



# Catholic Herald

the voice of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Peterborough



## Synod 2021 2023

### For a synodal Church

communion | participation | mission

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## EDITORIAL

Fr. Ray Rick

# Come, Holy Spirit

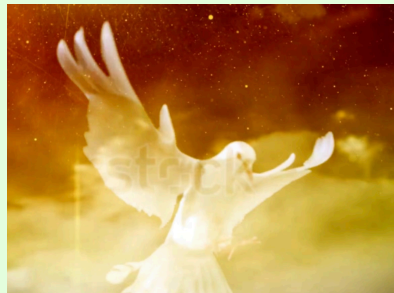
**A**mbitious. Bold. Courageous. Just three of the words I'd use to describe Pope Francis with respect to his calling of a world-wide synod involving all the Church's members.

A synod (pronounced SIN-ud) is nothing new. The word itself signifies meeting or being together, and a way or journey. It has often been used interchangeably with "council". The Council of Trent understood a synod as being a diocesan assembly and directed that each diocese should have one every year. Then the 1917 Code of Canon Law directed dioceses to conduct a synod every ten years. Neither of those expectations came to pass. Since Vatican II, synods can still be held as diocesan events, but more commonly the term refers to a meeting of bishops and other experts to advise the pope on some matter. The current one is quite unprecedented in its scope.

Synods are a somewhat different experience in the eastern Churches, in the Eastern Catholic and Eastern Orthodox communities. I can tell you very little about this; it's a whole different cultural mentality, giving rise to a different way of communicating, sharing ideas and coming to mutual agreements. If I'm not mistaken, synods in the east are not so much isolated events with a clear start and finish, but more like an on-going way of governing the community. One thing I can say with certainty is that I need to learn something more about this and, in all probability, the Latin Church as a whole could also learn something from the east — not to become just like them, but to have a broader and richer experience of Christian life.

Pope Francis is making a big act of faith in summoning the whole Church to reflect on its identity, its practices and outreach. He surely knows that not all the ideas arising will be actionable and that some participant will be disappointed in the outcomes. But, at the same time, he

knows that there is value in giving everyone a chance to speak up. Further, he is putting a lot of confidence in the presence of the Holy Spirit to make sense of the things that are said, to guide those who share their insights and dreams, and to guide also those who must synthesize and organize the input. He obviously must be very confident that the Spirit of God, which we received first at Baptism and again at Confirmation, will once more bring order out of chaos, as at the time of creation.



In the end, it seems likely that some Catholics will be disappointed that this exercise doesn't move us far enough in their preferred direction (whatever that might be) and others will be fearful that we're moving too far and too fast. It has often (if not always) been so. Yet the pope is courageous enough to invite all the faithful to speak, trusting that the will of God may be heard through any clamour.

Maybe the same Holy Spirit will help all of us to be patient. While the diocesan phase of the synod is ending, our local input will be gathered and organized over the next few months and forwarded to the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops; there our thoughts will meet those from other dioceses across this country. Eventually the Canadian bishops will forward all these reflections to Rome. The whole process is going to take several years.

These are exciting days. Let us often call upon the Holy Spirit to bring good fruit from these long and complex labours. ✠

Fr. Raymond Rick is Pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Lakefield and Editor of the Herald.

**Vol. 18, No. 3 — Christmas 2021**

## NEXT ISSUE

— Easter 2022 —

will be distributed to the parishes by mid-April 2022  
Submissions must be received at the e-mail address below by March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

Stories and photos of events from every parish and organization in the diocese are welcome. Photos should be sent as attachments, not embedded in a text document, and the bigger the image file the better. Submissions as PDFs often do not reproduce well.  
No contributor to the Catholic Herald is remunerated in any way.



# Hope Springs Eternal

Bishop Daniel Michm



Advent is most often described as a season of hope, though terms like “waiting,” “longing,” and “expectation” also get bandied about. As a Church we adopt the mindset of the ancient Israelites who longed for a Messiah, someone to deliver them from oppression and tribulation. That spirit of hope fills our hearts and grows throughout the season the closer we get to Christmas and the celebration of the Lord’s Nativity, much as the Advent wreath grows brighter with each passing week.

The lengthy fight against the pandemic may have bruised and battered hope a little along the way. It seems every time our hopes are raised, something brings us crashing back to reality. Nonetheless, we are making progress in this struggle even if it is not as fast as anyone would like.

Realizing that many of us may feel the need for a boost coming into this second Covid Christmas, I am happy to reflect on a few signs of hope that I have seen recently: indications that God is at work and that the Church, despite a long list of challenges, should never abandon hope.

The worldwide Synod consultation in which the Church is engaged is getting good take-up here in the Diocese of Peterborough. A thousand people responded to our online survey with many sincere and thoughtful comments, often expressing their hopes. We will open that survey back up at Christmas time with a view to engaging even more people in the conversation. In the meantime, discussions at the parish level are yielding some good results. We look forward to receiving those reports in the New year, which will help us formulate our Synod Report and will fuel our own pastoral planning discussions here in the Diocese.



I was delighted that the virtual Advent Mission with Sr. Helena Burns (sponsored by Sacred Heart College and the Diocese of Peterborough) got such a great response. Father Tom Lynch tells me that ten parishes in our Diocese and sixteen other parishes across North America are presenting the Mission. Additionally, dozens of groups signed up to view the Mission virtually at home. Many other parishes have made inquiries and since the theme “Ritual to Relationship,” is not focused on Advent, there may still be more who decide to present it. Sr. Helena shares many fine spiritual reflections, and I am delighted that our Diocese and Sacred Heart College are the sponsors of a continent-wide venture!

A group of the faithful came together recently for an in-service on starting “Catholic Moms’ Groups” in our parishes. We learned about great resources available through the Archdiocese of Toronto (who launched this program several years ago) that would enable any parish to take this on readily. As of now, four or five of our parishes are planning to take the plunge, a pastoral outreach that should greatly benefit the faith of our Catholic families. Others who may be interested should contact Robyn Henighan at our Diocesan Pastoral Center.

Those are but a few of the things that give me cause for hope these days, reassuring me that the favours of the Lord are always abundant, even in challenging times. I pray that you and your family are seeing signs of hope in your life, and that the birth of Christ may always give you cause for joy and thanksgiving. ✠



## Catholic Moms Group

by Karen Keays

Twelve weeks into Kindergarten I sat in the principal's office at my son's Catholic Elementary School, scribbling notes and sharing what I had learned in the three months since we arrived in our new community. Our meeting was confirmed after some persistence on my part. My first attempt to set it up had come with a polite but firm, "we're good on programs for this year," from the school secretary, a message she passed along after bringing my request to the principal. In a massively sleep-deprived mom moment of confusion and emphatic desperation I responded, "Well, that's a silly thing for him to say... he doesn't know what I'm offering."

I continued on, explaining that I wasn't trying to create any more work for the already busy school staff and principal but wanted to talk about the relationship between school, parish, and family. Now the day had arrived, the principal and the two religion teachers who joined him at the long meeting room style table, were waiting to hear what I had to say.

What's a Catholic Community?

A Catholic community often exists as a triad of Catholic school, parish, and family. When school, parish, and family work together, the resulting community is a vibrant shining example and witness of God's love in our world. Strong Catholic community strengthens and forms us as disciples and propels us forward in our mission to spread the Good News to those we meet each day. The bond of community allows God's love and goodness to flow between unified entities, mirroring the Trinity as God is brought to the forefront of our daily lives and allowed to work in His fullest. Building community is worth our time and energy but getting started can be difficult. Sometimes, it's hard to know where to begin.

Where to Start?

If you're looking for a starting point for building a stronger community start with moms, you and the other moms you know. We often look around at our communities and think, "Wouldn't it be great if there was something for moms, or families, or whoever..." We might even follow up by conversing with a friend about what we feel is lacking. I've been part of many of these conversations and I'd bet you have been, too. In the end, they usually resolve with friends agreeing with an affirmative, "Yes, *somebody* should do *something* about that. *Somebody* should address that need."

The implication in the *somebody should do something* statement, I think, is that someone with authority should do something, as if we need permission or tools or resources from someone else to organize ourselves and our communities. All of those things are helpful, and maybe you'll be blessed with permission from your priest to run a mothers group at the parish, or supported with advertising resources in the form of

photocopying or inclusion in parent mail-outs from the school, but to start we can recognize the unique role we have as moms.

Moms form the grassroots networks of our faith communities. Just go to [www.CatholicMomsGroup.com](http://www.CatholicMomsGroup.com) and you will see plenty of evidence of that. Catholic Moms Groups are popping up all over the place. I sometimes picture moms as the ones running around with watering cans, nurturing the little seeds of faith to grow. We're the ones with eyes and ears on the ground. It's more than an important role. It's our vocation. If you feel the need for somebody to do something to build up your community, know this: You. Are. Somebody.

You might be just the somebody to kick-start a vibrant community or to show up in the right time and place with your watering can, ready to nurture what's already there to its fullest potential. As moms, we can work together with the leaders of the other entities of our communities. Not sure what I'm talking about? Here's how it all fits together:

The Toronto Catholic District School Board references the important role of each entity within a Catholic community in their *Prayer for Harmonizing Our Faith Through Family, Parish, and School*. It begins,

*"Almighty and Ever-loving God,  
We give you thanks  
for the blessings of our Families,  
where the seed of faith is planted;  
for the Body of Christ, the Church,  
where faith is celebrated;  
and for our Schools, where faith is nurtured."*

This prayer summarizes so well the role and importance of each entity of the community. If you're talking with school administrators or your parish priest or member of his pastoral team it's a great launching point for a conversation about how moms are involved with and support families, parishes, and schools. With more support, we'll pour even more back into our communities. Only God knows what that "more" could look like!

### Families

Moms are intimately involved in the lives of our children. Often prayers for our children begin long before their birth. Mothers plant seeds of faith through the care of their families. As parents, moms provide their children with the foundational loving relationship so essential to understanding the even greater love of God.

Moms need a deep, loving relationship with God. When that relationship is nurtured, the love extends to our families, parishes, schools, and wider communities. Mothers groups support the spiritual lives of moms by giving us a place to learn and grow in faith and fellowship with one another.

*continued*



### Parishes

In our parishes, moms prepare themselves and their children for active participation in the celebration of our faith. Moms are so often the ones whispering “Look! Jesus is HERE!” to squirmy toddlers during consecration, and encouraging older children to enter into the liturgy and become aware of the beauty of the Mass and the Sacraments. Many moms take the opportunity to revisit aspects of the faith they forgot or didn’t understand in earlier life as their children are discovering the truths of our faith for the first time. In their words and actions, moms pass along the knowledge that we have a faith worth celebrating.

Moms need places to learn more about our faith. We need other people to talk with and learn from. We need resources, or even just a place to find out about resources, about our faith and inspiration on how to practice it well. More than all of that, we need places that set us up for a deeper encounter with Christ. Moms open the door for one another to enter into this deeper relationship. Parishes can facilitate foundations that lead to a deeper encounter with Christ through the Church and the Sacraments by offering mothers groups.

### Schools

In our schools, moms form the majority of parent councils and classroom volunteers. They are often the ones extending learning from the classroom, nurturing relationships and assisting their children in navigating life through the lens of faith.

Moms need a place to nurture relationships with one another, to laugh, love, and journey together with others who share their joys and struggles. We need to be around people who will challenge us to grow and answer the call to greater holiness. Schools can help us connect with one another and build up a Christ-centred community around the next generation.

### The Final Pitch for Catholic Community

The word *community* has become somewhat of a buzzword in our society. The word often evokes images of children playing together as neighbours stop by to say hello, friends come over to share a meal, and loved-ones happily pitch in with renovation projects. It all looks rather dreamy in a romanticised Hollywood kind of way. It would be wonderful if we could all have that kind of community, and maybe we can have parts of it sometimes.

Catholic community is something different, and far greater. It’s not a want. It’s a need.

Catholic community points us to Christ. It opens the door for us to care for and serve one another. It allows us to use our gifts to build up God’s Kingdom in our time on this earth. It spurs us on to share our love and good works with one another (Heb

**START a Catholic Moms Group at YOUR parish**

To get a **FREE GIFT** from our ministry write to [dorothy@CatholicMomsGroup.com](mailto:dorothy@CatholicMomsGroup.com)

**CatholicMomsGroup.com**

10:24). And we can be certain that when we gather in his name, Christ is right there with us, calling us and strengthening us for a deeper union with Him.

As moms, we know we need community. We need a constant deepening of relationships with each other and with Christ. It’s in our nature to nurture and when it comes to community, we can do just that. So give your priest a phone call, and set up a meeting with your school principal. Community is best built from the ground up, and we’ve got feet on the ground. Right now there is a new online ministry of Catholic Moms Group Leaders - these women are on the frontlines of impacting their communities. Check out <https://members.catholicmomsgroup.com/> for a short video that is definitely inspiring for those interested in strengthening the link between moms, the school and the Catholic Church.

*Karen Keays returned to the Church in early adulthood after more than a decade of wrestling with God. She is a stay-at-home mother of three.*



## CATHOLIC CURIOSITIES

Stephen  
Retallick

# Pope Pius VII and a Papier-mâché Tiara

For centuries, beginning with Pope St. Nicholas I in 858, papal coronations were part of the formal ceremonies held for popes after their election to the papacy. Following a solemn Pontifical Mass on the first Sunday or holy day after a pope was elected, the central point of the coronation ceremony occurred when the cardinal protodeacon — the senior cardinal deacon — approached the pope, removed his mitre and placed the papal tiara on his head, saying, in Latin:

*"Accipe tiaram tribus coronis ornatum, et scias te esse patrem principum et regum, rectorem orbis in terra vicarium Salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi, cui est honor et gloria in saecula saeculorum."*

[Receive the tiara adorned with three crowns, and know that you are the father of princes and kings, the ruler of the world, the vicar of our Saviour Jesus Christ on earth, to whom be all honour and glory, world without end.]

As the new pope assumes the office and authority of supreme pontiff immediately upon his assent to the election, the crowning is merely symbolic, and no further power or privilege is conferred on him with this action.

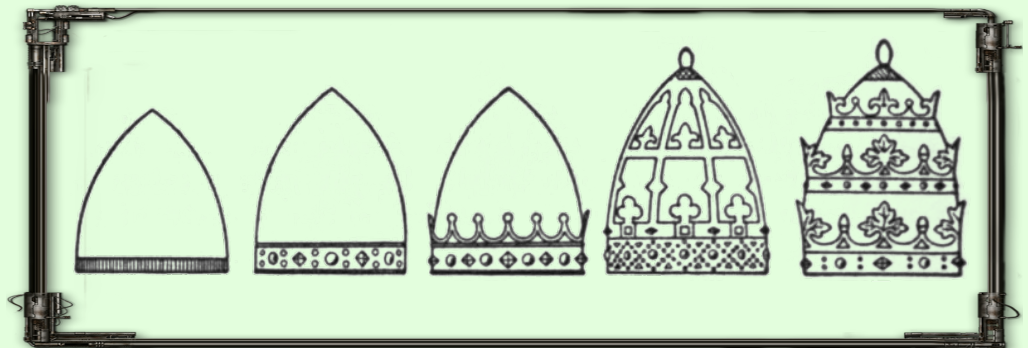
The last papal coronation was that of Pope St. Paul VI in 1963. His immediate successor, Pope John Paul I, and all subsequent popes, have chosen to forgo the coronation ceremony in favour of a papal inauguration. Although a coronation hasn't taken place for almost 60 years, future popes may opt for one if they so choose.

One of the most prominent papal heraldic symbols, the papal tiara — featured on the Vatican City flag, the coat of arms of the Holy See and, prior to Pope Benedict XVI's pontificate, on papal insignia — represents the pope's authority over the Church. Redesigned many times over the centuries, most of the twenty-two

tiaras still in existence contain gold and silver elements, are "beehive" in shape, consist of three tiered crowns adorned with precious stones, and, like a bishop's mitre, have two lappets (decorative flaps) hanging from the back. The majority of the tiaras are also surmounted by a cross set above a globe, which represents the universal sovereignty of Christ.

According to the Vatican, the first of the three crowns was added in 1130 to symbolize sovereignty over the Papal States. In 1301, Boniface VIII, at that time in conflict with Philip VI of France, added a second crown to indicate that his spiritual authority was superior to any civil power. The third crown was added by Benedict XII in 1342 to symbolize the superiority of papal religious authority over that of non-religious monarchs.

The receiving of a tiara as a gift has been a custom for hundreds of years. Since Pope St. Paul VI received his tiara from the people of Milan in 1963, Pope St. John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have received tiaras of their own, though they are



not typically worn.

In 1796, having condemned the French Revolution and the suppression of the Church in France, Pope Pius VI was captured by French troops in Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Rome and taken back to France, where he died a prisoner in 1799.

After six months of *sede vacante*, Cardinal Barnaba Chiaramonti was elected pope on March 14, 1800, in a conclave held in exile at the San Giorgio Benedictine Monastery in Venice. In honour of his predecessor, he took the name Pius VII. Keeping with the traditions of the Church, a coronation was planned for the new pope. However, since many of the papal tiaras had been destroyed in the sacking of Rome by Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, in 1527, and others seized during the French invasion in 1796, there wasn't a tiara the pope could be crowned with. Finally, after much debate, it was decided that a tiara would be made of papier-mâché. Gold and silver fabrics were stretched over the composite material, and it was adorned with jewels donated by women of the aristocracy. With Rome still occupied by the French Revolutionary Army, the coronation was held on March 21st at San Giorgio Maggiore, a church adjacent to the monastery.

Intended to be a temporary solution, the lightweight design of the papier-mâché tiara made it comfortable to wear for long periods of time. It was worn for decades by Pope Pius VII and his successors, finally being withdrawn from use in 1845, when a new tiara



was manufactured for Pope Gregory XVI.

After presiding at Napoleon's coronation as Emperor of the French in December 1804, Pius VII was given a tiara made with some of the jewels and decorations taken from the tiaras the French army had seized eight years prior. As a subtle insult to the pope, the tiara was made intentionally too small and heavy to be worn. (Tiaras traditionally weighed between two and five pounds; however, Napoleon's gift weighed 18 pounds.)

During the pontificate of Pope Benedict XV (r. 1914-1922), to support the victims of World War I, many of the jewels adorning the tiara from Napoleon were removed and sold, and glass replicas were added in their place.

Watch Pope Ven. Pius XII being crowned on the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica (1939): <https://youtu.be/3mOQQubN3GA>

Watch Pope St. John XXIII celebrating the solemn Pontifical Mass in St. Peter's Basilica and being crowned on the balcony (1958): <https://youtu.be/PORD1CRZqng>

Watch Pope St. Paul VI being crowned in St. Peter's Square (1963) (Note the modern "bullet-shaped" tiara): <https://youtu.be/6kGhqia-6mQ> ✠

*Stephen and his family live in Peterborough.*

## Lakefield's second Reverse Santa Claus Parade

For a second year, COVID forced the floats to sit still and the viewers to drive by. It was a "reverse parade".

St. Paul the Apostle Parish, together with pastors and people of other Christian communities in the village, gathered around

our float to make sure that Christ isn't forgotten in all the hype of the season.

Vehicles drove by in a procession that lasted nearly two hours on November 28<sup>th</sup>.





## THE CHOIR LOFT

**Kathleen  
Moquin**

# Wait Gains: An Advent of the Heart

Playing a waiting game. Take a wait-and-see attitude. Waiting in the wings. Hurry up and wait. Circumstances of the global pandemic, including supply chain concerns, challenged the collective patience of many Canadian households preparing for Christmas this year. Generations of young children are already familiar with the seemingly excruciating wait until wish list treasures are liberated from brightly wrapped packages and permission is given to savour Yuletide baked treats and confections. From childhood memories, I confess to having spied unwrapped items in not-so-secret hiding places and clandestinely sampled recently frozen, delicious shortbread. Still, waiting can be difficult.

Catholics preparing for Christmas are blessed to participate in the rich traditions, liturgical and non-liturgical, of the Advent season, which “makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Saviour’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 524). To the Advent calendar and the Advent wreath, I typically add directed seasonal reading and reflections. This year, I read Alfred Delp’s *Advent of the Heart: Seasonal Sermons and Prison Writings 1941-1944* (Ignatius Press, 2006). A German Jesuit priest serving in Munich, Alfred Delp was arrested in July 1944 for suspicion of conspiring against the Nazi government in the resistance movement. He was imprisoned and tortured in Berlin before his execution in February 1945; he was 38 years old. Father Delp was recognized as a talented preacher, and Advent was one of his favourite subjects. Translated from the German and formatted for spiritual reading, *Advent of the Heart* presents relevant liturgical readings and prayers followed by two sermons, preached between 1941 and 1943, and one

meditation, smuggled from Tegel prison in 1944, for each week of the Advent season. The appendices include a chronology of historical events and Father Delp’s life; an Advent play written and performed at an Austrian school in 1933; and a 1935 Advent sermon. This book would be suitable for a book club or parish religious education activity.

From his prison cell, Father Delp wrote that “all of life is Advent” and, in his 1942 meditation for Advent Holy Hour, asserted that “Advent means a heart that is awake and ready . . . aware of the free coming of the Lord God” (p. 81). The strongest of the sermons presented in this book are Father Delp’s 1941 Advent sermons which present four ways that Advent brings us to an encounter with God: by shaking us awake; by calling us to integrity and authenticity; by compelling us to confess and proclaim our faith; and by encouraging us to respond to God with “reverent awe.” The Gospel of the First Sunday of Advent 1941, from Luke 21, emphasized the message of the last days of the world: “The

people will languish in fearful expectation as they await the things that will come over the entire world; for the powers of Heaven will be shaken . . . look up, and lift your head, because your redemption is near” (p. 35). Please note that this Gospel was also proclaimed on the First Sunday of Advent 2021, so Father Delp may be speaking to us when he observes that “these days life lacks people who can come through the final shakings . . . those who are watching for the Lord will not be affected, in the eternal sense, even if they are hunted off the face of the earth” (p. 43).

In the Second and Third Sundays of Advent, Father Delp explores the figure of John the Baptist, whose confession of faith in the wilderness is worthy of imitation:

“That should be our confession . . . testifying for itself and for the Lord God, the Christ, who is our mystery, but who is also our strength and our certainty, and whose Advent alone is the one and only salvation of the world” (p. 96).

In the preconciliar liturgy for the Fourth Sunday of Advent, John the Baptist reappears to announce the filling of valleys and leveling of mountains, so that the salvation of God may be known. Father Delp’s meditation on his final Advent Sunday, in 1944, endures as a powerful witness of his own Advent of the heart: “There is no reason to lose heart or give up and be depressed . . . His nearness is as intimate as our longing is genuine. His mercy is as great as our call to Him is earnest. His liberation is as near and effective as our faith in Him and in His coming is unshaken and unshakable. That’s the truth!” (p. 148). What, and who, are you waiting for? ✕

*Dr. Kathleen Moquin lives with her family in Parry Sound.*





# Building a Culture of Vocations

by Fr. John Perdue



## Vocations Office Update

**M**erry Christmas from the Vocations Office of the Diocese of Peterborough. May your hearts and homes be filled with the joy of our infant Saviour, who did not hesitate to assume our human nature in order to be with us in all of the ups and downs of life.

Friends, many things have been happening in the Vocations Office and I am happy to provide some updates. Recently, Bishop Miehm announced that I will be going to Rome next year in order to pursue further studies. The plan is for me to join the teaching and formation faculty at St. Augustine's Seminary in Toronto. First, I will be sent to obtain a License in Biblical Theology from the Gregorianum in Rome, and then a doctorate in Patristics from the Augustinianum. I was surprised by this request, and took it to prayer and discernment with the help of my spiritual director. It was interesting to find myself discerning again, as Vocation Director. It is always good to practice what we preach! I believe this is what the Lord wants of me, and I appreciate any prayers you can spare!

I do not leave until June. When I go, Fr. Stephen DeCarlo will assume the responsibilities of Vocations Director. He will continue in his role as Administrator of Immaculate Conception parish in Peterborough. This means that our residential discernment program, the Saint John Paul II House of Discernment, will no longer operate. I am very grateful for all of your prayers and support of JPII House and I am grateful to all the young men who lived at JPII House during my time as Director. Special thanks are due to Fr. Peter Wayow and to Fr. Damian Smullen, who lived with me and added support and encouragement to the young men in discernment. Thanks also to the pastors who mentored young men on their weekend parish assignments and to the priests who served as spiritual directors to the men. The idea for a House of Discernment began with Monsignor Norbert Glasmacher and I was actually

among the first young men to participate in the program, when it operated out of the Sacred Heart rectory. I believe this was an excellent initiative to try in our Diocese, and I pray we continue to see creative ideas like this!

By way of update on our seminarians, Deacon Peter Lukow is now able to assist with liturgies at St. Augustine's Seminary and we are looking forward to his priestly ordination in May. Peter Bissonnette was recently installed as an acolyte and he will head out on his internship year after the winter term. Christian Parker and Steven Moore are doing very well in their first year of philosophy studies. Thank you for your prayers for our seminarians and discerners. If you know any young men who are considering the priesthood, have them contact myself or Fr. Stephen DeCarlo.

Finally, please consider joining an important movement of prayer for vocations in our Diocese, the St. Joseph Vocation Society. You can sign up at [www.ptbovocations.ca](http://www.ptbovocations.ca). God bless! ☩



At Peter Bissonnette's installation as acolyte (St. Augustine's Seminary).  
L-R Christian Parker, Fr. Stephen DeCarlo, Deacon Peter Lukow,  
Peter Bissonnette, Fr. John Perdue, Steven Moore





## Vocation as a Means of Love

Fr. Stephen Decarlo

In his March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021 message on the World Day of Vocations<sup>1</sup>, Pope Francis reminded the Church that to embark on any vocation means to live a life of fruitfulness and vitality. Using St. Joseph as an example, the Holy Father wrote that God is a father who looks into the hearts of the children entrusted to Him:

God looks on the heart (cf. 1 Sam 16:7), and in Saint Joseph he recognized the heart of a father, able to give and generate life in the midst of daily routines. Vocations have this same goal: to beget and renew lives every day. The Lord desires to shape the hearts of fathers and mothers: hearts that are open, capable of great initiatives, generous in self-giving, compassionate in comforting anxieties and steadfast in strengthening hopes. The priesthood and the consecrated life

couples? What about priests and religious sisters and brothers who take public promises and vows of chastity and celibacy? What about single people for whom neither marriage nor priesthood/religious life is an option? As Pope Francis said, those who do not have their own children can still live a full, fulfilling life of love and happiness. They do so by being faithful to their mission, by being self-giving and generous, and by serving with selflessness the people entrusted to them. Pope Francis shows that St. Joseph is a model of joy in service for one's vocation:

This fidelity is the secret of joy. A hymn in the liturgy speaks of the “transparent joy” present in the home of Nazareth. It the joy of simplicity, the joy experienced daily by those who care for what truly matters: faithful closeness to God and to our neighbour. How good it would be if the same atmosphere, simple and radiant, sober and hopeful, were to pervade our seminaries, religious houses and parishes! I pray that you will experience this same joy, dear brothers and sisters who have generously made God the dream of your lives, serving him in your brothers and sisters through a fidelity that is a powerful testimony in an age of ephemeral choices and emotions that bring no lasting joy. May Saint Joseph, protector of vocations, accompany you with his fatherly heart!

By their fidelity, priests, religious, and singles can live a life of joy and radiate this joy to others, drawing people to Christ. As I reflect on the Holy Father's words, I cannot help but think about the many seminarians at St. Augustine's Seminary who are preparing for the priesthood in an attitude of joy. I also think of the many religious sisters and brothers, and priests, who have sacrificed family life and a career in order to serve God and the Church. I have met many priests who have been priests for 30, 40, 50, and, in one case, 65 years! And they are all so happy! Yes, they have experienced challenges and struggles, but also so many joys. Conventional wisdom would hold that such people are unhappy and unfulfilled. My experience is the exact opposite! The key to their happiness is in joy and total self giving, the same self giving that is also absolutely critical to a happy marriage. That is how anyone can be happy in a vocation, how anyone can grow in love and charity. Selfishness is deadly to any vocation; selflessness is, by contrast, what makes couples and even celibate people happy, full of love, and willing to sacrifice in order to receive the fullness of love that comes by following Christ. ✠

greatly need these qualities nowadays, in times marked by fragility but also by the sufferings due to the pandemic, which has spawned uncertainties and fears about the future and the very meaning of life. Saint Joseph comes to meet us in his gentle way, as one of “the saints next door”. At the same time, his strong witness can guide us on the journey.

God's love and care for the human race is put into practice by the men and women who embark on their vocations in the Church. In the everyday circumstances of life, God's love is being made present.

This is easy to see in terms of the vocation to marriage, where husband and wife beget (or adopt) children and live as a family in a community of love. But what about childless



Ordination of Deacon Peter Luckow, seen here with Bishop Miehm and Fr. Perdue. October 1, 2021

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/vocations/documents/papa-francesco\\_20210319\\_58-messaggio-giomata-mondiale-vocazioni.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/vocations/documents/papa-francesco_20210319_58-messaggio-giomata-mondiale-vocazioni.html)





Inspired by our past, we build our future!

*The weekend of November 5-7, Father John Perdue led a pilgrimage of students and leaders to visit Catholic shrines and churches in Montreal. The experience led Father Perdue to reflect on the parallels between our ancestors in faith and our present day efforts to build the kingdom of God.*

Peterborough Campus Ministry's first ever student pilgrimage was a deeply inspiring experience. On the first weekend of November 23 students, 3 CCO Missionaries, 2 Student RCIA coordinators and 2 priests walked together in the footsteps of Saints through the city of Montreal. Exploring the rich history of the city and tracing the Holy Spirit's movements through the centuries drew me into reflections on the foundation we have been laying with Peterborough Campus Ministry. This is forefront in my mind as I prepare to transition out of my role as Director of Campus Ministry and into full-time studies.

Montreal began as an idea and it took the prayer and hard work of far-off supporters, like benefactor Jérôme le Royer de la Dauversière who



remained in France, and front-line missionaries like Paul Chomedey de Maisonneuve and Jeanne Mance who laboured in the mission. Then came the tireless efforts in education of St. Marguerite Bourgeoys and the founding of the hospital Hotel Dieu by St. Marguerite D'Youville. Brother Andre would later capture the hearts and minds of thousands with his holiness, vision, and devotion to St. Joseph.

Peterborough Campus Ministry is laying a foundation for the future of the faith in Canada and beyond. What started with just a few students has now become a vibrant community dedicated to growing in holiness and sharing the Gospel. Our team now includes four missionaries from Catholic Christian Outreach who help us reach the unengaged and a Development Officer who helps us strategically plan for our future. With the acquisition of a house this year, campus ministry will now have a home for years to come.

It has been a blessing for me to be a part of this good work and I am very confident that it is only the beginning. During the first homily preached as Paul Chomedey de Maisonneuve and Jeanne Mance arrived to settle Ville-Marie (later Montreal), Father Vimont referred to Jesus' parable of the mustard seed in Matthew Chapter 13. I would like to apply that image to the good work of Peterborough Campus Ministry. A seed has been planted and I look forward to seeing its fruit. Let us continue to work and pray and sacrifice together toward that end!

Visit [www.ptbocampusministry.ca](http://www.ptbocampusministry.ca) to learn how Peterborough Campus Ministry is building tomorrow's Church by investing in today's youth. ✠





## FROM THE PEW

David Beresford

# Crows

Whenever I hunted, crows would haunt me. I would sneak out into the deer stand, climb the ladder, and after about ten minutes the woods would settle down to its normal routine of birds chirping, the odd squirrel rustling in the leaves below me. These are the sounds that tell a deer that nobody is there, to come out and graze so I can put you into the freezer. Then, the first crow would show up, circling overhead, and give aloud "Caw!" In minutes, half a dozen crows would be circling, all cawing, clearly marking my spot for any game that might want to know where to avoid.

My silence, underneath the impromptu concert, was pointless. Only the stupidest deer would be within a mile of me, and I used to pass the time sitting in that tree with numb fingers and feet, consoling myself by imagining crows going through the torments of the damned by being frozen in Dantean lakes.

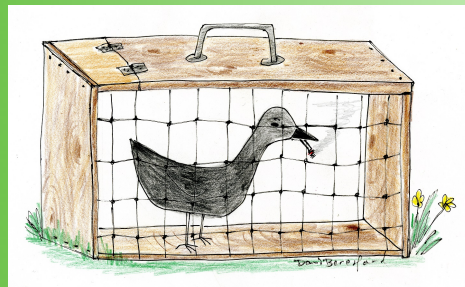
Time is funny when one is hunting. Wearing a watch is a bad idea. After sitting, or standing, or slowly sneaking along for hours, looking at my watch shows that only five minutes have passed. The best way is to simply go into the woods, no watch, and just accept the present as it occurs – the sun will go down when it wants, and the shadows will get longer on their own time.

This year a coyote walked out in front of me, went a little ways ahead, turned around, and lied down for a nap. Not much chance of a deer coming that day, with coyotes sleeping all around me. Another year, while standing beside a tree, a jack rabbit chased by a fox ran past me so closely that I could have tapped them both on the shoulder.

I used to have a donkey that would follow me out to the deer stand. I would

lock it in the barn, then walk north to trick it, turning south when I was out of sight. The donkey would somehow pick the lock and then come walking up to where I was, all keyed up as I was listening for the tell tale steps of a deer, then stand and look up at me. No deer that year.

We raised 30 ducks one year for the freezer, letting them wander around to graze, and swim in the pond. They were safe from foxes and skunks because they would sit in the middle of the pond on some floating logs I anchored for them. To be doubly safe, the pond was in a fenced in area. This was the case until mid August, when the drought caused the pond to dry up into a mud hole. Counting one morning, I noticed my 30 ducks were actually 28, with fox tracks in the mud coming from a hole under the fence. I set a



wire cage trap for that fox in the hole under the fence, and imagining how warm a fox-fur hat was going to be that winter.

Next morning I checked the trap. There was a crow in that trap, and all around on the trees and fence were crows cawing. I was tempted. I do not make a habit of eating crow, although like everyone, I have had to on occasion. But I try hard not to be vindictive in spite of all those frozen wasted hours in the deer stand. I wrapped my hands in an old coat, and opened the lid of the trap to catch the crow, holding its wings together so they would not flap around and get broken, and keeping its talons and beak away from my forearms. The crow gave me an angry look. Then I set it on the grass and opened my hands. It hopped, looked at me, and flew away. The other crows and it cawed and circled above me for about 3 minutes.

Since that time, and it is 15 years now, whenever I go deer hunting, while I still see lots of crows in the field and air, they never circle around where I sit, and never give me away. They act as if nobody is there. I know they are not afraid of me, they sit on the roof of my house nest in the tree in the front yard. Why they do not betray me, I am not sure. I know they are clever, but . . . Curious! ✂

*David Beresford teaches biology at Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Academy in Barry's Bay, and lives with his wife Theresa and their seven children on a farm near Lakefield Ontario.*



## THE “GOOD NEWS” FROM ST. MARY’S PARISH

# Campbellford

The Holy Spirit continues to be alive and active in The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Campbellford!!!! Where to start??

We were graced to have an Advent 40 Hours delivered by Fr. Jim Sercely December 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>. Fr. Jim spoke on the following three aspects of Eucharist: we celebrate, we are nourished, and we learn. We give, praise, glory, and honour to God for the blessings received, for those who kept vigil with the Blessed Sacrament when exposed, for those who attended, especially from neighbouring parishes, and for the Holy Spirit speaking loudly, proudly, and unabashedly through Fr. Jim. Plans are underway for a *Lenten Retreat*.

In the Spirit of John the Baptist, 100 hearty souls “Gathered Around the River” at Booster Park in Marmora, on Sunday, December 12<sup>th</sup>. Sponsored by the Knights of Columbus of The Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Marmora, and our Parish **eight brave souls** participated in our **First Annual Polar Plunge Fundraiser!** When the dust was settled, toes thawed and teeth ceased chattering, roughly \$750 was raised for Marmora and \$2,500 for Campbellford! There was such a festive atmosphere that 6 have said they would plunge next year, and the members of the fire department said they can’t wait to return. Special thanks to the organizers, those who attended and of course our **8 local polar bears:** Amy & Lee Ferrill, Sarah & Ben Fields, Stephanie Gevaert, Chris Grant, Al Pighin and Jimmy Woof. Please visit our website to watch a bone chilling video!

- Step 1 - Enter <https://www.saintmaryschurch.info>
- Step 2 - Click on “Click here for our Facebook Page”
- Step 3 - Click on Home
- Step 4 - Click on the video
- Step 5 - Enjoy

Mary’s Closet continues to grow in leaps and bounds. I continue to draw numerous parallels between it and my beehives. For those who unfamiliar with honeybees, a healthy hive at full strength has exactly 1 queen, roughly 200 drones and, depending on who you read, between 50,000 – 90,000 workers. The entire focus is on the good of the hive and serving the queen. Mary’s Closet has a plethora of volunteers performing so many tasks; all for the good of the closet which is ultimately for the service of the Lord. After 5 months, \$14,607 has been realized from Mary’s Closet directly, \$1,767 with items too large that were sold on marketplace for a grand total of \$16,374. Remember the reference to the parable of the mustard seed in the last edition of the Herald?

Drop by and see a miracle in progress!



# Refugee Sponsorship

**A**s I reflect on the events of the past year I realize that, despite the many restrictions and hardships created because of the Covid-19 virus, our Society of St. Vincent de Paul Conference at St. Alphonsus of Liguori Church in Peterborough had a successful year sponsoring a Syrian refugee. I am happy to announce that our newcomer is doing very well!

I would like to share with you the story of Anas Khito. To do so, I have to go back to 2016 when our parish sponsored the Kheito family. Its members included the father Jamil, his wife Salha, his 2 adult sons Tarek and Ousama, his daughter-in-law Inas and her 2 young boys Jamil and Wassim. Our parish fundraised to sponsor the family of 7 for one year. A committee was formed to prepare for the arrival of the family and to help the members settle into their new community. I was a member of the committee which was called "Refuge for Refugees". My job was to collect household items to furnish an apartment for the family but we all ended up doing much more than our assigned task.

Little did I know how much I would become emotionally attached to the members of this Syrian family. When the sponsorship year was over and the family members were capable of supporting themselves, most of the volunteers in the "Refuge for Refugees" group stepped away for a much needed break. I, on the other hand, became even closer to the family. The 2 young boys are like grandchildren to my husband and I.

Their mother Inas lost her husband in the war in Syria. She once told me that she came to Canada so she and her boys could have a better life. Within the first 5 years of her arrival in a new country, she mastered the English language, graduated from college, found employment, got her driver's licence and became a Canadian citizen all while being a single mother.

In Syria she left behind her parents and her 2 brothers and their families. Worrying over their safety and wellbeing is a constant stress for her. I helped Inas whenever I could but I felt she needed more happiness in her life. This is where Anas comes into the picture. In the Fall of 2018 I proposed to our SSVP conference to sponsor Inas' younger brother who had been living in Turkey. Our members agreed and thus began the process of reuniting the 2 siblings who hadn't seen each other in over 5 years.

We were guided by members of SAH (Sponsorship Agreement Holders) of The Diocese of Peterborough and the late Sister Ruth Hennesey, founder of Casa Maria, a non-profit organization in Peterborough that supports and offers safe temporary shelter to refugees regardless of race, social status, religion or cultural tradition. Anas' name was added to SAH's list of refugees permitted to come to Peterborough provided we

could raise the necessary funds to sponsor him for one year.

As a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Particular Council, I was able to secure funds from the SSVP Peterborough conferences and the Regional SSVP. The rest of the donations came from individuals.

Next came the paper work. It was critical to fill out the immigration papers correctly otherwise it could delay his entry into Canada or worse, he would not be permitted to come at all. With the help of the Syrian family and people who had been through this process before, we managed to get everything done on time in the Spring of 2019.

In the meantime back in Turkey, Anas, who was excited about being reunited with his sister and nephews, was feeling nervous about being deported back to Syria. At that time, the president of Turkey was randomly stopping Syrians on the streets and sending them back to their home country. Although Anas had entered Turkey legally and had documents to prove it, there was no guarantee that he would not be sent back.

Anas had fled Syria when he was in his 2nd year at Damascus University. The Syrian government was bombing several locales, including the university, in search of people who opposed its president. Anas was not part of the protests but he knew his life was in danger if he stayed in Damascus. With the



help of an uncle, Anas made his way to Istanbul, Turkey. He got a job working in a factory initially but he never felt safe. The Syrian workers were threatened daily by the Turkish workers. He often feared for his life.

Luckily, Anas found another job working in a sport apparel store. He quickly learned to speak Turkish. His employer hired him because many of the store customers were from Arab countries where the spoken language was Arabic.

Knowing he would have to speak English if he came to



# A Rewarding Experience

Canada, Anas began learning the language on the Internet. He was determined to know some basic English if he was granted entry into Canada. With the help of his sister, we were able to communicate through FaceTime prior to his arrival.

After the paperwork was completed and the information verified, we were notified in the Fall of 2019 that Anas was scheduled for a physical exam to make sure he was healthy. This was followed by a police check and an interview. In the Spring of 2020 Anas was informed that he was accepted to come to Canada. He was to arrive at Pearson airport in Toronto in March. Then Covid-19 hit and all flights into Canada were cancelled.



His flight was postponed. Luckily he managed to keep his apartment and job in Turkey.

In Peterborough, we had to give up the apartment we had found for him and all of the household furnishings we had amassed were put into storage. In the meantime, I signed Anas up for affordable housing with the Peterborough Housing Corporation (social housing provider) despite not knowing his arrival date. Shortly after, I was notified that he was eligible for a one bedroom apartment. It was under construction at the time and wouldn't be ready until Oct. 1st. We prayed that he would arrive before that time. Our prayers were answered! Anas flew into Pearson at the end of September 2020, just before the second wave of Covid-19. His sister was not there to greet him as it was

too risky due to the pandemic. He was transported to an airbnb where he quarantined for 14 days. On Oct. 1st our committee members set up his apartment and filled his fridge and pantry with food. On Oct. 2nd he moved into his new apartment where he was finally able to reunite with his sister and 2 nephews.

The pandemic did not allow us to spend the time we would have liked showing him around the city since most areas were closed. He took advantage of his free time to explore the parks and trails on a bike that was donated by a committee member. Anas also began his ESL (English As A Second Language) classes a few weeks after his arrival and he met with a counsellor, at the New Canadian Centre, who helped him settle into his new surroundings. Months later, he got his G1 and took driving classes in 2021 which were paid for by an anonymous donor. His driving test is in February 2022.

I am also happy to announce that Anas got a job working in a bakery. His employer has been so pleased with Anas' work ethic that he gave him the key to the bakery. Anas does the baking, ordering and manages the store. His English is good enough to deal with the patrons.

Anas has been an excellent role model for his 2 nephews and a big help to his sister who lives in the same apartment building. Wassim who is 6 and Jamil who is 9 love spending time with their uncle! The 2 boys are fluent in English and are in French Immersion classes at school. When they are with their uncle, they get to speak Arabic.

I would highly recommend sponsoring a refugee! There are numerous websites with information on private sponsorship such as the "Refugee Sponsorship Training Program" ([RSTP.ca](https://www.rstp.ca)) and the Canadian government website "Sponsor a refugee" - [Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca).

As more people are displaced because of war, famine, environmental disasters, etc., the need for safe havens will grow. As Pope Francis once said, "... I ask ... the entire international community above all to confront the reality of those who have been displaced by force, with effective projects and new approaches in order to protect their dignity, to improve the quality of their life ..." Living up to those words, His Highness Pope Francis welcomed 33 refugees, the Vatican sponsored, in 2016. Pope Francis' message for the 107th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2021 was, "Towards An Ever Wider We". He goes on to say, "Today's migration movements offer an opportunity for us to overcome our fears and let ourselves be enriched by the diversity of each person's gifts." Let us all heed his advice and invite refugees and migrants into our communities. We will be ... "building together a future of justice and peace, and ensuring that no one is left behind."

Lynn-Marie Gallant-Whipp  
St. Alphonsus of Liguori SSVP Conference  
Peterborough Ontario





## SAINT PROFILE

**Fr. Joseph  
Devereaux**

When we think of strict religious orders, the Carthusians, who were formed by St. Bruno of Cologne in 1084 come to mind. It is said that the Carthusians have never needed reform, due to the austerity of their lives. However, in the history of monasticism, Saint Romuald and the Camaldolese appear as a bridge between the Desert Fathers' eremitic tradition and the Benedictine monastic way of life. Similarly, but for another article, St. Augustine predates St. Benedict as a monastic founder in the Western Church.

Nonetheless, the Camaldolese are the elder of the two ancient eremitical orders of the Western Church. St. Romuald founded the Hermitage of Camaldoli at a place by that name near the centre of a wooded mountain chain in Tuscany, Italy in 1023. Sixty years later, Saint Bruno founded his monastery in the French Alps.

From the beginning of the church, the contemplative life of Mary has been present beside the active life of Martha. There have always been those who have responded to Jesus' call to greater perfection through a life of poverty, chastity, and obedience. The monk is consecrated like Nazarites in the Old Testament. The word "monk" derives from the Latin *monachus* "monk," originally meaning "religious hermit," and from the Ecclesiastical Greek *monakhos* meaning "solitary." So, the monk is one who lives alone.

Romuald lived in a time of great worldliness in the Church, even among Popes. During his youth, Romuald too "felt drawn to the carnal sins popular in his day." Yet, he was also drawn to solitude and was sincere in trying to amend his ways. His monastic life began when his father killed a distant relative in a duel over a land dispute. Romuald fled to the monastery of St. Apollinaris in Classe to do forty days' penance for his father's sin. There he asked to receive the

monastic habit. During his three years at the monastery, he "perceived that some of the monks were living in laxity, walking along the broad way, while he was not allowed to take the narrow as his heart was urging him." The other monks took offence at his attempts to draw their attention to the Rule and plotted to kill him, though Romuald successfully avoided the trap.

He then received permission to live near Venice under the spiritual leadership of a venerable hermit named Marino. Because Romuald was not at all a fluent reader, whenever he made mistakes, Marinus, his teacher, beat him on his left cheek. Finally, it became too much for Romuald who said, "dear master, please hit me on the right cheek in the future. My left ear is almost deaf." The master was surprised at such patience and thereafter acted more considerately.



Romuald's religious foundation, the Camaldolese, was one of the strictest orders for men in the West. The members lived isolated in small huts, observing strict silence and perpetual fasting, constantly praying or engaged in manual labor. Our saint enjoyed the grace of bringing sinners, particularly those of rank and power, back to God. When he died, he was a little over seventy years of age. During his religious life, he had never used a bed, had always sought out ways of practicing severe penances. Fifteen years later his pupil, the holy doctor of the Church, St. Peter Damian, wrote his biography.

"His greatness lies in the rigorous and austere character of his interpretation of monastic life - an approach that was quite singular and unique. In the deepest recesses of his being, Romuald was an ascetic, a monk; not a monk of that serene peace and self-possession exemplified by St. Benedict in his life and described by him in his Rule. Nor was Romuald an organizer who through prudent legislation enabled his spirit to flourish and affect great numbers. He reminds us of the stolid figures inhabiting the Eastern deserts, men who by most rigorous mortification and severest self-inflicted penances gave a wanton world a living example of recollection and contemplation. Their very lives constituted the most powerful sermon. It is in company with men like these that St. Romuald continues to live."

*continued*

Romuald left a Rule of life to his followers consisting of only one hundred words in the original Latin text. It is a bright gem of spirituality recorded about the year 1006 – twenty years before Romuald's death.

- **1. Sit in your cell as in paradise;**
- **2. Put the whole world behind you and forget it;**
- **3. The path you follow is in the psalms – do not leave it. If you have come with a novice's enthusiasm and cannot accomplish what you want, take every chance you can find to sing the psalms in your heart and to understand them with your head; if your mind wanders as you read do not give up but hurry back and try again.**
- **4. Above all realize that you are in God's presence; hold your heart there in wonder as if before your sovereign.**
- **5. Destroy yourself completely;**
- **6. Sit waiting, content with God's gift, like a little chick tasting and eating nothing but what its mother brings.**

St. Peter Damian said that to be in Romuald's presence was to feel as though you were standing before the majesty of God. The marquis of Tuscany said, "Neither the emperor nor any other mortal can frighten me equal to the terror that Romuald's gaze gives me." He was regularly besieged by people seeking guidance or healing. It was well known that a piece of bread blessed by him could cure the sick of mind or spirit.

Currently, the Camaldolese form two separate congregations, both taking St. Romuald as their Father Founder. Various attempts were made at reunion. None, however, lasted, the longest being in effect 1634–1667. In that final year, Pope Clement IX issued a

Papal Bull establishing a definitive separation between them. The Benedictine Camaldolese (OSB Cam.) are headquartered at Camaldoli in Tuscany. On the mountainside stands the 11th-century Holy Hermitage founded by St. Romuald. The other congregation, known as the Camaldolese Hermits of Monte Corona (Er. Cam.), was established by the Renaissance reformer Blessed Paolo Giustiniani. This group lives solely in hermitages, usually with a very small number of monks comprising the community.

Perhaps, St. Romuald will inspire us to take up the bible and begin a commitment to pray the Psalter (the 150 Psalms). For St. Romuald, as "for all Catholic contemplatives from the 5th to the 13th century and beyond, each Psalm was considered to have been either uttered by Christ or written to foretell his redemptive work or to be recited with reference to his mysteries" (Dom Jean Leclercq). ✠

Fr. Joseph Devereaux is Pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Hastings

We had intended that this edition would appear in print and be available in the parishes throughout the diocese; but at the last minute, and with COVID on the up-swing once more, we decided it was not wise to ask anyone to drive from one end of the diocese to the other distributing the copies. Therefore, this issue is circulated electronically only.

The printer, Prestige Graphics Inc., was notified. And we were informed that they are having great difficulty getting the paper supplies they need. Can you say, "supply chain issues"?

So, it looks like the pandemic is causing disruptions for us all.

Nevertheless we rejoice with hope, even amid tribulations, for a saviour has been born for us! - Ed.



*from  
the Catholic Herald!*

# Christ, the Lord of Fallen Humanity

by Fr. Stephen Decarlo  
(Pastor of Immaculate Conception, Peterborough)

Some people know this, but others don't, that I spent my grades 5-8 not at a Catholic school but at King Edward Public School in Peterborough. The school, now closed and a YMCA built in its place, was my first real encounter with a majority student body of non-Catholics, and also some who were not baptized at all. For me, it was the experience of being a Catholic minority that led me to take stock of my faith and to see why that made me different, which later led me to want to be involved in the faith and eventually become a priest.

None of my pals were Catholic but we were still close and did many of the things pre-teen boys like to do: sports, bike riding, skateboarding (of course!) hanging out, video games, and getting into trouble. One thing we enjoyed back then was the then-popular phenomenon of professional wrestling. Muscle-bound, steroid enhanced tars such as Stone Cold Steve Austin, Rock (now a Hollywood celebrity by his real name, Dwayne Johnson), Kane, Undertaker, Mankind, and several others, filled the TVs of our younger days with scripted gladiatorial combat. Our attraction to this form of entertainment (or "sport" if it can be described in its own way) was more to the characters themselves rather than the combat, which was the reason that the scripted nature of it never bothered us. We loved to see the outrageous and over-the-top personas interact and entertain us, with the in-ring activity serving to further the storylines. The characters served as avatars of our own personal desires and dreams; every night we witnessed men and women overcoming obstacles and opposition, personal setbacks and injuries, in order to become champions and be the very best in the business. For us as kids, this was real draw, to see living proof that our own ambitions can take reality,

even though we had no actual desire to literally become wrestlers. The men and women worked so hard to get where they were, and we felt that the same was promised to us if we worked hard enough. Pope Francis reflects on the how sports can lead one upwards and inspire us to transcend our own present circumstances and limitations:

When we see athletes strive to the maximum of their abilities, sport excites us, amazes us, makes us feel almost proud. There is great beauty in the harmony of certain movements, as well as in strength or teamwork. When this is the case, sport transcends the level of pure physicality and takes us into the arena of spirit and even mystery. And these moments are accompanied by great joy and satisfaction, which we can all share, despite not having competed.<sup>1</sup>

As I got older, it became clear even more so why wrestling was so appealing to my elementary school classmates. King Edward was situated in the southern part of the downtown, in an area marked by poverty, crime, and drug use. As I later realized, most of my pals lived in broken homes, with the father physically absent and the mother physically there but often emotionally absent. In fact, one friend was abandoned by both father and mother, and was instead raised by his grandmother. My pals were frequently left to their own devices all day while their parents drank and/or smoked marijuana. Their older siblings frequently got in trouble with school authorities and the police. The home environment of my boyhood friends did not encourage academic excellence and many of them later dropped out of school. Inspired by pornography and their own parents' bad examples, they engaged in

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2016/october/documents/papa-francesco\\_20161005\\_conferenza-fede-sport.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2016/october/documents/papa-francesco_20161005_conferenza-fede-sport.html)



sexual activity as young as 10! As you can see, their lives were pretty bleak; wrestling was a means of embodying their hopes that the sadness of their then-current situation was only an obstacle and escape was possible.

Alas, these hopes were dashed years later. Wrestling faded away into escapism and remained just that. The uplifted hopes eventually fell down to cold hard reality. We drifted apart shortly after starting high school, and each went his own way. Some were more successful in life; others not so. Wrestling no longer held on to its charm and we all stopped watching and caring for it.

Yet, this experience growing up made me reflect on what drew us to wrestling, the feeling of rising to the top and out of the darkness of our lives. As a Catholic and now a priest, I also reflect theologically about it. Christ, the Only-begotten Son of the Father, Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, took on flesh and dwelt amongst us. He took on human nature while retaining his divine nature, entering into human history, also entering into the messiness of human life. By taking on human nature and bringing that nature to the cross, Christ assumes the messiness of human nature, and redeems it. Human nature, with all its failures, sins, shortcomings, dreariness, bleakness, weakness, is lifted up by Christ and the weaknesses of humans becomes a source of grace. Christ redeems fallen humanity by his death and restores it by his Resurrection. The very nature that is traced back to Adam was the one that Christ redeemed, the same nature in which my friends were born with, as St. Thomas Aquinas explains in his *Summa Theologiae*:

I answer that, As Augustine says (De Trin. xiii, 18): "God was able to assume human nature elsewhere than from the stock of Adam, who by his sin had fettered the whole human race; yet God judged it better to assume human nature from the vanquished race, and thus to

vanquish the enemy of the human race." And this for three reasons: First, because it would seem to belong to justice that he who sinned should make amends; and hence that from the nature which he had corrupted should be assumed that whereby satisfaction was to be made for the whole nature. Secondly, it pertains to man's greater dignity that the conqueror of the devil should spring from the stock conquered by the devil. Thirdly, because God's power is thereby made more manifest, since, from a corrupt and weakened nature, He assumed that which was raised to such might and glory.

It was for fallen humanity that Christ became incarnate: For "the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10)

As fun as it was, professional wrestling was not the answer to mine or my friends' deepest longings. Christ's Incarnation and death and Resurrection was the answer. Their desire to escape from the harshness of life could only be purified by Christ. The goal of faith is union with God, not necessarily escapism. Yet, our faith raises us up and strengthens us to overcome whatever life throws at us. The hardness of life is also included in what Christ has redeemed so that challenges are an occasion of grace. The Incarnation is the single reason that we rejoice, as Pope St. John Paul II reminds us at his 1997 Christmas homily:

In the mystery of Christmas is fully reflected the truth of his plan of salvation for man and for the world. It is not only man who is to be saved, but all creation is invited to sing to the Lord a new song, to rejoice and to exult together with all the nations of the earth

Let us never be afraid of encountering our deepest longings and desires, our hopes and dreams. Let us never dash them away but allow them to be raised up by Christ, the redeemer of all humanity. ✠

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/4004.htm#article4>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1997/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_hom\\_24121997.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1997/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_24121997.html)





### CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

In one of my favourite Christmas Carols, it is said of the little town of Bethlehem, “the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.” Hopes and fears are common to all of us in our human experience, and for people of faith, these realities are all mingled. When faith is strong, hope will be on the rise. When faith is weakened, fear may take over.

The last twenty-one months have acquainted us with both fear and hope. It has often seemed that, just as hopes are raised, they are dashed again. The fight against the pandemic has been long and we may be growing dispirited. So let the Good News of Christ’s birth infuse our hearts this Christmas more than ever. God, who knows our hopes and our fears, our dreams and our despondency, has chosen to come among us as the Word made Flesh, Emmanuel. The birth of Jesus Christ brought all the hopes and fears of humanity together in God’s plan for our salvation. As it was in Bethlehem two millennia ago, let it be so today. This Christmas may God overcome our fears with His hope and help us to celebrate this season of joy.

Yours in Christ,

+Daniel Miehm  
Bishop of Peterborough