware of their dignity as baptized



Cardinal Czerny (foreground) at Bishop Remi's gravesite. Victoria's Bishop Gordon officiating. (ICN Photo)

persons and of the responsibilities they were called to play in the Church as protagonists of the apostolate, not merely as recipients of the proclamation.

- Promoting the role of women; rejecting the patriarchal models that confine them to subordinate positions and offend their human and baptismal dignity.
- Finally, the care given to ordained ministers who had chosen to leave the ministry. Against the stigmatization that made them reprobates and outcasts, Bishop Remi manifested a Church that knows how to be “mother” to all.

Bishop De Roo's progressive stances and apostolic service were greatly appreciated by some and greatly disparaged by others. He remained constant in spite of a degree of marginalization and hostility, even within the Church. Difficulties of a different order arose in the administration of the goods of the diocese of Victoria. In response to the criticisms, a friend of his wrote a whole book about his “Vindication” with the subtitle “Political Sea-change in the Catholic Church”.

FAREWELL

What of us here, now? When confronted with the death of a life-long brother, let alone one of our senior elders, our faith in the Risen Lord spurs us to reflect on ourselves and to remember that Divine Judgment takes place in the here and now,

in our daily decisions about Christ, with or without him, for or against him.

Our farewell for Bishop De Roo questions us about our adherence to the Lord Jesus who said “When I was hungry you gave me to eat”. We mustn't just sit here. Let us review our lives on both the individual and ecclesial levels. Let us give thanks for Vatican II and align with its mission of evangelization. Let us recall:

- that above all, collegiality is made up of closeness, openness to dialogue, patience, and a cordial welcome that does not condemn.
- that belonging to the Church today is based more than ever on fidelity to the Council and on attention to the human heart, to community, to the common home, with ears and eyes attentive to the “signs of the times” that continually reveal the presence of the One to Come.
- that the rediscovery of synodality must inject new energy into every area of pastoral response: catechetics, liturgy, family, employment, justice, culture, social life, charity...

Let us recall too that if we affiliate with elites instead of trusting in the Lord and opting for the poor; if we huddle for assurance within our own closed groups instead of going out to the existential peripheries; then we end up far from the people of God and outside of real communion with the

Catholic Church.

It is time, the time is now, to reflect, meditate and pray on all these things, whether we are young in the Church or approaching 98 years of vigorous age. The words of Pope Francis two Sundays ago, to a group of lay people engaged in catechesis, are an excellent guide to this moment, this time:

- “This is the time to be the artisans of open communities that know how to value the talents of each person.
- It is a time for free and disinterested missionary communities, which do not seek prominence and advantage, but rather walk the paths of the people of our time, stooping to tend to those on the margins.
- It is a time for communities that look disappointed young people in the eye, that welcome strangers and give hope to the disheartened.
- It is a time for communities that fearlessly engage in dialogue with those with different ideas.
- It is a time for communities that, like the Good Samaritan, know how to approach those wounded by life, to bind their wounds with compassion.”

The Holy Father could easily have had our beloved Bishop Remi in mind when, with a certain tough love, he spelled out these challenges. With the intercession of our beloved ancestor, let us – even with the risk of being, once in a while, just a little bit irritating – embrace them with firm resolve and inextinguishable hope! Amen.

Michael Czerny was inspired by Bishop De Roo in the 1970s. He coordinated a visit to Central America when the Bishop went on a fact-finding tour representing the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops as chair of their Social Affairs Commission.

A Beacon For Our Time A Look at the Life of Remi De Roo

Video by Ray Painchaud
available at:

https://youtu.be/EyCEN0o_QgE
also

<https://islandcatholicnews.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/bishopde-rooabeacon.mp4>

Last Interview with Remi De Roo Digs Into Issues

By David Szollosy, Toronto (with Laretta Amundsen)

On June 8 of last year, former staff member for Bishop Remi J. De Roo, Dave Szollosy conducted an interview with the bishop for the Rogers community television show, "Politically Speaking." It proved to be the last public interview the very media-savvy prelate would give.

The following October, Dave Szollosy met with the bishop and when they spoke about the interview, Bishop De Roo expressed his interest in having it transcribed into a print interview. The following is a condensed and edited version of the June conversation.

It is important to emphasize the importance of the very significant event for the Catholic Church and the world which took place in the 1960s. The Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, commonly known as Vatican II, addressed relations between the Catholic Church and the modern world. Bishop Remi J. De Roo, Bishop Emeritus of Victoria, British Columbia, was the last surviving bishop to have participated in all sessions of the Second Vatican Council. He continued speaking about the Council and its impacts long into his retirement. The Rogers interview started with his recollections of that important event.

DS: Can you describe the importance of the Second Vatican Council for that period of history? What was going on in the world and in the Church to cause there to be a need and an appropriateness for the Council?

RDR: There was a renewal in the world and in the Church. Pope Pius XII had addressed those issues. Many societies were trying to come back to normal after World War II.

DS: What were your impressions at the time of what was going on?

RDR: There was excitement about coming together to talk about what was happening in society. There was an awakening to a new theology which scared a lot of people in the Vatican who weren't accustomed to thinking that the Church might evolve because for them the Church was the perfect society and unreformable.

Most of the bishops had never met one another, many of them were not well enough read to be sensitive to what was happening. The Church had been in a situation of negativity and condemnation. The world was searching for universal peace, for more justice.

DS: In an article by *Vancouver Sun* columnist Douglas Todd, he suggests "the jury is out on whether Vatican II has achieved its goals. Many believe the reforming movement you took part in building has been resisted by popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI." Is that what happened to the spirit of the Council?

RDR: Yes! The reforms of Vatican II were resisted by successive popes



L to R: Laretta Amundsen, Remi De Roo and David Szollosy in Nanaimo, October 2021.

John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Some forms were subtle.

DS: Todd also recounts a conflict you had with then Cardinal Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI). You had just spoken at a U.S. conference about the need for a dialogue over ordaining women to the priesthood. Ratzinger called you to Rome to admonish you.

RDR: The issue of the ministries of women in the roles in society was of such importance that it merited the communal spiritual discernment of the whole people of God, not just the hierarchy. I think that's what ruffled him the wrong way, the thought that the members of the Church could have anything to say in the future of the Church. Yes, rather severe. It surprised me.

I was surprised and somewhat offended at the tone of voice of Ratzinger at the time. I think he was missing the point of what was going on. For him, there was no such thing as dialogue with the world. It was just direct condemnation and strict instruction to women not to speak up.

DS: Are you responsible for the Vatican attempt to declare the matter of ordaining women closed?

RDR: No.

DS: One of the impacts on the Church in Canada was the importance given to national and regional conferences of bishops and the subsequent creation of bishops' commissions like the Social Affairs Commission of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. You chaired that body for a number of years. What would you identify as some of the highlights from that time and from the work of the commission? I know that former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau was not a fan of the statement on the Economy.

RDR: That's correct. His response was rather nasty, but that didn't bother us from going ahead and doing our work.

DS: Various Catholic commentators have reflected on Pope Francis' goal of implementing the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. Is there a renewal movement regarding Vatican II taking place?

RDR: Francis has certainly picked up on that. I think there's a very good example of a pope who not only listens to the people, but listens with his heart as well as with his head and his ears.

There's two sides to this issue, two aspects. There's the one of enthusiasm and hope for the future that has arisen to some extent through the Council. The other one of fear and evasion and condemnation on the part of those who really see the world as a sinful place to be fought rather than cooperated with.

DS: Is the opposition to Francis' agenda that we see in some circles, especially in the United States, really a continuing opposition to the reforms of Vatican II?

RDR: It is a vocalization, a coming out into the open of the people who really don't believe that the Church should be listening to people.

DS: In 1994 you tried to have a conversation with Pope John Paul over the benefits of ordaining married clergy. He did not receive it well and declared, God will provide! Now under Pope Francis with there were great expectations coming out of the Amazon Synod to normalize married priests. Although that was not contained in his statement following the synod input, is there more openness today to the concept than when you addressed it with Pope John Paul?

RDR: Particularly we are beginning to see, in dialogue with the other churches, that the present situation is untenable for a variety of reasons. One of them being that the Church is not giving the kind of pastoral leadership which is required.

I am happy to see what Pope Francis is doing in terms of listening, not only with his ears but listening with his heart. I think it is very important for people to sense that the primary thing we must do is love one another, rather than compete with one another, and bring about justice as the prophets of old reminded us.

DS: I have to address with you the recent discovery of 215 children's graves at the Kamloops Indian Residential School and ask you for

your comments. You were bishop of the Victoria Diocese while residential schools still operated there on Kuper Island.

RDR: The discovery is something horrendous. It has certainly caused us to re-examine where we are at and what the purpose of education is. It's an extremely complex situation but I believe it merits a very conscientious examination of what had really happened.

DS: A number of years ago, I predicted that by the time I would retire that I would not be retiring from working in the Catholic education system because it would no longer exist. I also predicted that I would not be able to be buried in the Catholic Church because it would not exist by then. So far I am 100% wrong. Will my second prediction come true? And if the Church is to survive, what are the greatest challenges it must overcome?

RDR: The future is very clear. I am myself quite serene and confident that despite the problems, the Spirit is at work. I've seen the Spirit at work now for 96 years so I think I speak from experience, so I would say I am inclined to be an optimist.

DS: In reflecting on your long and very active career in social justice, in human rights and in connecting the church to working people's realities, what would you identify as your most significant contribution and want to be recognized as your legacy?

RDR: First of all, listening. I believe in the presence of the Holy Spirit. I believe that the example of Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is continuing on. Know that as long as we pursue the road of justice, peace, and truth, we're on the right path. If we stumble occasionally, that is perfectly quite human.

DS: There are calls from certain groups that it is time for a Third Vatican Council. How do you respond to those voices?

RDR: We do not need or want another Council at this point for a number of reasons. One of them being that the truly influential, many of the truly influential people in the Church, are not encouraging the promotion of a Vatican III. I think that rather than another Council, we need a determined effort to re-implement all that Vatican II brought.

We live the Council again by paying more attention to what happened there. Let's continue on and do our best to continue living the heritage we've already received and the heritage which is unfolding.

Dave Szollosy was formerly the Director of the Office of Social Justice for the Diocese of Victoria. He is now retired from teaching and his role as a union official.

Bishop Remi De Roo: The Pilgrim and the Prophet

Eulogy by Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C., Funeral Mass February 12, 2022, St. Andrew's Cathedral, Victoria, B.C.

Your Eminence,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Ecumenical
Representatives,
Reverend Fathers and Sisters,
Members of the De Roo Family,
Friends of Bishop Remi De Roo

It is with trepidation that I address you and I do so because, some time ago, Bishop De Roo asked me to give the Eulogy at his funeral. I tried to demur this honour on the grounds that others were more capable, but he insisted. And thus I come before you, humbly and in a mixture of sadness and joy, to pay tribute to my friend of some sixty years' standing, the Bishop of Victoria for thirty-seven years, a Council Father at the Second Vatican Council, a courageous advocate for social justice, a champion of women's rights, an ecumenical pioneer, and most of all a servant of God.

Remi De Roo was one of the great bishops in the history of the Catholic Church in Canada. Only history will reveal his true greatness.

Good books have been written about him and he himself wrote his memoirs, the inspiring story of the farm boy from Swan Lake, Manitoba, who became a driving figure for change in the Church, in order to meet the historical outreach of Vatican II. But the definitive historical record of this great man has yet to be set down. I hope a historian or scholar will, at some point, perhaps in the not too distant future, write the full life story of this spiritual leader who was visionary, controversial, and a beacon of light for all those who experience "the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ."

What that story will reveal is the life of a pilgrim and a prophet.

His whole life seems to me to have been a journey, a pilgrimage through the Church he was born into, passing through its classical forms, and moving towards a Church centering around the People of God bearing witness to "Christ the light of all nations." This was by no means a simple journey, as if one could move from the rigidities of many centuries to the open embrace of service to a globalized world without upheavals, pain and fear of change.

REDISCOVERY

The Second Vatican Council, held from 1962 to 1965, was a transformational moment in the long history of the Church. It set us on a journey to rediscover who we are as baptized Christians and what our responsibilities are to a suffering world. This is the pilgrimage that Bishop De Roo led, primarily in the Diocese of Victoria, but also throughout Canada and, indeed, in other regions of the world. He brought me, as he did so many others, on that pilgrimage. The pilgrimage was not



Doug Roche eulogizing at St. Andrew's Cathedral. (Photo: © 2022 Kevin Doyle)

finished in Bishop Remi's life, nor will it be finished in ours. We need sturdiness to equal our vision. He supplied plenty of sturdiness.

To this challenge, Bishop De Roo brought another quality that is rare in our society. He was a prophet. A prophet is a person regarded as an inspired teacher or proclaimer of the will of God. Bishop De Roo proclaimed the teaching of Vatican II. He proclaimed who we are as Church. He proclaimed the Church in the modern world.

He proclaimed revelation. He proclaimed liturgy. He proclaimed ecumenism. He proclaimed laity. He proclaimed religious liberty. Bishop De Roo lived and breathed the entire body of Vatican II teaching, reaching out to all humanity. He testified, in his memoirs, *Chronicles of a Vatican II Bishop*, "I personally underwent a profound conversion of heart and mind."

He gave four interventions to the assembled Council, a remarkable achievement for so young a bishop. His intervention on the values of conjugal love in marriage was supported by thirty-three Canadian bishops who appended their signatures to his words. He had prepared for this topic by calling a meeting of married people on Vancouver Island.

Another two oral interventions were on the role of the laity. He said: "Christians achieve their total vocation when in the spirit of Christ they engage themselves in the structures of the world, share in its struggles and commune with the inner dynamism of humanity." He also made a written intervention, arguing for a fuller role of women in the Church. He said, "We find it necessary that this Council open doors for a deeper collaboration of women in the Church's apostolic mission."

The Second Vatican Council, which produced sixteen documents, was,

without a doubt, the most important religious event of the twentieth century. In the words of Pope St. John XXIII, who called the Council, it "opened the window" of the Church. What followed was not just fresh air but a veritable storm. In a ferocious storm, sometimes familiar landmarks become obscured. Some become uncertain of their direction and fearful. But the prophet knows the way forward, and Bishop De Roo devoted his life to showing us the way forward in a renewed and revitalized Church.

Of course, prophets meet resistance, and seldom are they revered in their own lifetime, for their restless energy is always prodding us, challenging us, urging us onwards. It takes a special calling from God to be a prophet, and Remi De Roo had that calling.

PROPHET

The calling to be a prophet gave Remi De Roo the courage to stand up for women's rights in the Church. It gave him the courage to tell the Government of Canada it was wrong in its economic policies disadvantaging the poor. It gave him the courage to affirm the supremacy of informed conscience by married couples. It gave him the courage to hold a lengthy synod in his own diocese, in which his major role was simply to "listen to the people."

He would listen for hours, but he also spoke. Here are the final words of his memoirs: "There is a vast world out there, desperately in need of an infusion of Gospel values, with multitudes of people waiting to be loved into wholeness. Let us not remain focused on our internal structures and concerns. Let us not wait for others to stretch our own horizons."

"Today's world desperately needs our vision and our talents. Trusting in the Spirit, let each one of us reach out to our neighbour in a creative dialogue with all who care about truth

and justice. Then we, too, will be beacons of light and hope for all of humankind to see."

The pilgrim and the prophet had a long life. In fact, his "retirement" years — if one could use that term — lasted twenty-two years, almost a career in itself. In most of those years, he and his colleague and friend Pearl Gervais collaborated on team teaching, giving seminars and workshops throughout North America and Europe. Here indeed was the "people of God" in action as they discussed Scripture, spirituality, justice, peace, the role of women in the Church, and the other subjects of Vatican II.

It wasn't enough just to celebrate his 90th birthday with a party among friends. He launched an immense project to bring the magnificently illuminated St. John's Bible to the University of Victoria Centre for Studies on Religion and Society, which he himself had founded.

Indefatigable is much too soft a word to describe Remi De Roo.

Did Bishop De Roo suffer pain in his life? He did. And he faced it stoically. But he faced it with faith, perseverance, gentleness, and forgiveness. For he not only taught the wide canvas of Vatican II, he absorbed its very spirit. And that is the spirit of love — a love that never dies.

Bishop Remi is gone from us. I have lost my dearest friend. But I know that I will see him soon. And I'm sure that in our next conversation, he will tell me something new about the Second Vatican Council.

Meanwhile, the prophet lives on. Bishop Remi has left us his legacy, which is a call to action. He is still calling us to faith in Our Lord to guide us. He is calling for hope to strengthen our resolve. He is calling for love in our hearts as we reach into a hurting world. He is calling all in the Church to apologize for our mistakes and move on.

He is calling us to raise up women in the Church. He is calling us to heed the needs of the poor. He is calling us to help the refugees and migrants. He is calling us to protect the climate. He is calling us to oppose war in all its forms. He is calling us to condemn the possession of nuclear weapons. He is calling for world cooperation to assure peace and security for everyone. He is calling us to Vatican II, which will never die.

I close by recounting a remarkable scene that epitomizes the De Roo effect. The event occurred in this very cathedral in 1987, and it commemorated Bishop De Roo's twenty-fifth anniversary as a bishop. Bishops came from across Canada, filling the sanctuary. The pews were overflowing with proud laity. The homilist was Bishop Alex Carter, then president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic

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Avant Garde Bishop Figures in Ongoing Catholic Cultural Wars

By Patrick Jamieson, Victoria

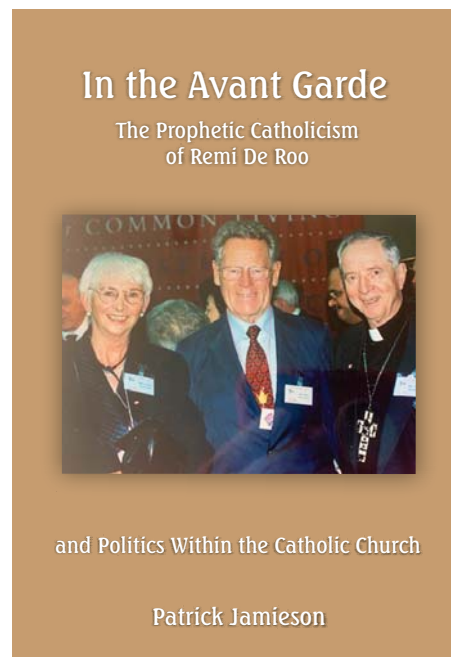
VICTORIA – Canada's most theologically avant garde, socially progressive, and politically controversial bishop Remi Joseph De Roo died here February 1, at age 97. Born February 24, 1924 on the family farm at Swan Lake Manitoba, the second of eight children, he entered the Catholic seminary at age 15 in 1939 and was ordained in 1950. Groomed for higher office, he immediately studied in Rome for his doctorate in theology.

During the 1950s he anticipated the coming changes in the Catholic Church, holding many offices and conducting progressive projects as a priest for twelve years. Eventually he served as pastor for the large Holy Cross English-speaking parish in Norwood, St. Boniface Archdiocese in Winnipeg.

He was shocked at age 38 to be appointed Bishop of sleepy Victoria by the forward-looking Pope John XXIII in 1962. As such he attended and actively participated in all four sessions of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) in Rome. As a young bishop in a minor diocese, he was able to carry the torch for church and social reform in a wholehearted and majorly effective manner for four decades between 1962 and 1999.

In childhood he directly experienced the value of cooperatives, credit unions and the Canadian prairie wheat pool for the plight of small prairie farmers. As a result he was socially progressive, leaning well to the left as a leader in Canadian society during his tenure. This took the form of international involvements as well as domestic issues.

He was a founding member of The World Religious Conference on Peace and visited war-torn central America on a fact-finding visit in the late 1970s. Bishop De Roo met with Archbishop Oscar Romero in El Salvador just before his death in 1980, on a tour coordinated by Canadian Jesuit Father and future Cardinal Michael Czerny. Czerny spoke as an



admirer at his funeral February 12 (see page 1). The Central America visit resulted in one of a number of books published by De Roo, including his memoirs as a Vatican II Father; some of which proved controversial due to their progressive nature.

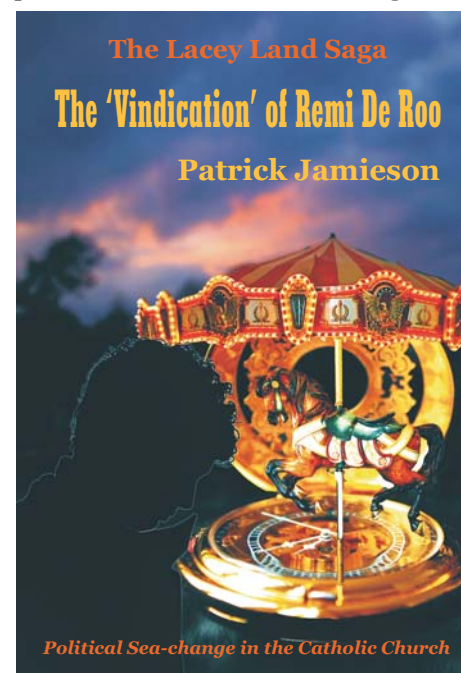
De Roo served as the chairperson of the Social Affairs Commission of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops during its most pointedly critical period of Canadian Capitalism, from 1975 to 1985. He made headlines in the early 1980s with a critique of federal wage and price control measures, inadvertently taking on Jesuit-educated Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, business heads like Conrad Black and Catholic Archbishop Emmett Cardinal Carter of Toronto.

Earlier, in the late 1960s, he chaired the Canadian Bishops Theological Commission when the pope of the day banned artificial contraception in 1968. His leadership response to *Humanae Vitae* fundamentally placed the burden of conscience back on the individual Catholic couple, while recommending they reflect on the papal teaching and give it the due weight of conscience.

This was a significant shift in Catholic sexual teaching. Collegial in style, he worked closely with forward-looking theologians at the time, avoiding the split in the United States between the hierarchy and Catholic theologians.

His extensive consultation with socially progressive, theologically literate, professional Catholic couples in the 1950s anticipated the equation of marriage partnership with the choice of procreative decisions affecting family and parenthood. He made a number of decisive written and spoken interventions at the Vatican II sessions, effecting key documents that came out of the global consultation.

This Catholic controversy led to a wide division in the Catholic Church in the Western world where over 80 per cent of Catholics disagreed



publicly with the official teachings on birth control. A permanent division within the church resulted in the current ongoing crisis of contemporary Catholicism. Church politics have swung left and right since that time with the current Jesuit pope on the progressive side. In my biography of Bishop De Roo (2002), I attempt to

connect the dots leading to this conclusion, seeing him as an albeit unconscious factor in the culture wars that currently plague the church.

In Victoria, De Roo led a ten year rigorous synodal process in his diocese anticipating the current pope's calling of a similar global consultation with the laity. De Roo was a leading exponent of in-depth lay consultation even before the Second Vatican Council which brought about its extensive reforms in this direction.

RETIREMENT CONTROVERSY

One of the longest serving bishops in Canadian history at 37.5 years, De Roo retired in 1999 at the compulsory age of 75. Shortly after, controversy broke out under his successor about a land investment in Washington State that had not been allowed to properly mature, made in the 1990s by De Roo.

Little real clarity about the whole picture resulted, partly because De Roo refused to correct or contradict his successor Raymond Roussin in public. Roussin had been Bishop of Gravelbourg, Saskatchewan where he worked to have Gravelbourg diocese suppressed and attached to the Archdiocese of Regina due to financial constraint.

In 2003, De Roo's former business partner took the Diocese of Victoria to court on the basis of breach of fiduciary responsibility to a business partner. In May, 2005, he won on the basis of the facts of the case. The Diocese of Victoria was under a judgement of 12 million dollars to its business partner, Joseph C. Finley, as a result of the jury verdict. Much confusion resulted because the local Victoria media did not do its proper diligence in researching the case, accepting carte blanche the Diocese of Victoria version of the facts.

Court records revealed that De Roo's investments had been sound, the national newspaper *The Globe*

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Remi De Roo - R.I.P.: Tributes and Remembrances

The Editor:

Remi De Roo died this Tuesday evening, Feb. 1st.

I think we all know how close he and Charles Brandt were.... 2 peas in a pod, in my view.... both great church activists of our age.

At about age 38 Remi De Roo was adopted into the Tsawout First Nation of the Saanich area very soon after he arrived as Bishop of Victoria in 1962, as the world's youngest Catholic Bishop of that era. Remi said they gave him the name "White Swan". I've also included a photo of an article, from that ceremony, though it is of poor quality.

A funeral mass is scheduled for Saturday February 12th at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Victoria. The Eulogy will be given by Bishop De Roo's close friend, Douglas Roche, who was a past Progressive Conservative MP, and later, Canada's Ambassador for Disarmament to the United Nations where he became its Chair He is also a past Canadian Senator.

Remi De Roo was committed to move across the political spectrum and for many years he was Spiritual Advisor to Dave Barrett, the NDP Premier of BC from 1972-75. Of course Bishop De Roo was also well known in his standing up to power, both within the church and without.... standing up to the likes of business tycoon, Conrad Black and to Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau.

For many years Remi was head of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops Social Affairs Commission. During this time he took numerous fact-finding missions to war-torn areas of Latin America meeting with peasants, church leaders and government officials. This helped him in then speaking out on behalf of the poor.

Bishop Remi also gave direction and discourse for Canadian Christians in practicing the Social Gospel. He commissioned, co-wrote and helped publish in-depth documents and study guides like *A Society to Be Transformed* (1977), *Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crises* (1982), *Do Justice: The Social Teachings of the Canadian Catholic Church* (1987) and with books he wrote like *Cries of Victims, Voice of God* (1986) and, *In the Eye of the Catholic Storm* (1992) which he co-wrote with Douglas Roche and Mary Jo Leddy. He also worked closely with the Anglican and United Church Communities, and Remi was a founding member of the *World*



Bishop De Roo speaking at a Labour Day event at Cumberland Lake in the late 1980s. De Roo spoke up on the behalf of workers' rights. (Photo courtesy of Bruce Witzel)

Conference of *Religions* for Peace.

I received my First Confirmation from Bishop Remi in the mid 1960s in Courtenay. It was the same church that Fr. Charles was ordained as Hermit-Priest by Bishop Remi in 1965. One of the photos I've included was from a Labour Day event I attended at Cumberland Lake in the late 1980s, where Remi spoke up on behalf of workers rights. He was always challenging the status quo, much like Jesus during his day and age. Always defending the poor, the suffering and the oppressed, challenging the elite... "To come, follow me."

Well done, good and faithful servant. Remi De Roo ... b. Feb 24, 1924 - d. Feb 01, 2022.

In faith, peace and love,
Bruce Witzel, Port Alice, BC
On behalf of the Brandt Oyster River Hermitage Society

The Editor:

Bishop De Roo's dying is a big loss to progressives. I've listened to both sides for years. It seems that in the "Tatler" and the "Spectator" written by Addison and Steele in England, he invented a character he named Sir Roger de Coverly who was like a judge listening to arguments. He made him say: "much can be said on both sides."

So it all boils down to interpretation of texts. I still have a negative reaction to this but the future belongs to progressives. Pope John XXIII started it with Vatican II.

Thanks, Bishop De Roo
Franklin O'Connor, Nanaimo

The significant fact is that the bishop survived this crisis in contrast to his successor who in his sensitivity suffered personally and ultimately died prematurely as a consequence. After retirement, for the next twenty years, De Roo continued to preach, teach and lead retreats on the subject of the meaning of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, dying of old age at nearly 98 years.

Sixty years in Victoria, between

The Editor:

Sorry I couldn't make it to Remi's celebration of life. A few people shared some moments from it, including Cardinal Czerny's address. It really is the end of an era, and for families like mine and the Beaubiens - among many, many others - it has felt like a death in the family.

Here's what I posted on Facebook on February 3, along with a link to an essay I wrote about him in 2013 (which I think you may have published).

"I don't often have good things to say about Roman Catholic bishops, but Remi De Roo was always an exception. Vatican II's last great champion, who passed away this week just shy of his 98th birthday, walked the talk of social justice and a more compassionate church, and he took a lot of heat for doing so.

"About a decade ago, when I was working on my book about Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who became Pope Benedict, I sat down for dinner with Remi to ask about his experiences with 'God's Rottweiler'. He didn't want to be quoted or acknowledged in the book (the resulting aggravation would not have been worth it), but he did share many observations about his run-ins with the future pontiff, who more than once had summoned De Roo to the Vatican to defend his left-wing views, such as his support for the liberation theology movement in Latin America.

"The first time I was called on the carpet by Ratzinger', he told me, 'I was afraid. The second time, I was

angry. The third time, I laughed.' During one of these visits Remi, an expert at reading upside down, saw a letter on Ratzinger's desk complaining about him. 'Get rid of him,' it said.

"In honour of the bishop whose idealism kept me in the Church far longer than I would have stayed otherwise, I'm reposting this blog entry from 2013. Rest in peace, Remi."

Dan Gawthrop, New Westminster

The Editor:

Moments ago I received word from Bishop Jane about the death of Bishop Remi late last night. How much this dear man and prophetic leader has shaped for the better our Church especially in Canada. Without him all these years, I do not know what our Church would be today, as much as we continue the suffering, the incompleteness and struggle for reform. You have been such a support for so many years for Remi and his commitment to radical reform. Thank you.

One of my favorite memories of Remi was his arriving at Queen's House back in the 1980s during the month of March to lead a workshop - with a big bundle of fresh flowers from the Island!!! Both beautiful and hope-filled - spring is coming for all of us.

Glenn Zimmer, OMI, Fort Quapelle Oblates House of Prayer, SK.

The Editor:

Thank you for the prayer card for Remi De Roo enclosed with your last mailing. I had not heard about his death.

I worked fairly closely with him around some policy issues at the hospital in Comox - when the Sisters of St. Joseph still operated it. Remi was good to work with and trusted the people he consulted on different issues. I appreciated his confidence and support.

Kind regards,
George C. Webster, Kelowna

The Editor:

Remi is our patron saint for a synodal church.

Michael McBane, Ottawa

The Editor:

Sorry about Bishop Remi. Rest in peace and joy.

Roma De Robertis, Saint John, NB

early spring flowers from Victoria to gatherings in still winter bound eastern Canada. His first act upon arriving in Victoria was to take gifts to the leaders of the other major Christian denominations in the region, an unexpected and unprecedented act that set the tone for the next four decades of ecumenical relations in the region.

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and Mail reporting was more thoroughgoing in its journalism, pointing out how the court records were contradicting the Diocese statements and tactics. In its May 31, 2005 headline *The Globe and Mail* announced that De Roo was vindicated but due to the extent of local media reporting the issue remains clouded in the public's mind.

1962 and 2022, he spent the entirety of his pastoral life effectively implementing these monumental changes that are said to have brought the Catholic Church positively into the 21st Century. Happily the newspaper headlines reporting on his death, life and contribution reflected this spiritual triumph.

I like his capacity for simple symbolic actions, such as taking the

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Remi De Roo — R.I.P.: Tributes and Remembrances Continued

The Editor:

It is with sadness at our loss, and appreciation for an extraordinary life in ministry, that I inform you of the passing of our good friend, Bishop Remi De Roo. He died peacefully last night, Feb 01, 2022, in Victoria, following a period of gentle decline in his health over recent months.

Remi was the longest serving Roman Catholic bishop in Canada, and the longest surviving member of the Second Vatican Council (1962-66), which inspired reform and renewal around the world in both church and society

So many wonderful things can be said of him and his committed, faith-filled life, and no doubt obituaries will be arising from many sources in the media.

When I first started listening in 1993 to cassette tapes (remember those days!?) from the Queenswood Centre library in Victoria on the topic of the *Enneagram* system of spiritual wisdom and personality study with Franciscan and Vatican II priest Richard Rohr, I did not realize how much this would shape my formation in ministry for the decades to come.

It led me not only to the *Center for Action and Contemplation* in New Mexico, and to Anglican Franciscan community, but also in due time to my first personal meeting with Remi, in the context of taking related sessions of inner spiritual work and teaching which he shared with Pearl Gervais, as we studied the spiritual and psychological insights of the wisdom teachings of the *Enneagram*. It helped bind together the work I was putting together as I embarked on my ordained ministry, just as Remi was coming to the end of his epic 37-year episcopacy (1962-1999) for the Diocese of Victoria.

I had the privilege of attending Remi's retirement dinner in 1999, hosted by Christ Church Cathedral, and also being present in 2001 at the Bethlehem Centre at his book launch for the book on *Enneagram* and Biblical Characters that he co-wrote with Pearl Gervais and Diane Tolomeo.

Nearly all of my time in ordained ministry has been based in Central Vancouver Island, and Remi and Pearl have been good friends throughout this time, since Remi retired to live in Nanaimo. I worked with him over the years on his interspiritual ventures through the Bethlehem Centre, and continued to work alongside him in sharing the spiritual and psychological insights of the wisdom teachings of the *Enneagram*.

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Bishops. He looked out at the congregation and raised his arms. "Here," he said, "we have the Bishops of Canada who have come to tell the people how much they respect their brother, Remi De Roo. And here we have the laity who have come to tell



Ross Bay Cemetery: Official Photographer Kevin Doyle (left) with Cardinal Michael Czerny and Reverend Andrew Twiddy of Parksville, BC. (Photo ICN)

In 2016, he and Pearl Gervais joined me as directors in the founding of our ministry, *Spirituality Beyond Borders*. I was honoured to share the floor with him for his last public retreat and teaching sessions in our program relating ecology and spirituality, *Creation-Centered Spirituality*, at the Bethlehem Centre last summer. At the age of 96, he was able to inspire us with lucid and thoughtful contributions in our hybrid online/in-person sessions, as in turn, I took the role of Francis of Assisi, Pearl took the role of Hildegard of Bingen, and Remi interpreted Thomas Aquinas for the present day.

My favourite formal image of Remi, arising from his trip to the Vatican in 2014 for the beatification of Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul, was of Pope Francis reversing everyone's expectations after the ending of the mass by pausing to kiss the ring of Bishop Remi, rather than offering him the customary expectation in the

opposite direction.

Informally, Remi always signed off "fraternally yours" in his notes and emails to me – he truly crossed boundaries without hesitation and always saw me as a brother to be appreciated and encouraged. And this from a man who as a bishop who has been personally in the presence of seven successive popes. "Keep up the good work", he cheerfully and enthusiastically told me often at the end of our sessions and programs. He humbly and joyfully entertained our parish youth and summer students in his home, and was able to share exceptional stories of his life's work.

Pearl encourages me that his prayers have been with me and us, as ours are with him in this time of his passing over, for the continuation of the good work we have shared together, rooted in the Gospel, rooted in the reforms of Vatican II, and rooted in our common desire for a spirituality that transcends bound-

Doug Roche was founding Editor of Western Catholic Reporter in Edmonton, an elected MP, an appointed Senator of Canada as well as Ambassador for Peace and Disarmament to the United Nations.

aries and borders in the service of the common good.

Rest in peace, Remi.

Rev. Andrew Twiddy, Parksville

The Editor:

After completing my studies at the scholasticate in Ottawa, arrangements were made for me to be ordained by Bishop Remi De Roo at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Victoria on June 26, 1965.

On the day of my ordination, I was becoming anxious waiting to meet Bishop Remi in the sacristy. Finally, a very young looking person with a collar came into the sacristy and I asked him when the bishop would be coming. To my great surprise, he replied, "I am the bishop!"

That was my first meeting with Remi. Subsequently, he became one of my best friends and a friend of my family. We were continually in contact. He supported my leaving the active priesthood in 1975 and wrote a letter to all the parishes in his dioceses thanking me for my services to the Catholic Church in Peru and Vancouver.

He attended the family celebration of my father's 100th birthday. When Remi came to Victoria, after retiring in Nanaimo, he occasionally stayed at my brother Peter's home, where a number of friends gathered to meet with him. A few times, they celebrated his birthday. On two occasions my visitors from Chincha Baja, Peru and I visited Remi at his home in Nanaimo, as he was a generous contributor to projects in Peru.

May he rest in peace.

Joe Gubbels, Edmonton, AB

The Editor:

I have been thinking of you especially since I learned of Remi's death — I know you had a special friendship with him — and wrote some good books about him as well — and I wanted to tell you I am sorry for your loss. He was a rare presence in the Church of our time and touched so many people for good.

I have a memory of him asking me for some of my O Henry chocolate bar one day when I was working at the CCCB in Ottawa and he was on his way to a meeting – and my sister Brenda who lives in White Rock remembers a retreat with him years ago. I do believe that the people we love continue to be present even when they leave us for the everlasting love and light place. Peace and gratitude for all you do for us. Best wishes and Peace.

Moir Carley, Montreal

The Editor:

Thanks for keeping me in the loop re. Bishop Remi. He sure used his time on earth well!

Faith Magood, Victoria

Charismatic Bishop Devoted to Modernizing The Church

By Jody Paterson (Excerpted from the February 17, 2022 edition of *The Globe and Mail*)

Roman Catholic Bishop Remi Joseph De Roo considered himself a pilgrim. Those who knew and loved him consider him a prophet as well, and some believe he will ultimately be remembered as one of history's greatest Catholic bishops for his lifelong commitment to modernizing the Church.

Bishop De Roo died in Victoria on Feb. 1, three weeks before his 98th birthday. While his time as the charismatic and controversial bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria had come to an end long before, he continued to lecture and minister right up until the COVID-19 pandemic took hold.

"During the pandemic, he spent a lot of time reflecting – for all of us, it has been a time to reimagine what we want to be, what will come next," says Pearl Gervais, a lifelong friend and co-worker who first met Bishop De Roo when he was a young chaplain for a Winnipeg youth group she belonged to.

Ms. Gervais provided a suite in her Nanaimo, B.C., home for Bishop De Roo after he retired from the diocese in 1999. He lived there until his worsening health forced a move into Victoria's Mount St. Mary Hospital four months before his death.

"In these past two years, Remi continued to be on the phone at least three or four times a week, calling someone who was elderly, lonely, needing comfort," says Ms. Gervais, who lectured extensively with Bishop De Roo over the years.

"We took a lot of courses together on Zoom. He constantly reminded all of us that ministry never stops, personal growth and spiritual growth never stop. It was very moving to be around Remi in this last period."

Born in Swan Lake, Man., on Feb. 24, 1924, Remi De Roo was one of eight children born to farmers Josephine (née De Pape) and Raymond De Roo.

He graduated from Winnipeg's Saint-Boniface College (now Saint-Boniface University) then earned a doctorate in sacred theology from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, in Rome.

He was the youngest Catholic bishop in history when Pope John XXIII appointed him as bishop of the Victoria diocese in 1962. That year was also the start of the Second Vatican Council, known as Vatican II.

The 16 directives that came out of that council launched difficult conversations for Roman Catholics that continue to this day around topics such as contraception, women's role in church leadership and whether priests should be allowed to marry.

Vatican II also marked a momentous shift in the Catholic world view from one of a hierarchy with the Pope at the top, to one of a circle with all



Roman Catholic Bishop Remi Joseph De Roo. (Ian Mulgrew/*The Globe And Mail*)

Catholics equal. That was a view that Bishop De Roo had held from his earliest days in the Church.

"Remi's impact was to bring about a more human-centred church that cared about people – simple words but powerful in the application," says former Canadian senator and author Douglas Roche, another lifelong friend of Bishop De Roo who met him 60 years ago when Mr. Roche was editor of the now-defunct *Western Catholic Reporter*.

"He was a prophet, and prophets have a rough go. Prophets are almost by definition set apart from the establishment of their era – you never find a prophet who's giving you the establishment line. People who liked him really liked him. People who didn't like him really didn't like him."

One of the most difficult chapters in Bishop De Roo's life were the years immediately after his mandatory retirement from the Victoria diocese at the age of 75. His successor, the late Bishop Raymond Roussin, went public soon after with allegations of questionable investments by the diocese.

Funds had been invested in Arabian horses. When that resulted in losses, the diocese partnered with the same person, Seattle lawyer Joseph Finley, on a property investment in Washington State. Instead of receiving a quick return, the diocese ended up the guarantor for a high-interest mortgage.

For 10 years, Bishop De Roo endured much media scrutiny as Vancouver Island Catholics reached deep to raise \$13-million in bonds to buy out the mortgage, some diocese properties were sold, and Mr. Finley pursued the diocese in court for breach of contract.

A damning report in 2000 from the Canadian Catholic Commission found it "truly beyond belief" that Bishop De Roo had put such trust in the diocese's long-time financial administrator Muriel Clemenger. No outside audits of diocese finances had been conducted for the 15 years that she and Bishop De Roo worked together.

Never one to lay blame, Bishop De Roo wouldn't comment about how such investment decisions had come to be, even while his silence confused supporters and provided fodder for his critics.

Over time, matters sorted out, though not without lingering bitterness. Bond purchasers got their money back. A Washington appeals court ruled in 2005 that the land investment was "sound," and the diocese sold the property the next year for \$16.5-million. Mr. Finley's lawsuit was thrown out in 2008.

Ms. Clemenger finally sent a letter of apology to Bishop De Roo in 2009, two years before her death, and asked that he make it public. "The fault was mine," she wrote. "It was a very serious miscarriage of all that is just that you

were made to take the blame publicly."

That Bishop De Roo not only survived that period but continued his lecturing and ministry for 22 more years speaks to his resilience, says Patrick Jamieson, whose 35-year career as the editor of *Island Catholic News* has revolved around the life, times and teachings of Bishop De Roo.

"Church politics are things that can destroy people, so for Remi to withstand that was really something," Mr. Jamieson says.

Ms. Gervais says Bishop De Roo found consolation in those difficult years knowing that the man he revered the most, Jesus, had endured much worse. "Remi had people who held onto him. They knew enough to support a fellow pilgrim. They reached out, loving and without judgment."

Cardinal Michael Czerny travelled from Rome to speak at Bishop De Roo's Feb. 12 funeral at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Victoria. The two men met in the late 1970s in El Salvador, where both were part of an emerging "liberation theology" that led them to stand with impoverished people and challenge authority.

Cardinal Czerny spoke at the funeral of Pope Francis's words in January, when the pontiff urged people to "walk the paths of the people of our time" and to draw close to those who have been wounded by life.

"The Holy Father could easily have had our beloved Bishop Remi in mind when, with a certain tough love, He spelled out these challenges," Cardinal Czerny said. "With the intercession of our beloved ancestor, let us – even with the risk of being, once in a while, just a little bit irritating – embrace them with firm resolve and inextinguishable hope."

Bishop De Roo found many opportunities to apply the tenets of liberation theology in Canada as well. He was a vocal critic of the Canada-U.S. free-trade agreement in the late 1980s, and on occasion got on the wrong side of then-prime minister Pierre Trudeau. He challenged 1980s-era B.C. premier Bill Vander Zalm's government for its union-busting legislation.

When media mogul Conrad Black wrote in a 1987 piece in *Maclean's* magazine that capitalism was "a concept profoundly rooted in the human personality and antedates Christ," Bishop De Roo responded that capitalism "is not Christian and not even authentically human."

An enduring legacy from Bishop De Roo's time leading the diocese is the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society at the University of Victoria. Centre director Paul Bramadat says Bishop De Roo was "at the very genesis" of the centre when it was

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Remi De Roo, 'Driving Figure for Change'

By Louise Dickson (Excerpted from the February 3, 2022 edition of the *Times Colonist*)

Former senator Douglas Roche, a close friend, called De Roo a "courageous advocate for social justice, a champion of women's rights and an ecumenical pioneer."

"He became a driving figure for change in the church. In fact, he was a prophetic figure, who advocated the outreach of the church into the modern world."

Roche said De Roo was "first and foremost" someone who cared about other people.

"Remi De Roo was a figure who embraced much of the world in the sense of communicating a love of God and love your neighbour as yourself. He was the embodiment of that. He was highly motivated to express a loving concern with everybody that he dealt with."

De Roo was born in Swan Lake, Man., on Feb. 24, 1924, the second of eight children. He grew up in a deeply religious family on a farm during the Depression. His first language was Flemish, his second French, his third English.

At the age of 15, he began studying for the priesthood at the St. Boniface seminary in Winnipeg. In his first year, his mother visited him on his birthday, but she became ill and died on her journey home.

"That was very formative in his whole experience," said Patrick Jamieson, founding editor of the *Island Catholic News*, who has written three books on De Roo. "My sense is that he took that as a sign to keep going with his studies. He stayed and became a priest and was ordained in 1950."

De Roo served as a priest for 12 years. In 1962, he became the world's youngest Catholic bishop when he was appointed at the age of 38 by Pope John XXIII. De Roo spoke at the Second Vatican Council, 1962 to 1965, and was the last surviving bishop to have participated in all four sessions.

An advocate for married male Catholic priests and the ordination of women into the priesthood, he was instrumental in making contraception an issue at Vatican II and was seen as being in favour of birth



In 1962, Remi De Roo became the world's youngest Catholic bishop when he was appointed at the age of 38 by Pope John XXIII.

control, said Jamieson.

For centuries, the church had been looked at as a pyramid with the Pope at the top.

The Second Vatican Council deliberately changed that, with the church viewed as a circle with everybody equal, Roche said. "One of the documents of the Second Vatican Council specifically defined the church as the people of God. And he took that very seriously and was able to establish a rapport with the people of the Diocese of Victoria. That rapport enabled him to communicate

effectively. And his definition of communicating was two-way. It was listening as well as speaking."

De Roo was critical of government policies that made it hard for the poor to break out of poverty. In the 1980s, he criticized then-prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau for Canada's high rate of unemployment.

"He spoke up for economic justice in public policy making, which made him somewhat controversial. But he was courageous," said Roche.

For a period of time, De Roo chaired the social justice committee of

the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

De Roo retired in 1999 at the mandatory retirement age of 75.

His 37 years as Bishop of Victoria was marred by a complex financial situation involving a land investment in Lacey, Washington. Months after De Roo retired in 1999, his successor, Bishop Raymond Roussin, accused him of financial mismanagement.

De Roo apologized publicly. The diocese eventually raised \$13 million Cdn from parishioners to pay the debt. The case dragged on and, in 2005, De Roo was vindicated by a Washington state jury, said Jamieson.

Roche said that if you asked De Roo what he was like, he would say: "I'm a listener."

"In a bishop, it's a remarkable characteristic. He was able to put himself into the shoes of the people he was with. He was very sensitive to the human condition."

The two men were friends for 60 years, close professionally and personally. They published two books — *Man to Man: A Frank Talk Between Layman and a Bishop* in 1962 and *In the Eye of the Catholic Storm* with Sister Mary Jo Leddy in 1992.

Roche, who is preparing to give the eulogy at De Roo's funeral, said goodbye to his old friend at Mount St. Mary's nursing home in early December.

"I said I'll probably not see him again. He'd been declining for some time."

The former senator regards De Roo as one of the great bishops in the history of the Catholic Church in Canada.

"He will be regarded by future historians as a towering figure who held up the Second Vatican Council's vision of outreach to the world. He was reaching out to all those most vulnerable."

De Roo was a great ecumenical leader with many friends in the Anglican and the United churches. He was also honoured by Indigenous people, said Roche.



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founded in 1991, and helped raise the majority of the endowment that the centre relies on.

"Remi liked the idea of a research centre in which experts from any scholarly discipline would pursue their own research projects in a supportive environment," Dr. Bramadat says.

"He had a huge footprint within especially progressive Catholic circles. And yet, when he would join our daily meetings at the CSRS, he would treat a 22-year-old atheist master's student with the same care,

curiosity and respect as he would treat a world-famous Oxford scholar who was a fellow at the centre."

Under Bishop De Roo, the diocese gave the university a priceless collection of almost 1,700 books on theology and philosophy from the 16th century that Victoria Bishop Charles Seghers had brought back to the city from Europe in the 1800s. It also gifted a \$155,000 St. James Bible to the centre that recreates hand-drawn calligraphy and illustrations from the Middle Ages.

Bishop De Roo had the rare honour of receiving an Indigenous name upon

his arrival in the diocese in 1962. He was named Siem Le Pleet Schoo-Kun, roughly translated as "High Priest Swan," in a Tsawout First Nations ceremony that re-enacted the arrival of Victoria's first bishop in 1845.

He continued to drum and dance with local First Nations many times over the years, Ms. Gervais says. But Mr. Jamieson notes that relationships started to change in the 1990s, when "things got more political" between First Nations and the Church.

Bishop De Roo, who maintained strong family relations throughout his life, leaves three sisters, Clara

Major, Alma Verdonck and Madeline Martinez.

In his eulogy at the funeral, Mr. Roche said history will eventually make visible the tremendous impact of Bishop De Roo's commitment to advancing the directives of Vatican II.

"Bishop Remi is gone from us. I have lost my dearest friend," Mr. Roche said. "But I know that I will see him soon. And I'm sure that in our next conversation, he will tell me something new about the Second Vatican Council."



Cardinal Czerny S.J.: A Journey of Prayer, Prophecy and Denunciation

By Cardinal Michael Czerny SJ, Rome (excerpted from the March 8, 2022 edition of *Aggiornamenti Sociali*)

INTRODUCTION

The Prefect ad interim of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development departs on his journey to meet with Ukrainian refugees and displaced persons and those who assist them. In this article, published in the Jesuit publication "Aggiornamenti Sociali" he reflects on the mandate given to him by Pope Francis and on his task to bring closeness and solidarity.

Mine is a journey of prayer, prophecy and denunciation. I leave Rome on March 8 to reach Budapest and I will continue by meeting refugees and displaced persons, and those who welcome and assist them. Meanwhile, Card. Konrad Krajewski, papal almoner, has already reached Poland and will do the same in the regions on the border with Ukraine. The hope is that we can cross the border in the following days and enter Ukraine, but this will depend on the evolution of the situation. The Holy See – Pope Francis said it with great force in the



Pope Francis sent two of his cardinals into the middle of the war in Ukraine. Cardinal Krajewski (right) goes to the border in Poland and Cardinal Czerny to the border with Hungary.

Angelus of Sunday, March 6 – “is ready to do everything, to put itself at the service of this peace.” Of this willingness my mission in Ukraine is a sign and my task is to bring to those who suffer the presence and closeness not only of the Pope, but of all the Christian people.

I go to see directly what the

situation is, and I hope to be able to bring some material help, but I go above all to meet people, to be with them. This is the prophecy of a presence and a closeness that may appear weak, even insignificant according to the logic of the world and the force of arms. However, this is not the case; being close to his people, to

his children who suffer, is the way that God has chosen to enter into the history of the world, even at the cost of ending up on the cross. A symbol of this style of God is the great wooden crucifix that in recent days – we have all seen the images with emotion – was moved from the Armenian Cathedral of Lviv and taken to a bunker in the hope of saving it from the fury and madness of war. Just as in bunkers, cellars and even improvised shelters there are many people who address their prayers to that crucified Lord.

For this reason I am sure that mine will be a journey of prayer: the Pope’s, mine and that of my two companions, one from the Dicastery for Communication and the other from the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, that of all those who will accompany us in this way, but above all the prayer of the people we will meet, a prayer that – as the book of Sirach teaches – “pierces the clouds”, because God “hears the grievance of the oppressed. He does not forsake the cry of the orphan, nor

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The Pope Is Close to You: Czerny to Ukraine Migrants

By Salvatore Cernuzio, Budapest (excerpted from the March 9, 2022 edition of *Vatican News*)

INTRODUCTION

The mission of the interim prefect of the Dicastery for Integral Development, to bring spiritual and material support, in the name of the Pope, to those who have been forced to flee from Ukraine, began Tuesday morning in Hungary

Tatiana is 31 years old but says she feels twice that age. She hasn’t slept for four days, since she decided to flee by train from the Ukrainian countryside near Kryvyi Rih to Lviv, and from there to Budapest. She arrived in Hungary this morning, a few hours before the bombs started raining down on her village. She left behind a cow, chickens, goats, all the livestock she had raised with her parents for decades. She only took one cat with her, which she hides in a hood: “He’s blind, the children begged me to take him at least because they were upset.”

The children... There are seven of



Cardinal Czerny with volunteers.

them playing next to Tatiana and the pile of backpacks, luggage, pouches, where their whole lives are now enclosed. Two are her children, two her nephews, three her younger brothers. With her mother and sister, she decided to leave at night and join relatives in Italy. For more than five

hours they have been huddled in a corner of Kelety station, the starting point for international travel, and the first stop on the trip to Hungary by Cardinal Michael Czerny, acting prefect of the Dicastery for Integral Human Development.

THE MISSION BEGINS

The cardinal left Rome’s Ciampino airport this morning to undertake the mission, on behalf of the Pope and “all the Christian people,” of closeness and support for those who have been forced by the cruel violence of war to leave their homes and their homeland. About 2000-2500 people have arrived in Kelety each day for the past week, welcomed by the Hungarian Caritas which, together with other organizations (including the ecumenical Caritas and Protestants), has divided up the five borders with Ukraine to better distribute aid. The government seems to have offered guarantees of sustenance for at least three months, but the refugees do not want to stay in Hungary for too long: Poland, Italy, and especially Germany are the most popular destinations, either for job opportunities or because relatives live there. “Hungary is just a bridge,” says a priest.

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Canadian Bishops: Healing, Reconciliation Campaign Looks Better Established

By Michael Swan for Catholic News Service (Excerpted from the Jan. 6, 2022 edition of *National Catholic Reporter*)

TORONTO — A national framework for a five-year, \$30 million fundraising campaign to help with healing and reconciliation of residential school survivors and their communities is coming in the new year, Bishop William McGrattan, vice president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, told *The Catholic Register* weekly.

Church officials hoped that plans for the campaign, first announced Sept. 27, would be complete by November, but getting the framework in place for a national diocese-by-diocese effort has turned out to be more complicated than first thought.

Bishop McGrattan said he hoped that in January or February, “announcements of details would be able to be shared with the public and with Catholics.”

“We realize that it has taken longer than expected, but it’s important that we do this right and that we make sure that it is both transparent and that it demonstrates accountability,” Bishop McGrattan said.

“We’ve drawn upon the expertise of people in terms of governance — yes, fundraising and also legal — because we do have to make sure that these funds are received by a non-profit and are directed to a nonprofit organization or initiative. There are a lot of details.”

Extra care is being taken to ensure that mistakes made with the 2008-2014 “best efforts” campaign will not be repeated, an insider on the campaign organizing committee told *The Catholic Register*.

The organizing committee, made up of bishops, finance officers and fundraising experts from dioceses across the country, is focused on ensuring the campaign is consistent with the 94 Calls to Action that came out of the 2015 final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commis-



Bishop William McGrattan of Calgary, Alberta, vice president of the Canadian bishops’ conference is pictured in an undated photo. (CNS photo/Michael Swan, *The Catholic Register*)

sion, the source said.

That report said the removal of Indigenous children from their families over a century, when they were sent to residential schools, amounted to “cultural genocide.” About 60% of the government schools were run by Catholic dioceses and religious orders.

In a September apology, the Canadian bishops acknowledged the residential school system “led to the suppression of Indigenous languages, culture and spirituality, failing to respect the rich history, traditions and wisdom of Indigenous peoples.”

“We acknowledge the grave abuses that were committed by some members of our Catholic community: physical, psychological, emotional,

spiritual, cultural and sexual. We also sorrowfully acknowledge the historical and ongoing trauma and the legacy of suffering and challenges faced by Indigenous peoples that continue to this day,” the bishops said.

Unlike the previous \$25 million “best efforts” campaign that raised just \$3.7 million, the CCCB commitment to raise \$30 million over five years is absolute. If parishioners and donors fail to give the full amount, dioceses will make up the difference. Much of the organizing effort has gone into ensuring that, while bishops can be held accountable for the money raised, they are not seen as directing or dictating how the funds are spent.

Dioceses or regions will form local committees of Indigenous leadership to consult with bishops on the disbursement of funds for Indigenous priorities.

At a Dec. 2 news conference, Edmonton Archbishop Richard Smith said: “We’ve started the process here in the Archdiocese (of Edmonton) to reach out to Indigenous leaders, to help us to discern the needs that are in the community. Might there be some programming that exists already in the community that can be supported by the dollars that are raised?”

“This is going to be unfolding over the next little while, but I think the key thing for us to keep in mind is that these efforts will be Indigenous discerned and Indigenous led,” the archbishop said.

While the national campaign will be largely locally driven, larger dioceses with higher fundraising ceilings and less exposure to Indigenous communities may share some of the funds raised with smaller dioceses where Indigenous reconciliation needs are greater, a source told *The Catholic Register*.

In September, Graydon Nicholas, Mi’kmaq elder and former New Brunswick lieutenant general, told *The Catholic Register* the whole church, not just the bishops, had to take responsibility for the legacy of residential schools and the failures of past campaigns.

“I didn’t hear too many priests from the pulpit or many bishops (during the failed best efforts campaign) saying, ‘Hey, look this is something we’re responsible for — this is something we have to do.’”

Rather than a mere financial commitment, Nicholas said the campaign must build lasting relationships between non-Indigenous Catholic parishioners and Indigenous communities.

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the widow when she pours out her complaint.” These people share the gift of their closeness to God with those who meet them, with those who are willing to live the sacrament of their presence, bringing the word of the Gospel and concrete support.

The gesture of charity of those who welcome them becomes an opportunity to corroborate the faith that unites us and nourish the common hope that a world without war is possible, that violence and death do not have the last word. This is the mystery of Easter for which we are preparing this Lent.

For this reason, I will meet and

bring the closeness of the Pope and the Church also to the people engaged, in so many different ways, in actions of welcome: a silent and unarmed army, committed to rebuilding that humanity which weapons try to destroy. Their hands are the hands of the whole Christian people, indeed the very hands of God.

Faith is not absent from the tragedy Ukraine is experiencing, because it is in the hearts of the people fleeing the war: most of them are believers, as are many who welcome them, and it is important that all those who wish to receive religious assistance should be able to do so, while respecting the differences

between the various confessions and religions. In my journey I will also strive for this.

Finally, mine will also be a journey of denunciation. The story of the Ukrainian refugees is well known, unfolding according to the dramatic script of too many conflicts that bloody our world, often forgotten. With the same rapidity with which in a few days millions of people have had to abandon their homes, news is already coming in that the machine of human trafficking and smuggling of migrants has been set in motion at the borders and in the countries of first reception. To the drama of war and displacement is added that of slavery.

In the mission that our small delegation will carry out, we will pay great attention to this issue, as well as to another equally painful point: the marginalization and sometimes rejection suffered by Africans and Asians who lived in Ukraine and are now fleeing together with the rest of the population. This is a difficult issue to address at such a tense time, yet extremely urgent. We are all children of one Father and brotherhood knows no borders: this is the meaning of the embrace of the Pope and of the Church that I bring to all those I will meet.



Pope Launches Synodal Process to Discern Spirit's Call to Church

By Dennis Sadowski by Catholic News Service (excerpted from the Dec. 30, 2021 edition of *National Catholic Reporter*)

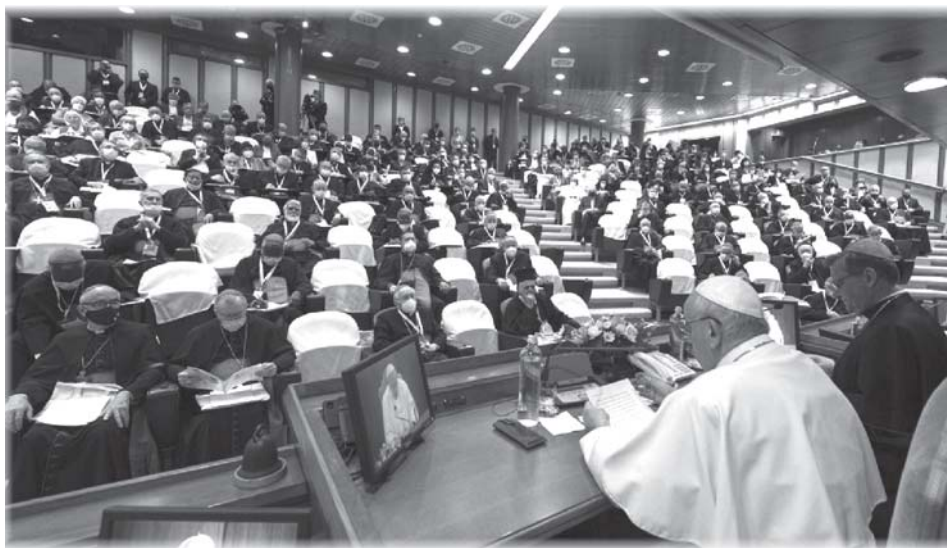
Building on the guiding principles of his papacy, Pope Francis this year invited Catholics both in the mainstream of church life and on the margins to express their dreams, ideas and concerns in preparation for the Synod of Bishops in 2023.

The pope's invitation to discern a path forward for the church stems from his belief that the Holy Spirit inspires all members to be missionary disciples, sharing core Christian beliefs by going out to the world.

The pope formally opened the synodal process at the Vatican Oct. 9-10. It launched Oct. 16-17 in dioceses worldwide.

Under the theme "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission," the pope has called the church to practice synodality, that is listening to — and hearing — one another in all facets of church life, coordinators of the effort at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops explained.

The October opening "is just the first step in a larger, longer-term process of really incorporating the fruits of Vatican II and becoming a synodal church," said Julia McStravog, a former USCCB employee who is a consultant to the



Pope Francis leads a meeting with representatives of bishops' conferences from around the world at the Vatican, Oct. 9, 2021. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

bishops on the process.

"We're going to have consultation. It's also going to be a learning process about how to actually engage in a synodal way," McStravog said.

The launch began a two-year journey that will culminate in the Synod of Bishops in October 2023. The synod is expected to adopt a final document that will guide the continuing development of a synodal church going into the future.

The pope's call to synodality is rooted in his deep involvement as a cardinal in 2007 in drafting a document on church life for the Latin American bishops' council, known as CELAM, its acronym in Spanish, which met in Aparecida, Brazil. The document issued repeated calls for a "continental mission," a church that goes out in search of ways to proclaim the Gospel to all.

In the first phase that is underway,

dioceses and parishes have begun convening discussions, or consultations, in which people from across the church have been invited to participate. The listening sessions will continue through June.

Each diocese is asked to submit a summary report to the USCCB or their appropriate episcopal conference office, which will then have until Aug. 15 to present a report to the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican.

The process presents opportunities to welcome the Holy Spirit to guide discussions said Richard Coll, executive director of the bishops' Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development, who is coordinating the effort for the USCCB.

"The Synod of Bishops is saying don't focus on what the ultimate product is going to be. Focus on the process itself and how the Spirit will guide the church, represented in part through subsidiarity in the work that you are doing at the diocesan level," Coll said.

The diocesan consultations also are an opportunity for creativity, McStravog added.

"This is a moment to be co-creators

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Pope Francis Reorganizes Vatican's Doctrinal Office Creating Department to Handle Abuse Cases

By Christopher White (Excerpted from the February 14, 2022 edition of *National Catholic Reporter*)

ROME — Pope Francis on Feb. 14 overhauled the current structure of the Vatican's doctrinal office, creating an independent section to handle disciplinary matters related to the sexual abuse of minors.

Under its new structure, the office will operate with autonomous doctrinal and discipline sections that will be coordinated by separate secretaries, both of whom will report to the prefect of the congregation.

The new legislation, *Fidem servare* ("To preserve the faith"), represents the most significant organizational changes to the office in over 30 years.

In announcing the new structure, which comes in advance of a much-anticipated new apostolic constitution that will reorganize the Vatican's central bureaucracy, the Vatican did not announce any personnel changes at the congregation.

The office's current prefect, Cardinal Luis Ladaria, is 77 years-old and has passed the Vatican's traditional retirement age of 75. Last month, Francis reassigned the doctrinal office's secretary, its number two official, to lead Italy's Reggio Emilia-Guastalla Diocese, indicating the pope could soon remake the top leadership of the office in the near future.



Pope Francis greets Cardinal Luis Ladaria, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, during an audience with members of congregation at the Vatican, Jan. 21, 2022. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Currently, the doctrinal office is also served by two adjunct secretaries, Archbishop Augustine Di Noia from the United States and Archbishop Charles Scicluna of Malta.

According to the Feb. 14 document, the doctrinal section will manage matters related to the "promotion and protection" of issues of faith and morals, along with matrimonial concerns. The document also states

that the section will be tasked with certain evangelization priorities and "questions posed by the progress of the sciences and the development of society."

The discipline section of the congregation will manage concerns related to the sexual abuse of minors and other "grave" crimes.

The pope's instructions for the newly revised structure was issued as

what's known in church law as a *motu proprio* ("on one's own initiative") and marks the 46th occasion Francis has issued legislation in such a manner.

Terence McKiernan, president and co-Director of BishopAccountability.org — a website dedicated to documenting the abuse crisis — said in a statement the new changes represent a "long-overdue improvement in the structure of the congregation" that should allow for cases to be more efficiently processed.

"But in order to do this," he noted, "the section's budget and staff must be increased significantly to clear the backlog of cases and ensure efficient work going forward." He also called for publicly accessible monthly reports on the congregation's "decisions regarding laicizations and prayer and penance determinations."

McKiernan said the reorganized office "must take a more open and responsible approach to the evidence it considers and the decisions it makes."

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the oldest and, arguably, most powerful office of the Roman curia, traces its origins to the Roman Inquisition.

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Putin Has Shown Why Nuclear Weapons Must be Outlawed

Editorial by Douglas Roche, Ottawa (Excerpted from the March 7, 2022 edition of *The Hill Times*)

EDMONTON—It's no longer postponable. Russian President Vladimir Putin has shown, in a demented and terrifying way, why the possession of nuclear weapons must be outlawed now.

Far from closing down the little that remains of nuclear disarmament agreements because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, this seminal moment in the history of the 21st century must be seized.

The contradictions in Canada's nuclear disarmament policies have got to be fixed. Sand castles won't stop a tsunami. We and our NATO partners can no longer go on professing a desire for an end to nuclear weapons while supporting the military doctrine of nuclear deterrence, which leads to even more than the present 13,000 nuclear weapons.

Putin jolted the world when he warned the West of "consequences greater than you have faced in history" for any interference in his invasion, and then ordered Russian nuclear forces to be placed on high alert. Suddenly a light went on in people's minds: "You mean, those things could actually be used?"

Throughout the post-Cold War years, people – and governments -- have become lackadaisical that these horrendous instruments of warfare that once destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki could ever actually be used again. Putin raised this spectre anew.

Fortunately, U.S. President Joe Biden didn't rise to the bait and return the threat, but you can be sure all the security systems around the world were tightened after Putin's outburst. The arms industry is moving into high gear.

One would have to be in real denial not to recognize that the world has now moved closer to a nuclear



catastrophe. It is not enough to condemn Putin's invasion and threat of Armageddon. It does not suffice to have an immediate ceasefire and retraction of Russian forces from Ukraine.

The Nobel Peace Prize-winning International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons made the right call when it urged all nuclear armed states to stand down their nuclear forces and refrain from threatening to use weapons of mass destruction. "Any use of nuclear weapons would cause catastrophic humanitarian suffering and the fallout – radioactive, economic, political – will be harming people for generations," the organization said.

But such voices are shouted over by those who see belligerence as the only way to stop tyrants. Diplomacy and dialogue have failed, they claim. So now defence budgets everywhere will shoot up (Germany was an early example). Some want the remaining U.S.-Russia nuclear arms agreement, the START, to be abandoned.

At the Conference on Disar-

mament in Geneva and again at the UN Human Rights Commission, Western delegates walked out last week when Russia took the floor (I regret immensely that Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly was among the walk-outs) to protest Russia's actions.

What good does such juvenile thinking accomplish? How will we solve the world problems of common security if all the politicians and diplomats run to their own corners? Some think effective engagement can only be done on the battlefield. They are wrong.

Nuclear weapons must be negotiated away because that is the only way we can avoid being blown up in some frenzied strike by an adversary. The Non-Proliferation Treaty was set up to effect such negotiations. But it has so far failed. That is why a group of like-minded countries and civil society leaders wrote the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. But the nuclear powers won't touch it because it actually bans the possession of nuclear weapons. Should we

quit trying diplomacy just because we are at a stalemate in nuclear disarmament and the international system is in disarray? No, we should try even harder now that we realize how close we are to an unspeakable tragedy for all humanity.

Foreign Minister Joly went to the Conference on Disarmament and recited again the tired themes of the unenforceable Test Ban Treaty and the proposed Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, neither of which are doing anything to stop the modernization of nuclear weapons. She never mentioned the Prohibition Treaty, which has now entered into force for the 59 states that have ratified it.

How is it rational to refuse to even discuss a fully activated treaty in international law? How will the new treaty become effective if NATO, which vigorously opposes it, keeps its head in the sand?

Senator Marilou McPhedran wants Canada to send a parliamentary delegation to Vienna for the first meeting of state parties to the Prohibition Treaty "with instructions to listen and report back publicly."

The Government of Canada is sending more arms to Ukraine. That is an attempt to tell the brave people of Ukraine that we are with them in their fight against tyranny. Our concern for Ukraine would go to a higher level if Canada implemented a plan to remove the nuclear cloud from over their heads – a cloud that is swirling around everyone in the world today.

Former Senator Douglas Roche was Canada's ambassador for disarmament 1984-89.



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with the Spirit. ... It is a chance for reinvigorating an engaged community through creativity and the call to be open. There's a chance to reaffirm the good and reimagine some things that could be better," she explained.

Bishop Daniel E. Flores of Brownsville, Texas, echoed the pope's invitation to creativity while addressing the bishops' fall general assembly in Baltimore in November.

"No one is unimportant in this time of listening," he said, encouraging the bishops to remember that the first phase of the process must involve the participation of the whole church "listening together, praying together, discerning together" the voice of the Holy Spirit.

"Pope Francis has asked us to invite people, to listen to people, including those who do not show up in our pews," said Bishop Flores, who began a three-year term as chairman of the bishops' Committee on Doctrine at the close of the assembly.

He also described the synodal process as a "deliberate pathway and style of communion."

To facilitate the effort, the Synod of Bishops, under Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary-general, introduced documents to guide the work being done in dioceses. The USCCB followed up by developing a supplemental document as well.

The primary Vatican document is a "vademecum," or handbook, offering support for diocesan teams "to prepare and gather the people of God so that they can give voice to their experience in their local church."

The USCCB document further defines the Vatican materials. It includes a checklist of actions, proposed timeline for dioceses to follow, and a listing of background materials to help walk parishes and dioceses through the initial process and ensure wide participation.

An addendum, developed by the U.S. bishops' Committee on Divine Worship, offers ideas for liturgical

celebrations to mark the opening and closing of the synodal process in dioceses and suggestions for Scripture readings and musical themes.

As the first phase began, several U.S. prelates said the effort is an opportunity to better engage people in the life of the church.

In San Diego, Bishop Robert W. McElroy said he expects the diocese to become more synodal in its operation as the first phase unfolds, long before the final conclusions are reached by the Synod of Bishops and Pope Francis in October 2023.

"I hope this is an opportunity not only for us to assess the level of synodality, which is already present in the life of our local church, but to advance it dramatically," he said.

Meanwhile, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano of Bridgeport, Connecticut, convened a team of 260 delegates who have been charged with going out and prayerfully meeting with people. From parish town hall gatherings to one-on-one conversations, the delegates will

be hearing from people about concerns, hurts and hopes, he said.

"In the end, we're not trying to solve a problem. What we're trying to do is discern the solution that is already there. The Holy Spirit already knows what the solution is," he said.

For several other dioceses, the process will build upon local synods that are addressing local priorities including young adults, family life and ministry to Latino members.

When the Vatican receives the synthesized reports of diocesan meetings from bishops' conferences around the world, the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops will draft by fall 2022 the "instrumentum laboris," or working document, to guide continental or regional ecclesial assemblies that will take place by March 2023.

Those assemblies will produce another set of documents that will help in the drafting of a second working document for the October 2023 Synod of Bishops.

Letters

Rebuttal to ICN Winter 2021/22 – “Paul Bramadat on Religion & Vaccine Hesitancy”

By Raymond Potvin, Windsor, ON

In Wendy-Ann Clark’s critique of “Vaccine Hesitancy” You could set Bramadat and Seljak’s reasoning to music; all predicated on receiving the mantra of “**the injections are safe and effective**” (aka. SaE) as if an uncontested truth: so anything short of full acquiescence and obedience to ever-intensifying dictates derived therefrom can be characterized as emanating from flawed minds/souls. Thus a new sub-class of detestable human beings (those refusing to volunteer for history’s largest medical experiment) are being presented as sinners (unintentionally-misguided at best, obdurately-selfish at worst).

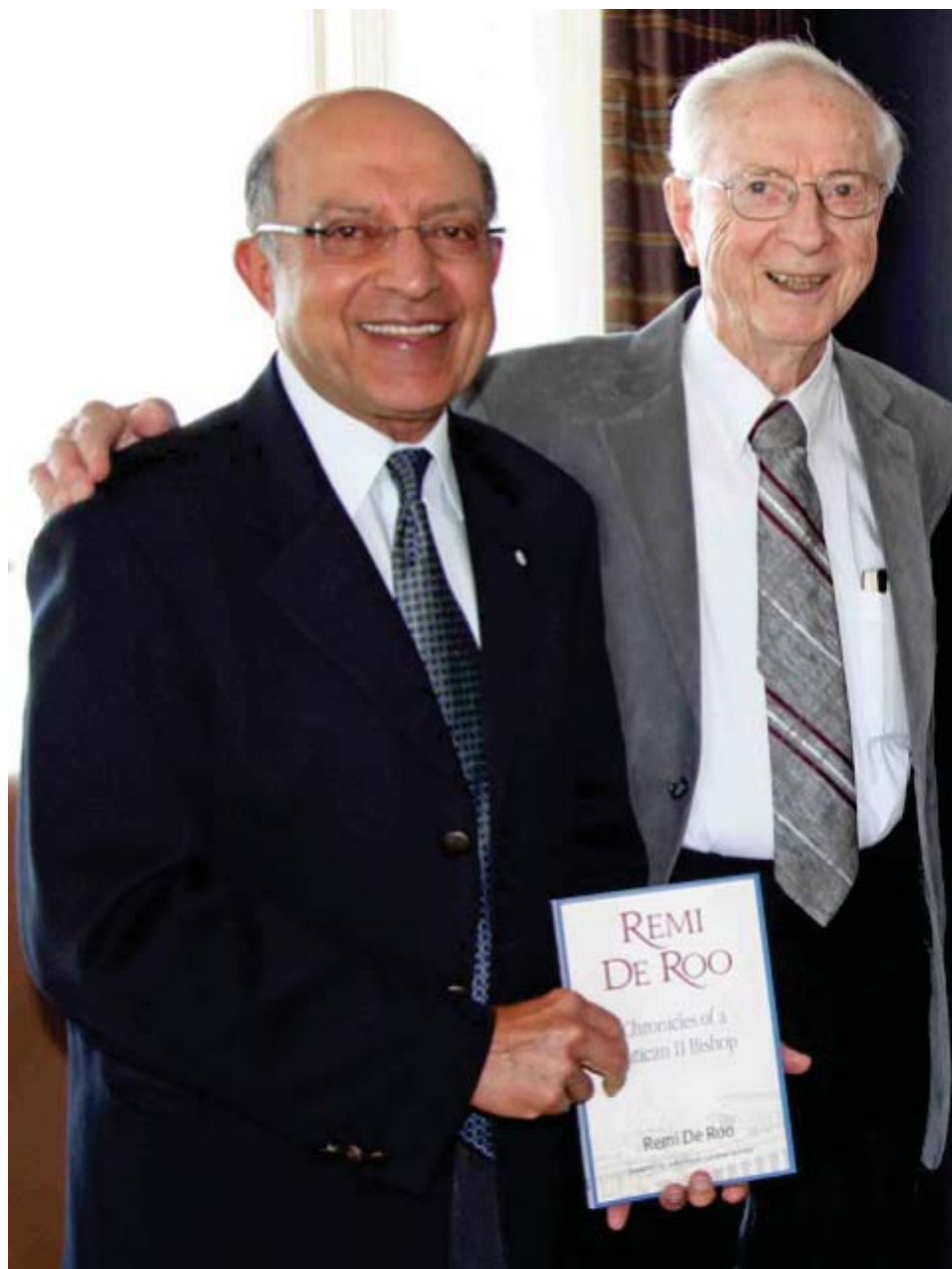
I’d agree with the lamentations they expressed in the Wendy-Ann Clark piece, IF (repeat IF) the axiom on which they hinge – that the safety/efficacy profile of this set of injections has been sufficiently demonstrated to withstand the scrutiny that the vetting process SHOULD have been subjected to. No previous vaccine had ever been released within YEARS of its development...this one came through the pipeline within MONTHS!..and MAJOR corners were blatantly cut:

*the testing-in-animals stage was “somehow” quashed and thus the *sine qua non* conditionality upon which the commencement of human trials hinged was blatantly ignored – convenient, as BigPharma knew that in previous attempts to develop mRNA-type injections ALL the ferrets died;

*and when the protocol-violating human-trials were underway, alarmingly-early in the process the absolutely crucial “control group” (ie. the untreated or “unvaccinated” group) was abandoned; without it any later pre-rollout pronouncements on “effectiveness” and/or “safety” were little more than PR slogans;

*no adults under the age of 40 were involved in pre-rollout human trials (so each successive drop in the age-cohort that big-Pharma now targets is another “experiment” we’re supposed to volunteer for (and scowl suspiciously at those who don’t!)

*neither were any pregnant women involved in whatever passed for pre-rollout “testing” (and Pfizer’s original official documentation, as



Ismaili Muslim leader Naz Rayani with Remi De Roo at his last book launch. (Photo: © 2012 Kevin Doyle)

provided to doctors, strongly-specified that female adults who even suspected they may be pregnant should not get shot until they were “sure” and furthermore that all potentially-fertile women should carefully guard against pregnancy for at least nine weeks post-jab)...somehow within just a few months, this contra-indicative warning – that might have been passed along in a doctor’s office – was essentially “forgotten” when the jabbing rolled into assembly-line mode at large venues.

Long story short, there are PLENTY of red flags that warrant a patient look ‘round. Under such circumstances, being “hesitant” is

not a character flaw at all...but a shining example of what Rudyard Kipling would praise as “keeping your head while all about you people are losing theirs”. That a handful of people like me refuse to jump off a bridge simply because they “were told to” (or attempted to be cajoled / browbeaten into it via an increasingly-surreal schedule of “carrots and sticks”) is unambiguously a good thing.

What got me started in thinking how I’d respond to the inaccurate and patronizing description of “vaccine hesitant” people like me was a pithy section I came across in this Jan. 31 editorial piece in **Epoch Times** called “*How My View of the Holo-*

caust Was Altered During COVID”, by Roger L. Simon, which managed to cleverly flip the character-flaw point on its head.

https://www.theepochtimes.com/how-my-view-of-the-holocaust-was-altered-during-covid_4247128.html

Most striking was this section dealing with the actual degree to which Enthusiastic COVID Policy-Compliers were wont to get/stay informed of the scientific issues related to said policies.

In a personal survey of those who have most willingly and unquestionably accepted the vaccines (if that’s what they are), wore masks, and lived obediently under lockdowns as if that were the only way to survive, I have met absolutely none who have read the works of **Robert F. Kennedy Jr.**, **Alex Berenson**, or **Dr. Scott Atlas** or heard the lectures or seen the readily available videos by the likes of **Drs. Robert Malone**, **Peter McCullough**, **Harvey Risch**, or **Vladimir Zelenko**, not to mention many others, including the august group that signed the Great Barrington Declaration. Many don’t even know what it is or even that it exists. They certainly haven’t read the statement, although it’s only a few pages.

The Editor:

I very much appreciate your publication and the opportunity to keep up to date on the happenings in the Roman Catholic Church and the diocese.

May God continue to bless you in this ministry.

Rev. Michelle Slater
Oak Bay United
Victoria, BC

A Beacon For Our Time A Look at the Life of Remi De Roo

Video by Ray Painchaud
available at:

https://youtu.be/EyCEN0o_QgE

also

<https://islandcatholicnews.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/bishopde-roobeacon.mp4>

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Since then, the role of the 16th century office has expanded from its original responsibility of defending church doctrine to now include overseeing matters related to marriage and judging clergy accused of sexually abusing minors.

In 2001, Pope John Paul II issued *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela* (“The Protection of the Sanctity of

the Sacraments”), a *motu proprio* tasking the congregation with handling cases of the abuse of minors. In 2010, Pope Benedict XVI reaffirmed and updated those norms.

At a conference in 2019, Msgr. John Kennedy, who oversees the congregation’s disciplinary activities, discussed the uptick of disciplinary cases, which at the time he said was managed by a staff of 17 members. At

the time, he likened the experience to working in an emergency room or trauma center.

In January, the pope met with members of and advisers to the congregation, where he said the church “is resolutely pursuing the commitment to render justice to the victims of abuse.”

“Judicial action alone cannot suffice to stem the phenomenon,” he

told them, “but it is a necessary step toward reestablishing justice, repairing the scandal and reforming the offender.”

Editor’s Note: This story was updated after initial publication to include reaction from [BishopAccountability.org](https://bishopaccountability.org).

Letters Continued



Bishop De Roo media shot. (Photo: © 2012 Kevin Doyle)

priest and was ordained in 1950. In 1962 he became the youngest Catholic Bishop in the World. At the time of his passing he was the last surviving Bishop that had participated in the Vatican II.

Here at **Bethlehem Centre**, Bishop Remi was the initial inspiration in 1987 for the creation of the now, Bethlehem Centre. He had been an active champion of our Society with his participation, patronage, and guidance over the years.

We are extremely grateful for the service that Remi gave to the Centre, and his legacy lives on with us.

The Editor:

Thank you for letting me know, and indeed may the Spirit wing him on his way home. I guess we've known each other around 50 years and, while encounters weren't very frequent, there was a lot of shared conviction, hope and vision. May Remi intercede for the Church and all God's people, especially on our synodal way.

In our Lord,
Michael Czerny, S.J., Vatican City

The Editor:

Our prayer is invited for the reduction and prohibition of nuclear weapons. Jan. 22 marks one year since the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons entered into force at the United Nations. Earlier, the Holy See (Vatican) was among the first states to sign and ratify it. Neither Canada nor the United States have signed the treaty. We join many others in praying and advocating for that goal. We also join in celebrating a recent pastoral letter by Archbishop John Wester of Sante Fe, New Mexico: "Living in the Light of Christ's Peace: A Conversation Toward Nuclear Disarmament."

Thank you,

Roma De Robertis, SC,
Saint John, NB (see editorial p. 12)

The Editor:

You asked, in your last mailout, what I/readers thought of the ICN focus on First Nation residential schools. I thought your/ICN's focus was great! The Dec. 11, 2021 *Globe and Mail* had a three-page spread on the FN residential school in Lower Post, just inside the BC border and the sexual predator who was protected by the church. This is to say that your articles are keeping up with *The Globe and Mail*.

Allow me to simply say that I read and appreciate each edition of ICN from cover to cover. The perspective is "whole picture" of person or event or ideas. Your answers are not religious. ICN lifts the covers and brings so much to light.

Thank you for your fine paper and work. Please carry on!

Marie Curtis, Victoria

Francis: Is Schism on the Horizon?

By Richard Renshaw, Niagara, ON

The Editor:

On January 27, the *National Catholic Reporter* organized a webinar on YouTube hosted by Dr. Michael Higgins, President of Corpus Christi College at UBC. The panelists included David Gibson, a journalist at Religious News Service, who has followed Pope Francis closely; Christopher Lamb, a journalist at *The Tablet*, who lives in Rome and covers the Vatican; Michael Winter, also a journalist who has worked extensively at *The National Catholic Reporter*, and finally Tina Beattie, a British author and professor.

<https://youtu.be/gdSIYDm37n8>

Some highlights from the discussion: An important minority of the US church is in fact in schism in the sense of rebellion against the Catholic Church as an institution. A schism does not require papal bulls announcing it. Schism is not heresy. It is not a refusal to accept doctrine. It is a refusal to accept communion. It offends charity rather than truth. In the United States and in certain circles of the Vatican Curia, it is a rebellion against the Second Vatican Council and Pope Francis' attempt to return the Church to its spirit. The current Synod is clearly a response to the schism, a call to dialogue and acceptance of diversity.

The discussion focused principally on the Church in the United States, with some reference to Latin America, Europe and Africa. Certain bishops were said to be promoting schism in their rejection of Pope Francis and the presence of traditionalists played in. However, it was underlined that these latter were really a small minority of US Catholics. The difficulty seems to be, as one panelist said, with taste in liturgy and Church "style." Nevertheless, the trend has reached dangerous proportions and needs to be addressed.

Among the institutional issues the Church needs to address has to be the segregation of candidates to the priesthood in seminaries and the exclusions, particularly of women, in those theological settings. It was also pointed out that there is a serious rift between American theologians and bishops who are not in regular consultation with them.

The cohesion of the viewpoints presented by these panelists was particularly impressive. The challenge to take up the difficult work of dialogue was powerful.



Don't Forget the Women of Ukraine

By Therese Koturbash, Dauphin, MB

The Editor:

I am a Ukrainian Catholic who lives in Dauphin, Manitoba. It warmed my heart to see our two local Ukrainian Churches – Orthodox and Catholic – bring community together for a rally to pray for our ancestral homeland.

As much as I saw this as a positive, it was painful to absorb that even at a community service in a time of war, neither of the priests (male) spoke with inclusive language. I look to the news and see Ukrainian women in leadership, Ukrainian women on the front lines, Ukrainian women preparing food for people on the front lines, Ukrainian women crossing international borders alone with their children to save them from war, and for me – most poignantly, Ukrainian women giving birth in bunkers underground or worse. I wonder how many of these women are destined to become single parents, future sole nurturers, bread winners and providers for their families.

I don't have words to express how hurtful it was not to hear the words 'sisters and brothers', or she with the

died peacefully on Feb 01, 2022, in Victoria, following a short decline in his health. Requiescat in pace.

The Most Reverend Bishop Remi De Roo was born in 1924, became a

he and her alongside the him. This is 2022. What kind of leadership are we as Christian community providing for the world when we persist in clinging to a past that failed to acknowledge the full humanity of women. I find it difficult to be part of Church community because of what I see as its depravity on account of exclusion of women. To come face to face with this in such dire circumstances makes this hurt even more.

I hope that my short note will provide some food for thought. Power to your work for ecumenical and what I hope is also inter-faith effort. This is so important in these trying times all over the world. Please don't forget about the other half of humanity – women. We are in solidarity and stand shoulder to shoulder with our brothers in moving the work of good forward in the world.

When we say 'Glory to the heroes of Ukraine', let us also include women.

Wishing you peace, blessings and all that is good,

Therese Koturbash, Dauphin, MB
Member, Catholic Network for Women's Equality

The Pope Is Close to You: Czerny to Ukraine Migrants

By Salvatore Cernuzio, Budapest (excerpted from the March 9, 2022 edition of *Vatican News*)

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Mothers and children

Around noon, Cardinal Czerny, in cassock and red biretta, and wearing a pectoral cross made from the wood of a boat from Lampedusa (many people are curious, and ask him about its significance), heads to this station in ancient Pest, which had already hosted the great wave of migrants fleeing Syria in 2015. By the time he arrives, volunteers are busy cutting up buns to fill with ham or salami and distributing them for lunch. The children are offered snacks and chocolate bars, along with soda pop and fruit juices. They consume half of them, then leave them to their mothers, because, wrapped up in their heavy coats, they want to play catch or slide across the marble floor. They have fun in their own way, while their mothers watch them with furrowed brows. They take turns throwing themselves on the stands where toys, nappies, clothes, medicines, water, and long-life food are piled up in boxes.

PERSONAL ACCOMPANIMENT

There is no limit to the quantity, and of course no charge. Deacon Gabor Csorba, head of Caritas, which coordinates aid at the station, explains to the cardinal: "Whoever wants to takes what they need." On several occasions he says that the work for the refugees is not limited to material goods, but goes much further: "The refugees who arrive by train have passed the bureaucratic checks and have received a free medical examination for COVID and other diseases. Once here, we get in touch with the mayors of the different districts [each district in Budapest



Cardinal Czerny speaks with a young man who escaped from the war in Ukraine.

has its own mayor, ed.] to provide them with food and accommodation and with big companies to find them work. There are more than a thousand of them, we are fewer than fifteen, but we try to organize their reception and accompany them personally."

"THE WAR OF ALL"

Cardinal Czerny offers words of encouragement: "Thank you for your work." He repeats these words to a Caritas volunteer who asks him for a blessing for her and her companions: "The Pope's blessing." "But is he the Pope?" asks a man passing by, also a refugee from Ukraine (he won't say from where), who arrived in Budapest a few hours ago. He stops to talk to the cardinal, says he needs to ask him some questions; he asks about the trip – the itinerary, its significance – but above all, whether this war is everyone's war or a war at the expense of some peoples and minorities. "The whole world is involved," Cardinal Czerny replies. Many approach to say

hello, to take a photo, or to make a request. Many look on, but without moving from their seats, especially those in line at the ticket machines: there are about sixty of them and they have been waiting for several hours.

The Cardinal then goes to greet a group of young Nigerians. Their

names are Isy, Christopher, Joyce; they are between 19 and 22 years old. They fled from Ternopil, where they were studying medicine. In their eyes and in their stories, you do not see the desperation of those who have seen their lives crumble: their life in Ukraine was a transition phase, and they have a family and a country waiting for them. The same is true of the groups of Chinese and Vietnamese, who are all standing together in a corner just before the tracks, displaying their flags. They came out without a hitch via the humanitarian corridors; they had no particular difficulties at the borders. All, however, are in an obvious state of shock. "I just want to go home," Joyce tells the cardinal. He shook her hand and replied: "Good luck. God is with you and the Pope is close to you."

In the afternoon, Czerny will go to the Church of St Peter Canisius to visit the assistance centre run by the Sant'Egidio community.



An Alternate Short Summary of an Integral Life

Roman Catholic Bishop of Victoria, 1962 - 1999, born at Swan Lake MB, February 24, 1924, died at Victoria BC, February 1, 2022.

Bishop De Roo was unique in the Canadian Catholic Church, as much a social leader as a church leader due to his vital progressive stance both in the church and in Canadian society. Appointed at the precise moment of the Second Vatican Council in 1962, which proved the major religious event of the 20th century with its massive changes to the 2000 year old institution, De Roo could be said to be the leading exponent in Canada for its prophetic shifts.

A quiet spoken man, his actions and words had a major effect beyond his humble origins and small Catholic diocese on Vancouver Island. In the 1960s he pushed for internal reform within the church in the way of the birth control controversy, in the 1970s he moved into the areas of ecumenism and social action, in the 1980s he was the spearhead of a radical critique of the inadequacies of Canadian capitalism, in the 1990s

until retirement he formed his diocese into a synodal church, a people's church on a grassroots model now being established by Pope Francis for the global Roman Catholic Church.

Upon retirement at the mandatory age of 75 in 1999, aspersions were cast upon his administrative abilities and financial management of the diocese which proved to be fallacious but his reputation suffered. Much of this was transparently due to both church and partisan politics. A 2005 court decision out of Lacey Washington vindicated Bishop De Roo's financial management record by awarding a 12 million dollar judgement against his successor for breach of fiduciary responsibility to his business partner Joseph C. Finley. He weathered the controversy admirably, living another 23 years of active ministry worldwide. His integral spiritual strength endured.

De Roo will probably be best remembered as a prophetic figure defending the rights of the poor and striving for church reform. – PJ

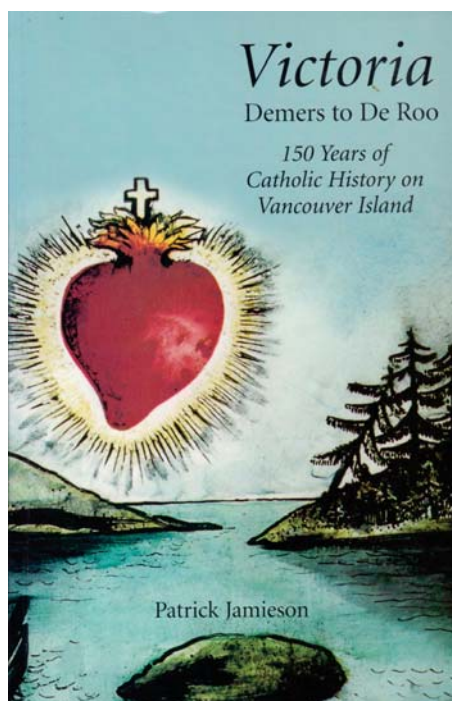
Continued from page 5

A brave leader, De Roo was expected to be appointed elsewhere as his star rose but some of his stands on church reform and social affairs cost him these appointments to larger diocese in Canada. As a consequence he used the platform of the smaller diocese to take on global responsibilities and national roles as mentioned in the Canadian Catholic Church.

As a Canadian justice activist, De Roo served as the first chairperson of the BC Human Rights commission in the 1970s appointed by Premier Dave Barrett. He worked closely with Justice Tom Berger on the Northern Pipeline Commission consultation and was a colleague of Maude Barlow of the Council of Canadians and an ally and compatriot of environmental icon David Suzuki.

Work is underway to commission a full biographical history of the bishop. Anyone wishing to support such an academic study, please let us know at ICN. Like a folk hero, Remi Joseph De Roo lives on in our hearts and minds

and as an inspiration for our faith lives. Remi De Roo Presente!



Pope Francis Writes to Controversial Nun Thanking Her for 50 Years of LGBTQ Ministry

By Sarah Pulliam Bailey (Excerpted from the January 7, 2022 edition of *The Washington Post*)

Pope Francis has sent an encouraging letter to an American nun thanking her for her 50 years of ministry to LGBTQ Catholics, more than two decades after she was investigated and censured by the Vatican for her work.

In his letter dated Dec. 10, Francis wrote that Sister Jeannine Gramick has not been afraid of “closeness” and without condemning anyone had the “tenderness” of a sister and a mother. “Thank you, Sister Jeannine, for all your closeness, compassion and tenderness,” he wrote.

He also noted her “suffering ... without condemning anyone.”

Gramick, who lives just outside of Washington, D.C., in Mount Rainier, Md., said that the letter felt like it was “from a friend.”

“Of course, I was overjoyed,” she said. “It felt like a turning point in the church, because for so long, this ministry has been maligned and in the shadows.”

For decades, Gramick and her New Ways Ministry co-founder, the late Rev. Robert Nugent, were considered controversial by some church leaders for the workshops they did about the science and theology around LGBTQ topics. Gramick said she would not provide her opinion, but she would present the Catholic Church’s teaching, as well as doctrinal positions from more moderate and liberal theologians.

Gramick said she was under scrutiny from the Vatican for about 20 years before officials issued a declaration that she would be barred from ministry.

“The ambiguities and errors of the approach of Father Nugent and Sister Gramick have caused confusion among the Catholic people and have harmed the community of the Church,” the 1999 statement from the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith said.

Gramick later transferred to another religious order to keep doing her work.

A spokesman for the Vatican did



Sister Jeannine Gramick, the co-founder of New Ways Ministry recently received a handwritten letter from Pope Francis congratulating her on “50 years of closeness, of compassion and of tenderness” in a ministry that he described as being in “the style” of God.” (Courtesy of Sister Jeannine Gramick)

not respond immediately Friday to a message seeking to confirm the authenticity of the pope’s letter to Gramick. The letter, first published on Friday in the Catholic publication *America* magazine, is the latest in a series of several letters the pontiff has written this year to gay Catholics and others who are serving and advocating for LGBTQ people.

The pope’s letter follows actions by the Vatican on gay rights that have frustrated Francis’s more liberal supporters. Early in his papacy, he famously declared: “If a person is gay and seeks God and has good will, who am I to judge?” But he has upheld church doctrine that calls LGBTQ acts “disordered.” Last year, the Vatican’s doctrinal body said that Catholic priests cannot bless same-sex unions.

In December, a Vatican official apologized to New Ways Ministry for having pulled a reference to it on the Vatican website, drawing praise from the group as a rare and “historic” apology and for restoring the reference. New Ways revealed that Pope Francis had written them two letters earlier in 2021 praising their minis-

try. In those letters, Francis noted Gramick’s work, that he knew “how much she has suffered,” describing her as “a valiant woman who makes her decisions in prayer.”

The Rev. James Martin, a New York City-based priest known for his ministry affirming LGBTQ Catholics, said he has received a few letters from Pope Francis but made one of them public in July 2021. Gramick’s letter, he said, is significant because she has been censured by the Vatican.

“For most LGBTQ Catholics, Sister Jeannine is a real hero, so they’ll be delighted. They’ll rightly see this as one of Pope Francis’s steps forward,” Martin said. “He doesn’t change church teaching on this but take steps ... added up, all the steps, we’ve come a long way.”

Gramick said official investigations came after the late Cardinal James Hickey, the former archbishop of Washington, wrote to the Vatican asking officials to pressure Gramick and Nugent to stop their ministry. An investigation was launched in 1988 and in 1999, the Vatican issued its censure.

“It was devastating,” she said. “What can I say? It didn’t feel good.”

A spokeswoman for the archdiocese of Washington did not immediately return a request for comment on the letter.

Gramick said she and others from New Ways Ministries met with Cardinal Wilton Gregory, the archbishop of Washington, in October and told them about the letters Pope Francis had sent the ministry. “Sounds like you’re pen pals,” Gregory told them, according to Gramick.

Gramick said she started her ministry when she was 29 while studying in graduate school and befriended a gay man who had left the Catholic Church for the Episcopal Church. In his apartment, she organized Mass for gay and lesbian people who had left the Catholic Church.

“When the liturgy was over, they had tears in their eyes because they felt they were being welcomed home again,” she said.

Gramick said she hopes the church will eventually change its position on sexual ethics and listen to the growing number of parishioners who have become more LGBTQ affirming.

“What would I say to LGBTQ Catholics is, ‘Hold on, it will change,’” she said. “We have to make our views known so that the officials of the church can properly express that change.”

Francis also wrote to *America* magazine national correspondent Michael O’Loughlin, who is a gay Catholic, commending him for reporting on Catholic responses to the HIV/AIDS crisis.

From the earliest days of his papacy, O’Loughlin said, the pope has reached out to individuals in a personal way by calling people on the phone and writing the string of LGBTQ-related letters.

“There’s a lot of hurt and pain in the LGBT community and a single letter or group of letters is not going to fix that,” O’Loughlin said. “He’s interested in highlighting Catholics living out their faith even in areas that have been historically difficult for the church.”

Pope Francis Thanks New Ways Ministry in Recent Correspondence

By Brian Fraga (Excerpted from the Dec. 8, 2021 edition of *National Catholic Reporter online*)

In two letters to New Ways Ministry this year, Pope Francis commended the organization for its outreach to the LGBTQ community and referred to one of its co-founders, Loretto Sr. Jeannine Gramick, as “a valiant woman” who had suffered much for her ministry.

Written in Spanish on official Vatican stationery, Francis’ letters mention that the pope is aware that New Ways Ministry’s “history has not

been an easy one,” but that loving one’s neighbor is still the second commandment, tied “necessarily” to the first commandment to love God.

“Thank you for your neighborly work,” Francis wrote in a June 17 letter addressed to Francis DeBernardo, executive director of New Ways Ministry, which is based in Mount Rainier, Maryland.

“Despite what some church leaders might say or think of us, it

appears that Pope Francis is happy that we’re reaching out and helping to bring LGBTQ people into the church, and helping those who are here to stay,” DeBernardo told NCR.

DeBernardo said he decided to publicly disclose the correspondence between New Ways Ministry and the pope in response to the Vatican’s General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops removing a New Ways Ministry webinar video from a

resources website for the 2021-2023 synod on synodality.

Reports in conservative Catholic media outlets indicated that the secretariat removed the video on Dec. 7 after learning that the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops had censured New Ways Ministry in 2010 for its support of civil marriage for same-sex couples. A spokesman for the

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secretariat has not returned requests for comment from NCR.

“We weren’t planning on making the correspondence public,” DeBernardo said, “but given this situation, it’s important for people to know. We do believe [Francis] wants LGBTQ people speaking, and we think it’d be helpful for him and helpful for his message and his invitation of inclusion, that people know that he has been corresponding with us.”

Francis’ correspondence with New Ways Ministry – an organization that has often drawn the ire of church authorities who doubt the group’s adherence to Catholic doctrine on homosexuality – is one more example of Francis striking a more conciliatory posture than his more conservative predecessors and the U.S. Catholic bishops.

“The Holy Father’s warm letter to New Ways Ministry is not only another step in his outreach to LGBTQ people, but the beginning of a kind of rehabilitation for New Ways, and for [New Ways cofounder] Sister Jeannine [Gramick] as well, in recognition of their important ministry in our church,” said Jesuit Fr. James Martin, editor-at-large of America Media who called for the Catholic Church to be more welcoming to LGBTQ people in his book, *Building a Bridge*.

On May 3, Francis wrote in response to a letter that DeBernardo had sent him on April 21 that he read DeBernardo’s letter from an “attitude of shepherd closeness,” and that the letter helped him to better understand New Ways Ministry’s history.

“It helped me a lot to know the full story you tell me,” Francis wrote. “Sometimes we receive partial information about people and organizations, and this doesn’t help. Your letter, as it narrates with objectivity its history, gives me light to better understand certain situations.”



The Vatican in 1999 barred Sr. Jeannine Gramick and Fr. Robert Nugent from ministry involving homosexual people. The two had been involved in gay ministry in the United States for more than 30 years. (CNS/Nancy Wiechec)

In his second letter, which was handwritten and dated June 17, Francis thanked DeBernardo for his “heart, open to your neighbor.” He also sent Sr. Jeannine Gramick his cordial regards.

“I know how much she has suffered,” the pope wrote. “She is a valiant woman who makes her decisions in prayer.”

In May 1999, the Vatican’s Congregation of the Doctrine for the Faith declared that Gramick and fellow New Ways Ministry co-founder Fr. Robert Nugent were to be prohibited from pastoral work with homosexual people because of the “ambiguities and errors” of their approach. The notification was signed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the congregation’s prefect who later became Pope Benedict XVI.

Since its founding in 1977, New Ways has run afoul of church authorities. In 1984, Archbishop James Hickey of Washington denied the organization any official authorization or approval of its activities. The

late Cardinal Francis George of Chicago, then the president of the U.S. bishops’ conference, issued a statement in 2010 declaring that New Ways Ministry had no approval or recognition from the Catholic Church.

Some church officials in recent years have spoken at New Ways Ministry’s events, including Bishop John Stowe of Lexington, Kentucky. But the organization’s strained history with the Catholic hierarchy reportedly caused its webinar video to be scrubbed from the synod secretariat’s resources website.

The 75-minute video, entitled “From the Margins to the Center: LGBTQ Catholics & Synodality,” features a webinar presentation by Fordham theologian Robert Choiniere, who is also the director of adult formation at St. Francis Xavier Church in Manhattan.

Martin, a consultant for the Vatican’s Secretariat for Communications, told NCR that he was disappointed to see New Ways Ministry’s video removed from the synod

resources website “after some people complained.”

“At the beginning of the synod, the Holy Father asked, ‘Do we allow people to express themselves, to walk in faith even though they have had difficulties in life, and to be part of the life of the community without being hindered, rejected or judged?’” said Martin. “For LGBTQ Catholics, that is still an open question.”

On Dec. 6, Martin tweeted a link to the New Ways Ministry video, which was then still on a website that the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops created to share resources for the synod on synodality. Martin hailed it as a “small but historic step forward in the church’s relationship with LGBTQ people.”

A day later, however, the video had been removed. Martin, who has more than 303,000 Twitter followers and often enrages Catholics on the right for his ministry to the LGBTQ community, said the removal of the video raises questions of how LGBTQ Catholic voices will be heard at the synod.

“There is no Vatican Dicastery for LGBTQ People or USCCB Office for LGBTQ People, so official channels are more or less nonexistent,” Martin said.

DeBernardo argued that the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops “made a big mistake” in taking down the video.

“Having our video up there was a way of showing that the Vatican was serious about reaching out to marginalized people, LGBTQ people in particular,” said DeBernardo, who added that New Ways Ministry will continue to promote LGBTQ participation in the synod.

“We at New Ways Ministry have made a commitment to promote the synod experience,” he said, “and we’re going to continue to do so, but it just makes our work, which we believe is in service to the pope’s mission, that much harder to do.”

The Nun Reshaping the Role of Women Inside the Vatican

By Celestine Bohlen (Excerpted from the March 7, 2022 edition of *The New York Times*)

INTRODUCTION

This interview is part of our latest Women and Leadership special report, which highlights women making significant contributions to the major stories unfolding in the world today. The conversation has been edited and condensed.

Sister Nathalie Becquart, 53, a French Roman Catholic nun, was named to serve as under secretary of the Synod of Bishops, a summit of 250 bishops from around the world that will meet in Rome in 2023. She will become the first woman with a right to vote at such a high-level Vatican gathering.

What is the significance of your appointment?

We can read this as a call by Pope Francis to have a woman be there — not just as a woman, but as a lay person. I am a lay woman, since as



Sister Nathalie Becquart will serve as under secretary of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops next year in Rome. (Credit: Alberto Pizzoli/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images)

religious (a church term for members of religious orders), we are not clerics.

He really believes that the Holy Spirit speaks not only through the hierarchy, but also through all baptized people.

At the beginning of the church, there was this idea that the church was first of all a community. Then, for many historical reasons, the church put the focus on the institutional hierarchy. And now we rediscover that the main focus of the church is people walking together: Everyone has a role. Nobody should be set aside. We are together, the church, the people of God, all of us — bishops, men, women, lay people, religious, married, single, children — baptized. So we all have to be protagonists of the mission of the church.

What kind of issues will you be voting on at the synod?

That’s difficult to say. The Synod of Bishops is a process, one that was

founded at the end of Vatican II as a way to continue the experience of the pope meeting with all the bishops, an advisory body for the pope. Now, it is a listening process that has already started in dioceses all over the world. This synod — which follows synods on youth (2018) and on the Amazon region (2019) — is about what kind of church we want to be, how we can best serve the world.

So far we are at the listening stage, the first time in the history of the church that we have such a broad-based listening process.

How has Pope Francis given women a greater voice in the Church? What difference has it made?

Pope Francis has been trying to fill the gap that has sometimes been put

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Raising the Bighouse: Revitalization in the Tsawout Community

By Brooklyn Cribdon, Victoria (Excerpted from the November 2021 issue of *Seaside Magazine*)

July 17, 2009: This was the last time the STÁUTW (Tsawout, pronounced “say-out”) Nation had a gathering place. On a Friday evening in 2009, a fire engulfed the Nation’s Longhouse, with flames visible across the Peninsula, and left nothing but ashes and bits of steel in its wake. One resident, concerned for the safety of others, tried to open the door to the longhouse and ensure no one was trapped. Thankfully, no one was inside or badly hurt.

Where wounds arose, however, was in the hearts of the Nation – in the souls of the people. No longer did Tsawout people have a place for ceremony, teaching or healing. What was once a cultural and spiritual home suddenly became a visual reminder of heartache and loss.

SMILE,ÁUTW is the SENĆOŦEN word for the bighouse. Bighouses are vital to the well-being of Indigenous nations and communities. The bighouse is a cultural and spiritual gathering place that is truly the “heartbeat of the community.” The space serves as a sacred place to share in traditions, ceremonies, marriages, funerals, and the passing of oral knowledges from Elders. Without this gathering place, culture and language are being lost – especially for the younger generations whose participation and learning are key in keeping culture and traditions alive.

Not only is culture being lost, but without a longhouse, there is also harm to the community’s well-being as people have been displaced from where they once found a sense of direction and identity.

This particularly holds true for the youth and young people of the Tsawout First Nation. The longhouse is a space where young people can find refuge and release emotions, stress



The new bighouse rises from the ashes on the Tsawout First Nation. (photo by Amanda Cribdon Photography)

and sadness. They can sit with Elders and seek guidance. And importantly, they can find belonging where they aren’t alone. Participating in and witnessing ceremonies, practising SENĆOŦEN language and sharing in traditional dance and music can all provide a deep connection with meaning and purpose.

While some teachings from Elders can happen at home, it is very different (and less accessible) than at the bighouse surrounded by community. As a result of the fire in 2009, Elders have been holding on to teachings and effectively been silenced for over a decade. This leaves an entire generation without a much-needed connection to their culture and the ability to learn about themselves, who they are, and where they come from.

In an emotional interview, Becky Wilson, Executive Assistant for the Raising the Bighouse project, shared the story of how close family and community members’ lives were lost shortly after the world was hit with the COVID-19 pandemic. These lives, however, were not lost to the virus but were taken instead by suicide.

Additionally, not only did the community have to bear witness to the loss of some of their youth, they saw these losses happen one after the other, without the ability to mourn or heal collectively in the longhouse. Wilson, who had just experienced deaths in her family in Cowichan, was then faced with arranging funerals, holding space for others, and her own mourning for two more young souls that were now gone. The impact of a worldwide pandemic on top of a community left without a gathering place became very evident.

There is hope shining through the community though. Twelve years after fire and destruction, the Tsawout community is finally witnessing the construction of a new bighouse – a place that can support the youth and the community as a whole. After the initial trauma from 2009, and the residual trauma over the last decade, there is a lot of excitement surrounding the construction, which began with a groundbreaking in November, 2020.

A year later, work is progressing quickly and there is hope that the new

longhouse will be completed in December this year. The construction is a combination of partnerships from Vancouver Island’s Built Contracting, as well as work from community members, including Becky Wilson’s son and nephews. “To have our community members being a part of the build is amazing and it means just that much more.

“I have noticed the happiness it has brought to everyone in our community and the excitement and anticipation for it to finally be done,” says Becky. Soon, those in the Tsawout community will no longer see empty land, or even hear machines working on that land, but instead hear the sounds of drums and the smell of smoke that signal the life and vibrancy of the bighouse.

There are feelings of anticipation, renewal and joy across the Tsawout First Nation as they watch the bighouse come to life, day by day. As Becky Wilson put it, “the bighouse is bringing life back to our people.” Each morning brings the community one step closer to standing together as one and no longer being deprived of culture. Rebuilding the bighouse is not only a revitalization project. It is also an act of preservation and autonomy.

If you’d like to learn more or watch an impactful video trailer about Raising the Bighouse, please visit www.tsawout.ca/bighouse. In addition to the longhouse itself, there will also be a large dining hall where folks can share in feasts and meals.

The STÁUTW Nation has a GoFundMe set up to help complete the interior of the bighouse, including the community kitchen.



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between leaders and faithful — those who know or who teach, on one side, and the rest.

Women are a part of the church. Which is why it is so important that they have a voice, that they participate. There was a major change a year ago when Pope Francis opened up the possibility for women to have a specific role (in church services) as lectors and acolytes; before, that was only for men.

What are the obstacles to women being ordained priests in the Catholic Church?

The vision of Pope Francis, through this synod, is to get rid of a clerical church and move to a synodal church — to disconnect participation in the leadership of the church from ordination. We can say that the way now opening up is to listen to all different views; for instance, not everyone thinks ordination of women is a good path. You have some groups calling for that, but you also have some groups calling for new ministries.

The question of women is a sign of the times. It is a powerful call within our societies and in the church. The church has already said we should fight against any discrimination against women. But it is a long way, not only in the church.

What have been your experiences as a woman in what were once all-male gatherings?

I was the first woman to be director of the national office of youth and vocation at the French Catholic Bishops Conference; before it was always a priest. At a gathering in Lourdes, I remember a very old bishop asked me, “So whose secretary are you?” I said, “No, not a secretary, I am a director of a national office.” He was a little bit surprised because someone from his generation — they were usually trained in minor seminaries since the age of 12 — didn’t have a lot of experience with women.

The younger generation is different; many have had professional

experiences. I work with young priests, and for many of them, working in team with women who may be their boss, it is no longer a question.

You have degrees in business management, philosophy, sociology and theology; you have worked as a volunteer in Lebanon; studied in Boston and Chicago; and worked as a consultant at a marketing agency for nongovernmental and religious organizations. What parts of that experience led you to this critical — maybe history-making — role at the heart of the Catholic Church?

When I was young, I was a girl scout and later a scout leader. It was kind of a school of leadership.

As a student at HEC Paris (the prestigious business school), I specialized in entrepreneurship, how to take risks, to organize a business plan. I learned a lot about how to work as a team, about project management,

how to develop the spirit of entrepreneurship, how to take risks.

I became a nun in 1995, at age 26, so there is also my experience in religious life. I would highlight my spiritual path of transformation, of conversion, of living in a community. Throughout life, you face difficulties, crises, storms. But if you are really rooted in faith, and sure that Christ is with you, the main message of the Gospels and the church is that darkness is not the end. There is always this message of hope and resurrection. This has helped me, even through difficult times.

You are also a great sailor.

I am a skipper! And yes, sailing has been a great school of life and leadership. When you are a skipper, you have to listen to your crew. For many years, I received the gift to sail and lead retreats for young adults. It was a way to put together my experience sailing and my call for a ministry to help young people. Truly, the sea is my place.

Interview: Sister Jeannine Gramick on Being Censured

By Jim McDermott (Excerpted from the Jan. 7, 2022 edition of *America Magazine*)

INTRODUCTION

Jeannine Gramick, S.L., has spent the last 50 years working for L.G.B.T. people. Together with Robert Nugent, S.D.S., Sister Gramick began New Ways Ministry, which offers workshops to Catholics on scientific and theological research on homosexuality and advocates for the rights and needs of L.G.B.T. people. For that work, she and Father Nugent were eventually prohibited by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith from working with L.G.B.T. people, an order that Sister Gramick refused to abide by. She ended up having to change orders to continue her ministry.

Recently, Pope Francis sent Sister Gramick a letter congratulating her on 50 years of ministry, describing her work as being in “the style of God.” Talking to Sister Gramick, what is striking is her utter lack of animosity or ego in the face of all that she has experienced. She has an easy, self-deprecating humor, kidding that she is like the woman in the Gospel who just won’t stop knocking at the door of the judge.

What does it feel like to have been doing this ministry for 50 years?

The primary feeling is gratitude and joy. We have come such a long way. Granted, we’re not where we should be as a church, particularly in the United States with the firing of teachers and others who support L.G.B.T. people. But honestly, 50 years ago you could not even say the word “gay.”

How did you first get involved with ministry to L.G.B.T. people?

I was doing a Ph.D. in mathematics at the University of Pennsylvania, and I met a gay man, Dominic Bash, at a home Mass. Dominic had been in the Franciscans for a brief time. He knew he was gay from an early age, but of course in those days you didn’t talk about it. If you went to confession, which he did, you would be thrown out.

Though he left, Dominic was still very spiritual. After the Mass, he said: “I have lots of friends who would love to have been at this Mass, but they’re afraid. They think that the church doesn’t want them.” I suggested, “Why don’t we have a home Mass at your apartment, and you invite your gay friends?”

We began to have weekly liturgies at his apartment. That was the beginning.

What was your understanding of homosexuality at that time?

I had heard the word, but I barely knew what it meant. I had all of the myths and stereotypes that society had in 1971. I thought that lesbian and gay people were good people, but I



With Rev. Charles Curran, moral theologian. (Photo from New Ways Ministry)

thought somehow they were psychologically imbalanced. That was what people thought.

But when I started to meet Dominic and his friends, they seemed like normal people. I remember this one lawyer, she worked for the A.C.L.U. I admired her so much. She was so smart. I thought, “That woman is not imbalanced.”

Did you have any trepidation at the beginning about how these Masses might be perceived in the broader church?

No. I’m simple-minded in that sense; I don’t really look ahead or anticipate a lot. I kind of go with the flow. I knew this was something that the church needed to do because these were Catholics who were afraid to come to church.

I did, of course, talk to my religious superiors in Baltimore. Thank God, I had women of vision. Some of my provincials knew more about homosexuality than I did. They encouraged me to do what I could. They said: “This is a group of people the church has neglected. Do what you can because the church needs to be there for them.”

And to see the light in their eyes after those Masses, the happiness on their faces, it was wonderful.

How did you and Father Robert Nugent come to form New Ways Ministry?

Bob joined the Salvatorians, and in the transfer process he was down in Washington, D.C., working part time at the Quixote Center, a peace and justice center. They wanted to do something on justice for lesbian and gay people in the church. So I joined the staff, and Bob and I began to do educational workshops about homosexuality. We called them “New Ways” workshops because in that year Bishop Francis Mugavero, of happy memory, had written a pastoral letter called “Sexuality, Gods Gift”. In that

letter, he talked about the need to find “new ways” to bring the truth of Christ to lesbian and gay people.

The workshops were open to anyone, and the contents were very full: We talked about the origins of homosexuality, the medical aspects. We would give a lot of data from the sociological research that was being done on homosexuality and homophobia.

We went through all of the negative quotes about homosexuality in the Bible and showed how biblical scholars deal with them. And we talked about the theological positions on sexual orientation and behavior.

Once we started New Ways in 1977, we went all over the country. Bob once tallied it up, and we’d been to three-fourths of the dioceses of the United States. This was all in the late ‘70s, ‘80s and into the ‘90s.

I’m surprised to hear you were welcomed in so many dioceses; that seems different from what might be possible in the U.S. church today.

Well, many bishops did shut us out. We had these workshops mostly in mother houses of women’s communities or retreat centers. I’m very happy to say that women religious were the first ones in the church to move on the issue of homosexuality.

But there were a few bishops who came, too. Like Bishop Leroy Matthiesen of Amarillo or Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit.

It sounds like there might have been more openness in the church to conversations about homosexuality back then.

In the late ‘60s, the ‘70s and the early ‘80s, people were really fired up about Vatican II and social justice. There was hesitation on the part of bishops, but the priests, nuns and lay people who were in charge of Catholic institutions were more ready, I would

say, to embrace something controversial or new.

Once Pope John Paul II began to appoint a lot of the bishops in the early ‘80s and ‘90s, things really tightened up. At that time the “middle management” in the church—the Catholic leaders who run retreat centers, hospitals or other institutions—were much more L.G.B.T.-knowledgeable, friendly and open. But they were afraid of what their bishop might say.

It was in that era that the Vatican issued its notification to Father Nugent and me.

How did that process happen?

First bishops put pressure on our communities. They wanted the communities to do the work for them, so on three occasions, they asked our communities to investigate us and recommend sanctions, but no sanctions were recommended.

I went through a half-dozen provincials and superiors general in my days as a School Sister of Notre Dame, and they all supported the work.

At some point, these complaints were taken to the next level.

Yes. In 1985, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith appointed a Vatican commission to investigate us and give recommendations. It was headed by Cardinal Adam Maida in Detroit. He was a nice man, really a nice man. I don’t think he relished this task. He was appointed in 1985, but we really didn’t get off the ground until 1991, when he got a letter from the C.D.F. asking [about the investigation’s status].

We had several meetings with the commission, and they forwarded something to the C.D.F. Apparently that didn’t satisfy the C.D.F., as it then gave us a series of written questions that we were to answer, Bob and I. And we didn’t answer the way they wanted us to, so then they basically told us the answers they wanted.

They wanted us to say that homosexual activity is objectively immoral and that we personally believed that. And I could not say that. I told them I would not give my personal opinion on the subject. I’m an educator. I can present the teaching of the church, but I’m not going to give you my conscience’s opinion.

In 1999, they issued a notification that neither Bob nor me would be allowed to do any more work with lesbian or gay people. We were not to be involved with this issue.

It sounds like a very painful thing to have gone through.

In a sense I felt excommunicated. Because what does excommunication mean? It means being outside of the community. It’s being shunned. And

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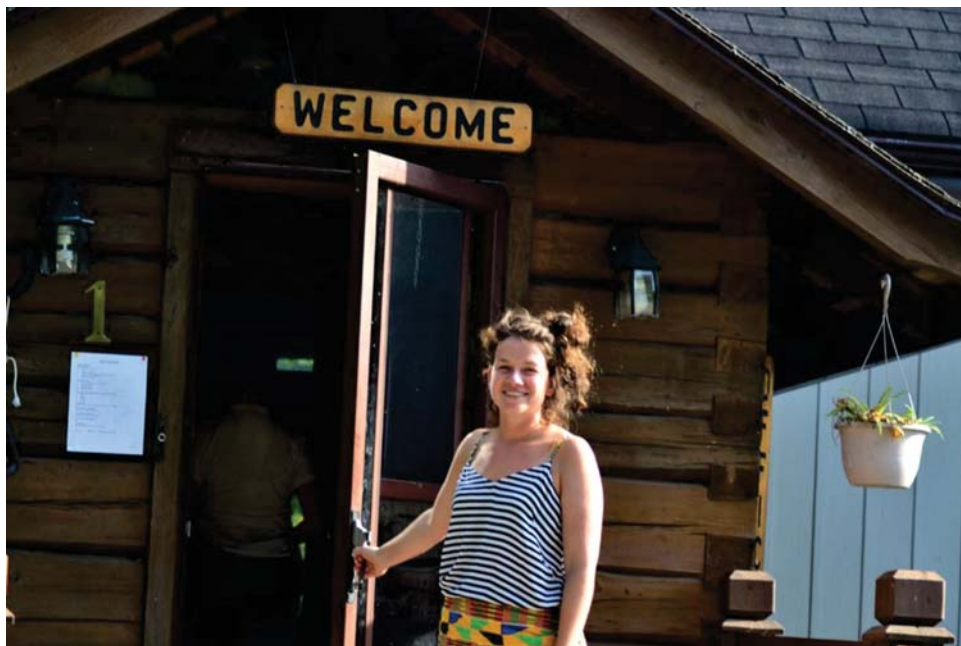
Toronto's Romero House Features Young Worker Program

I value the fact that my co-workers are not just co-workers, and that my housemates are not just housemates. Sharing life with the rest of the staff team helps to make each and every interaction that much richer and fuller.

– Joel, former worker

The Romero workers live together in an intentional community of mutual care and support. They commit to: an inclusive practice of morning prayer rooted in an ecumenical expression of the Christian tradition, sharing regular meals together, a weekly community night, monthly community days, biweekly continuing education and spiritual formation and periodic group retreats. Each worker is matched with a mentor or spiritual director. Important note: Workers who start the program without culinary skills emerge as five star chefs.

Mary Jo Leddy, standing (left) founded a Christian intentional community named after Archbishop Oscar Romero.



“Having studied philosophy, I had many theories about what it means to welcome the stranger and how to build a community. My theories and preconceptions were challenged at Romero House. I came to realize that ‘the stranger,’ is not that strange, that I can cook with a couple from Venezuela, teach piano to a girl from Turkey, talk about classic films with a man from Pakistan, and watch horror movies with a teenager from Colombia.”

– Marin, 2012 - 2014



“I’m particularly grateful for the practical experience and training offered through the worker program. I’ve been able to attend conferences, training workshops, and courses that I would never have been able to otherwise. I’ve valued them not only as opportunities to develop my understanding of the refugee settlement field, but also as an affirmation that Romero House is as genuinely committed to investing its workers as we are to the work we do here.”

– James, 2017 - 2018



My Complicated Relationship with the Catholic Church

'The Way I See It' A Column by Gerald Archibald, Edmonton (As always, feedback is appreciated: archibaldjerry@gmail.com)

A year ago, in one of my ICN columns, I asked readers for suggested topics for future articles. Several of the responses I received were from readers who felt I should tell my story – being open, personal, and sharing how I got to be where I am (including warts and all) – especially how my story relates to faith and Christianity. They felt this sharing would be a powerful way of telling others that they are not alone.

At first, this suggestion set me back. Who wants to read such a story? Such a story could be interpreted as self-centeredness. I was reluctant to accept the challenge and as a result gradually forgot about this suggestion. Until recently – when I took a break from attending regular Sunday Mass.

Because I have been going through some gut-wrenching times regarding the Catholic Church, I reached out to a few very knowledgeable and insightful people whom I deeply respect. Here I was writing for a well respected progressive Catholic newspaper while not attending Mass regularly. They all encouraged me to keep reading, researching, writing, and sharing. They assured me that other readers may be going through the same experiences. Up to this point, I was feeling more and more hypocritical writing for ICN while going through this 'desert or dark night of the soul'. So, in the end, I decided to share the highlights of my journey hoping that it may help readers of this column.

UPBRINGING

I was brought up in an Irish Catholic home. I went to Catholic schools all my life. The idea that I could miss Mass on a Sunday was unfathomable. While I knew we were not allowed to miss Sunday Mass (under pain of mortal-grievous sin no less), I actually looked forward to this weekly experience. I had a personal relationship with Jesus and believed what was said in the homily and what was read in the readings, were basically infallible.

I loved the Church and became a devoted altar boy. In high school, I signed up for all the retreats that were offered. Life was straightforward and simple, with God leading the way and inspiring me to live a good life through the lessons learned at Church. Basic religious rules were good and provided a guideline for me as I journeyed through high school.

During my high school years, I began thinking about the priesthood. This interest became stronger and stronger. I was attracted to the Redemptorists, a Congregation devoted both to reaching out to the most abandoned and to nurturing one's spiritual life. So I joined the



First Nations celebrants at the February 12 funeral at St. Andrew's Cathedral. (Photo: © 2022 Kevin Doyle)

Redemptorists and spent five years with them from 1962-1966 I had no idea what I was in for!

All I knew was I wanted to be a priest and do the most good possible in the world. Congregations start their preparation of candidates in what is called 'novitiate.' This is a year-long retreat comprising of intense prayer, following numerous rules, and learning about the Congregation, particularly the founder St. Alphonsus. In this retreat year, I absorbed all the instruction, rules, and prayer like a sponge. The Novice Master at the time was a very stern, dominating man but a dedicated missionary. He was on the traditional side of things and, again, I soaked up all of this to the limits of my capacity.

VATICAN II

During this time Vatican II was underway but we, as novices, were **not allowed** to read any outside media. I lived in a bubble isolated from the real world (should I have seen a red flag?) At the end of this novitiate year, I took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience and then ventured on to the major seminary in Windsor, Ontario.

I can remember vividly walking into the seminary while a retreat was going on led by a renowned progressive Redemptorist, Fr. Bernard Haring from Germany. It was like I landed on Mars. Where was I exactly? Was this the same Congregation I just studied about for a year?

This Father Haring was talking about things that were the opposite of what I had just enthusiastically studied

and endorsed. He said such scandalous things like: Many sins of commission (what we did wrong) are not as bad on most occasions as sins of omission (things I should have done), the 'Law of Love,' evils of war, how we treat the needy, and that practicing love and kindness were more important than learning lofty theological concepts. I was scandalized; I was confused; I did not know one end from another.

As the months rolled by, and as the seminary allowed information on Vatican II to be read and circulated, I slowly began to see a whole new exciting world. The Church seemed to be changing. It appeared to be trying to become more relevant to people. For example, it was encouraging dialogue with other faiths; it was urging parishes to reach out to people no matter what their circumstances; it was telling us to embrace the good of the world etc. Vatican II documents were life giving and seminarians were extremely motivated in embracing its directions.

However, many of the professors at the seminary were much slower to embrace change. In fact, many were resistant to do so. Gradually there developed a schism between the authority figures and seminarians, and it became more serious as time went on. Then very rapidly, students began to leave the seminary in large numbers, many in frustration. The Congregation then appointed 'hard-liners' who would re-establish and exercise authority over the students eradicating their radical ideas in the process. This backfired in the extreme to the point that, in an act of

desperation, the General Council in Rome closed the seminary.

The students were sent to other seminaries located all over the world (Germany, U.S., England, Ireland, Quebec, Japan etc.). I was sent to Quebec to learn both French and theology. The seminary there was reflective of a very different culture as well as progressing slowly regarding Vatican II theology. I became deeply troubled, confused, and frustrated resulting in a painful decision to forego my final vows and leave the seminary. But even during this difficult time, I somehow still had faith that Vatican II would reform the Church over the next several years.

Transitioning to corporate and lay life was not easy and at times quite rocky. But grace intervened, and after a short time, I met my life-long partner Joanne, got married a couple of years later, and together raised a wonderful family. We were very active in five parishes over the next fifty years often taking on leadership positions.

DECLINE

In the 1970s and '80s however, I witnessed a sudden decline in the implementation of Vatican II. It was basically ignored (some would say suppressed). Pope John Paul II issued a directive that women could never be ordained. The LGBTQ community was not welcomed as full members of the Church. Marriage of priests continued to be forbidden. In 1968 Pope Paul VI issued a decree forbidding birth control. Music became more traditional and lost relevance with the laity, the "new translation" of the liturgy was a throwback and less understandable than ever (who knows what the word 'consubstantial' means in our present society) etc. Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI did not advance Vatican II, and in fact severely disciplined theologians who were advocating new theology and approaches.

Then came the many reports regarding sexual abuse in the Church. At first, I was in denial concerning these reports actively defending the Church ("If this was true, only a few priests must be guilty"). But after years of hearing and reading credible reports about these terrible abuses, I began to take them more seriously. But equally, if not more damaging to me, were the cover-ups after cover-ups displayed by the bishops involved.

These scandals and practices gradually took their toll, and my desire to go to Church began to wane. I was jealous of friends who could separate the institutional church from the spiritual. As much as I tried, I just could not make this separation. All this became too much and that was when I decided to give Church a break.

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Laudato Si Revisited: Synodality and Climate Change

By John Madigan, The Ottawa Valley, ON

On January 27, 2022, some 170 people tuned in to a Zoom presentation, by Rev. Sean McDonagh, in Ireland, on the topic of *Synodality, the Parish and Climate Change*. The event was organized by the Association of Catholics in Ireland (ACI) and supported by the Association of Catholic Priests, (ACP).

Father McDonagh, a Columban Missionary, has been an environmental campaigner since shortly after his ordination in 1969. He has written ten books, hundreds of articles and spoke at innumerable events on matters related to ecology and climate change. Pope Francis tapped his knowledge and expertise when preparing *Laudato Si*, the encyclical on “care of our common home”.

While he was teaching an anthropology course in the rainforests of the Philippines during the 1970s, his interest in ecology and justice was awakened. He saw very poor people being taken advantage of by the rich and a lot of the focus of the Church was on justice and peace because so many people were losing a number of their rights. He was awed by the amazing diversity of the rainforests but was shocked at the destruction by the huge logging industries.

In his early seminary and priestly formation, he was excited by the wonderful reality of Vatican II and how it brought the Church into the 20th century. But the Council documents showed no concern by the Church about the devastation of the environment despite Rachel Carson’s book *Silent Spring* (1962) about the dangers to humans and the earth posed by the indiscriminate use of pesticides.

The United Nations established The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988. Its purpose was to assist policymakers to develop strategies on climate change by providing regular scientific assessments. In its early days scientists were alerting us that climate change is happening because of what



humans are doing in burning fossil fuels. But they were up against some of the most powerful industries in the world promoting the production of coal, oil, and gas, and they have always endorsed a very inimical view of the scientific findings on climate change saying, “Yes, there is some impact, but it is extremely light”.

Over the years the IPCC has published regular studies, but the Catholic Church showed very little interest until COP 21 held in Paris in 2015. (COP is an acronym for ‘Conference of the Parties’ and the ‘21’ means this was the twenty-first time the countries who are signatories to the convention got together.) *Laudato Si*, though very much a part of the conversation at COP 21, is an encyclical Catholics know very little about and the bishops were slow to take up the gauntlet when it was written.

Countries were committed to keep the average global temperature no higher than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Yet at COP26 in Glasgow in November 2021, if we add up the blizzard of non-binding promises by nations regarding deforestation, methane gas emissions, coal use, and renewable energy, the result would be an increase of 2.4 to 2.5 Celsius degrees. A FAILURE TO MEET THE TARGET! That will be a disaster for many countries, particularly island nation countries. Many of them would disappear if the

sea levels rose one metre or more.

Imagine what that would do to many of the cities on the coast of Ireland, England, or the US, just to name a few? At the moment we are 1.1 degree above the pre-industrial global temperature so it is imperative that we strive to reduce our greenhouse gases, or the warming trend will continue. To achieve this goal, we need to cut by 50 per cent by 2030 and by 2050 we must be neutral. Therefore, we must look at all of our societal systems, transportation, agriculture, manufacturing, heat and light, etc.

This is a matter of global justice. It is the developed western nations, representing only about 15 per cent of the world’s population, who have been the biggest consumers of coal, gas, and oil. Yet, if the seas rise, it will be the poor countries that will be most affected.

For example, Bangladesh, with a population of 166 million, one-fifth of that country will be underwater. At Glasgow, one of the leaders of one of the island nations said, “My country could be gone in forty years!” Yet, he has very little resources to prepare for such a calamity and depends on wealthy nations to assist him. But in Glasgow no money was put on the table to respond to such needs.

SYNOD

So, how does one link this issue of climate change to the current synodal process happening in the Catholic Church? We know that in advance of the Synod in Rome in 2023, Pope Francis is requiring every bishop to provide opportunities for the laity to contribute to the preparation of the Synod agenda to discern the future of the Church. A focus on climate is a vital issue, a matter which concerns all of us and we all need to contribute to the solutions. How do we make an effective contribution?

It would be most appropriate to make this issue part of the synodal discussions. Moreover, it is our responsibility to participate in the mission of the Church and as members committed to reform and

renewal in the Church, we must do more than just talk about the issues around climate change. We need to be doing something about it in our homes, our personal lives, and our communities.

This is not something the parish priest can lead, especially if his seminary training had no more science than they traditionally had. This will require tapping the resources and expertise of local specialists. It will require all of us to reduce, reuse, and recycle, and to change our habits of extravagant consumption. It will require substantially decreasing our use of fossil fuels, retrofitting our homes and churches to make them more energy efficient, changes to our lifestyles and practices in our own lives. Less driving and more walking and biking.

It will require that we intentionally organize ourselves; perhaps a community committee and lead coordinator to help us keep focused for the long haul. We will need to read, research, and discuss, invite speakers, and share resources to help us grasp and understand the topic.

The reality is that everyone is going to have to deal with this. It is not just a Catholic issue. We will need to work with other churches in order to address this as a community. How do we deal with retrofitting all of the monstrous churches in our communities? Do we need a church for each denomination? Indeed, the Covid pandemic may have shown us other alternatives.

Father McDonagh suggested that an excellent resource to start with is the encyclical, *Laudato Si*. He said in his opinion it is the centre of Pope Francis’ ministry and is the most important document published by the Catholic Church in the 21st century, and probably for many years before that.

It makes it very clear that **climate change is happening**, that it is a moral issue, and that there is scientific consensus on the question which cannot be denied. We are called to urgent action now!

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So while I am in this ‘desert’, I try to keep my faith alive by praying, meditating (primarily with Father Richard Rohr who has a daily meditation on-line that is free – it turns up everyday in my email), talking often with spirit-filled people, reading theological books and articles, conducting research for ICN columns, and so forth. A book I am reading now which is very inspiring and addresses many of my concerns is ‘**Faith after Doubt**’ by Brian D. McLaren. He is a former pastor and is a member of Rohr’s meditative team.

I also subscribe to *La Croix International*, a daily on-line newsfeed with

excellent articles written by accomplished theologians. It is produced in Rome (not the Vatican). The synodal path being promoted by Pope Francis is a good start, providing the summaries of the various parishes, summaries of the dioceses, summaries by the various conferences of bishops in different countries, and the report that goes to the Vatican are not ‘sanitized’ and made so generic that nothing of substance will change. In the meantime, I for one will try to be positive and grateful yet continuing to strive for meaningful change within the Catholic Church. I do hope that I can regain my ability to see the divine in our Church, not being dragged

down by all the scandals, the clericalism, and inaction that we have seen for many years now. As Thomas O’Loughlin has recently written in *LaCroix International* (Jan/22) – the clericalist church has lost trust in the baptized faithful by not truly listening to them and not respecting them (e.g. – cover-ups), and the laity has in large part lost trust in the ordained leaders of the Church by virtue of the many scandals, their hold on authority, and their inaction regarding Vatican II. Trust must be mutual for positive and meaningful change to take place.

The author of *The Curia is the Pope* (O’Loughlin Kennedy) makes a compelling case that the Church must

return to its roots – small believing communities celebrating the Lord’s Supper and trusting each other in their mutual mission of being Christ-like in all aspects. I too pray and hope for this return to our roots and somewhere in all this, my return to the institutional Church. I crave for the ability to see Christ’s action in the Church without becoming so completely disheartened by the irrelevance it now displays to our youth and many parts of the world.



Permanent Astonishment – Showing a Way Forward

Book Review by Peter Best, Sudbury, ON (Excerpted from the Frontier Centre for Public Policy)

After a press interview several years ago Tomson Highway, author of *Permanent Astonishment* (Doubleday Canada, 2021) found himself sidelined by Indigenous and media elites for his apostasy in saying that some good things came out of residential schools. He said:

Nine of the happiest years of my life were spent at that school...You may have heard stories from 7000 witnesses that were negative. But what you haven't heard are the 7000 stories that were positive stories. There are very many successful people today that went to those schools and have brilliant careers and are very functional people like myself. I have a thriving international career, and it wouldn't have happened without that school. You have to remember that I came from so far north and there were no schools there.

Permanent Astonishment puts hopeful and inspiring flesh on this assertion. In its loving portrait of his parents, his family, his friends, his classmates and teachers at residential school, of meeting the challenges of the harsh but beautiful wilderness he grew up in, *Permanent Astonishment* is a work of transcendental, universalist power. Like all works of art, if only during the startling, "astonishing" moments when the reader is in the near-ecstatic grip of it, it transcends superficial boundaries that divide us as humans and that dangerously separate us from nature. It acknowledges failings and wrongs, (One priest fondled young boys in their dormitory beds), but urges that they should not be life-defining.

Permanent Astonishment is overflowing with stories and anecdotes about diverse human characters humorously and generously portrayed, Indigenous food and recipe descriptions, and botanical, zoological, and geographic details of the wilderness world of his childhood. Its warm and capacious nature lifts the reader out of his getting and spending reality and takes him to a better place – the human soul-enriching world where the truth that all humanity is an interconnected whole is realized and felt.



Tomson Highway

Tomson is joyfully gay – "two-spirited" – and he sensed it from very early in his life. He says that he only had one godparent, a woman, "one reason for the pronounced femininity of my persona." He writes of his father's total acceptance of this:

When I think back to it, even the fact that I am a "girl" does not faze Dad. He sees me playing "girlie" games – putting on Mom's apron for example, and pretending it's a skirt – but to him, it makes no difference...Where too many men would beat the woman out of their effeminate boys to turn them into "men", thus destroying the lives of those boys, the lives of their families, and most blindly, their own, the world's most athletic, most masculine man, world-champion dogsled racer Joe Lapstan Highway, loves me even more.

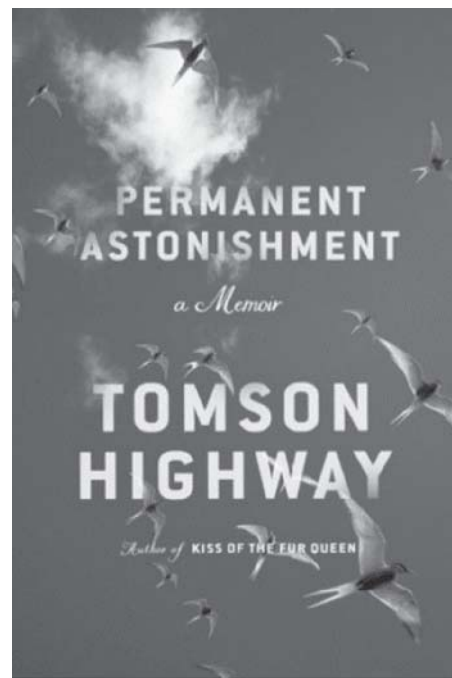
Joe Highway was a fisherman, bushman, dogsled champion, devout Catholic, tireless laborer, faithful husband to Balazee, with no formal schooling and unable to read and write, father of twelve children, of which Tomson was the eleventh, gave this remarkable gift of unequivocal love and acceptance to this son of his, and allowed him to be the *individual* he was born to be: classical pianist, playwright, author and two-spirited, transcendentalist trickster funny man.

Humanity's unhealthy and dangerous break from nature is a growing threat to our existence. *Perpetual Astonishment*, with its chapters alternating between descriptions of the author increasingly being happily gripped by non-Indigenous "civilization" at his residential school, on the one hand, and his vivid descriptions of his life and soul-defining experiences in the

wilderness during the summers of his youth, exemplify this dichotomy.

With the advance and ultimate dominance of European civilization in Canada the distant forefathers of today's Indigenous Canadians lost their old way of life forever. Their generation, as the author writes about Joe Highway's, "leaped five generations in one." The reserve system and the Indian Act, the establishment of which has to be seen in hindsight as a big mistake, set up a system designed to ensure the failure of Indigenous Canadians to adapt to the new reality that had tragically overwhelmed them. This state of general failure continues today.

Tomson Highway and *Permanent*



Astonishment possess the inherent sweetness to stop the poisonous leak of useless bitterness, divisive demands and false accusations against their fellow Canadians that continually emanate from Canada's Indigenous elites, and which are shamefully acquiesced in by our non-Indigenous elites.

Permanent Astonishment is rich with the virtues of gentleness, forgiveness, gratitude, and kindness.

He thanks Sister St. Aramaa for giving him the gift of the piano. He thanks his 200 classmates "for all they have given me all these years –

companionship, laughter, and yes, love, in all its richness. I love them to death. I love them to pieces." He forgives his classmate Stanley Blackbird who punched him on the side of the head because he was a "sissy". He compliments his staff and teachers; "kind" Mrs. Rasmussen, "kind" Mr. Bouchard, and thanks them all.

The brilliant trans-gender, two-spirited Welsh writer, Jan Morris, born James Morris, who experienced all manner of human dysfunction in his/her long life, summed up her view of life in one of her last books, *Thinking Again*, this way:

"Worst of all (the problems of the world) though, has been the way humanity has turned upon itself...We have no certainties anymore, no heroes to trust, no Way (in mystic capital letters) and no Destination. But perhaps you will forgive me, if I propagate an old thesis of my own once more. It is this: that the simplest and easiest of virtues, Kindness, can offer all of us not only a Way through the imbrogio, but a Destination too."

The kind, tolerant, forgiving, forward-looking, and celebratory *Permanent Astonishment* shows not only a Way through the Indigenous-non-Indigenous imbrogio bedeviling Canada today, but it shows that a united, *race-free* Destination is possible.

Mr. Highway writes that he is dedicating his life to dismantling "that hateful, destructive two-gender structure that arrived on our continent in 1492." But if the old social rigidities around sexuality and gender identification should be loosened, shouldn't the old social, political, and legal rigidities around *race* in Canada be loosened as well? Shouldn't "race" become equally irrelevant? *Permanent Astonishment* suggests an affirmative answer to that important question.

Peter Best is a Sudbury lawyer and the author of There Is No Difference: An Argument for the Abolition of the Indian Reserve System, which has been endorsed by retired Supreme Court of Canada Justice Jack Major.

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after the 1999 rebuke, that's how I felt. There were places that I wasn't welcome where I would have been welcomed before.

What did you do after it happened?

I went around the country and told Catholic audiences my story of the Vatican investigation. And I told them, "If you believe we didn't get a proper hearing, write the Vatican and tell them to reconsider." At the end of that year the Vatican had gotten thousands and thousands of letters from all over the world. The primary

people who led it were the nuns.

The Vatican wrote to my superior general and told her that this has got to stop. I was summoned to Rome to my generalate. It was heart-rending. I knew my community leaders supported me, but they begged me to stop speaking publicly about the investigation. It was clear that if I didn't comply, they would ultimately be forced to dismiss me from religious life.

At that meeting, I realized I felt like a battered woman. I hadn't been physically battered, but emotionally, I'd been battered from 1985 to 1999. But going around the country telling

my story, I had gained strength. I think that's true for battered women, and for L.G.B.T. people, too. Each time they tell their story they gain more strength.

And I realized, I will continue to tell not only my story with the Vatican, but my story with L.G.B.T. people. I needed to continue to advocate for them because they had no advocate in the institutional church.

You must have been very angry at the C.D.F. and the bishops who had treated you this way.

I didn't agree with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger when that notifica-

tion came out, but I respected him. I believe he was sincerely doing what he believed was right.

Have you ever heard my story of meeting Cardinal Ratzinger?

No.

In 1998, things were looking really bleak, and my provincial had this idea that she and I should make this pilgrimage to Munich, where the foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame is buried, and pray at her tomb for a miracle. "Because you need a miracle," she said.

When we were changing planes in

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125 German Catholic Priests, Religious and Lay Employees Publicly Come Out as L.G.B.T.

Excerpted from Associated Press, January 24, 2022

BERLIN (AP) — More than 120 employees of the Catholic Church in Germany publicly outed themselves as queer on Monday, saying they want to “live openly without fear” in the church and pushing demands for it to allow the blessing of same-sex couples and change its labour rules.

A group of 125 people — including priests, religion teachers and administrative employees — identified themselves as backers of the initiative titled “#OutInChurch — For a church without fear.”

In a document last March, the Vatican’s orthodoxy office, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, said Catholic clergy cannot bless same-sex unions because God “cannot bless sin.”

The document pleased conservatives and disheartened advocates for LGBT Catholics around the globe. But it drew notable pushback in Germany, which has seen discussion on hot-button issues such as the church’s teaching on homosexuality as part of a formal process of debate and reform.

Bernd Moenkebuescher, a pastor from western Germany who helped



Monika Schmelter, left, and Marie Kortenbusch, right, stand hand in hand in front of a statue of Mary at a convent in Luedinghausen, Germany, Monday, Jan. 24, 2022. (Guido Kirchner/dpa via AP)

initiate blessings for same-sex couples last year, told the Associated Press news agency that the participants in the new initiative were inspired by a public coming-out by 185 actors in Germany last year.

The initiative is calling for all LGBT who work for the church to join

up, and appealing to bishops to give its manifesto public support. It assails the church’s “discrimination” against same-sex relationships and argues the church should make clear “that LGBT people, whether living alone or in a relationship, are blessed by God.”

The initiative especially calls on church officials to allow queer people to come out at work if they’re working for a Catholic institution without having to fear that their work contracts will be cancelled.

“The #OutInChurch initiative demands ... to change the church’s labour law in such a way that a life in accordance with one’s own sexual orientation and gender identity, also in a partnership or civil marriage, does not lead to exclusion from tasks and offices nor to dismissal,” supporters of the initiative wrote.

“I would like to welcome this on behalf of the German Bishops’ Conference as a sign that we are working to ensure that such a climate of freedom from fear must prevail and arise in our church,” Aachen Bishop Helmut Dieser said on the sidelines of consultations of the Bishops’ Conference Permanent Council in Würzburg.

No one, he said, should be discriminated against, devalued or criminalized because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

“We have an image of man that tells us that the person is unconditionally loved by God,” Dieser added.

Phyllis Olive NESTOR

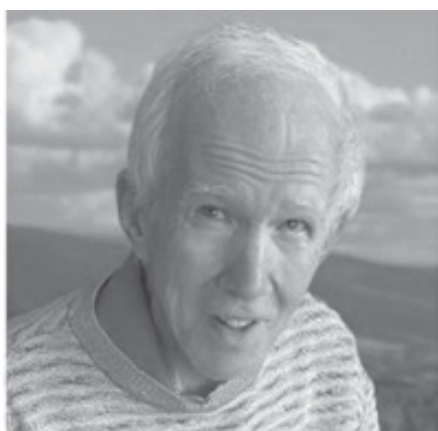
7 December, 1931 – 28 December, 2021



Phyllis Olive Nestor passed away on December 28, 2021 in Chilliwack BC at the age of 90 years young. She was born in Pincher Creek, Alberta on December 7, 1931.

At five years old she went to school at the Convent until 12 years old. She lived in Coleman, Germany, Calgary her final home and most loved was Victoria BC until her passing. Phyllis was a great cook and seamstress she loved to have a phone conversation that could last for hours because it was always hard to end a chat. Phyllis is survived by three siblings Sonny (Sandy), Pat (Jim), Brian (Melinda). Three children Donna Georgina Hardy (Art), Terry (Frances), Duane. Five grandchildren Dustin (Tanya), Mitch (Lex) Trevor, Cameron, Teri (Ed) and nine great grandchildren Rhys, Kennedy Wyatt, Matteo, Isabella, Albert Megz, Sophie, Charlie. She is predeceased by her mother, father, sister Bobby and two nephews.

Ross (Ernest Ross Alfred Joseph) LABRIE



Ross (Ernest Ross Alfred Joseph) Labrie will be remembered with sadness passing at the age of 85.

Ross is survived by his loving wife Gisela whom he married in 1966; and by his sons: Mark, who is in business in Australia; and Steven, who is a school administrator in Kelowna. He is further survived by his brother Warren; his grandchildren Kyla, Danika, Cohen, Josh, and Charlotte; and his nieces and nephew. Having grown up in Montreal, Ross went to McGill University for his M.A. He

obtained his Ph.D. at the University of Toronto, and was the author of a number of books on American Literature, notably Catholic American literature. He became a Full Professor at the University of British Columbia, retiring in 2001.

Following his retirement, he was invited to join the faculty of Arts One, an interdisciplinary course that Ross believed was a model for how university courses should be structured and taught.

Ross loved to travel. When not camping or cruising, Ross spent his vacations with his wife and sons in the Caribou where he developed a love of B.C., which reminded him of summers in the Laurentians north of Montreal. In Vancouver, he returned to the ice skating of his youth and became an active member of the Newman Association. This past year Ross and Gisela decided to move to Kelowna to be close to their son, Steven, his wife Allie, and grandchildren Kyla, Danika and Cohen.

Ross was a beloved father, brother, grandfather, uncle, mentor and friend. His presence will be missed, but the legacy of his kindness, wisdom and quiet strength will live in the memories and hearts of all who knew him.

His funeral mass was held Monday, November 22, 2021, at 10:30 a.m. (PST) at St. Charles Garnier Catholic Church in Kelowna. A recording is available. To view the recording or send the family condolences, please visit www.springfieldfuneralhome.com.

NEWS NOTES

January 11, 2022 Press Release from Pax Christi USA

Washington, D.C. – Following today’s release of “Living in the Light of Christ’s Peace: A Conversation Toward Nuclear Disarmament”, a pastoral letter issued by Archbishop John C. Wester on the urgent need for nuclear disarmament and avoiding a new nuclear arms race, Pax Christi USA wishes to extend its thanks to Archbishop Wester for his prophetic stance and encourage other bishops to join the conversation. Pax Christi USA eagerly anticipated the archbishop’s letter which opens a new chapter in the U.S. Catholic Church’s movement toward the moral imperative of the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Nick Nele former U.S. diplomat and coordinator of Pax Christi USA’s Nuclear Disarmament Working Group stated that Archbishop Wester’s statement is the first major proclamation of current Catholic teaching on nuclear weapons by a member of the U.S. hierarchy.

**Bishop Allen Jones,
Catholic Apostolic**

Street Ministry
Support, Prayer, Listening

778-433-0819

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Reflection: Prayer Life Key To Understanding De Roo

By Marie Zarowny, SSA, Victoria (February 11, 2022 Vigil Prayers)

It's tempting when reflecting on a long public life such as that of Bishop Emeritus Remi, to focus on his very public major accomplishments. I will touch on those this evening but I invite you first, to join me in reflecting on some characteristics, suggested by this evening's readings, that round out his personality and therefore his presence in our midst

1) *Lord, Make me know your ways; Lord, Teach me your paths.* I suggest that this plea, expressed in Psalm 25, guided Remi throughout his life. His prayer life was a constant seeking for God's ways in our world, in our Diocese and in his own day-to-day life.

It also led him to seek and promote ways to help those entrusted to his care to grow in their spiritual lives, such as the Prayer Companions, Faith and Sharing, the Charismatic Movement and the establishment of Bethlehem Centre, all of which continue to this day. He remained involved with and committed to Bethlehem as it evolved into a Centre for "spirituality without borders."

I believe it was Remi's prayer life that allowed him to continue to look on our Church and world with love and hope, and in the words of Paul to



Marie Zarowny (Photo: © 2022 Kevin Doyle)

the Romans, *to be patient in suffering.*

2) The reading this evening from *Gaudium et Spes* reminds us that Jesus ... *worked with human hands, [He] thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart.* Applying these words to Remi, this passage is consoling to me. In some ways, his towering intellect and worldwide perspectives made him seem bigger than life.

Yet, Remi was so very human, with limitations, that like his accomplishments, became matters of public discourse. He was the first to admit that he had to work on his social and

interpersonal skills. In so doing, he was an inspiration to all of us to become "fully human" through personal development.

His humanness shone through in his attachment to family and friends and his eagerness to meet with them to share life and to celebrate.

I recall many years ago the delight he had in showing me how to debone a freshly baked salmon – and sharing a good bottle of red wine was a special pleasure for him. I recall, too, how thrilled he was to be acknowledged as a Council Father by His Holiness Pope Francis when he was in Rome for the canonization of Pope Saint John XXIII ... and the delight he had in sharing the story.

It somehow seems appropriate that our celebration of Bishop Emeritus Remi De Roo's passing into God's eternal embrace take place during the month when in this Diocese we begin our active participation in the world-wide Synod called by Pope Francis.

Bishop Remi's life of leadership in the Church and the world was profoundly shaped by his experience of the Second Vatican Council and in addition to implementing its vision of

Church in the Diocese of Victoria, he introduced processes of engaging all of us, as God's people, in listening, sharing and discerning, through such events as the Women's Commission, *Interaction 1975* and the Diocesan Synod of 1986-91.

How fitting then, that in this very month, the whole People of God are invited into a process of listening anew to our own inner selves, to one another and to the cries of our world.

Who among us, who are old enough, can forget the joy, wonder and enthusiastic commitment we experienced as we explored a vision of who we are as rooted in the compassionate, inclusive message of Jesus and expressed in a Church of God's Pilgrim People, each of us called to grow in holiness and to share in Church governance and in the mission of the Church in the world.

We had a shepherd who synthesized these teachings for us and listened to our ideas and questions; a shepherd who encouraged us to explore emerging and diverse worldviews, theologies and spiritualities. We were led into attentive listening to the joys and

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Bishop Established University Centre for Religion and Society

By Justin Samanski-Langille, Victoria (Excerpted from the February 10, 2022 edition of the *Oak Bay News*)

Greater Victoria is mourning the loss of former Bishop Remi de Roo, who died at the age of 97 on Feb. 1.

Born in Swan Lake, Man., De Roo served as bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria from 1962 until his retirement in 1999 and gained recognition both in Greater Victoria and beyond as a champion of social justice and a progressive both within the church and outside of it.

Patrick Jamieson, managing editor of *Island Catholic News* and author of three books on De Roo, said he embodied a little-known, but deeply rooted tradition of progressive thinking in the Catholic church, which led to him playing a notable role in all four sessions of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (Vatican II), which led to much change in the church globally.

"He was always pushing for more power to the people, the laity of the church," Jamieson said. "Vatican II was called in the 1960s, and lo and behold those changes came about in the church. He was probably the leading proponent for the reforms of Vatican II, which were pretty radical if you were a traditional Catholic."

While his progressive thinking earned him a reputation for being ahead of his time or even prophetic, Jamieson said, De Roo was also a source of controversy during his time



Former Catholic bishop of Victoria Remi De Roo is seen here with Pope John Paul II. (Foto FELICI, Roma)

as bishop. Despite this, he received high honours including a meeting with Pope Francis, where Francis kissed De Roo's ring in recognition of his role in Vatican II.

Closer to home, De Roo was involved in many notable activities, including helping to establish the

University of Victoria's Centre for Studies in Religion and Society, which serves as a secular academic hub for research on all religions and society in general.

"He was very excited by the centre's mandate," said centre director Paul Bramadat. "His role

within the Catholic community was to always push it forward and always asking the community, not just the Catholic community, to take research and progressive thinking and critical thinking as seriously as possible. I think he saw that there was a real benefit to the religious life from paying attention to the academic or scientific world, and the centre was the space where that could happen."

Describing De Roo as having a unique mixture of charisma and care for others, Bramadat said he would always interact with researchers at the centre equally and passionately, whether they were a tenured scholar or someone early in their academic career.

"He was a tremendously warm and patient person," he said.

Current Bishop of Victoria Gary Gordon said De Roo was always a very gracious person who made friends readily and easily.

"He certainly worked at bringing to the whole diocese and the church an understanding of church as the people of God, which I think is something that is still ongoing, but I think it was a great launch that he did," Gordon said. "The other thing he championed was social justice issues around poverty ... and a just distribution of wealth so that all can participate in society."

Former Bishop Remi De Roo Laid to Rest

By Darron Kloster, Victoria (Excerpted from the February 13, 2022 edition of the *Times Colonist*)

Remi De Roo, the former Catholic Bishop of Victoria, was remembered Saturday as a “prophet and pilgrim” of the church, a trailblazer on reforms and a social-justice advocate who could bring groups of people with diverse convictions together in thoughtful dialogue.

De Roo became the youngest Catholic bishop in the world at age 38 and spoke at all four sessions of Vatican II during the early 1960s which would produce a series of documents to direct the life of the Catholic Church into the modern age — among them, the church’s hierarchical structure, responsibilities in a suffering world, its place in relation to other religions and for increasing roles for women.

Pope John XXIII, who appointed De Roo a bishop, called the Vatican II council to “open the window” of the Catholic Church.

De Roo was an advocate for married male Catholic priests and the ordination of women into the priesthood. He also made contraception an issue at Vatican II and was seen as being in favour of birth control, said Patrick Jamieson, who has written three books on De Roo.

De Roo died Feb. 1 at age 97.

His funeral Saturday at St. Andrew’s Cathedral drew about 350 people — limited due to pandemic protocols. They watched a casket draped in white linen with a simple wood cross brought into the cathedral and placed before the altar. Friends, family members and parishioners joined for a celebration of De Roo’s life along with members of the Anglican clergy and Jewish leadership, members of the Catholic clergy, two bishops, an archbishop and a cardinal from Rome.

Cardinal Michael Czerny told the gathering that he was bringing the “warm greetings” of Pope Francis, “who joins us in mourning and thanksgiving, and who sends his blessing.”

Czerny, the Pope’s social justice leader, said he was “inspired and challenged” by De Roo over the decades that they knew each other.

“Remi came across as decisive, frank and even abrasive at times,” said Czerny. “He was also complex, controversial, and faithful to his

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hopes, the grief and anxieties of people both at home and in other parts of the world and with them to analyze and address the underlying causes of such alienation and oppression.

Especially through the Social Affairs Commission of the CCCB, Bishop Remi fearlessly challenged the prevailing political and economic interests of the time and suggested ways we could all become faith-based agents of change.

Each of us here could identify ways



Cardinal Czerny (right) with two of the Bishop’s sisters; Alma Verdonck (left) and Madeline Martinez (centre) with funeral director Telford Nault prior to the liturgy. (Photo: © 2022 Kevin Doyle)

convictions until the end. Above all he was a Council Father who dedicated the subsequent 55 years to continually rediscovering what it means to live as a Council Christian and as a Council Church ... and now indeed as a Synodal Church.”

Czerny said De Roo called himself “a pilgrim of the Second Vatican Council. ... It decisively shaped both his unwavering vision and his lifelong mission.

“He believed that the Church in Canada should divest itself of its instinctual suspicion of the modern world, and instead always seek to dialogue with contemporary culture, to accompany the path of ongoing cultural and social transformation, and to enlighten society with the living substance of the Gospel.”

Czerny gave several examples of De Roo’s leadership, including his decision to visit the Indigenous communities of his diocese, “with whom he maintained a sincere bond of friendship throughout his life.”

That was the case during Friday evening prayers, said De Roo’s niece, Teresa Vincent, who said a First Nations leader referred to her uncle as “the White Swan.”

Czerny noted De Roo’s commitment to the promotion of social justice, which led him — as chairman of the Canadian bishops’ Social Justice Commission — “to question

that Bishop Remi stretched us. In every instance, true to the spirit of the Council, we needed to listen carefully to others, make our own insights known and strive to grow together.

As we reflect on Remi’s life and teaching, let us heed the message from Paul’s letter to the Romans: *Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.* Let us remember these words as we begin our new synod journey.

On our behalf, I would like to offer a word to Pearl Gervais: Pearl, you have been a friend of Remi from the

the political world about its social policies and the business community about its responsibilities.”

De Roo also promoted the role of women, “rejecting the patriarchal models that confine them to subordinate positions and offend their human and baptismal dignity.”

The cardinal said De Roo’s progressive stances “were greatly appreciated by some and greatly disparaged by others, [but] he remained constant in spite of a degree of marginalization and hostility, even within the Church.”

Czerny said Pope Francis encouraged people two weeks ago to be the artisans of open communities that know how to value the talents of every person; that missionaries “walk the paths of people of our time,” give hope to the disheartened and approach those wounded by life, to bound their wounds with compassion.

“The Holy Father could easily have had our beloved Bishop Remi in mind when, with a certain tough love, he spelled out these challenges,” said Czerny. “With the intercession of our beloved ancestor, let us — even with the risk of being, once in a while, just a little bit irritating — embrace them with firm resolve and inextinguishable hope.”

Douglas Roche, a former senator and a friend of De Roo for 60 years, called him one of the great bishops in

time he was a young priest. As years went by, you became a colleague, as you mutually challenged and learned from one another and partnered in giving workshops and retreats.

And in these recent years you became his trusted caregiver. We are deeply grateful to you and assure you of our love and continuing support during this time of loss and transition.

We also thank his cousin Denise De Pape who joined Pearl in supporting Remi as he took up his cross of suffering during these last months.

the history of the Catholic Church in Canada.

“Good books have been written about him and he himself wrote his memoirs, the inspiring story of the farm boy from Swan Lake, Manitoba, who became a driving figure for change in the Church, in order to meet the historical outreach of Vatican II, said Roche.

“But the definitive historical record of this great man has yet to be set down. I hope a historian or scholar will, at some point, perhaps in the not too distant future, write the full life story of this spiritual leader who was visionary, controversial, and a beacon of light for all those who experience the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.

“What that story will reveal is the life of a pilgrim and a prophet.”

De Roo’s journey wasn’t easy in that regard because he devoted his life to showing the way forward in a renewed and revitalized Church, said Roche.

“Prophets meet resistance, and seldom are they revered in their own lifetime, for their restless energy is always prodding us, challenging us, urging us onward. It takes a special calling from God to be a prophet, and Remi De Roo had that calling.

“The calling to be a prophet gave Remi De Roo the courage to stand up for women’s rights in the Church. It gave him the courage to tell the Government of Canada it was wrong in its economic policies disadvantaging the poor. It gave him the courage to affirm the supremacy of informed conscience by married couples. It gave him the courage to hold a lengthy synod in his own diocese, in which his major role was simply to listen to the people.

Family members recalled De Roo, the second of eight children who grew up on a Manitoba farm, as kind and gracious, a constant reader who taught himself several languages, with a soft spot for baking pies and chocolate cakes, “and delegating family to get the ingredients.”

“To me he was just a wonderful friend,” said Telford Nault, a friend for 62 years. “He was always there, always with a smile. His last words to me were a blessing.”

— with files from Louise Dickson

During Remi’s recent final illness, Pearl asked him if he had a word of wisdom for us before he left. What he said was, *Embrace the Present; Welcome the Unknown.*

What a precious message for us to carry forward. Remi, we trust you will be with us as we walk into the unknown, obtaining for us the graces we need to be faithful disciples of Jesus in our world of today and tomorrow.

Marie Zarowny was Victoria Diocese first social justice coordinator.

Bishop Remi De Roo Named Among Most Influential Spiritual Leaders

By Catholic News Service (Excerpted from the February 4, 2022 edition of the *National Catholic Reporter* online)

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA — Retired Bishop Remi De Roo, the last surviving Canadian, English-speaking bishop to take part in the Second Vatican Council more than 50 years ago, died Feb. 1. He was 97.

The retired bishop of Victoria is remembered as a longtime proponent of social justice issues and an outspoken advocate of subjects — from the celibate priesthood to unbridled capitalism — that could make popes and prime ministers uncomfortable.

When he retired in 1999 at the age of 75, Bishop De Roo was Canada's longest-serving bishop, having shepherded Victoria since 1962.

In 2010, *The Vancouver Sun* named Bishop De Roo British Columbia's fourth most-influential spiritual leader of the century. It cited his provoking a national debate in 1984 "when he accused Pierre Trudeau of exacerbating the 'moral crisis' of unemployment" and for "encouraging his diocese's 70,000 Catholics to experiment in worship styles and enhance the role of women."

Vancouver Archbishop J. Michael Miller said Bishop De Roo "will long be remembered as one of the fathers of the Second Vatican Council, an ecclesial event that was a great grace for the church."

Victoria Bishop Gary Gordon said Bishop De Roo "was able to bring the firsthand experience of Vatican II into the lived experience of our diocese and continued in ministry up until well into his 90s."

Bishop Gordon said one of the enduring gifts the late bishop brought to the diocese and the church in Canada was his passion for promoting "the council's desire for the church to grow into the fullness of the people of God in dialogue with the world, especially in the realm of the social teachings of the church."

Born in 1924 in the farming community of Swan Lake, Manitoba, Bishop De Roo was the second of eight children, with a sister who was an Ursuline nun and a younger brother who was a priest. He studied for the priesthood at St. Boniface Seminary



Retired Bishop Remi De Roo is pictured in a 2016 photo at St. Mark's College in Vancouver, British Columbia. (CNS photo/Sarah Scali, St. Mark's College)

in Manitoba and was ordained June 8, 1950.

After ordination, Father De Roo went to Rome for further studies and received his doctorate in sacred theology from the Angelicum University in 1952. He served as a pastor in Winnipeg, where he was a priest-consultor and secretary for the Manitoba bishops' conference.

When he was named bishop of Victoria at age 38, he was the world's youngest bishop and the first western-born Bishop of Victoria.

Bishop De Roo had a dramatic arrival in the diocese with a solemn tribal ceremony reenacting the arrival of Bishop Modeste Demers, the first bishop of Victoria, 117 years earlier. A B.C. Catholic newspaper recounted how the new bishop arrived by canoe at the Tsawout Reserve near Victoria and was greeted by 11 war canoes that escorted him to the shore.

There he was made an honorary chief and bestowed with the name Siem Le Pleet Schoo-Kun, roughly translated as "High Priest Swan" and

a reference to a Coast Indian tradition of launching canoes and heading out to sea in spring at the sight of the first swan seen flying overhead.

One of the early tasks Bishop De Roo set for himself was to visit as many of the Indigenous people of his diocese as possible, and he maintained a close relationship with them for the rest of his life.

He attended sessions of the Second Vatican Council in Rome, where he and other Canadian bishops criticized a proposed document on the lay apostolate in the modern world, saying it failed to set forth the essential principles of the movement.

After returning from the council, his enthusiasm for embracing progressive ideas quickly took root in Victoria, where he told a lay apostolate workshop that new pastoral patterns were needed in the church, with the laity planning, organizing and carrying out programs with the spiritual guidance of priests and in cooperation with the hierarchy.

He spoke of his frustration over what he saw as entrenched attitudes among the laity that blocked efforts to breathe life into Vatican II's documents. He cited, for example, the faithful's tendency to look to clergy for answers to all moral and religious questions. He also complained of bishops who were "far too engrossed in administration" and too little concerned with pastoral problems. He was also a promoter of the role of the laity as being "more than a secondary one of assistance to the clergy."

A strong advocate for social justice, Bishop De Roo served as chair of the Canadian bishops' social justice committee and frequently called for economic justice in public policy making.

In 1968, he made a presentation to a federal committee considering abortion law reforms and called on the committee to show "respect for life. We are much concerned that a too-open health clause may result in widespread disrespect for and assault on the life of the unborn child."

But he continually drew the ire of traditional and conservative Catholics with his support for married and female priests. He was a frequent guest at conferences sponsored by Call to Action, an organization that advocated for contraception and for married and female priests.

In 1999, months after Bishop De Roo retired, the Vatican instructed him not to speak at a conference of married Catholic priests.

A Beacon For Our Time A Look at the Life of Remi De Roo

Video by Ray Painchaud
available at:

https://youtu.be/EyCEN0o_QgE

also

<https://islandcatholicnews.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/bishopde-rooabeacon.mp4>

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Rome to go to Munich, we see this person getting on ahead of us. And my superior says, "That's Cardinal Ratzinger." I said "Oh no, it's probably some low-level bureaucrat at the Vatican who looks like Cardinal Ratzinger." He looked very haggard, and he had a shirt that could've been clerical, but he was not dressed up, like, to be "known."

We get on the plane, and I see that the seat next to him is empty. I just plopped myself next to him and started talking to him. I said, "I'm a

School Sister of Notre Dame going to our motherhouse in Munich." He says, "My aunt was a School Sister." "Oh," I said, "What was her name?" He says, "Ratzinger."

"Oh," I say, "Are you Cardinal Ratzinger?" "Yes." "Oh. Well, I'm Sister Jeannine Gramick."

He smiled. "Oh, yes, I have known you for 20 years." [Sister Gramick laughs]

We had about a 20-minute conversation. He was very friendly. Charming, I would say. He asked me how I got into this ministry. I told him about

Dominic. And he was good; he approved that we were meeting and having Mass for gay Christians.

After that meeting, I thought of that reading from the Gospel of John, the Last Supper discourse where Jesus says, "I am the vine, you are the branches." But instead of a vine, I visualized a huge tree with lots of branches all around it. Cardinal Ratzinger is way out there on one branch, and I am way out there on a branch probably 180 degrees around that tree. We couldn't have been farther apart in our theological

thinking. But we are rooted in that one tree. We have a common faith in Christ, and that's what draws us together. We're all around that tree somewhere.

I love Cardinal Ratzinger, Pope Benedict. I think he's a holy man. I really do.

You have a lot more openness to those who have persecuted you than most of us would.

We people of God are always growing in our knowledge and awareness. We are becoming more

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Honorary Chief 'High Priest Swan' Last Surviving Vatican II Bishop

By Paul Schratz, Vancouver (Excerpted from the February 11, 2022 edition of *The B.C. Catholic*)

Bishop Remi J. De Roo, the last surviving Canadian, English-speaking bishop to take part in the Second Vatican Council more than 50 years ago, has died at the age of 97.

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He was named bishop of Victoria by Pope John XXIII in October 1962, making him the 13th bishop of the diocese, succeeding Bishop James D. Hill, who died in March 1962. At the age of 38, Bishop De Roo was the world's youngest bishop and the first western-born Bishop of Victoria.

His consecration as Bishop of Victoria took place Dec. 14, 1962, at



1963 photo of Bishop Remi De Roo meeting Pope John XXIII. The Pope anointed him as the 'Benjamin' of the Canadian Bishops and presented him with a special ring. (Archdiocese of Vancouver Archives)

St. Boniface Cathedral under Archbishop Maurice Baudoux. He was installed in Victoria's St. Andrew's Cathedral Dec. 20 by Vancouver Archbishop W.M. Duke.

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In 1968 he made a presentation to a federal committee considering abortion law reforms and called on the committee to show "respect for life. We are much concerned that a too-open health clause may result in widespread disrespect for and assault on the life of the unborn child."

But he continually drew the ire of

traditional and conservative Catholics with his support for married and female priests. He was a frequent guest at conferences sponsored by Call to Action, an organization that advocated for contraception and for married and female priests.

In 1992 he co-authored a controversial book *In the Eye of the Catholic Storm* with former nun Mary Jo Leddy. The refusal by *The B.C. Catholic* and *The Catholic Register* to publish ads for the book became a national news story highlighting tensions between conservative and liberal Catholics.

In 1999, months after his retirement, the Vatican instructed Bishop De Roo not to speak at a conference of married Catholic priests.

At the time of his retirement at the age of 75, Bishop De Roo was Canada's longest-serving bishop, having shepherded Victoria since 1962.

In 2010, a decade after Bishop De Roo's retirement, *The Vancouver Sun* named him B.C.'s fourth most influential spiritual leader of the century. It cited his provoking a national debate in 1984 "when he accused Pierre Trudeau of exacerbating the "moral crisis" of unemployment" and for "encouraging his diocese's 70,000 Catholics to experiment in worship styles and enhance the role of women."



First Nations' mementoes displayed at the funeral. Cherished gifts to Bishop De Roo during his lifetime. (ICN Photo)



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sensitive because we know more.

I love that quotation from Cardinal John Henry Newman. He said: "To live is to change. To be perfect is to have changed often." Yes, we've made mistakes in the past, but we didn't have as much knowledge in the past

as we have now. L.G.B.T. people are coming out and telling their stories. Science is telling us much more.

Would you say that your work has been primarily about personal relationships rather than politics?

Yes, but it's also about politics. Politics means people who are vested

with power. If they are oppressing the people that you want to help, you have to get politically involved.

I'll tell you another little story. At one point to satisfy Cardinal James Hickey of Washington, D.C., my provincial suggested that maybe I should go on a sabbatical. I was sent

to New York, and the New York City Council had this gay rights bill, which had been up for years. I testified to advocate for civil rights for homosexual persons. And I got a call from my provincial shortly thereafter.

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'One of The Great Bishops in the History of the Catholic Church in Canada'

By Michael Swan, Toronto (excerpted from the February 10, 2022 edition of *The Catholic Register*)

Canada's last surviving Second Vatican Council father has died. Victoria Bishop Emeritus Remi De Roo was 97 years old when he reached his eternal rest on Feb. 1.

"Bishop Remi De Roo was one of the great bishops in the history of the Catholic Church in Canada," Bishop De Roo's friend of 60 years, retired Senator Doug Roche said in an email. "He became a driving figure for change in the Church. In fact, he was a prophetic figure who advocated the outreach of the Church into the modern world. He leaves a lasting legacy of understanding the Church as the People of God."

In 1962 then-Father De Roo became the youngest bishop in the world at just 38 and was almost immediately thrust into a critical role as one of the Canadian bishops at Vatican II in Rome. The transformative 1962-to-1965 gathering of bishops from around the world came to define the young bishop's life and ministry through his 37 years leading the Diocese of Victoria and 23 years as bishop emeritus.

"He was a distinguished bishop who was trying to be faithful — not only trying, he was successfully



Cardinal Czerny (right) with Anglican Bishop James Cowan. (Photo: © 2022 Kevin Doyle)

faithful to Vatican II," said University of St. Michael's president and vice chancellor David Sylvester, a lifelong friend.

As a young scholar, Sylvester spent

summers working at Trinity United Parish, an ecumenical parish in Nanaimo, B.C. that housed a Catholic and a United Church community in the same church — "built not to save money but to advance the spirit of Vatican II," Sylvester said.

Bishop De Roo was born in 1924 in Swan Lake, Man., the second of eight children born into a farming family. His path to priesthood began at 15 at the St. Boniface Seminary in Winnipeg. He was ordained in 1950 and immediately sent on for advanced studies at the Angelicum University in Rome, where he took a doctorate in Sacred Theology in 1952. His first pastoral assignment was to a parish in Winnipeg, while at the same time acting as priest-consultor to Manitoba's bishops.

In 1962 the newly ordained bishop took possession of his cathedral with a solemn Indigenous ceremony that re-enacted the arrival of Victoria's first bishop 117 years earlier. Made an honorary chief and given the name Siem Le Pleet Schoo-Kun by the Tsawout people, Bishop De Roo remained an advocate and friend of Indigenous people his whole life.

In the years after the Second

Vatican Council De Roo attracted attention for arguing that the Roman Rite of the Church should ordain married men, just like all the other rites. As debate about ordaining women to the priesthood heated up in the 1970s, he said the Church should talk about roles for women, including ordination.

In 1968 Bishop De Roo played a prominent role as one of the authors of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops' response to St. Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. He became chief spokesman for what came to be known as the Winnipeg Statement. The statement explained the role of conscience in any faithful Catholic's response to the encyclical's controversial teaching on contraception.

A Beacon For Our Time A Look at the Life of Remi De Roo

Video by Ray Painchaud
available at:

https://youtu.be/EyCEN0o_QgE
also

<https://islandcatholicnews.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/bishopde-rooabeacon.mp4>

Bishop Remi: A Voice to be Heard

Poem by Logan McMenamie, Anglican Bishop Emeritus, Vancouver Island

From Manitoba you came,
Priest and bishop,
Benjamin,
To the church,
Transformation,
Tables upset,
With grace and love,
Progressive,
Cathedral reflection,
University foretold,
Vatican II born!
Sisters and brothers,
Family strengthened,
Not profits or gain,
Human needs and pain,
Teacher,
Synod for all,
Consistent,
Refrain,
Borders reshaped,
Newness and reform,
Vatican II lives!
In the silence an echo heard,
A reformer speaks,
Those who have ears will hear,
Unsettled foundation,
Received compassion, Gentleness
and calm,
Humility and grace,
The poor given,
New chance,
The voiceless speak,
Vatican II lives!
A voice of a prophet,

A voice of a pastor,
In every community,
On a national stage,
Social justice declared,
Fair practices proclaimed,
Ecumenical emissary,
Friend and mentor,
Communicator,
Justice and peace,
Vatican II lives!
National,
International,
Plane and car,
Boat and Canoe,
Community and Care,
Welcome and warm,
Liturgy,
Renewal,
Form and function,
Walls removed,
Vatican II lives!
Today we say,
Goodbye and thanks,
For all you gave,
All you were,
For courage,
A voice leading,
Reforming,
Reshaping,
Renewing,
Community,
Church,
Because of you,
Vatican II lives!



Anglican Bishop Logan McMenamie naming Bishop De Roo as an honorary officer of the Order of the Diocese of British Columbia. (Photo: © 2018 Kevin Doyle)

Mass of Christian Burial, Saturday, Feb. 12, 2022 St. Andrew's Cathedral, Victoria, BC



Joyce Harris, SSA with Rabbi Harry Brechner, Congregation Emanu-El, Victoria. (Photo: © 2022 Kevin Doyle)



Alma Verdonck, Bishop De Roo's sister and Co-executor with Cardinal Czerny, S.J. and funeral director Telford Nault. (Photo: © 2022 Kevin Doyle)



Anglican clergy, L-R Canon Craig Hiebert; St. Mary the Virgin Oak Bay, Archdeacon Alastair Singh-McCollum; Bishop James Cowan, former bishop of Diocese of Islands and Inlets; Bishop John Hannen, retired bishop of Diocese of Caledonia; Rev. Andrew D. Twiddy, parish priest St. Anne & St. Edmund, Qualicum Beach, B.C. . (Photo: © 2022 Kevin Doyle)



Bishop Gary Gordon with Cardinal Michael Czerny S.J. at the close of the funeral liturgy (Right)

Friends of Bishop De Roo at the internment at Ross Bay Cemetery. (Left)

(ICN Photos)



Bishop Remi De Roo – 1924 - 2022

Obituary in the February 19, 2022 edition of *The Globe and Mail*

DE ROO, Bishop Remi Bishop Remi De Roo, a strong advocate of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, who, as Bishop of Victoria for 37 years, was a driving figure for change in the Catholic Church and who did not hesitate to criticize governments for policies disadvantaging the poor, died in Victoria, B.C. February 1, 2022. He was 97.

Appointed a bishop by Pope John XXIII in 1962 at the age of 38, he was seen as the youngest bishop in the world. When he died, he was the last surviving Canadian bishop who had attended the Vatican Council, which took place 1962-65. His influence reached far beyond the Catholic Church. He was the first chairperson of the British Columbia Human Rights Commission; he was made an honorary officer of the Order of the Anglican Diocese of B.C.; the Emanuel Jewish Synagogue of Victoria honoured him; he was inducted as a member of the Coast Salish Nation for his work among Indigenous people. In 1970, he was a founding member of the World Conference of Religion and Peace. Bishop De Roo came to national attention in 1983 when, as chairman of the Catholic Bishops' Social Affairs Commission, he authored "Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis," a stinging indictment of government policies for giving priority to "the wants of the rich" over the needs of the poor. He faced a storm of corporate protest, but held steadfast that action for social justice was a constitutive dimension of the proclamation of the Gospel.

Remi Joseph De Roo was born February 24, 1924 in Swan Lake,

Continued from page 28

She said, "Jeannine, someone said that you testified for the gay rights bill and you had your veil on." I said, "Yes, I did." She said: "But you never wear a veil! You're just using the institution."

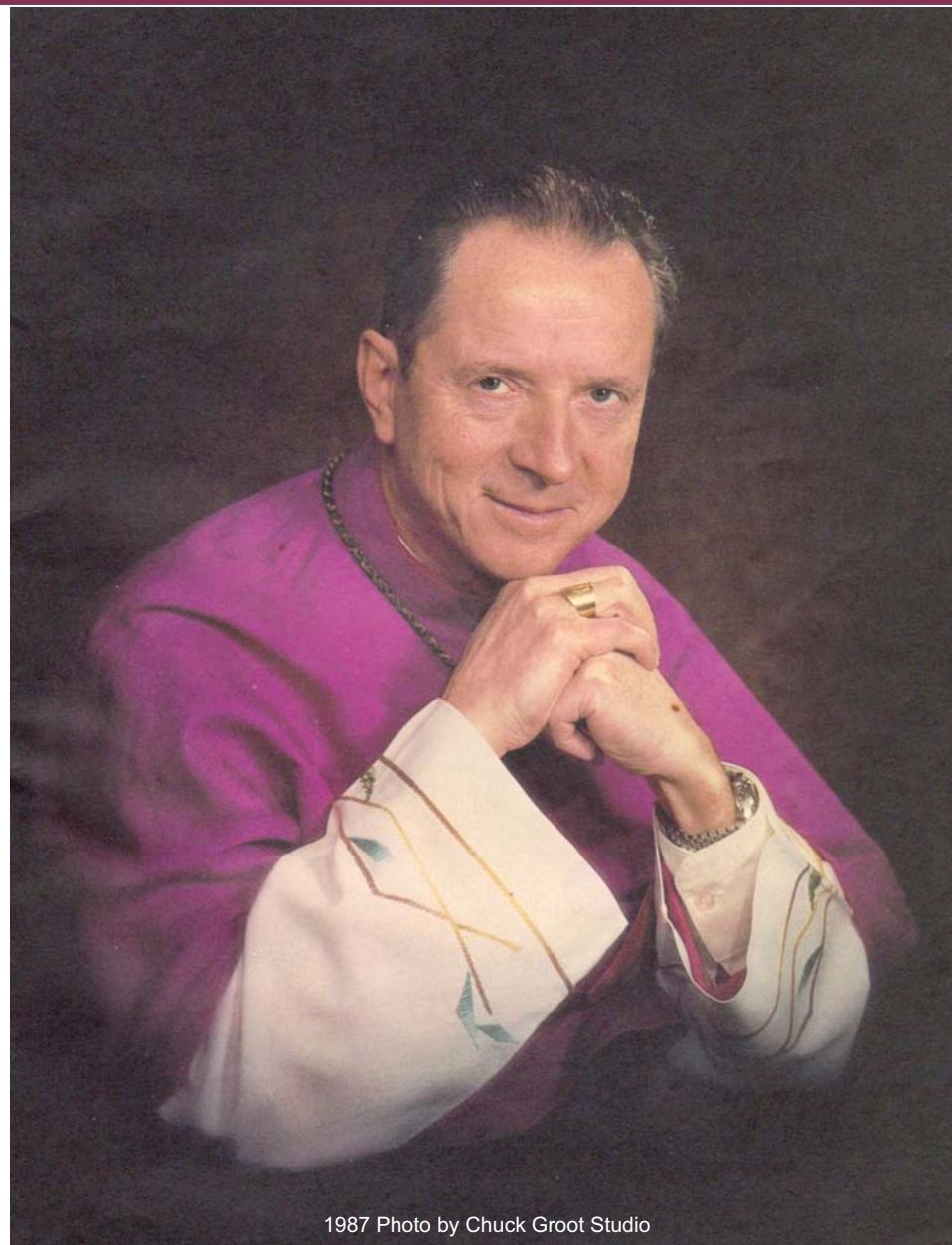
I said: "Well, of course I am. What's the institution for? The institution is to be used to help people. That's the only reason that we have institutions, for the good of the people. So of course I'm going to wear a veil to give you a visual that I represent the Catholic position of justice for lesbian and gay people."

That's what I mean by political.

Looking back on the last 50 years, what's been the best part?

The best part is to see the change that has come, to see more and more people starting to say, "I support L.G.B.T. people," and protesting when they get fired from their jobs. I know of over 100 cases of teachers who have been fired from Catholic schools because they're gay or civilly married. And in many places now, there are public outcries. The laity are beginning to stand up. That gives me hope.

Gay people say to me, "Pope Francis is wonderful, but he hasn't



1987 Photo by Chuck Groot Studio

Man., and grew up on a farm, one of eight children of Raymond De Roo and Josephine De Pape of Flemish ancestry. He graduated from College de Saint-Boniface and earned a doctorate

changed the teaching of the church." Well, that is not his job right now. Eventually, it's his job, but right now it's up to us, the people, to articulate the faith. What do we believe?

We have to stand up for what we believe in and not pass the buck. We have to follow our consciences. We need people in the pews to start writing letters to their bishops saying they are withdrawing donations until you start treating L.G.B.T. people as human beings and stop ostracizing them because you're hurting not only them but the whole body of Christ.

Sometimes we have to go against what the leaders of our church say. We have to operate out of love and not fear. Pope Francis doesn't want little robots. Vatican II didn't, either.

Looking ahead, what do you hope for L.G.B.T. Catholics?

My hope for L.G.B.T. Catholics is that they all feel welcome and comfortable in any parish in the world. That they might feel just as much a part of the church as anyone else.

What matters is how you follow the Beatitudes. Are you for the poor? Do

in sacred theology from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome. He was ordained a priest June 8, 1950. He was awarded honorary doctorates from

you clothe people if they are naked? Do you visit those in prison? Are you merciful? That's what I would hope would matter, not one's gender, gender identity or sexual orientation.



several universities, including Antigonish, Winnipeg and Victoria. The 16 documents of the Second Vatican Council, particularly the Constitution on the Church and the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, defined his life. As he explained in his memoirs, *Chronicles of a Vatican II Bishop*, published in 2012, he saw himself as "a pilgrim of Vatican II." He gave four interventions to the assembled Council, a remarkable achievement for so young a bishop. His talk on the values of conjugal love in marriage was supported by thirty-three Canadian bishops, who appended their signatures to his words. He had prepared for this topic by calling a meeting of married people on Vancouver Island. He also argued for a fuller role of women in the Church, telling his fellow bishops gathered from around the world, "We find it necessary that this Council open doors for a deeper collaboration of women in the Church's apostolic mission." From 1986 to 1991, Bishop De Roo initiated throughout Vancouver Island a diocesan "synod," which was an assembly of the faithful to discuss the implementation of the Gospel values of Vatican II into the lives of the "People of God." He also had a special dedication to the well-being of the Church in Central America. In his "retirement," which lasted 22 years after stepping down as Bishop of Victoria at age 75, he and his colleague Pearl Gervais collaborated on team teaching, giving seminars and workshops throughout North America, Europe, Taiwan and mainland China on Scripture, spirituality, justice, peace, the role of women in the Church and the other subjects of Vatican II. Bishop De Roo is survived by his sisters, Clara Major of Killarney, Man., Alma Verdonck (Marcel) of Winnipeg, and Madeline Martinez of Bakersfield, Calif.

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Remi Joseph De Roo 1924 - 2022 Social Justice Bishop Par Excellence



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Bishop De Roo leads a Eucharistic Liturgy at Glenairley, East Sooke at the 1987 annual social justice retreat for the diocese. This retreat featured Redemptorist Father Paul Hansen as animator.