



NEWS ARCHIVE:

Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

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Director of Pastoral Services Blake Sittler was MC at the annual diocesan Administration Day held at St Mary parish in Saskatoon Sept. 7, 2011

Beginning of another season of ministry in diocese launched at annual Administration Day Sept. 7, 2011

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

Plans, ministries and initiatives for the year ahead were addressed during a diocesan Administration Day held Sept. 7 in Saskatoon.

Priests, Parish Life Directors, ministry leaders, and parish staff members were among those to gather at St. Mary's Parish with Bishop Donald Bolen for a full day of presentations and distribution of information and resources.

The day began with prayers reflecting First Nations traditions, which were led by Our Lady of Guadalupe parish representatives. It concluded with celebration of the Eucharist and a commissioning of lay pastoral ministers by the bishop.

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Greeting each other during opening prayer.



Throughout the annual meeting, a wide range of ministries and initiatives were introduced, as were new pastors, parish staff and ministry personnel.

The Bishop’s Annual Appeal (BAA) was also launched at Administration Day, with representatives of the Diocese of Saskatoon Catholic Foundation Office introducing the 2011 theme: “Building Pathways of Hope” through a video and other resources.

The bishop will travel to deaneries across the diocese in the weeks ahead, to speak with parishioners and BAA volunteers about the Appeal, the gathering heard.

The BAA supports a range of ministry in the diocese, including justice and peace, prison outreach, hospital chaplaincy, youth ministry, rural catechetics, vocation promotion, education of seminarians, lay formation, marriage and family life, ministry development, native religious ministry, a diocesan resource library and the priests’ pension fund. This year’s goal is \$1.5 million.

“The Bishop’s Annual Appeal is a cornerstone of stewardship: so many programs in our diocese are funded by this Appeal,” said Bolen, adding that there remains a gap between what is raised and what is needed.

“We have grown as a diocese,” he said. “And when you are trying to live the gospel, there are no shortages of needs.”

The bishop said ministries supported by the BAA are important to the life of the diocese. “These are good programs. They aren’t superfluous. Each one of them is there to be a support to the parishes and the people of the diocese.”



Jocelyne Hamoline

In another presentation by the Catholic Foundation Office, Jocelyne Hamoline described her efforts to promote the concept of planned giving, as a way to leave a legacy to one’s faith community at either the parish or diocesan level. She noted that about 10 per cent of Canadians have made a planned gift of some kind, with some 34 percent of those who have made a will saying they would make a planned gift if they were asked.

Hamoline told parish leaders that she is willing to come out to speak in parishes or to local organizations about the planned giving program, or to provide information about setting up a parish planned giving team.

“You don’t have to be rich to make a planned gift: most planned gifts are made from people of modest means,” she stressed,

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describing it as a way to leave a legacy, directing resources to something we care about. “We are blessed when we share.”

A diocesan Miscarriage Awareness Committee described their ministry and resources now available on the diocesan website, including memorial services and advice for how to reach out to parents who have lost a child through miscarriage (*see related article on miscarriage awareness, posted on the diocesan news archive page of the website.*)

Other speakers during the day included diocesan liturgy director Fr. David Tumback, who reviewed resources available for the upcoming implementation of the new translation of the Roman Missal at the beginning of Advent.

Jim Nakoneshny, chair of the building committee for the new Holy Family Cathedral and Catholic Pastoral Centre, was introduced as the new building manager for the parish/diocesan building. He gave an overview of the project history and described the progress on the cathedral, which is expected to be ready for occupancy some time in December.

Pat Clarke of Holy Family Parish reported that an official opening committee has been established, and planning is underway for a week of opening celebrations for the new building May 6 to 13, 2012.

Changes and proposals in the diocese related to refugee sponsorship, justice and peace, ecumenism and a combined “Ministry of Initiation” structure were also discussed during the Administration Day (*see related article about proposals, below*).

Proposals and changes discussed

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

Proposals and information related to Christian initiation in parishes, refugee issues in the diocese, the diocesan Office for Justice and Peace, and interfaith dialogue were among the many issues discussed Sept. 7 during an Administration Day held for parish leaders from across the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

Bishop Donald Bolen, Rev. Michael Koch and Michelle Sieben introduced the idea of each parish creating an umbrella committee to oversee the **Ministry for Christian Initiation** in all its forms. This local committee would be responsible for all issues regarding Christian Initiation in the parish – including RCIA for both adults and children, sacramental preparation of children for confirmation and first Eucharist, infant baptism programs for parents, and ongoing faith formation of new Catholics.

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Koch, who serves as the director of Christian Initiation for the diocese, said he can see many advantages to putting ministry related to the sacraments of Christian initiation – baptism, confirmation and Eucharist – under one committee, with a common understanding and vision of initiation.

“It would be for the sake of greater clarity, consolidation of resources, and greater success in carrying out more effectively, the church’s mission of evangelization, initiation and catechesis in the life of the parish,” Koch said. “It’s not that what we’re doing is wrong or bad, it’s been good, but arguably, we can make it better.”

Beginning with several pilot projects in parishes might be a good way to start implementing the new vision of Ministry for Christian Initiation, Koch said.

Michelle Sieben of the diocesan Rural Catechetics Office described the connections she has experienced between training she received about the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and the work she is currently involved in – the catechesis and sacramental preparation of children. “The General Directory for Catechesis says that the model for all catechesis should come from the RCIA model,” she noted.

The proposed Ministry for Christian Initiation model could have many positive effects, suggested Sieben.

Rather than having several teams to coordinate the different areas, one combined team could work together and develop a common vision, she said, adding that it could make clustering of teams and sharing of resources easier between parishes. It would deepen understanding about the importance of baptism and the centrality of the paschal mystery – and would make clear that confirmation and Eucharist are a beginning, not an end of the journey, she said.

“I would like us to seriously consider the model that is being put forth,” said the bishop. “It is a model which I think would allow us to initiate people into Christian discipleship more effectively than we are at present.”

Bolen noted the challenge of evangelization in our world where many find it difficult to believe. “As a church we need to learn to be better prepared in communicating our hope, in communicating the reasons we believe. We do that not only by evangelizing but in introducing people to the Christian life.”

He added that the Restored Order of the Sacraments of Initiation which the diocese has implemented over the past several years (in which children celebrate the sacrament of confirmation at an earlier age, in conjunction with first communion) has raised challenges. However, that restored order is pointing precisely toward this kind of cohesive model of Christian initiation, the bishop said.

“In the long run it should also make our lives easier in parish communities,” he said, expressing hope that parish Ministry for Christian Initiation committees would include a strong commitment to evangelization.

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“I think we’re trying to sow seeds in your imagination,” the bishop said. “Have this model in the back of your minds and see if it might help in streamlining some of the catechetical work in your parish.”

Another proposal raised during Administration Day concerned the creation of a more structured diocesan office to address issues related to refugees and refugee sponsorship.

Ellen Erickson, refugee sponsorship organizer for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon (which is a government-recognized Sponsorship Agreement Holder), described her years of volunteer work assisting parishes in sponsoring refugees to come to Canada.

“When a refugee is sponsored they need two basic things. First of all they need financial support; obviously they need money to live on. They also need settlement services: (someone) helping them to find a place to live, a job, enrolling the kids in school,” she explained in her overview to parish leadership.

“But you may be surprised to know that when a parish sponsors, a portion of the financial support which a parish provides can range from 100 per cent right down to zero,” she said. Similarly, the settlement support could be as minimal as having one or two parishioners becoming friends with the newcomers, Erickson described.



Ellen Erickson

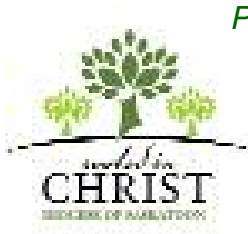
The time it takes from application to arrival also varies widely from case to case, she added, advising any parishes interested in refugee sponsorship to contact her with their questions.

Erickson stressed that for parishes that really see no way to actually sponsor a refugee, there are other ways to help: in particular, by undertaking advocacy work, raising awareness about the realities facing refugees and the hurdles that exist in trying to welcome refugees to Canada.

She noted that in recent years there has been a lot of “negative propaganda” about refugees. “It’s misleading, it’s xenophobic ... and it leaves the average Canadian apprehensive about refugees.” There is a lot of work to do to highlight the need to support and protect refugees as a humanitarian obligation, she said.

Bishop Donald Bolen noted that the need to establish a paid diocesan position to work with refugee sponsorship and other issues has been recognized, and is under consideration.

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This was the strong recommendation of the late Rev. Paul Donlevy, who was actively involved in the issue, Bolen noted. “If you have any experience in refugee sponsorship, you know how tremendously valuable those resource persons like Ellen are, who can answer your questions and can navigate the government policy.”

The future of this proposed office might also be tied up with changes facing the diocesan Office for Justice and Peace he added.

With Tony Haynes having recently stepped back from his work as volunteer director of the diocesan Office for Justice and Peace because of health issues, provisions have been made to have other volunteers temporarily take on some of the more pressing Justice and Peace projects and issues in the diocese, including the planning of a conference on food issues planned for Nov. 5, the bishop said.

Bolen expressed a hope that there might one day be a unified diocesan office that would oversee and advocate for issues related to justice and peace, to pro-life work and refugee concerns.

“The Catholic ethical vision is a great, broad, wonderful vision which is concerned with human life at every step of the way. There is no political party that embodies that kind of broad vision that we stand for,” he said. “As we are dealing with all these fragments and pieces, this is a long term vision to keep in our prayers.”

The bishop also described a recent move in the diocese to separate inter-faith relations from the work of the Diocesan Commission for Ecumenism.

“Ecumenical dialogue or relations are with those who are committed disciples of Jesus, those who are committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ,” said Bolen, describing the imperative of Christians to work toward the unity that the Lord prayed for when he said “let them be one.”

However, relations with other religions are a different matter, said the bishop. “We are seeking common understanding, we’re seeking to get rid of our misconceptions, and work together for the common good,” he said. “But there is no sense that we should be united. The goal of the dialogue is very different.”

Therefore, a new committee is being established in the diocese for interfaith relations, he reported. “It’s a Catholic committee that will coordinate the Catholic community’s efforts in this diocese,” he said.

The bishop reported that the Diocesan Interfaith Committee recently approached Multi-Faith Saskatoon about a joint celebration to mark the 25th anniversary of Pope John Paul II’s pilgrimage to Assisi to pray for peace alongside the leaders of the world’s religions.

As a result, this year’s Festival of Faith, which Multi-Faith Saskatoon has presented annually for over 25 years, this year has as its theme “Festival of Faith: Pilgrimage of Peace.” It will take place 3 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 30 at St. Patrick’s Parish in Saskatoon.

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Groups present information at diocesan gathering

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

Biblical literacy, an International Eucharistic Congress, creative outreach by ex-gang members, and the establishment of a Chair of Catholic Studies at St. Thomas More College were among the diverse subjects highlighted during a diocesan Administration Day Sept. 7 in Saskatoon.

Diocesan ministries and programs such as the Bishop's Annual Appeal are the focus of the annual event (*see related overall story*), but it is also an opportunity for other groups to address priests, parish and ministry leaders.

Rev. Len Bachiu of the Canadian Bible Society described scriptural resources and special projects of the organization. For instance, the Bible Society is working with the Catholic Church in the Philippines to distribute a million bibles over five years. In another ongoing project, the scriptures are being translated into Plains Cree.

Bachiu encouraged parishes to establish congregational Bible Society representatives in their faith community, and to continue working for biblical literacy.

Ministry to Tourism coordinator Rev. Ralph Kleiter spoke about the upcoming International Eucharistic Congress in Dublin, Ireland in June 2012, providing information about registration and travel options.

Liturgy commission chair Karen Schreiner described plans to send a bell from parish to parish across the Saskatoon diocese in the new year, along with an icon of St. Patrick and a prayer service related to the International Eucharistic Congress and the gift of the Eucharist.

Representatives of Str8-Up, a program that supports and encourages recovering gang members on their journey of healing, spoke to parish representatives about a project to publish an anti-gang book for children, written by former gang members (*see related article about Str8-Up*).

The new president of St. Thomas More College also spoke to the diocesan gathering, introducing himself and his vision of Catholic education. Dr. Terrence Downey came to the federated Catholic college at the University of Saskatchewan campus after 12 years as president of St. Mary College in Calgary.

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“It’s a great privilege to be called to a position of leadership in a Catholic college, particularly in this day and age,” he said, describing some of the ethical and moral questions that face young people, developing in conjunction with rapidly changing advances in science and technology.

“We have a sobering opportunity to prepare this current generation to face the challenges and decisions, particularly in the area of ethics, that we can’t even think about,” he said. “It underlines the importance of what we’re doing at St. Thomas More College... in giving people a broad liberal arts education, with a good grounding in their religion, and a good grounding in philosophy, and in being able to think through things and understand that they are spiritual beings, and that there are ethical and moral dimensions to what we do.”



Dr. Terrene Downey

Establishing an endowed Chair of Catholic Studies at the college is a priority, said Downey. This independent, permanent position will become a centre for the study of the Catholic Church, its belief and ethics, and will be a resource to the entire Catholic community, Downey predicted. “This can become a source of expertise and a source of knowledge for people in their parishes,” he told the diocesan gathering

Str8-Up: helping recovering gang members

BY KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI

Ex-gang members are working to create an anti-gang book for children in Grades 6 to 8 with the help of Str8-Up, an organization that supports and encourages recovering gang members on their journey of healing.

Str8-Up representatives spoke to parish leaders from across the diocese of Saskatoon Sept. 7 at an annual diocesan Administration Day, describing the book project and the need for financial support.

“The gangs are around, but not only in the cities but in rural areas, the north and on the reserves,” said Diann Block who works as a cultural coordinator at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre.

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A creative writing program has been introduced at the prison, she noted. “These men love to write, they’re excellent writers. They love to draw. They are excellent artists. And they also care about their communities and all those kids that are still out there in danger of getting hooked into the gangs.”



The proposed book is totally a Str8-Up project, said Block, stressing the project is not being funded by Corrections or the Saskatoon Correctional Centre.

Str8-Up is a non-profit organization working in cooperation with the John Howard Society and Kinsman Activity Place. It receives some funding from the United Way and the Kinsmen Club. Therefore, Str8-Up is seeking financial support for the project, to get the book published and into the schools.

An English professor and a masters student from the University of Saskatchewan are voluntarily helping the men with their writing, and the publisher is donating the majority of her company’s services to the project. However, a minimum of \$5,000 will still be needed to get the project off the ground, the diocesan gathering heard.

Str8-Up works with individuals both in the community and in prisons who want to get out of gang life, said Stan Tu’inukuafe, the coordinator of Str8-Up for the John Howard Society in Saskatoon.

“We help them find employment, housing, access to education programs and treatment centres,” he said.

Dwayne Sasakamoose, Jr., described what Str8-Up meant to him.

“I was involved in gangs from a young age, in my teenage years,” he said. “There are a lot of wasted lives because of being involved in gangs.”

Sasakamoose described how he eventually connected with Fr. André Poilièvre, and how, with the Saskatoon priest’s help, began working to turn his life around.

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Workshops and support through Str8-Up made a big difference, he added. “Without Str8-Up I would still be in the penitentiary I think – or dead.”

The book project is a way for Str8-Up members to give something back, and to reach out to young people at risk, organizers said.

The Str8-Up program requires participants to drop gang colours, deal with addictions, be honest, humble, and willing to give the program a chance, asking them to take part for at least four years. Goals include becoming responsible citizens, faithful partners and loving parents. In addition to walking with individuals, the program offers workshops, presentations and group discussions on addiction, abuse, violence, racism, gangs and the negative effects of living a criminal life style.

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A diocesan Administration Day in Saskatoon Sept. 7 concluded with a commissioning Mass for lay pastoral ministers from across the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon by Bishop Donald Bolen. Fr. Steve Morrisey and Fr. Jon Hansen of the Redemptorist community at St. Mary’s parish concelebrated Eucharist with the bishop.