**Convention Reports Given by Parish Presidents and Diocesan Executive**

**Witold Pilecki – Bernice Duncan, President of Holy Trinity , Englehart**

Witold Pilecki was born in Poland 1901,he was part of the Polish underground during WW2 1939- 1945.

In August 1940, a group of Polish political opponents were imprisoned in Auschwitz. Pilecki volunteered to investigate why some of these political opponents died, he allowed himself to be arrested by the Nazis, he remained in Auschwitz for the next two and a half years as prisoner 4859.

At the time of Pilecki’s internment, Auschwitz was a concentration camp intended to hold Polish political prisoners. He witnessed the changing demographic and horrifying treatment of each persecuted group. His reports described the early experiments conducted on Soviet prisoners of war, who were murdered with poisonous gas. This laid the foundation for the mass murder of many Jews in the gas chambers and crematoria. Pilecki describes experiments on Roma and Sinti prisoners, many died from their injuries . The underground could not believe the horrors; of the ovens, the gas chambers, injections used to murder people, they thought he was exaggerating. Pilecki wrote a report of his time in Auschwitz known as “Witold’s Report”.

For the next two and a half years, Pilecki and fellow underground members slowly worked to feed his reports up the Polish chain of command to London.

The British and Americans at this time were not ready or capable to liberate the camp. With no help coming and his imminent transfer to another camp, Pilecki fearing for his life escaped in April 1943.

In 1945 at the end of WW2 Auschwitz was liberated by the Soviets.

Poland is now communist, Pilecki is arrested by the Communist Polish authorities in1947, accused of spying, his trial a sham, he was found guilty and executed May 25,1948.

Witold Pilecki did make a difference; his intelligence reports told what was really happening in the concentration camps.

The details of his bravery were revealed four decades later after the fall of Communism in 1989. His story has been published and there is a movie” The Death of Captain Pilecki”.

**Carlo Acutis - Audrey Shelton Our Mother Of Perpetual Help Council**

“The more Eucharist we receive, the more we become like Jesus; so on this earth we will have a foretaste of heaven.”

That is a quote from a young Italian man who never reached the age of 16.

Carlo Acutis was born in May 1991 to Italian parents. Although his parents weren’t practicing Catholics, Carlo was in love with Jesus from a very early age. At 7 years old he requested to receive his First Holy Communion. He went to Mass every day as well as praying the rosary and spending time at the foot of the tabernacle.

Other than that, he was an ordinary child who loved sports and computer games. He was very intelligent and by the age of nine he started learning computer programing from the books his parents bought him.

He loved the Eucharist and wanted to spread devotion to the Holy Eucharist world wide. His parents took him to many of the places where Eucharistic miracles had occurred. Carlo took pictures and by the age of 11 he started compiling a catalog of Eucharistic miracles on a website he created. He completed it in 2005.

In the fall of October 2006 he was diagnosed with leukemia. He offered his suffering for Pope Benedict XVI and for the Catholic Church. A week after the diagnoses, he died. He was 15 years old.

He loved St. Francis of Assisi and had spent time in Assisi and so asked that he be buried there. He also had Jacinta and Francisco Marto (the children of Fatima) and St. Bernadette as guides for his life.

In May of 2013, Carlo was declared a Servant of God and then in 2018 Pope Francis declared him Venerable.

Several miracles have been attributed to his intercession.

A photo exhibition of all the Eucharistic miracle sites that Carlo had documented has been traveling around the world.

Recent surveys have found that 70% of people who claim to be Catholic, do not believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Carlo Acutis is making a Holy difference through his website, the traveling exhibition of his photos and the example of his life.

As people come to know about these Eucharistic miracles, which have been proven by scientist to be true, we will have to acknowledge the true Eucharistic presence of Jesus.

We can say with Carlo “The Eucharist is my highway to heaven.”

To learn more about Carlo Acutis and the dozens of Eucharistic Miracles reported, visit his website [www.carloacutis.com](http://www.carloacutis.com).

**Pope John Paul II and the World Youth Day – Colleen Landers President of St. Anthony of Padua Report**

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In 1984 at the close of the Holy Year of Redemption, over 300,000 young people from around the world responded to the invitation of His Holiness John Paul II for an International Jubilee of youth on Palm Sunday in St. Peter’s square. Looking out to the crowds who answered his invitation he said, “What a fantastic spectacle is presented on this stage by your gathering here today! Who claimed that today’s youth has lost their sense of values? Is it really true that they cannot be counted on?” It was at this gathering that the Holy Father entrusted to the youth what is now known as the World Youth Day Cross, to be carried throughout the world as a symbol of the love of Christ for humanity. Pope John Paul made a difference by showing our Youth do have values. Starting in 1987, World Youth Day was celebrated for the first time internationally and every 2 to 3 years from that moment on in different host cities. As of 2023, World Youth Day has been hosted by 14 different countries around the world in almost all of the continents. Europe has hosted it 10 different times; The Americas – North, Central and South – have hosted a total of 4; Oceania and Asia have each hosted one. There have been 12 International World Youth Day celebrations, where the youth continue to answer the invitation of the Holy Father in staggering numbers and carry home the message received there to be Christ's light to the world. The 17th World Youth Day 2002 was a Catholic youth festival held July 23 to 28, 2002, in Toronto, Ontario. As the event is ultimately an expression of faith, and a critical expression of faith is through service to others, World Youth Day 2002 had the support of some 25,000 volunteers; and some 100,000 pilgrims themselves spent three hours each on one of 750 service projects. The next world youth day theme is “Mary arose and went with haste” (Lk 1:39) and will be held for the first time in the capital city of Lisbon, Portugal.

**Mary Jo Leddy – Marg Johns**

**President of Sacred Heart of Jesus,Timmins**

Mary Jo Leddy is a writer, speaker, theologian and social activist. In addition to attaining a PhD from the University of Toronto, she is the recipient of several honorary doctoral degrees.

Dr. Leddy is widely recognized for her work with refugees at Toronto’s Romero House. After years as a member of the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion, she began working at a welcome house for refugees in 1991. At the time the welcome house was run by the Congregation of Christian Brothers, who utilized a shelter/social work type of model. The Brothers did outstanding work in that they sponsored a number of refugees many of whom were women and children from Eritrea and Somalia. What was apparent to Dr. Leddy who worked the night shift, was the change in how the refugees interacted with one another after hours when the day staff and managers weren’t there. After hours, the refugees were opening their doors to one another and inviting each other over for tea, and generally having fun and enjoying each other’s company.

So, when the Brothers made the decision to close the welcome house, she spearheaded a group to keep their good work going. They named it Romero House and they utilized a community model. Over time, they were able to purchase other buildings in the neighbourhood and now have a total of 12 apartments for transitional housing. Each building has live-in staff. They also purchased what was at one time, a flower shop and converted it into a community centre, not just for refugees but for the neighbourhood. In addition to providing support, they have a clothing boutique and hold a weekly food bank.

Initially there was pushback from some of the neighbours. It was a NIMBY attitude. Pope Francis in response to the Syrian crisis addresses this issue – he stated that we have become so used to the suffering of others that there is a “globalization of indifference”. He said that we have “forgotten how to weep”. That was certainly true in this case. Some neighbors were outright hostile and vicious. They did, however, slowly accept the refugees through what Dr. Leddy described as a thousand acts of daily kindness. One thing they did was host street parties. That seemed to be the impetus that allowed the neighbours to get to know the refugees. As they got to know each other on a more personal level, children began playing together and befriending one another. Through these events, one of which was a lamb roast, neighbourhood families began socializing with refugee families. To their delight, they discovered that face-to-face interaction lessened the need for services like employment counselling because the neighbors were helping the refugees and aiding in their assimilation into Canadian life. There were even instances of neighbors accompanying refugee families to register their children for school and assisting with child care. **“When refugees have a name and a face and a story, we begin to know who they are, and who *we* are”**

Dr. Leddy described the feeling of seeing this transformation as “the Gospel walking off the page”. The staff of Romero House also reciprocate by contributing to the neighbourhood community. They are members of the Resident’s Association and participate in the discussions pertaining to neighbourhood concerns.

As stated earlier, Dr. Leddy is an author. She is a founding editor of the Catholic New Times.

She has authored several books; some of her more intriguing titles are “At the Border Called Hope: Where Refugees are Neighbours”, “Why are we Here? A Meditation on Canada” and “Our Friendly Local Terrorist”.

For her outstanding work, Dr. Leddy has received the Ontario Citizenship Award and the Order of Canada.

**Organization Report - Lynne Rowlandson Chairperson**

The person I have chosen is Sr. Susan Moran. Sr. Susan co-founded the “Out of the Cold Program” 37 years ago.

Sr. Susan Moran was born in Montreal but raised in Toronto. She studied at the Loretto Abby Catholic Secondary School then attended Teachers College in Toronto. Following that she taught school for a few years before joining the Abby in 1963.

Sr. Moran joined the staff at St. Michael’s College School as a Special Education Assistant and helped with the Chaplaincy program starting in 1987. That year a homeless man that Moran and her students took food and clothing to, was beaten to death. His death prompted Moran and the students along with the co-founders, a Basilian priest, Rev. John Murphy and an Anglican priest, Rev. John Erb and to create a soup kitchen in an old store front on St. Clair Ave. West.

Three decades later, the “Out of the Cold” program provides shelter for thousands of people across the province. In 2016, 16 Toronto organizations supported by Dixon Hall Neighborhood Services, which doesn’t track all Toronto programs, provided warmth, safety and food to more than 1240 people each day. There are also programs in York Region, St. Catherine, Hamilton, Woodstock, Barrie, Sudbury, North Bay to name a few as well as outside Ontario and the US. More than three decades after she co-founded “Out of the Cold” faith based organizations including Churches, Synagogues, and Mosques open their doors and offer a safe place to eat, warm up and sleep.

In her life story written sometime in 1995, she said: “We are blessed by God to share our lives with the poor here in Toronto and throughout the world. Love, compassion and friendship are gifts to be shared.” “I know my mission, my calling is here with the homeless,” Moran told the Star. “We have to take better care of our vulnerable. There has to be better affordable housing.”

Sr. Moran had thought this program would be a temporary solution to homelessness but as we know the situation persists and is present in all our areas today and is ever increasing.

“In winters, for most of her adult life, she would have been spending her days and nights making sure people were out of the cold. Sr. Moran was driven,” her Superior explained. “There are many stories chronicling her remarkably selfless life, by a singular mission to create a welcome, loving and warm place for those who struggled to do it for themselves. Sr. Moran was remembered by her niece, Mary Jo Eustace, as a smart, feisty determined woman of enormous faith, who could connect with everyone she met, never passed judgement and was known for her love of giving flowers and writing long, loving messages, often with gold or silver sharpies.

She was a force of nature. She was all about love and acceptance for everybody. From a homeless person on the street to the Queen of England, she treated everyone the same.”

Mayor John Tory described “Out of the Cold” as the best example of how communities can organize to help the most vulnerable among them. “Sister Susan Moran was at the very heart of developing that model and making it work. She has left the city a lasting legacy that is deeply appreciated.”

The longest running overnight program runs out of St. Patrick’s church on McCaul Street and started a few years after the creation of “Out of the Cold”.

Father Santo Arrigo said Moran always came to community events and was known for grabbing the microphone to encourage the crowd. She would say” don’t forget, look after each other”.

Where her influence has been is to show people they can do something to really make a difference in the lives of people who call the streets home.

Her work and tireless dedication was recognized. Sr. Moran was invested with the Order of Canada in 2006 and was inducted into the Order of St. Michael in 2001 through St. Michael’s College School.

Sr. Susan Moran died December 21st, 2016 at the residence of Our Lady’s Missionaries, the place she called home since 1963. She was 78.

**John Augustine Ryan and the Minimum Wage – Communication Chairperson – Colleen Landers**

John Augustine Ryan (1869–1945) was an American Catholic priest who was a noted moral theologian and advocate of social justice. Ryan lived during a decisive moment in the development of Catholic social teaching within the United States. The largest influx of immigrants in America's history, the emancipation of American slaves, and the industrial revolution had produced a new social climate in the early twentieth century, and the Catholic Church faced increasing pressure to take a stance on questions of social reform. John Augustine Ryan, recognized an authoritative moral and scientific analysis of the “living wage” concept introduced in Rerum Novarum. The concept of a living wage described the need for all those who work to receive a fair wage by their employer that would enable them to sustain themselves and their families. Ryan published his dissertation under the title A Living Wage that was translated into multiple languages. The dissertation contended that the right for a living wage was natural rather than positive, social, or legalistic. A natural right exists from birth rather than being endowed as a share of social good by an authority like a positive right.

Without a living wage, Ryan believed that people could not attain their natural end of human flourishing as God intended; they could not achieve the goods in accordance with human rational nature as established by God. Ryan emphasised the examination of the human faculties to establish moral principles, and he believed it was an acknowledgement of human dignity in social ethics. When people deprived others of a living wage, Ryan believed they took away the individual’s right to pursue self-perfection. By associating a living wage with traditional natural rights, Ryan hoped to battle for justice claims which went far beyond the claims traditionally articulated in the moral theology manuals” (Gaillardetz, 1990).

Beyond authoring political texts, Ryan also took a number of decisively political actions. Ryan took an active interest in trade unions, promoting their cause to outside groups, addressing union gatherings, and helping to author and promote social legislation. In 1923, Ryan initiated the Catholic Conference on Industrial Problems. Ryan worked actively with the National Consumers' League, which attempted to encourage consumers to push for decent working conditions. 1n 1931, Ryan urged the federal government to develop a $5-billion public works campaign. In 1933, the Roosevelt administration enlisted Ryan's assistance in mustering support among Catholic clerics for its NRA codes. One of Ryan's most controversial ventures into American politics was his national radio endorsement of Democratic Party candidate Franklin D. Roosevelt when he ran for re-election as president in 1936. On a broadcast on national radio on October 8, 1936, he urged Catholics to repudiate Coughlin and support the New Deal and Roosevelt.

**St. Josephine Bakhita - Marie Black Education and Health Standing Chair**

Saint Josephine Bakhita was born in 1869 in southern Sudan and was kidnapped at the age of 7. Frightened and unable to remember her name, her Arab captors named her Bakhita, which means “fortunate” in Arabic.

Bakhita was sold into slavery, forced to walk barefoot long distances and was tortured by her various owners. There was one horrifying incident where she was cut 114 times, including her breasts, belly and right arm. Salt was then rubbed into her wounds to ensure the scarring was permanent.

Her final owner was the Italian consul in Khartoum, the capital city of Sudan. When he returned to Italy with Bakhita, she worked as a nanny for one of his colleagues, who then sent her with one of his daughters to a school in Venice run by the Canossian Sisters.

It was here that she encountered Christianity for the first time and eventually was baptized, received her First Communion and Confirmation. Her baptismal name was ‘Josephine Margaret’ and ‘Fortunata’, which is the Latin translation of the Arabic, Bakhita.

After refusing to return to Sudan with her owner, the Italian courts ruled that she could remain in Italy as a free woman, since slavery was not recognized in Italy.

Josephine became a novice with the Canossian Daughters of Charity religious order, then took her final vows in December 1896. Afterwards, she was sent to Northern Italy where she remained for 42 years working as a cook and doorkeeper at the convent, and teaching others to love God. She died on February 8, 1947 at the age of 78.

Once she was asked, “What would you do if you were to meet your captors?” Without hesitation she replied, “If I were to meet the slave-traders who kidnapped me and even those who tortured me, I would kneel and kiss their hands, for if that did not happen, I would not be a Christian and Religious today.”

It is said that her legacy is, “that transformation is possible through suffering.”

She was beatified in 1992, and canonized in October 2000. Saint Bakhita became the first Sudanese saint, the Patron Saint of Sudan and also the patroness for victims of human trafficking and oppressed Christians. Her feast day is February 8th, which is also the World Day of Prayer against Human Trafficking.

St. Josephine Bakhita has made a tremendous difference by inspiring, consoling and bringing hope to those who have been and are victims of slavery and human trafficking. The Bakhita Foundation was thus created to help make that difference.

An amusing or favourite quote is,

“I travel slowly, one step at a time, because I am carrying two big suitcases. One of them contains my sins, and the other, which is much heavier, contains the infinite merits of Jesus. When I reach heaven I will open the suitcases and say to God: ‘Eternal Father, now you can judge.’ And to Saint Peter; ‘Close the door because I am staying.”

**-. Benedict Daswa – Annette Kelly Past President/Historian**

South African schoolteacher, Benedict Daswa was beatified in 2015 in the remote northern village of Tshitanini, near his home in Limpopo province. Cardinal Angelo Amato, prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes, said that Blessed Daswa "gave historic witness to the Gospel, even to the shedding of blood" and that "from now on will be called 'blessed.'" Blessed Daswa, who was 43 when he was murdered Feb. 2, 1990, is the first person from the southern African region to undergo beatification, a step toward sainthood. Blessed Daswa was married with eight children, including one born a few months after his death.

He was killed by fellow villagers after he refused to pay a sorcerer who promised to end lightning storms that were causing heavy damage in the region. At the time, all households in the community were expected to contribute a small amount of money to a man known as "the doctor" who would then identify the person believed to be responsible for causing the storms, and that person would be killed.

“He (Blessed Daswa) had said that, as a Catholic, he could not accept the power of witchcraft nor the attacks of witch hunt” and, "for that, the church has recognized him as a blessed martyr."

Blessed Daswa "was a committed lay Catholic and the loving husband and father of a large family; a dedicated teacher and volunteer catechist," and "an active and charitable member of the community," His "great moral courage and his passion for the truth led him to openly and very publicly oppose the belief and practice of witchcraft," the archbishop said.

"Aware of the fear caused by the practices of identifying witches, the harm this does to the fabric of social relations and the inevitable killing of innocent people, he was prepared to oppose this practice which still persists today, out of love for Christ and at the cost of his own life."

Witchcraft is a taboo subject in South Africa, and many people have died in the practice of witchcraft, in opposing it and in witch hunts, Archbishop Brislin said. It is hoped that Blessed Daswa's "legacy will be to develop healing and truth in the community in which he lived and beyond.”

Blessed Daswa's feast day is celebrated Feb. 1.

**Fr.Edward Dowling—Anne Plaunt, Life Member Liaison**

Fr. Dowling, also known as Fr, Ed, was a Jesuit priest, a spiritual advisor to Bill W. founder of Alcoholics Anonymous.

A friend of Fr. Ed’s, developed a drinking problem after his wife passed away.  Fr, Ed brought him to an AA meeting.  While there, he noticed the similarities between the 12 step program and the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola.  Inspired by theses similarities he formed and supported similar programs.  CANA Conferences, a marriage enrichment program for struggling Catholic couples. CANA stands for , “Couples not alone” and refers to the wedding at Cana.  He also worked with Recovery Inc. now Recovery International, Divorcees Anonymous, for those struggling with a failed marriage and Montserrat group, for those with moral dilemmas.

Fr Ed was not an alcoholic himself but used the12 step program to get over his own problems of overeating and smoking.

Fr. Dowling found strength in helping the anxiety plagued student, the troubled married couple, the addict.

When giving a talk at an AA gathering he likened the interior conflict he endured during his noviciate to that of alcoholics who struggle with the notion of surrendering to their Higher Power.  This opened him up to the idea that God was not truly absent but was waiting patiently for his “yes”.  In this way his journey to mature faith began with his “via negativa”.He developed the wisdom to recognize the dark places where , in  his own mind, he had excluded God and gained the humility to ask God to illuminate them.  Fr. Ed, carried his experience, of the “via  negativa”, into his work in Alcoholics Anonymous.

It was in working with AA that he attained the lasting sense of inner peace that came with knowing he was exactly where God wanted him to be.

He considered sitting with AA members at a meeting, an experience of being in the presence of holiness.

Author, Daniel Amiri wrote, “The life of Father Dowling is an illustration of someone with personal appeal, who in deep prayer, lived for others, with empathy and sensitivity.  His story, is of a man,  who embodied the faith totally.

In the Jesuit order Fr Ed’s role was a comparatively low position. He was not a professor on the staff of the Jesuit magazine.  Instead he counselled people with problems, including drunks, drug addicts and the mentally ill, and yet as Daniel Amiri stated, “ It is faith like that of Fr. Dowling that will bring people closer to the church and revitalize our Catholic communities.

**Oscar Romero – Shirley Gravel, Diocesan President**

Oscar Romero was born into a family of ten on August 15 1917 in, El Salvador..

When he was 14 years old, he wanted to be a priest so he went to study at a seminary. When his mother became ill, he left the seminary and worked in a gold mine for three months.

In 1937 he went to Rome to study and stayed there during World War II.

In 1942, at the age of 25, he was ordained a priest and returned to El Salvador. He did a lot of parish work like visiting prisons, organising catechism classes and working with others in the Church to provide help and food for the poor.

On June 21,1970, at age 52 he was made a bishop.

El Salvador was a violent country in the mid 1970s. The government and army began killing poor people who stood up for their rights. When the army killed three people in a village of his diocese, he comforted the families and wrote to the President to protest about the murders.

Romero became Archbishop of San Salvador. Some rich people were happy because they thought he would stop priests from helping the poor to stand up for their basic rights. But a few weeks later, his friend Fr Grande was shot and killed, along with two companions. The following Sunday, Archbishop Romero allowed only one Mass in the whole diocese - at the Cathedral - where he spoke out against the murders

In 1977, as the violence in El Salvador continued, Romero continued to speak out. He appealed to them to end the killings and to begin reforming land ownership and allow for political representation of the poor.

Every Sunday his sermon was broadcast by radio. The whole country listened. Romero’s life was often threatened

On March 23 1980, in his sermon, he ordered the army to stop killing people: The next day, he was killed as he said Mass. Thousands came to the funeral. The army fired into the crowd. 30 people died and hundreds were injured.

In 1983,John Paul II also asked for dialogue between the government and opposition to end El Salvador's civil war

The civil war in El Salvador continued until 1992.

On 21 December 2010, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 24 March as the International Day for the Right to the Truth concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims which recognizes, in particular, the important work and values of Romero.