



# Gazette

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## 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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

## 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."

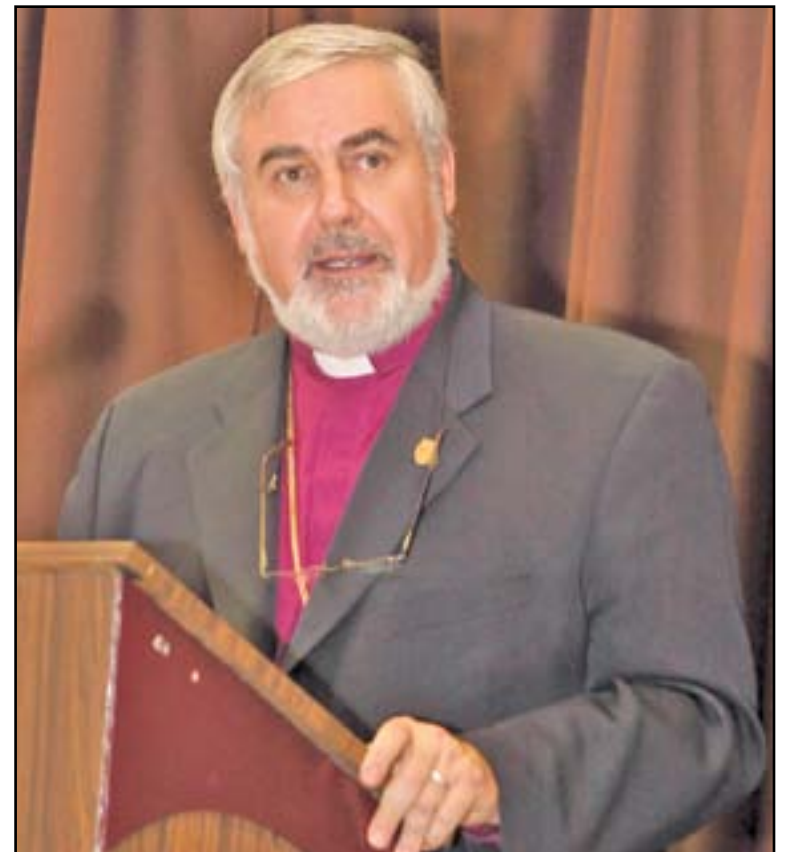
In fielding questions from his audience, Bishop Drainville, who is also co-chair of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada, said churches have a role

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.



## Answering the call

**MUCH OF MY TIME** this year will be spent on issues of personnel and restructuring of ministry. As I go through the diocese, people are increasingly acknowledging the need to become a different kind of church community. They see plainly that our empty churches cannot continue to dominate our collective efforts within a congregation.

The congregations of St Peter, Sherbrooke, St. John the Divine, Thetford Mines, St. James Trois-Rivières, and a number of other church communities have opted to close or give up the responsibility for their buildings. This means that they now have resources to use for ministry—resources that can be used to do what the church is always challenged to do: God's mission in the world.

We in the Diocese of Quebec often have difficulty in attracting ordained clergy or ready-to-be-ordained ordinands. There are some understandable reasons for this problem. Often the individual is married with a spouse who is employed in a well-paying job, leaving such a situation and coming to a new province may present difficulties in finding the spouse suitable employment.

Knowledge of French is often an obstacle to those considering a move to this diocese. Also, the scale of remuneration in our diocese is lower than most dioceses in Canada.

And finally, some of our parishes are in isolated and semi-isolated areas, whereas most graduates of theological colleges are urbanites who are reluctant to try such an adventure. I mention all of these factors because there are still a few individuals who think that all we have to do is put out the "help wanted" sign and the line-ups will start forming.

It is increasingly evident that we must put our emphasis on raising up priests and deacons from within our own communities. We will always need a certain number of theologically trained individuals to help discern, educate, and enable others in ministry. But we must look to our own resources if we are to have the number of ordained clergy that we need.

You, my brothers and sisters, must help in this process. All of us need to be discerning who could lead us in ministry as lay readers, deacons, and priests. We must pray about this, become educated in what the three roles require, and we must be active in mentioning to individuals who we believe have a call that the people of God require their talents and abilities in the church.

Over this year we will be sending prayers to be used every Sunday regarding the need for vocations. As well, we will prepare leaflets that explain the role and function of each vocation and provide a summary of the educational opportunities we will be offering in the diocese to those who answer the call.



LETTER  
FROM  
OUR  
BISHOP

LETTRE  
DE  
NOTRE  
ÉVÊQUE

*Dennis P. Drainville*

Dennis P. Drainville  
Bishop of Quebec / Évêque de Québec

## APPOINTMENTS & TRANSITIONS

A former priest of the Diocese of Quebec will receive an honorary doctorate from Montreal Diocesan Theological College this spring. The Rev. Canon Dr. **John St-Helier Gibaut** is receiving the distinction for his years of service to the ecumenical movement. Canon Gibaut is currently the director of Faith and Order, the theological wing of the Geneva-based World Council of Churches. Ordained in the Diocese of Quebec in 1984, he was assistant curate at St. George,

Lennoxville, and later priest-in-charge of St. Clement's Mission on the Lower North Shore.

The Rev. **Wanda Dillabough** is chaplain to the diocesan Anglican Church Women. She offers pastoral support to the ACW and helps oversee worship at gatherings of the diocesan ACW executive and at the group's biennial.

The Rev. **Martha Spence** has announced she will be leaving as incumbent of the parish of St. John,

Kawawachikamach, later this year. Because of her husband's declining health, they need to be closer to health-care facilities.

Two new auxiliary bishops have been appointed to serve the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Quebec. Fathers **Gaëtan Proulx** and **Denis Grondin** will assist Archbishop **Gérald Cyprien Lacroix** and fellow Auxiliary Bishop **Paul Lortie** in the pastoral leadership of Canada's oldest Roman Catholic diocese.

## Répondre à l'appel

**CETTE ANNÉE**, une grande partie de mon temps sera consacrée à des questions reliées au personnel et à la restructuration du ministère. Mes visites dans différentes régions de notre diocèse me permettent de constater que les Anglicans sont entraînés à prendre conscience de la nécessité de devenir une communauté religieuse différente. Ils réalisent clairement que nos églises vides ne peuvent plus continuer à prendre le dessus sur les efforts collectifs investis au sein de nos congrégations.

Les congrégations de Saint Peter à Sherbrooke, de Saint John the Divine à Thetford Mines, de Saint James à Trois-Rivières, et quelques autres communautés ont choisi de fermer ou d'abandonner la responsabilité de leurs bâtiments. Cela signifie qu'ils ont maintenant des ressources pour le ministère : des ressources qui peuvent être utilisées pour faire ce que l'église est toujours au défi de réussir : accomplir la mission de Dieu dans le monde.

Dans le diocèse de Québec, nous avons de la difficulté à attirer des prêtres ordonnés ou des ordinands prêts à être ordonnés. Il y a évidemment des raisons évidentes à l'existence de ce problème. Souvent, l'individu a un conjoint qui détient un emploi bien rémunéré; quitter une telle situation et déménager dans une nouvelle province peut présenter de sérieuses difficultés pour le conjoint qui doit trouver un nouvel emploi correspondant à ses compétences.

La connaissance du français est souvent un obstacle de taille pour ceux qui envisagent de venir dans notre diocèse. L'échelle de rémunération dans notre diocèse est aussi considérablement plus basse que dans la plupart des diocèses au Canada.

Et enfin, certaines de nos paroisses sont situées dans des régions isolées et semi-isolées, alors que la plupart des diplômés des collèges théologiques sont des citadins souvent réticents à tenter une telle aventure. Je mentionne tous ces facteurs car certains croient encore que tout ce que nous avons à faire est d'annoncer des postes à combler et que nous n'aurons que l'embaras du choix à travers une foule massive de candidats.

Il est de plus en plus évident que nous devons mettre l'accent sur le développement de prêtres et diacres à partir de nos propres communautés. Nous aurons toujours besoin d'un certain nombre d'individus formés théologiquement pour identifier, éduquer et appuyer nos membres du clergé. Mais nous devons nous tourner vers le développement de nos propres ressources si nous voulons atteindre le nombre de prêtres dont nous avons besoin.

Vous, mes frères et sœurs, devez contribuer à ce processus. Nous avons tous besoin de découvrir et d'identifier les leaders qui peuvent exercer un ministère en tant que lecteurs laïcs, diacres ou prêtres. Nous devons prier à ce sujet, déterminer ce que ces trois rôles exigent, et nous devons être proactifs en assurant ceux qui croient avoir une vocation que le peuple de Dieu a besoin de leurs talents et leurs aptitudes au sein de l'église.

Au cours de cette année, nous allons préparer des prières à être utilisées tous les dimanches concernant notre besoin de vocations. Nous allons de plus préparer des brochures qui expliqueront le rôle et la fonction de chacune des vocations et qui présenteront un aperçu des opportunités de formation qui seront disponibles dans le diocèse afin d'appuyer ceux qui répondront à l'appel.

## BISHOP'S CALENDAR

Jan. 24	Deanery of St. Francis clericus meeting
Jan. 31-Feb. 9	In Rome attending an international ecumenical conference focussing on the church and its mission to the poor
Feb. 20	Meeting of the Bishop's Examining Chaplains Committee
Feb. 27-March 1	In Toronto meeting with students at the Toronto School of Theology

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## Lenten retreat ponders idea of Jesus as Saviour

During the season of Lent, Christians are invited to reflect on the ministry, life and death of Jesus called the Christ in the writings of scripture and the church.

We believe that Jesus died for us. What does it mean to confess that Jesus is saviour, indeed, the saviour of the world?

We will explore the meaning of this belief by studying the gospel of Mark as Jesus faces the forces of temple and empire conspiring to silence him and some of the teachings of the Christian Church down the centuries as a means of enriching our own belief.

**When and where:** Friday, March 9 at 5:00 p.m. to Sunday, March 11, at 3:00 p.m. at the Maison du Renouveau (870, Carré de Tracy Est, Québec).

**Format:** This event will combine group study and silent meditation. The first day of the retreat we will engage in a group study the gospel of Mark and other texts reflecting the various perspectives of the church on the effect of Christ's passion on his followers, the early church, and our own time. On the second day of the retreat we will enter into silence as we deepen our communion with Jesus and with one another. During this period of silence we will meet for periods of centering prayer.

**Leaders:** Co-leaders of the retreat will be the Venerable Garth Bulmer, executive archdeacon of the Diocese of Quebec and the Reverend Edwin Stretch, chaplain of Trinity Church, Ste-Foy and coordinator of the Diocesan Pastoral Care Programme.

**Cost:** The cost for two night lodging, all meals, study rooms and materials will be \$140. Clergy may draw from their continuing education fund. Bursaries of \$40 each are available upon request for anyone needing some financial assistance.

**Registration:** Can be done by phone (418 692 3858), email (gbulmer@quebec.anglican.ca), or completing a registration form. Payment can be made by cheque (payable to Archdeacon Garth Bulmer) or cash. Maximum number of participants: 20.



Visit the Diocese of Quebec's redesigned website:  
[www.quebec.anglican.org](http://www.quebec.anglican.org)

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Money could be better spent than on repairs

I just cannot seem to understand the meaning of "mission."

When I read the article "Repairs stalled by heritage grant cuts" (Jan. 2012 *Gazette*), I remember being told at several meetings that the time has come to start thinking that we should not be so attached to our church buildings. It is time to think of cutting back on expenses, even selling our buildings, and maybe even renting a cheaper hall to hold our Sunday services.

Then I read this article about

how the government funds that were promised would be cut back and plans for renovations would be put on hold. These funds would have been used for costly renovations, restoring the insides of All Saints' Chapel, a "charming but dilapidated ... chapel," which has not been used for worship in more than 20 years. This chapel would then be used as a multi-purpose meeting area.

I am sure there are many other ways to put this money to good use than a dilapidated building

needing major repairs. This chapel is also surrounded by hotels, plus Carter Hall, where meetings may be held at a lot less cost than the total of these renovations.

But then again it has taken me more than three years to even try to understand mission and then I read an article such as this one—using our money or government funds it is all the same—to restore an extremely old, broken down building.

Nancy Roy  
Sainte-Foy

### Train service of 'incaculable' value to Gaspé

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**  
Colleges and Universities as they begin to find a way to enter into the life of the nation. It is also environmentally beneficial to the surrounding land and waterways, a consideration which every year grows in importance but is totally neglected by the government and Via Rail.

Father Gérard Sainte-Croix, the vicar general of the Diocese of Gaspé recently said, "The loss of the train service will have a

significant negative impact on the whole of the region. Many of the most vulnerable people will feel the impact. We must not let this happen."

The representatives of the two churches have agreed to work together to support every effort to have the Gaspé rail line continue to be the important and vital public service that it has become. They call on all citizens to take the issue seriously.

## Education event back in spring

A date and place have been fixed for this year's Diocesan Education Event. It will take place from the evening of Sunday, May 13 to midday on Wednesday, May 16 at the Maison du Renouveau retreat centre just outside of Quebec City.

Once again the instructors will include faculty from Montreal Diocesan Theological College and McGill University's Faculty of Religious Studies, including Canon John Simons and Canon Paul Jennings. Details on the content of the event will be available as the date draws closer. The over-arching theme of the event will be "Anglicanism in a post-denominational church."

The education event is open to all licensed lay readers, lay readers in training, deacons, and other clergy seeking further formation. If you aren't sure whether or not you are eligible to participate, please contact Archdeacon Bruce Myers at bmyers@quebec.anglican.ca or 418 914 7582.

As in past years, the cost of this event is covered through the budget of the diocesan synod, in support of the ongoing education of our diocese's leaders. Travel costs will be reimbursed according to diocesan policy.

If you plan to attend this year's education event, please contact Sherry Knox at the Synod Office as soon as possible at synodoffice@quebec.anglican.ca or 418 692 3858.

## 'Tis the season: Getting ready for annual vestries

**THIS IS THE SEASON** for vestry meetings! Right now, treasurers in most parishes are hard at work compiling their financial information as they prepare their reports for the upcoming vestry meetings. They are also putting the final touches on their 2012 budgets.

Here are a few tidbits of information that might be of help to those treasurers, and that might interest vestry members as well, as they will have to approve those budgets for the coming year:

- For parishes with stipendiary clergy, the 2012 stipend agreements were sent out to clergy at the end of December and had been updated with a base stipend increase of 2.999%, in accordance with the annual update procedure approved by the Diocesan Executive Council in 2010. All employers' costs were also updated to reflect the 2012 rates.

- Insurance costs will be going up by 3% for buildings insured for reconstruction; buildings insured for demolition should see only a modest increase, if any.

- Fair Share rates have not changed: the parish assessment for 2012 will be determined as 16, 5% of the 2010 assessable parish revenue.

- All deaneries receive annual grants from the diocese that they use for ministry, youth activities and camps, lay reader development, pastoral care, and stipend and Fair Share support to parishes that need financial help. But a corporation has to apply for this financial help. Rural deans are available to help with this process. But remember that deanery meetings do not happen every month; they only occur only two or three times a year. So the earliest a parish gets a request in, the more chances it has of seeing it accepted.

Bishop Dennis has summoned Synod for later this year, from November 2 to 4. Synod will be held at the *Forêt Montmorency* facilities just outside Quebec City. By the time you read this, photos of this facility, which is operated by Université Laval, will have been posted on the diocesan website. Go check it out!

Because of the upcoming Synod, decisions made at vestry meetings will be particularly important this year. All vestries are required to choose a Synod delegate, as well as an alternate. If you refer to the work carried out during a Synod as quoted above, the choice of a Synod delegate is of crucial importance, as this person must bring all the parish's questions with her or him, and his or her vote will represent the will of his or her congregation.

This is a very serious and important responsibility, not only during Synod, but also afterwards, as your Synod delegate must report to the vestry on the work accomplished during Synod and inform the congregation of the decisions made during its deliberations. Now is the time to formulate all your questions and concerns and make sure your delegate gets Synod to address them.

In preparation for Synod, Bishop Dennis also noted at the last DEC meeting held last November that we need to update the information contained in the database managed at the diocesan office regarding parish and congregation members. We will be working on a framework in the coming weeks and will contact wardens in order to obtain their assistance in this process.

In the meantime, if you are reading this, you are a person with whom we want to stay in touch. So please call Sherry Knox at Church House at (418) 692-3858 or send her an e-mail at synodoffice@quebec.anglican.ca, and make sure we have the correct coordinates for you in our database.

I'll talk to you again next month!



## Tending the Garden

News from  
rue des Jardins with  
**Guylaine Caron**  
Executive Director



# 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.

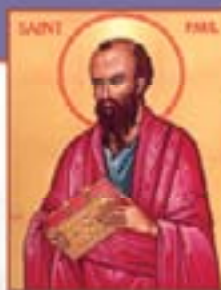
JUDITH 8:9-17: 25

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 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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