

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops of Canada: fields of action and highlights of this past year

Founded in 1943 and officially recognized by the Holy See in 1948, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) is the national assembly of the Bishops of Canada.

Through the participation of the Bishops who are its members, the Conference is involved in national and international issues. It works in close collaboration with the Holy See, other Episcopal Conferences and many different national and international organizations. The Conference also keeps in regular contact with the Canadian government. To assist them in their pastoral work, the Bishops have established a permanent bilingual Secretariat in Ottawa that includes various offices and services. Its staff of about 40 people – laypersons, priests and religious – assists the Bishops with the coordination of joint pastoral activities and provides them with information and advice in the following areas:

Justice and Peace... bringing a Catholic perspective to issues of social justice, poverty, the environment and human rights. In the past year, the CCCB has principally done this by:

- establishing an ad hoc committee tasked with collaborating with the *Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace* (CCODP) on the revision of its mandate and operational principles in light of the latest papal encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*;
- Launching, in response to the massive earthquake that shook Haiti in January, a joint campaign with *Development and Peace* which raised \$20 million for emergency disaster relief efforts;
- Coordinating, in partnership with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the Episcopal Council of Latin America (CELAM), efforts to rebuild the society and Church in Haiti;
- Meeting with representatives of other Bishops Conferences in the Holy Land in support of the Christians of the Mother Church; and subsequently writing to the Prime Minister, asking that Canada do all it can to promote a just and lasting settlement in the conflict in the Middle East, and one that takes into account the rights and needs of the local populations;
- And, in the context of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, issuing a pastoral letter denouncing human trafficking in all its forms

Life and Family... providing a strong and unified leadership in the areas of life and family by promoting a culture more respectful of life in its entirety. Notable activities in this field include:

- Establishing an ad hoc committee with the mandate of developing an intermediate and long-term strategy for the promotion of a Canadian culture more favourable to life and family;
- In the debate surrounding end-of-life issues, providing information and guidance; and promoting palliative care as a loving alternative to euthanasia and assisted suicide;
- And, working closely with the Catholic Organization for Life and Family to promote the teachings of the Catholic Church on issues concerning respect for life, and the inherent value and dignity of the human person; to support and reinforce the fundamental role of the family in society and to promote natural family planning.

Aboriginal relations... promoting a renewed partnership and new dialogue between the indigenous people and the Catholic Church. This was mainly achieved by:

- Working closely with dioceses and Catholic organizations to ensure a Catholic presence in the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as well as related activities;
- Working in close collaboration with the Canadian Catholic Aboriginal Council to promote Aboriginal Peoples' culture and traditional celebrations within the context of the Catholic faith;
- Taking part in the ceremonies commemorating the 400th anniversary of the Baptism of Mi'kmaq Grand Chief Henri Membertou and 20 members of his family;

- Expressing support for the Government of Canada’s announcement that it would “take steps to endorse” the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- And, publishing a message on the occasion of the National Day of Prayer for Aboriginal Peoples, observed annually on December 12, Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas

Doctrine... giving special attention to the dogmatic, theological and ethical teaching and tradition of the Church.

Evangelization... supporting missionary activities within the dioceses of Northern Canada and throughout the world.

- In 2009, the Canadian Pastoral Fund for Evangelization granted \$385,000 toward the support of lay, Native and ordained ministries and the promotion of vocations for the Northern dioceses.

Ecumenical and interfaith relations... participating in dialogues and reflections with the Jewish and Muslim communities, the Orthodox, Anglican and United Churches, and also Evangelical Christians, and serving as a member of the Canadian Council of Churches and also Kairos. Notable ecumenical activities include:

- Observing the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity;
- Extending an invitation to the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada Archbishop Most Rev. Fred Hiltz to speak at the 2009 CCCB Plenary Assembly;
- And, taking part in the June 2010 World Religions Summit.

Relations with Catholic Associations and Movements... Assuring dialogue and regular meetings with national associations and movements of clergy, consecrated life and laity by:

- Hosting a forum in Ottawa for representatives from 29 Catholic movements and associations on the theme “The Word of God: Identity and Mission”. In the course of the Forum, the delegates were given the opportunity to:
 - Meet with Bishops and share obstacles, challenges, successes and hopes being faced by their respective organizations and how the Bishops can assist them in their work;
 - And offer their reflections on the questions presented to them with reference to the Word of God in their mandate and their organization’s response to the Christian call to proclaim the Word of God.
- In the spirit of reinforcing communion and sharing, participating in the General Assembly of the Canadian Religious Conference (CRC).

Liturgy... preparing liturgical resources and guides as well as helping promote liturgical and sacramental formation.

- Through its National Liturgy Office, the CCCB is currently working on the revised Roman Missal.
- Producing a quarterly newsletter, the *Liturgy Newsletter* that provides information about the status of the translations of liturgical texts, the development of new liturgical resources and updates about any projects the Episcopal Commission for Liturgy is working on. It will also offer reflections on liturgical themes and issues. The magazine, *Vivre et Célébrer*, is also published quarterly and offers comparable content for French-speaking Catholics.

Publications... by offering over 300 publications that can be ordered from www.cccbpublications.ca.

The CCCB is an organization at the service of the Bishops and of the whole Church in Canada.
