



## ROCKING AROUND THE CLOCK



On January 8, 11 ladies participated in a fundraising "rock-a-thon" for Holy Trinity Church on the Magdalen Islands. Many of you are likely asking, "What is a rock-a-thon? Do they sing rock music?" A rock-a-thon is a fundraising activity wherein a group of people (in rocking chairs) rock for a specified length of time and for which they solicit sponsorships. There was some initial skepticism that this type of activity would yield much revenue. However, the results far exceeded initial expectations, raising a total of \$2,805.99 for the parish. Furthermore, it was more than a fundraiser; it was also a community-building activity bringing together the 11 rockers along with their supporters and local musicians. The ladies started rocking at 9:00 a.m. and finished at 5:00 p.m., with a five-minute break every hour along with a lunch break.

TEXT & PHOTO: KERRY DICKSON

## Churches rail against neglect of train service

The Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church are united in saying, "We need our train."

In a jointly issued communiqué, representatives of the Anglican Diocese of Quebec and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Gaspé say they are profoundly disturbed at the direction Via Rail and the Government of Canada are presently taking regarding the operation of the Matapédia-Gaspé rail line.

For over 20 years successive governments and Via Rail have sought to close down the Gaspé line. The rail line has lacked significant financial support for decades. We would not have this infrastructure problem if the Government of Canada and the Canadian National Railway Company had funded the line appropriately over the years. But

because of its chronic underfunding and because it doesn't fit into Via Rail's policy which is geared only to the Quebec-Windsor corridor, we are now close to losing our life-line to the rest of Quebec and Canada.

Bishop Dennis Drainville of the Anglican Diocese of Quebec stated, "I have lived in the Gaspé region for nearly 20 years. This battle takes place regularly because governments in their haste to find resources for urban areas are quite willing to deprive rural citizens of even the most basic and essential services."

The importance of the rail line to the social fabric of the region is incalculable. It is the means by which seniors and people who are ill travel to receive medical treatment in Rimouski, Quebec, and Montreal because those services

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## Bishop calls on Christians to fill vacuum of leadership

BY ART BABYCH

Canada has a serious leadership deficit that can be fixed only when people get actively involved and take the initiative, says Bishop Dennis Drainville, the Anglican bishop of Quebec.

"Where are the leaders? I hate to say this, folks. You're it," he told the 40 people attending his lecture Dec. 7 at Saint Paul University in Ottawa. "I know you don't want to hear that," said Bishop Drainville, a lifelong social activist and former NDP member of Ontario's legislative assembly. "But I am serious. The only thing that will put fear into the powers of those that dominate our culture and our nation, is to see people banding together, objecting, talking together, (and) putting forward a different agenda."

In 1993, as a member of the Ontario legislature, Bishop Drainville resigned from the government caucus to protest his party's decision to introduce casino gambling. Although he still votes NDP, he said political parties can't be trusted. "You can trust a person, and values, but not a political party," he said, "because the basis on which a political party is elected is that once they are elected ... their next agenda item is getting re-elected." That, in itself, "destroys the very fabric and

foundation of society," he said.

Pointing to recent public protests and uprisings against leaders and government in several countries, the bishop said "greed-dominated markets have begun to fail, corrupt politicians and their friends are being hunted, and everywhere in the world people are demanding fundamental change and an acknowledgment of their collective rights."

*"Where are the leaders? I hate to say this, folks. You're it."*

Bishop Dennis Drainville

Examples of "profound alienation and general disengagement with the political structure," can be found everywhere, he said. "Not only are people rejecting the leaders that they have, but they are also rejecting the political and economic structures that govern their countries and maintain their leaders in power."

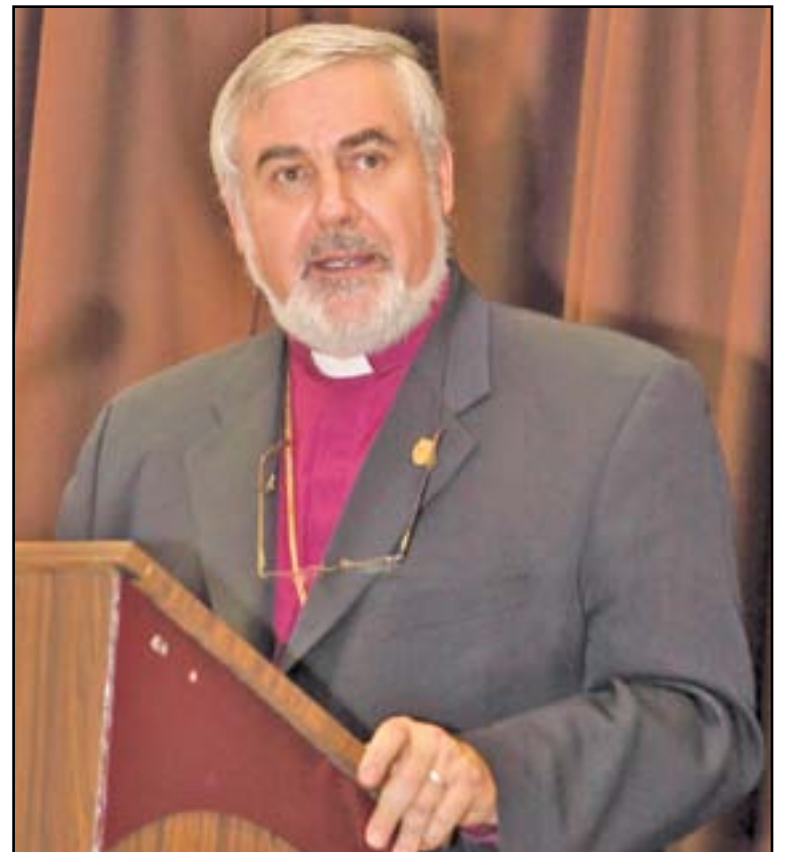
In fielding questions from his audience, Bishop Drainville, who is also co-chair of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada, said churches have a role

to play in bringing about positive change but he isn't sure they can "engage" that role. "I think the churches have become irrelevant in our society," he said. "They have made choices to follow and be consumed with all manner of things that are unimportant."

One of those things, he said, is survival. "Why are Christians spending all of their time worrying about whether the Christian church is going to continue?" They should "live the faith, feed the hungry, go out there and challenge authority, (and) be the people God is calling us to be." Because the church has an "incapacity to engage" the way it has been called to engage "means that we've become sidelined and irrelevant," he said. It isn't that people are rejecting the church or the faith, added the bishop, "It's just that it doesn't matter."

Bishop Drainville said building a new Canada, "and indeed a new world," requires the active involvement of the people. "Let's begin to follow the lead of those who are protesting throughout the world," he said. "Those who have an agenda that seeks to privilege the few over the many really do not have the power to stop us if we truly make up our mind to live in hope."

Saint Paul University is a



LOOKING FOR LEADERS - Bishop Dennis Drainville gave a lecture at Ottawa's Saint Paul University, asking the question, "Where have all the (good) leaders gone?"

PHOTO: ART BABYCH

Catholic school federated with the University of Ottawa. In 1981 its theology faculty and the Diocese of Ottawa established an Anglican studies program to prepare candidates for both lay and ordained Anglican ministries.

The program's director, the Rev. Prof. Kevin Flynn, introduced Bishop Drainville and noted they were seminarians together.

Art Babych is the editor of Crosstalk, the newspaper of the Diocese of Ottawa.



# Opening our eyes to God's presence in the world, even under an overpass

*You open our eyes to your presence in the world  
and you free our hands to lead others  
to the radiant splendour of your mercy.*

Lenten evening prayer, *Book of Alternative Services*

**I** ONCE VISITED a First Nations community where a member who was a convicted child sexual abuser lived in a trailer on the edge of town. He was forbidden access to children and visited regularly by elders, who kept him under a form of community surveillance.

I was struck by the fact that the community did not choose to send him away, as mainstream society does in cases of child sexual abuse, and as the church does. First Nations have lost almost everything, but community is one thing they have not lost. Every day this man faced his own community, whose trust he had violated, and they faced him.

Like other solutions found by First Nations communities for their catastrophic social problems, this one is prophetic for the rest of us. We face the same problem, but we put off the day when we have to face it head on by evicting abusers from our communities. We persist in maintaining a kind of fantasy: that of the safe and innocent community (and the church is especially guilty of this), by sending offenders to the far end of the country and creating human garbage heaps of the permanently ostracized.

American novelist Russell Banks noticed from his Miami Beach apartment window a group of homeless people living under an overpass, and on further investigation discovered they were sex offenders who had served their time. They couldn't live anywhere within 2,500 feet of where children gather, which essentially meant there was no place in the city for them to live. They were listed on the national sex offender registry for life, and wore electronic parole anklets for 10 years after being released. "The population of homeless people in cities like New York, or anywhere else in America," said Banks, "are be-

ing filled with convicted sex offenders who can't live anywhere."

His novel imagines the life that these outcasts lead, including the protagonist, a 20-year-old pornography addict, "a lonely soul," said Banks, "without contact with the real world—but not psychotic, by any means, not mentally ill even. But confused, lost—there are many ways to describe kids like that, and there are millions of them, more and more."

The title of his latest novel, *Lost Memory of Skin*, refers to the way that the internet is replacing real flesh with the virtual kind—an example of what Banks calls "the digitalization of our erotic life." The hard line that used to exist between reality and fantasy, he believes, is being eroded by the internet and especially by the unlimited access to pornography it offers. "We seem to have lost a kind of skin connection we have to other human beings, and instead we've become increasingly self-referential," he said. Klaus Beier, head of the Institute of Sexology and Sexual Medicine at Berlin's Charité hospital, describes the internet as "a huge, unethical human experiment" in this regard.

We have just celebrated the fact that God was born of a human woman and then lived the life of a man in a particular era of history, a particular place on the planet, and a particular culture and religion. As Lent approaches we face the fact that our God then died the death of a common criminal, killed by his fellow humans. In shar-



## Faithful Reflections

Louisa Blair

ing our human reality, as violent and sordid as it turned out to be for him, God told us that it is precisely through this humanity of ours, within the setting of our own precise place and time and culture, that God communicates him/herself, rather than through our timeless lists of rules and principles. This self-communication of God is known as grace.

Is grace a bit like a ZEC, a *zone d'exploitation contrôlée*, only applying to certain clearly defined areas of human reality? Or is grace perhaps a flowery meadow with a barbed wire fence around it? I suspect that every time I run into a reality that is clearly outside my flowery comfort meadow, it is a call to search for God there with particular attention. As a writer and a Christian I am always asking, where are the edges of grace? Novelists like Nabokov, and more recently Russell Banks and Andrew O'Hagan, contribute in their own way to pushing at those edges by imagining the inner lives of sex abusers, the most despised people in our society, bringing us to identify with them in spite of ourselves.

So what of the lost people living under the overpass? Is grace to be found even there? If we believe in the dignity that the incarnation gives our humanity, then we must say yes, grace is there, too. This is the first step to imagining creative ways of restoring responsible relationships, healing communities, protecting the vulnerable and breaking solitude, and clearing up the confusion between fantasy and reality in both our sexual lives and our community lives.

It's painful climbing over that barbed wire fence, and a constant challenge to our hope in a faithful and loving God. As Catholic writer Flannery O'Connor said, "evil is not simply a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be endured."

*Open our eyes to your presence in the world  
Free our hands to lead others  
to the radiant splendour of your mercy.*

## ACW Scripture Meditation

By Maureen Taylor

Judith is a beautiful, wealthy and pious widow. The name Judith means "Jewess." She is a holy woman who practices strict piety. She keeps all the fasts and appropriate festivals. She lives in a little Israelite town of Beth-lehem which is in imminent danger of the Assyrians who took captive the ten tribes of the northern kingdom in 722 B.C. and Nebuchadnezzar who destroyed Jerusalem and exiled the people of the southern kingdom in 587 B.C. The army is under the leadership of General Holofernes who is to lead a punitive expedition against the West. Holofernes goes beyond the original commission and wants to force religious unity by forcing all men to worship Neba alone. So he becomes a threat to the Israelite religious integrity and her national security.

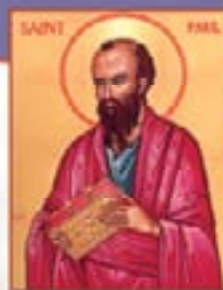
JUDITH 8:9-17: 25

FROM THE APOCRYPHA

*When Judith heard the wicked words spoken by the people against the ruler because they were faint for lack of water, and when she heard all that Uzziah said to them and how he promised under oath to surrender the city to the Assyrians after five days she sent her maid who was in charge of all she possessed to summon Chabris and Charmis, the elders of her city. "Listen to me, rulers of the people of Bethulia! What you have said to the people today is not right, you have even sworn and pronounced this oath between God and you, promising to surrender our city to our enemies unless the Lord turns and helps us within so many days. Who are you that have put God to the test today and are setting yourselves up in the place of God among the sons of men? Are you putting the Lord Almighty to the test - but you will never know anything! You cannot plumb the depths of the human heart, nor find what man is thinking; how do you expect to search our God, who made all these things, or comprehend out his mind or comprehend his thought? No my brethren, do not provoke the Lord, our God to anger. For if he does not choose to help us within these five days, he has the power to protect us within any time he pleases or even destroy us in the presence of our enemies. Do not try to bind the purposes of the Lord, our God; for God is not like man, to be threatened, nor like a human being to be won over by pleading. Therefore, we still wait for his deliverance, let us call upon him to help us and he will hear our voice if it pleases him. In spite of everything let us give thanks to the Lord, our God, who is putting us to the test as he did our forefathers.*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What pact did Uzziah make with the enemy? Why did this anger Judith?
2. What arguments did Judith give for rejecting Uzziah's idea? (There are four.)
3. What is Judah's answer to the problem that her people face?
4. In our own lives how often do we want to put God to a test? How many pacts have we made with God?
5. Does God need to answer our pleas?



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