



**(CCCB – Ottawa)...** The annual Plenary Assembly of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) began yesterday and will continue until 30 September 2016 at the Nav Canada Centre, Cornwall, Ontario. The meeting is chaired by the Most Reverend Douglas Crosby, O.M.I., Bishop of Hamilton and CCCB President, who presented his annual report at the opening session. On this first day of the meeting, the Bishops reflected on the impact of Bill C-14 which legalized assisted suicide and euthanasia in Canada. His Eminence Willem Cardinal Eijk, Archbishop of Utrecht, Holland, gave a reflection on the social and cultural impact of legalized assisted suicide and euthanasia in The Netherlands and beyond. The day began with the celebration of the Eucharist presided by Bishop Crosby with the participation of almost 40 members from the Holy Trinity Catholic Secondary School Choir in Cornwall.



A moral theologian, medical ethicist and physician, Cardinal Eijk gave an overview of the experience in his country. He said at first there had been arguments in favour of euthanasia and assisted suicide in 1969, followed by frequent medical practice of euthanasia in the 1970s and then the first law to provide provisional regulation of euthanasia in 1993. Since then, he said, public sentiment permits euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide for people suffering from emotional disorders and psychiatric illness, including depression, as well the termination of infants born with disabilities. At the same time, doctors who used to practise euthanasia frequently now receive fewer demands because of growing accessibility to and awareness of

palliative care.

"What can the Dutch experience teach politicians, policy-makers and people working in health care in other countries?" he asked. His answers were that first, there is no need for a "new medical ethics" other than what is provided through palliative care: "to reduce the suffering of people with incurable diseases to bearable proportions and to help them to discover or rediscover the dignity of their lives by giving loving professional care -- humane, medical, socio-psychological and pastoral; in short: it is directed to the whole person." Secondly, the Dutch experience provides empirical evidence that once the door is open a little, it easily opens wider. "Once one allows the termination of life for a certain kind of suffering, why should one not allow it for suffering that is just a little less?" The third lesson to be learned, he said, is palliative care respects how people who are suffering greatly, whether from disease or disabilities, can discover dignity in life and be enabled to continue their lives despite their circumstances.

In his annual report, Bishop Crosby highlighted [several initiatives](#) in which the Conference has been involved, including advocating for palliative and home care and mobilizing local support for these, as well as urging federal and provincial politicians to respect freedom of conscience and religion for health-care providers and institutions. The CCCB President also pointed out the initiatives by the CCCB and dioceses over the past year "to focus on relations with Indigenous People, including questions by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)." The CCCB President recalled his [letter](#) to the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau the day he was sworn in as Prime Minister. "I highlighted the need for improved Aboriginal access to education, the epidemic of murdered and missing Indigenous women, the need for environments supportive of Indigenous families and communities, and the importance of strengthening the ability of Canadian justice and correctional systems to respond to Aboriginal realities," Bishop Crosby stated.

### Commemoration of the 5th Centenary of the Protestant Reformation



The CCCB Episcopal Commission for Christian Unity, Religious Relations with the Jews, and Interfaith Dialogue hosted a workshop on the preparations for the commemoration of the 5th

Centenary of the Protestant Reformation. Chaired by the Most Reverend Claude Champagne, O.M.I., Bishop of Edmundston and Chair of the Commission, the panel members were: The Most Reverend Richard Gagnon, Archbishop of Winnipeg, the Most Reverend Brendan M. O'Brien, Archbishop of Kingston (on behalf of the Most Reverend Gerard Bergie, Bishop of St. Catharines, who could not be present), the Reverend Susan Johnson, National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Reverend Robert Bugbee, President of the Lutheran Church (Canada), and Reverend Stephen Kendall, Principal Clerk of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church in Canada. In March 2015, the CCCB Permanent Council approved a joint working group involving the CCCB and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) to prepare resources in view of commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. This joint working group is co-chaired by Archbishop Richard Gagnon and Bishop Susan Johnson.

### 50th Anniversary of Development and Peace – Caritas Canada



In 2017, the [Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace](#) (CCODP) -- Caritas Canada, will mark its 50th anniversary. The organization was founded in 1967 by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops in response to Pope Paul VI's encyclical letter *Populorum Progressio*. In this acclaimed encyclical, Blessed Paul VI described the integral development of peoples as the new word for peace. CCODP supports partners working to improve living conditions in 70 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. The 50th anniversary celebrations are already underway and will be held in each diocese and eparchy across Canada. Thanks to the support of Canadian Catholics, Development and Peace has invested more than \$600 million in over 100 countries since its creation in 1967. The CCODP jubilee will be a key event at next year's Plenary. Later this year, the CCCB will publish a pastoral letter to celebrate the anniversary.

The first day of the Plenary Assembly was also marked by the address of the Most Reverend Luigi Bonazzi, Apostolic Nuncio to Canada, and the presentation of the annual report of the Canadian Catholic Aboriginal Council by the Most Reverend Mark Hagemoen, Bishop of Mackenzie-Fort Smith, and the Most Reverend Daniel Jodoin, Bishop of Bathurst, who are the current CCCB episcopal representatives on the Aboriginal Council. There were also brief presentations on the 2016 World Youth Day that took place this past July in Poland and the International Eucharistic Congress which was held in January 2016 in Cebu, Philippines.

For the sixth year, the Canadian Catholic television channel [Salt + Light TV](#) is broadcasting live a number of key Plenary events, both on the internet and on television.

