



NEWS ARCHIVE:

Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

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Bishop's leadership style endeared him to the diocesan faith community

BY KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI

The new Archbishop of St. Boniface, Manitoba has a leadership style that endeared him to many in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

Words such as pastoral, hardworking, humble and collaborative are used to describe this prairie bishop, who is most often simply known here as "Bishop Albert".

"We couldn't have asked for a better leader," said **Nestor Trach** of Humboldt, who worked with Bishop Albert LeGatt in the context of several volunteer positions, – as a member of the diocesan Vocations Commission, as chair of the Saskatchewan Catholic Health Corporation, and as a representative on the provincial Catholic Connections Committee.

"He played a key role in the formation of Catholic Connections," described Trach, reflecting on the impact the bishop has had in helping to bring about the new provincial network of Catholic groups and organizations established to promote and defend Catholic education and Catholic health care. "He didn't miss a meeting," Trach recalled. "He really sees the need for Catholic education and Catholic health care, and he worked with us all the way."

"Bishop Albert has been a mentor to so many of us, in so many ways, and he's touched people with his hard work and his caring. People value his casual style, his unpretentious style, his method of talking things over one to one," added Trach.

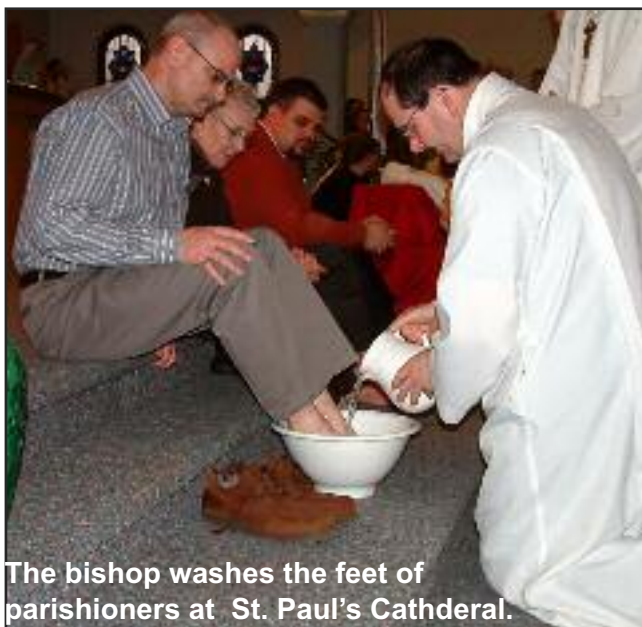
Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools chair **Diane Boyko** also stressed LeGatt's personal pastoral style. "He is just such a warmhearted man, and the guidance he gives is from the

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Bishop Albert LeGatt accepts a symbol of faith from a participant in an annual Youth and Liturgy program.



The bishop washes the feet of parishioners at St. Paul's Cathedral.



heart. He is not top-down. He is part of his community, and I think that's his greatest gift."

The bishop's personal approach in shepherding the faithful was also noted by **Garth Wruck** of the Trinity pastoral region of Prud'homme, Vonda and St. Denis. "Bishop Albert deals with people directly, one to one," he said. "He leads from amongst his flock."

Wruck noted the bishop's spiritual gifts as a listener, which provides him with a unique tool for discerning what the Lord is saying through His people. He also stressed LeGatt's humble faith in and love for the Church and her teachings, describing the bishop as "firm in the truth."

Mary Jacobi, Parish Life Director of St. Mary Immaculate parish in Martensville and chair of the Diocesan Mission Office, said LeGatt's leadership has been marked by consultation and collaboration. "As a bishop he has done as much as he can to encourage laypeople in leadership roles in the Church," she said.

"I think he has a vision of mission that truly is global," she added.

"He has been very supportive of our First Nations cultural component in the Catholic church," said **Gayle Weenie** of Our Lady of Guadalupe parish, which LeGatt declared a full-fledged parish in February 2007.

LeGatt appointed Verna Vandale, a First Nations person as the Parish Life Director for the parish, which provides First Nations and Metis ministry, she noted. "Under his leadership we have been able to incorporate some of our First Nations cultural traditions into the Mass and sacramental preparations."



Bishop Albert LeGatt reads the official decree creating Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon on Feb. 18, 2007, The newest parish in the diocese serves First Nations, Métis and non-Aboriginal people in the city of Saskatoon.

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Weenie also described LeGatt's strong support for the Aboriginal Lay Formation program that has been established by the dioceses of Saskatoon, Prince Albert and Keewatin/LePas. "It is the first of its kind to be offered," she noted. "He's been a big part of these initiatives," she said.



Bishop Albert LeGatt blesses Neil Edward Cook of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, one of the first graduates of a unique Aboriginal Lay Formation program.

"He has been very supportive and we will miss him."

Sr. Teresita Kambeitz, OSU, described LeGatt as a visionary leader. "He consulted; he listened; he imagined possibilities and then he appointed committees to carry out those dreams. 'Hmm - how about doing a study on the sacrament of reconciliation in the diocese... why not celebrate a Diocesan Eucharistic Congress... let's have an Aboriginal stream in the Lay Formation program... and, oh yes, a speaker series

during the Year of St. Paul..." He never ran out of ideas for opportunities to evangelize," she said.

"I will miss his the-sky-is-the-limit creativity, his of-course-we-can attitude, and the opportunities to serve on his committees," said Sr. Teresita. "I also appreciated his interest in St. Angela's Academy and his support of the sisters in our diocese. His presence at sisters' jubilees, at meetings of bishops and major superiors, and especially at the Sisters' celebration in 2005 (which he dubbed the "Sisterfest") demonstrated his respect and gratitude for the often hidden ministry of women religious in the church."

Saskatchewan Knights of Columbus **State Deputy Arden Andreas** noted the bishop's warmth and welcoming. "From my experience with the Knights of Columbus, the Diocesan Pastoral Council or my small rural cluster and parish, Bishop Albert treated everyone with respect and love. You could always tell he was concerned and wanted to understand," said Andreas. "His thunder is his presence."



Bishop Albert LeGatt presides over a centennial celebration in 2005, marking the province's 100th anniversary.



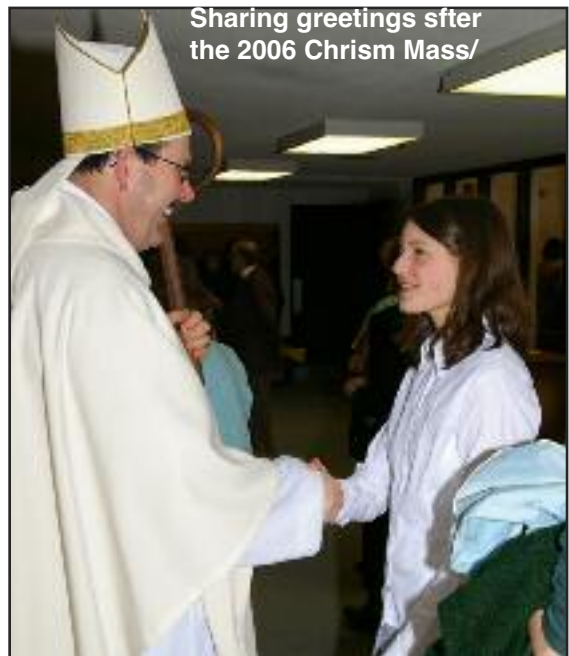
“He was and is a great spiritual leader with only the simplest goal in mind: how do we achieve what God has called us to do,” Andreas added, expressing appreciation on behalf of the Knights of Columbus of the province, of his rural parish cluster in the southwest corner of the diocese, and of his wife Sherry and himself for the bishop’s ministry.

Gilbert Chevrier, religious education coordinator for the Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools division said: “What has really struck me about Bishop Albert is his pastoral heart. He loves being with people, especially the students. When I think of our Grade 6 Youth and Liturgy, or our high school Living Liturgy, he’s been there whenever we ask him to be there. He is such an approachable bishop.”

The diocesan church of Saskatoon has been fortunate in the quality of its leadership over the years, and LeGatt is no exception, said **Fr. Ron Beechinor**, recalling the work of the bishops he has served with since his ordination – Bishops Klein, Mahoney, Weisgerber and LeGatt. “He continued the good leadership of his predecessors and was able to build on what they started,” Beechinor said. “It was a continuation: one bishop building on the work of the others.”

Beechinor described LeGatt as a demanding bishop, but one who primarily made demands upon himself. “I’m not sure that he knows the word ‘no.’ Whenever he was asked to be somewhere, he was there. If he could possibly do it, he would. He was responding to the needs.”

The recent Uniting in Faith campaign to build a new Catholic Pastoral Centre and Cathedral has been successful largely because of LeGatt’s leadership and the respect people



have for him, noted Beechinor. “The interesting thing is that it was in the smaller parishes that they showed the way,” he said. “It wasn’t just a matter of raising money, it was giving the individual parishes a stronger sense of community.”

Rock the Mount organizers **John and Elaine Boskill** said Bishop Albert has been a joy to work with over the last eight years. “He has been very supportive of Rock the Mount in particular, and attended each one except when in Europe one year,” noted John.



Bishop Albert takes in a talk at Rock the Mount Catholic youthy rally in 2006, as the sun sets behind the grotto.

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Describing LeGatt as a “humble servant of God” with a real heart for youth, Elaine added how much it meant to have the bishop’s presence at the annual Catholic youth rally. “He would come and stay the day – often speakers and visitors would express how impressed they were that a bishop would come to such an event and take the whole day to be with the youth.”

When it came to ideas for youth ministry, LeGatt was always encouraging, sometimes challenging and would bring forward ideas for consideration, John said. “He was very strong on looking at the fruits of an activity, encouraging co-operation and cohesiveness. It was through this type of encouragement, for example, that Rock the Mount evolved to include a number of ministries working together.”

LeGatt’s greatest strength has been his pastoral sensitivity, said **Fr. David Tumback**. “He embodies what the good shepherd is. He was very caring of his people, very good to his priests, and he had a real sense of the greater vision, the greater ministry and the fact that we are deeply and intimately connected to our brothers and sisters throughout the world.”

During his time as bishop, LeGatt nurtured the ministries that had already been established in the diocese, supporting them and allowing them to grow, noted Tumback, saying that LeGatt’s legacy in the diocese will include new ministries such as the Aboriginal stream of Lay Formation, and on the administrative side, the creation of a Development Office. “I would say the same thing with the cathedral: he had the courage to say this is what we need and move ahead with it, stepping out in faith to ask the people for support,” Tumback said.

Leah Perrault, Director of Pastoral Services for the diocese, recalled her first impression of the bishop. “I was overwhelmed with how connected people felt to him,” she said. “The diocese of Saskatoon meant something to them because Bishop Albert was their shepherd. I think that speaks highly of him.”

She also immediately noticed how well he listened to people. “I think one of his greatest strengths is his pastoral care. Before he sees the structure, before he sees the ministry people do, before he sees the potential challenges or opportunities, he sees the person who is in front of him,” Perrault said.

“I always appreciated his accessibility, and how quickly he answered e-mails and phone calls,” added **Tony Haynes**, diocesan director of the Office for Justice and Peace.

“One thing that has always impressed me has been Bishop Albert’s tremendous work ethic,” said **Fran Turner**, coordinator of the diocesan Resource Library at the Catholic Pastoral Centre. “He is extremely hard working.”



Bishop Albert LeGatt blesses students at a Knights of Columbus Blackstrap Camp in July 2006, during a blessing ceremony for a shrine dedicated to “Our Lady of Blackstrap.”



Turner also appreciates how LeGatt would take time to join the Catholic Centre staff for coffee, or special gatherings whenever his schedule permitted. “He connected with us, and showed real concern and interest, building friendships and fostering a real spirit of caring and collaboration.”

Presence, collaboration and humility are the three words that Diocesan Pastoral Council executive director

Dianne Cote uses to sum up LeGatt’s ministry.

“When Bishop Albert is at a meeting, he is fully present to that meeting,” Cote said, noting how the bishop would listen carefully and work to build relationships. His collaborative skills are evident in projects such as the launch of the new Diocesan Vision, which happened after much consultation, she added. LeGatt’s humble spirit has made it easy for her to support and work for the Uniting in Faith campaign to build a new Cathedral and Catholic Pastoral Centre, Cote added. “He saw a need and recognized an opportunity to address that need,” she said.

LeGatt’s pastoral charity for the faithful, his priestly spirituality and his gentleness in exercising of authority were noted by **Rev. Bernard de Margerie**. “He tirelessly spelled out pastoral priorities for the diocese that are truly evangelical,” de Margerie said, adding that the bishop also did much good in the ecumenical community of Saskatoon and area.

Sr. Kay MacDonald, NDS, described LeGatt as a “one-hundred percenter,” expressing appreciation for his many initiatives in the diocese, for his spirit of unity, and for the many ways in which he was present to the faithful, and in particular to the women religious of the diocese.

