

EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE CONFERENCE SINCE THE LAST PLENARY ASSEMBLY

ON THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STAGES

Euthanasia/Assisted Suicide (“Medical Assistance in Dying”)

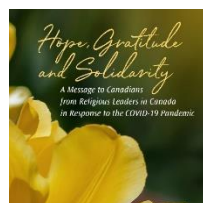
As one of the main issues on its agenda this year, the CCCB has been working diligently on the many elements surrounding euthanasia and assisted suicide. Among the work accomplished over the past year,

- 1) Information was posted about the Government of Canada’s general two-week consultation/survey which had been provided as an opportunity (albeit brief) for the public to share their views on the legislative changes under consideration regarding the expansion of eligibility criteria for euthanasia/assisted suicide (“Medical Assistance in Dying”/MAiD). The CCCB explained that while the consultation assumed that access to euthanasia/assisted suicide would be expanded, it also offered few sections at best where individuals could voice their opposition and concerns about euthanasia/assisted suicide.
- 2) The President wrote to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau regarding the proposed expansion of eligibility criteria for euthanasia/assisted suicide following the Government’s decision not to appeal the Québec Superior Court ruling which would require a change to federal legislation and the release of a national consultation (survey) prepared by the Department of Justice.
- 3) The CCCB issued a response to Bill C-7, “An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)” to express the Bishops’ strong opposition surrounding the proposed expansion of the eligibility criteria for euthanasia and assisted suicide by removing the “reasonable foreseeability of natural death” criterion currently in the Criminal Code, and by loosening some of the existing “safeguards” allowing patients whose death is “reasonably foreseeable” to waive final consent to euthanasia by making an advance directive.
- 4) Informal conversations regarding the CCCB’s concerns with Bill C-7 took place with the Department of Justice. Recently, the prorogation of Parliament put these efforts on hold and cast some uncertainty over the future of the Bill, at least for a time.
- 5) The Joint *Ad hoc* Committee for Palliative Care continues to work on the production of parish resources in order to engage with parishioners on this most important issue.

Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19)

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic early in 2020, the CCCB has issued the following messages to bring light, hope and awareness to the Catholic faithful of Canada:

- 1) On 13 March 2020, the CCCB published a statement calling for Catholics to offer prayers for the healing of the infected, the protection of the elderly and vulnerable, the prevention of the virus’ spread, and support for care providers who minister to the sick, their families and those most in need.



- 2) On 30 March 2020, an ecumenical and interfaith message by religious leaders from across Canada entitled *Hope, Gratitude and Solidarity - A Message to Canadians from Religious Leaders in Canada in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic* was published. This was an initiative of the CCCB and the Canadian Rabbinic Caucus with the support and coordination of the Canadian Council of Churches and the Canadian Interfaith Conversation, which garnered the support of more than 80 religious leaders from across Canada.

- 3) On 1 May 2020, Catholic Bishops across Canada consecrated their individual dioceses or eparchies to Mary, Mother of the Church, seeking her protection during the Coronavirus pandemic. The Marian consecration was held on the same day in both Canada and the United States with a special live, bilingual broadcast from St. Mary's Cathedral in Winnipeg.
- 4) On 21 May 2020, the CCCB signed a joint letter addressed to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and to Minister of Health Patty Hajdu, urging the federal government to ensure that the development of COVID-19 vaccines does not present an ethical dilemma to Canadians and emphasizing the distinction between vaccines developed using cell lines obtained from earlier abortions and those developed without involving such sources.
- 5) On 14 July 2020, the members of the Executive Committee released a message entitled *They Still Bring Forth Fruit in Old Age: A Lesson on Caring in the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic*, which acknowledged and raised concerns of the serious difficulties faced by many vulnerable persons across the country during the pandemic, with particular concerns raised for the elderly.



Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace – Caritas Canada



As part of the organizational review of CCODP – Caritas Canada, following last year's Plenary Assembly,

- a) the CCCB published an update following the presentation of Deloitte's final report and recommendations to the Executive Committees of both organizations and to the Bishops;
- b) the CCCB and the CCODP released a joint statement following the agreement to implement the recommendations and specifications of the organizational review;
- c) both organizations issued a joint news release to announce the creation of joint working committees to implement the recommendations of the review; and
- d) the Joint Committee on the partnership review completed its work and submitted its final report.



2019 Visit of the Presidency to the Holy See

The 2019 visit of the Presidency to the Holy See took place 9-20 December. On 12 December, Pope Francis received in private audience the CCCB delegation: President Archbishop Richard Gagnon, Vice-President Bishop Raymond Poisson, and General Secretary Monsignor Frank Leo.

2020 Coordination of Episcopal Conferences in support of the Church in the Holy Land

Archbishop Richard Gagnon, accompanied by Mr. Carl Héту, CNEWA National Director, participated in the annual meeting of the Coordination of Episcopal Conferences in Support of the Church in the Holy Land (11-16 January 2020). The theme focused on justice, peace and human rights for all living in the Holy Land.





2020 Meeting of the Bishops of the Church in America

Bishops representing the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM), and the CCCB gathered in Tampa, Florida, 17 to 20 February 2020, for the bi-annual meeting. The members of the Canadian delegation were Bishop Raymond Poisson, CCCB Vice-President; Bishop William McGrattan, CCCB Co-Treasurer; Bishop Pierre Goudreault, CCCB Co-Treasurer; as well as CCCB General Secretary Msgr. Frank Leo.

ECUMENICAL AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUES

Several ecumenical and interfaith joint initiatives took place throughout 2019 and 2020, including collaboration on Bill C-7 (expansion of MAiD) and Bill C-8 (“conversion therapy”).

North American Orthodox Catholic Theological Consultation (NAOCTC)

The Consultation released a joint statement entitled “A Chosen Race, a Royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation.” The joint text is not an official document of either Church, nor of the CCCB or USCCB, but was prepared by theologians from both traditions and submitted to the members of their sponsoring bodies for prayerful reflection and discussion.

Anglican Church of Canada

On 10 October 2019, the CCCB and the Anglican Church of Canada released a joint statement in anticipation of the canonization of Blessed Cardinal John Henry Newman, which was proclaimed on Sunday, 13 October 2019, in Rome.



LIFE AND FAMILY

2020 National Week for Life and the Family

The eighth National Week for Life and the Family took place 10-17 May 2020, on the theme *Children: The Crowning Glory of Marriage*. The CCCB again offered dioceses/eparchies, parishes, as well as other Catholic organizations and associated groups, resources and options for planning and organizing local activities. The resources were prepared by the Catholic Organization for Life and Family (COLF), in collaboration and consultation with the CCCB.

2020 National March for Life

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the 2020 edition of the March for Life was held virtually on Thursday, 14 May 2020. In anticipation of the March, COLF released its annual message, entitled *Be Not Afraid*, which stated: “With all of the uphill battles we face – unrestricted access to abortion, the expansion of euthanasia, and the continued lack of respect for life – it might seem that our struggle is futile and hopeless. Now, more than ever, let us recall the words of Saint John Paul II during his inaugural homily in 1978: ‘Be not afraid!’ We have nothing to fear and much to hope for. We know that in the end, the victory has been won in Christ Jesus and until that time when we shall definitively see good triumph over evil, we will continue to march for life.”

RELATIONS WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

2019 National Day of Prayer in Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples in Canada

Every year, on 12 December, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Church in Canada celebrates the National Day of Prayer in Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples. In 2019, the Canadian Catholic Indigenous Council prepared a reflection drawing on the theme of the United Nations 2019 Year of Indigenous Languages.

VARIOUS APPOINTMENTS

Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region

The CCCB Past President, the Most Rev. Lionel Gendron, P.S.S., then Bishop of Saint-Jean-Longueuil, was appointed by the Holy Father as a participating member of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region (6-17 October 2019).



Judicial Vicar

As of 1 January 2020, Bishop Robert Bourgon began a three-year mandate as Judicial Vicar of the Canadian Appeal Tribunal.

Member of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue

On 8 July 2020, the Most Reverend Lawrence Huculak, O.B.S.M., Metropolitan Archbishop of Winnipeg for Ukrainian Catholics in Canada, was appointed by Pope Francis as a member of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue.



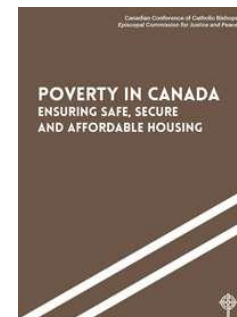
Member of the Council for the Economy

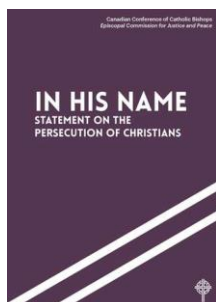
On 6 August 2020, His Eminence Gérald Cyprien Cardinal Lacroix, Archbishop of Québec and Primate of Canada, was appointed by Pope Francis as a member of the Council for the Economy, the coordinating agency for the economic and administrative affairs of the Holy See and Vatican City State.

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

Poverty in Canada

In anticipation of the Third World Day of the Poor (17 November 2019), the Commission for Justice and Peace released a statement entitled *Poverty in Canada: Ensuring Safe, Secure and Affordable Housing*, which presents a brief overview of poverty in Canada today, with a focus on the current housing crisis. It provides a short list of some key Catholic organizations engaged in the alleviation of poverty in Canada, and underscores the need for charitable organizations and all levels of government to collaborate in order to support individuals who are in need.





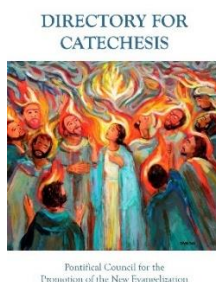
Statement on persecuted Christians

In view of Red Wednesday (20 November 2019), the Commission for Justice and Peace, in consultation with Aid to the Church in Need Canada, released a statement entitled *In His Name: Statement on the Persecution of Christians*, which outlines various types of persecution experienced and the reality of individuals and communities who suffer because of their faith in Christ, most notably in countries where Christians are in the minority.



Lectionnaire des funérailles

Having received the necessary authorization from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, the Canadian edition of the *Lectionnaire des funérailles* was approved for use in Canada and is published by the CCCB Publications.



Directory for Catechesis

As of 1 September 2020, the English translation of the new *Directory for Catechesis*, released by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, is available from the CCCB for pre-ordering. To help diocesan/eparchial personnel learn about the key themes outlined in the 2020 Directory and its integration into their own work at the local level, the CCCB's Office for Evangelization and Catechesis will host a four-part webinar series throughout the month of October 2020.

ORDO – Liturgical Calendar 2020-2021

The *ORDO* is an annual resource which provides detailed information and explanatory notes for each day of the Liturgical Year as well as references to the Roman Missal, the Lectionary, the Liturgy of the Hours, and the Book of Gospels.

CCCB STATEMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE BY PRESIDENT ARCHBISHOP RICHARD GAGNON

Update on the implementation of the guidelines on protecting minors from sexual abuse

On 15 November 2019, the CCCB released a statement entitled *A Transformative Journey – An Update on the Implementation of the Guidelines on Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse* to provide an account of some of the steps the Bishops of Canada are taking on this transformative journey.

Christmas Message 2019

On 9 December 2019, the President issued his first Christmas message. This year, Archbishop Gagnon focused on the treasure and mystery of reconciliation, noting that the birth of Christ brought new light and saving grace to our capacity to be reconciled and be reconcilers in daily life.

Pope Francis' 50th anniversary to the priesthood

On 13 December, a congratulatory letter from the President was addressed to Pope Francis on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Holy Father's ordination to the priesthood.

Statement regarding Jean Vanier

On 24 February 2020, the CCCB published a statement to acknowledge an independent inquiry, undertaken at the initiative of L'Arche International, to investigate allegations of abuse by its founder Jean Vanier.

2020 Easter Message

On 3 April 2020, in the first Easter message of his Presidency, Archbishop Richard Gagnon described how the Easter Vigil underscores how, as people of faith, our fears give way to joy in our daily encounter with Christ in the Eucharist, in Spiritual Communion, in the Scriptures, in our prayer, in devotions such as the Rosary, and in compassionate and loving service to one another. These encounters provide us with the courage and conviction of our faith so that, even in these most challenging times, we can boldly proclaim the death and resurrection of Christ through our words and actions.

LETTERS OF CONDOLENCE AND SOLIDARITY

Religious persecution in Eritrea

On 16 April 2020, CCCB President Archbishop Richard Gagnon issued two letters concerning continued religious persecution in Eritrea. The first letter was addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, the Hon. François-Philippe Champagne, to raise awareness of the ongoing human rights violations experienced by Eritrean Catholics and the role Canada can play to improve the conditions of life for the people of the country. The second letter was addressed to the Most Reverend Menghsteab Tesfamariam, Archeparch of Asmara and President of the Council of the Eritrean Church, expressing words of encouragement and solidarity with the country's Bishops as they continue to seek out ways to ease the tremendous suffering there of the Catholic faithful.

Violence in Nova Scotia

On 29 April 2020, a letter was addressed to the Archbishop Anthony Mancini and Coadjutor Archbishop Brian J. Dunn, conveying the sympathies and prayers of the Bishops of Canada following the tragedy that took place in Nova Scotia, 18-19 April 2020, with the murder of 22 innocent persons.

Violence in Minneapolis

In response to the tragic death of Mr. George Floyd on 25 May 2020, the CCCB issued a statement entitled *God Created Humankind in his Image and Likeness; Respect for the other is a must.*

Explosion in Beirut

On 7 August 2020, CCCB President Archbishop Richard Gagnon addressed a letter to His Beatitude Mar Béchara Boutros Cardinal Raï, Maronite Patriarch of Antioch, conveying the sympathies and prayers of the Bishops of Canada following the devastating explosion that occurred 4 August 2020 in Beirut.

Fire in Edmonton parish church

In a letter dated 9 September 2020 to the Most Rev. Richard Smith, Archbishop of Edmonton, the President expressed his sorrow and support following the fire at the Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton.

VARIA

Bishop Ovide Charlebois, O.M.I. moves toward canonization

On 28 November 2019, by way of a promulgation issued under the authority of Pope Francis by the Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, Bishop Ovide Charlebois, O.M.I., Apostolic Vicar of Keewatin (now the Archdiocese of Keewatin-Le Pas) was recognized for his outstanding heroic virtues, thus promoting his cause for sainthood from "servant of God" to "venerable".



Amalgamation of Archdiocese of Ottawa and Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall into the new Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall

On 6 May 2020, the Archdiocese of Ottawa and the Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall were amalgamated into one ecclesiastical circumscription, creating the new Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall. Archbishop Terrence J. Prendergast, S.J. was appointed Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall, and Archbishop Marcel Damphousse named Coadjutor Archbishop.

Diocese of Mont-Laurier united to the Diocese of Saint-Jérôme "*in persona episcopi*"

On 1 June 2020, the Diocese of Mont-Laurier was united with the Diocese of Saint-Jérôme "*in persona episcopi*", and The Most Rev. Raymond Poisson, Bishop of Saint-Jérôme, appointed Bishop of Mont-Laurier.



2020 Pentecost Message

On the occasion of the Solemnity of Pentecost, the Standing Committee for Relations with Catholic Movements and Associations released a message recalling that Jesus' mission through the Holy Spirit continues in the Church in spite of the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

New CCCB website

On 29 May 2020, the CCCB launched its new website incorporating a revamped visual layout, improved navigation based on thematic organization and upgraded compatibility of the site with multiple electronic devices. A new section on racism and discrimination was added in August 2020, providing an extensive list of Catholic resources available online.

