

Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things: Stories from the Saskatoon Catholic Community

Part I: In the Beginning

Go-pher It: The Story of St. Paul's Church

Records indicate that the Kusch family were the first Catholics to settle in Saskatoon. They and their seven children came to Saskatoon with a Temperance Colony from Ontario. Mrs. Kusch gave birth to five more children after they settled in Saskatoon. The Kusch family had been devout Catholic Churchgoers in Ontario, but because there was no Church in Saskatoon, they had to wait until a traveling priest stopped in order to celebrate Mass. Whenever a priest came through from Duck Lake or Prince Albert, the Kusch family would invite all of the other Catholics to their home and Mass would be said in their kitchen.

As time went on, the Catholic population grew, and it became impossible for all of them to congregate in one small house. One day, an Oblate priest, Father Emard, and two Oblate brothers happened to stop in at the Kusch home. The Oblate priest was an avid gopher hunter, so after Mass, he asked Mr. Kusch if he could shoot a few gophers on the Kusch land. He had a wonderful time in the warm September sun, and as he looked around at the incredible beauty of the Saskatoon riverbank, he thought, "This would be a great place to build a church!" He immediately went back into the house, offered Mr. Kusch a cheque, and began planning Saskatoon's first Catholic Church.

All the able-bodied Catholics, young and old, volunteered to help build the little Church, and as the building proceeded, the priest lived with the Kusch family, and the two brothers stayed in a tent in the backyard. St. Paul's Church was opened in 1903. The number of the first congregation is a little uncertain-some records say it began with three families-some say with 59 people-given the fact that they were all good Catholics, both could be true! By 1909, the little Church was bursting at the seams, and in July of 1910, Sir Wilfred Laurier laid the cornerstone of the present-day St. Paul's Cathedral. Interestingly, Emmett Hall was an altar boy at the first mass celebrated in that building.

Alleluia, God: The Story of St. Paul's Hospital

In 1906, a typhoid epidemic hit Saskatoon, and 160 people were reported to have typhoid fever. There was only one small makeshift hospital that had been set up during the Northwest Rebellion, but very few medical personnel were on hand to help the sick. The only Catholic registered nurse in the area had died of typhoid fever a year earlier. Father Vachon, who was the pastor at St. Paul's Church was beside himself, because so many people seeking care had come to him. He filled up his tiny rectory with eight makeshift beds, and he did his best to help his dying parishioners. Every day, he prayed to God to send a miracle to help save the people.

One Sunday, it happened that two Grey Nuns who had been sent on a begging mission by their Superior stopped off in Saskatoon to go to Mass before returning home to St. Boniface. After Mass, they walked over to the Rectory to introduce themselves to the priest. They knocked on the door, and Father Vachon opened it.

One of them said, "Hello Father, I am Sister Phaneuf and this is Sister Guay. We are Grey Nun nurses from-" At that point, Father Vachon interrupted them. His eyes filled with tears as he fell to his knees, raised his arms and said, "Thank you, Dear Lord; you have sent me my miracle." The two sisters stayed on after receiving permission from their Superior, and were instrumental in setting up the first St. Paul's Hospital in Saskatoon, an institution that would be owned by the Grey Nuns for the next 92 years.

Setting the stage for St. Paul's School Division

In the beginning, the Saskatchewan school system was largely based on the system that was in place in Ontario. All schools were founded on Christianity, and they were either Protestant or Catholic. Whoever had the greater numbers formed the Public school board; the words "Catholic" and "Separate" were not interchangeable. So, in places like Gravelbourg, where the majority was Catholic, the Catholics formed the Public School Board, and the Protestants formed the Separate School Board.

In Saskatoon, where the minority was Catholic, a Catholic Separate School Board was formed. These separate school boards, whether Protestant or Catholic, were protected by law; in other words, because Separate schools were operating legally when Saskatchewan entered Confederation in 1905, then, "by law", they were entitled to their share of the school taxes.

By 1910, there were 86 Catholic school-aged children in Saskatoon and many of their parents had come from Ontario and Quebec where Catholic schools were firmly established. This is the story of one such man, an outspoken lawyer who had come from Ontario prior to 1910, and his fight to establish a Separate School System in Saskatoon. Details are sketchy, so the following is a story of how events might have occurred.

O' "Leary" of Lawyers

There is a story told about a Catholic lawyer by the name of Macdonald, and it may or may not be true, but it makes for an interesting legend about the beginning of St. Paul's School in Saskatoon. Mr. Macdonald moved to Saskatoon from Ontario in 1910, and almost immediately, began campaigning for a Catholic school. By 1911, three classrooms were set up in the basement of the Church; by 1912, they'd moved across the street, and by 1913, a new school was necessary.

Macdonald, by this time, was a trustee on the school board, and he began making arrangements to borrow a substantial amount of money. But he had two problems! The first was in the person of Father Joe O'Leary, who did not want St. Paul's to carry a heavy debt load, so he tried to get Macdonald kicked off the board. O'Leary called for a police investigation because he believed that non-Catholics and women had been allowed to vote for Macdonald, and that was illegal!

Macdonald's second opponent was an outspoken Orangeman who resented the loss of the school tax that was now being given to the Separate board. He pushed for amalgamation until 1917, when City Council came up with a plan that satisfied both parties.

Financial worries continued to plague the Catholic School Board, and if it was not for the fact that the teaching sisters worked for almost no wages, the board would have gone under. In 1932, creditors did threaten foreclosure, and Emmett Hall did some fancy negotiating in Toronto to keep the system afloat. As a result of Hall's plan, the parish sold the school to the board and St. Paul's School Division stood on its own from that time onward.

St. George's Church and the Faith of Father Firman

Immigrants from the Ukraine began coming to Saskatchewan in the late 1800s, but it was not until after the First World War that there was a need for a Byzantine Church. In 1917, the former St. Paul's Church building was purchased for \$500, and in 1918, the land that St. George's Cathedral now stands on was purchased from the Separate School Board for \$2500.

In the 1930s, a large wave of immigration occurred and a bigger church became necessary. Father Firman, the parish pastor, took it upon himself to collect the funds to build a new church. He went from door to door asking his parishioners for contributions, and he gave all of his own money to the project as well. His people were very poor and many of them could not speak English; if they could get a job during the Depression, it didn't pay well. But yet, they were willing to give all they could spare, even if they had to eat nothing but potatoes for an entire winter. It meant a great deal to them to be able to practice their faith in the ways of their homeland, with their music, their language and their traditions, and so they were willing to make huge sacrifices.

One day, when Father Firman was campaigning for donations, he came upon a family who had absolutely nothing to give, and his companion was shocked when he went into their home anyway. At the end of his visit with them, he did not ask them for anything; rather, he reached into his own pocket and gave them the little money he had. It took Father Firman until 1939 to collect enough to build a new church; it was completed in 1943. The Ukrainian Eparchy began in 1951 when the first Ukrainian Bishop, Bishop Roberecki, was appointed; at that time, St. George's Parish became St. George's Cathedral.

Part II: The Dirty Thirties

A Warm Welcome for Bishop Murray

Bishop Murray, a Redemptorist, was appointed the first Bishop of the Diocese Saskatoon. When he arrived at the CPR station in 1934, a tremendous dust storm had blown up, but despite that fact, he received a warm welcome from his new flock. This hospitality characterized his whole time as bishop in Saskatoon.

Bishop Murray was loved by the people, and he managed to bring together and solidify the Saskatoon Diocese in times of great despair. But he wasn't alone! During the 1930s, the Sisters of Sion ran The Academy of Our Lady of Sion.

They were known to accept farm produce in lieu of tuition and room and board payments, and they did not turn students away for lack of funds.

At St. Thomas More College, which was opened in 1936 and which came to be regarded as Bishop Murray's greatest accomplishment, the Basilian Fathers provided breakfasts and healthy lunches for those students who had only the funds for tuition. The following stories illustrate the kind of dedication and Christian service that members of the religious orders exhibited in the Diocese's history.

Edeltrude's Efforts

The legend of Sister Edeltrude is that she was a Sister who, in the Great Depression, owned one big pot, one big tub, one big towel and one big Rosary. And that was all she needed to run a summer Catechism class for the Catholic children who lived in the country and did not attend Catholic schools. During the regular school year the Sisters of Sion taught day students and resident students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 at the Academy of Our Lady of Sion. Every summer, from 1934 until 1961, between 180 and 220 children would come into Saskatoon, board at the Academy and receive instructions in Catechism and the sacraments.

During the Depression years when there was no money to run this program, Sister Edeltrude worked tirelessly to keep it going. She asked the children to bring whatever they could afford; some brought wheat, some vegetables, some a little meat or sugar - whatever their families could spare. Besides giving them their Catholic instruction, she managed to care for their other needs as well. Everyday she would make up a big pot of soup to feed the children. Once a week, they all got their clothes washed in that big tub and, like it or not, they all got a bath, even if many of them had to share the same water and the same towel. And every night, Sister Edeltrude would put them to sleep by reciting the Rosary. In very tough times, those children had a little reprieve from the harshness of life in the Thirties.

The Teachers Ran Out of Food . . .

Although the Ursuline sisters did not come into Saskatoon until 1953, they, like the Sisters of Sion, were dedicated teaching sisters who educated children in academics and music throughout winter and summer. The Ursulines often taught in little teacherages in outlying areas to Saskatoon, and each Ursuline was assigned a companion (who was usually a teenage girl) to live at the teacherage with her. During the winter in the Depression, times were lonely and scary for these young women.

One winter things were particularly tough and one of the Sisters and her companion ran out of food in the middle of the week. As soon as school was finished on Friday, they set out for the next teacherage, which was four or five miles away. Extremely hungry and tired, they walked through deep snow banks and cold winds in the middle of winter.

Finally, when they arrived at their destination, they were excited to see that although there was no other food to be had, a local farmer had dropped off some delicious smelling home-made sausage. They couldn't wait to cook it! But then, they realized that it was Friday, and Catholics were not allowed to eat meat on Fridays! Cold, hungry and tired, they went to bed. But they set their alarms for midnight, at which time, they got up, cooked the sausage and enjoyed every last bite!

Part III: Distinctively Catholic

'They Were Known to Stick Together'

Prior to Vatican II, the Catholic community was a very isolated one. Educationally, socially and in the business world, Catholics were known to stick together. There was an expectation that all Catholics would tithe 10 per cent of their earnings to the Church. The oldest boys and girls in Catholic families were strongly encouraged to go into religious orders, and in the Thirties sometimes that was the only way that they could get a higher education. In the early schools and up until the 1960s, boys were expected to learn Latin and to serve as altar boys.

Catholics were required to fast and abstain from meat on Fridays, and they were expected to follow extra days of fast and abstinence during Lent. Nuns of the orders of Sisters dressed in habits of their order, and priests wore standard cassocks specific to their orders. Nuns were present in all of the Catholic schools, Catechism was the most important subject, boys and girls were taught separately and students wore uniforms. Churches were full, and Mass was said in Latin with the priest's back to the congregation. Lay participation was minimal.

The sacraments were handled differently, as well. Baptism was administered soon after the child was born, to avoid any possibility of going to "limbo" if the baby should die. Confession was not face-to face and often consisted of a grocery-type list of venial and mortal sins. People did not usually go to Communion unless they had recently gone to Confession. They also had to fast from food and water from midnight of the previous day, and no one could touch the host with his/her fingers; it was placed on the tongue by a priest with a communion server. Confirmation was administered by the Bishop, and he would travel throughout the diocese to confirm children in each small town. Mixed marriage was not encouraged, and was held in the vestibule of the Church.

Practice Makes Perfect

The Ursulines and all the other teaching orders of Sisters were very precise in their preparation for the sacraments. The clapping hands story of one First Communion class in the 1940s illustrates the thoroughness with which the Sisters trained the children. When it was time to genuflect, the Sister clapped her hands, and all of the children genuflected in time. When it was time to kneel, she clapped again. And so on, until they got it just right. It should be noted that if any little girl forgot her veil (or her hat during a regular Sunday Mass), a handkerchief was pinned to her head because females in those days could not appear in Church without a head covering.

The Living Rosary

Prior to Vatican II, it was impossible to mistake a Catholic school! During the years when Sion Academy was operating as a school for girls, most of the girls were Catholic, but a handful was Protestant. All of them wore uniforms.

Once a year, during May, which is the month of Mary, the girls would go out into the streets of Saskatoon in their uniforms and publicly display the Living Rosary. They were known to stop traffic, and their procession became more popular each year. As part of the Living Rosary, the Catholic girls would line up in groups of 10; they were the Hail Marys. The Protestant girls would stand alone between the groups of Catholics; they were the Our Fathers. The Sisters of Sion prided themselves on the popular procession and on the fact that they didn't impose the Hail Mary on the non-Catholic girls.

Father Mahoney's Dating Service

In the 1950s, St. Paul's High School for boys was opened at the instigation of Bishop Klein, and there were occasions where the boys from St. Paul would get together with the girls from Sion. Father Mahoney (later known as Bishop Mahoney), ran a "dating service" whenever there was a dance. In those days, girls were strongly encouraged to attend dances with a male escort. So, Father Mahoney would go over to the girls' school and ask the girls who did not have dates to write their names on slips of paper. Then he would go over to the boys' school and during a gym class, he would holler, "Okay, boys, who is going to the dance?" Several boys would raise their hands. Father Mahoney then would walk around and hand a slip of paper to all of the boys who didn't have their hands up and he would announce, "Now the rest of you boys are going, too. And here are your dates." When the sock-hop dances began, the girls were inspected to make sure that they were modestly dressed, and the boys were inspected to make sure that they did not have holes in their socks!

Part IV: The Sixties

A Milestone for Catholic Schools

Until 1965, there was no public tax support for Separate high schools in Saskatchewan. In Saskatoon, three school boards existed, and were publicly funded: the Elementary Separate Board, the Elementary Public Board, and the Collegiate Public Board. Students who attended St. Paul's High School and Sion Academy had to pay tuition and the nuns and priests worked for reduced salaries to keep school fees down.

Bishop Klein, an ardent advocate for education, was instrumental in establishing legislation that provided public funding for Separate high schools. "An Act to Amend the Secondary Education Act," which provided taxation money for Separate schools was passed in 1965, but the Public Collegiate Board was still in charge of collecting all the taxes. The Separate School Board relied on the good will of the Public Collegiate Board for its share of the taxes. In 1978, legislation was reworked, and the separate school boards were given jurisdiction over tax support for both elementary and high school education.

In 1982, when Pierre Trudeau repatriated the Canadian Constitution, Phil Hammel of Saskatoon made a trip to Ottawa and worked diligently to ensure that the Saskatchewan Education Act of 1978 was protected in the new Constitution.

The Change of Habit Begins

In the Sixties, several big events occurred in the Catholic community of Saskatoon. First of all, Vatican II occurred and the teaching orders were no longer required to wear their habits. New Catholic high schools, namely Holy Cross and E.D. Feehan (named after the first principal of St. Mary's) opened their doors, and for the first time Catholic Education was publicly funded. Students were still required to wear uniforms, and the nuns still advocated modesty; apparently, some girls liked to roll up their skirts, but urban legend has it that the nuns still had a way of making sure they "measured up". Bishop Klein, the man who fought so hard to change legislation to provide tax support for Catholic high schools, also advocated for paying the Sisters of the various orders the same salary that all other teachers were getting.

The Grey Nuns and Medicare

In May of 1957, the Catholic Hospital Association of Canada met in the Bessborough Hotel to advocate for a national hospital insurance plan, and despite opposition from people like Emmett Hall and some of the clergy, Mother Berthe Dorais, a Grey Nun, apparently took the lead in writing out general principles for a national plan. These were immediately passed on to the Minister of Health at the time, Paul Martin, Sr., who was waiting for them outside in the hall.

At the provincial level, when the CCF proposed a universal medical insurance plan for Saskatchewan in the 1960s, the Grey Nuns supported it even though many of the clergy spoke publicly against it. When universal health care came into effect, Mother Berthe Dorais is reputed to have said, "Finally, social justice took the place of social charity."

We'll Have "Nun" of That

Just as Bishop Klein had advocated for equal wages for the teaching orders in the 1960s, his predecessor, Bishop Pocock advocated for the Grey Nun nurses at St. Paul's Hospital a decade earlier. When Tommy Douglas, the premier at the time, argued against paying the nuns equal wages to the other nurses, he reportedly said to Bishop Pocock, "I thought the nuns took a vow of poverty!" Bishop Pocock reportedly answered, "Yes, but to God, not to the CCF government!"

However, the Grey Nuns and the government were not always on opposing sides. In fact, in the early 1960s when the CCF introduced government health care and a hospital insurance plans, the Grey Nun nurses did not share the fears that many of the clergy had about Medicare; in fact, they were all for it, provided it did not infringe upon Catholic moral standards.

The provincial medical insurance plan was not without its downfalls, however. One day in 1963, a fellow came in to the Grey Nun superior's office with a complaint that the quality of the soup and sandwiches had gone downhill. When she asked what floor he was on, he replied, "Oh, I'm not a patient, but I pay my medical insurance, so I'm entitled to get something for it. I've been eating my lunch here for 10 years." Needless to say, an investigation followed!

Part V: Reaching Out: Women, Men and Children of Diversity

Two Organizations that Made a Difference

The Saskatoon Division of the Knights of Columbus was formed in 1910, and the first Catholic Women's League meeting in Saskatoon was held in 1924. It would be impossible to describe the far-reaching impact that the CWL and the Knights of Columbus have had on Saskatoon. Since their inception, they have taken on fund-raising initiatives and leadership roles in war relief efforts, education, spiritual development, social justice, women's rights issues, human rights causes, youth initiatives and care for the elderly. (Both the Knights and the CWL have Ukrainian affiliate organizations in the city of Saskatoon).

Perhaps the one thing that most consistently characterizes the CWL is its welcome to immigrants in Saskatoon. In the early years, when so many families were arriving from other countries, CWL members would welcome them and help them to establish themselves in their new land. In the 1940s, the CWL formed an affiliation with the Sisters of Service who had begun the Catholic Welfare Council out of concern for new immigrants. (This council turned into Catholic Family Services, with Sister Ann O'Brien as its directress for 30 years).

Entertaining Angels

Hospitality has become a trademark of the Catholic Women's League. They have begun many new initiatives that reach out to the people of Saskatoon. The CWL runs a clothing depot in the basement of the Friendship Inn. This depot helps well over 2,000 families a month. In the early 1970s, a Chinese lady who was a regular customer of the depot came in and told the CWL workers about five young women who had come into Saskatoon without sponsors. The young ladies were boat people from Vietnam and they and their husbands had been in refugee camps for several months before coming to Canada. They were very young, they couldn't speak English, they missed their moms, they owned absolutely nothing and they were pregnant! The CWL ladies immediately set to work to help these girls. They rented a garage and filled it with cribs, layettes and clothes for the babies and their parents: enough to last each family for more than a year. And it didn't stop there! They visited the girls, accompanied them to the hospital and kept in touch with them afterwards. Even years later, the CWL planned Christmas parties for these and other immigrant families and arranged for gifts to be given to all of the children.

Alberta Bound: A Visit to the Pope

The Knights of Columbus in Saskatoon have proven to be a Visible Presence of Carrying the Cross in the community . . . literally! In 1984, when Pope John Paul II came to Canada, he stopped in Alberta, but he did not stop in Saskatchewan.

The Saskatoon Knights decided that if the Pope wasn't going to come to them, they would go to the Pope and they organized a walk from Saskatoon to Edmonton. Four thousand Knights took turns walking, while carefully carrying a cross from one province to the other; the Pope blessed that cross and it now rests in the chapel of St. Paul's Hospital. That story sums up what the Knights in Saskatoon are all about.

It would be impossible to list all of the projects that the Saskatoon Knights have been involved with, but a few that provide opportunities for youth and are most well-known are as follows: They began the Knights of Columbus Carol Festival in the mid-1950s. They bought the first police safety patrol car in 1964. They set up Blackstrap Youth Camp in 1969 and that same year they established the Knights of Columbus Foundation, to help children faced with difficult circumstances. And in the 1970s they began the Special Olympics and the Saskatoon Indoor Games, a track meet that involves more than 1,000 youth each year. All of these initiatives begun by the Knights have continued to this day.

Recurring Dreams: The Story of Guadalupe House

The story of how Guadalupe House came to be is a fascinating one. In the 1970s Monsignor Len Morand was the pastor at St. Paul's Cathedral, and he developed a special affinity for the growing number of First Nations people who were attending his masses. In the '70s, a large number of aboriginal young people had moved to Saskatoon from the North and Father Morand noticed that many of them felt lost without their grandparents and the traditions they had grown up with.

Father Morand approached Bishop Mahoney and said, "We have to do something for these young people!" Not long after that, one of the older First Nations men, who was a very faithful parishioner, approached the Bishop and said, "Bishop Mahoney, I have had vivid, recurring dreams for the past three nights in a row. They have been urging me to come to you and ask for a place where our young people can practice their own traditions, and worship with sweetgrass and drums in the way of their grandfathers." Bishop Mahoney, believing in the power of dreams, sent that man to Father Morand. Father Morand approached the Knights of Columbus and Walter Podiluk, the director of the Catholic School Board. Among the three of them, they found a way to establish Guadalupe House. In 1979, Joe Duquette school was founded on the same philosophy, and today, First Nations youth have the opportunity to practice their traditions at school, at Guadalupe House and at Church. A First Nations Mass is celebrated every Sunday afternoon at St. Mary's Parish, where smudging and praying with drums is a regular occurrence.

Catholic School Board Initiatives in Diversity

Catholic education in Saskatoon and area continues to play an essential role in the faith development of the young Catholic population, especially as Church attendance has declined. Daily prayer, liturgical celebrations and sacramental preparation are key components in all Catholic schools in Saskatoon, Humboldt, Biggar and Viscount. A lay chaplaincy program led by Father Beechinor has recently been implemented, and retreats are offered to staff and to grade 9 and 12 students. In addition, members of the Catholic School Board have certainly attempted to “reach out” to the entire Catholic population with programs such as the following:

The French Immersion Program: Today, six elementary schools are designated French Immersion schools, and all four main-stream high schools offer French Immersion classes. L'Education Chretienne en francais is offered to all French Immersion students.

Bishop Filevich Ukrainian Bilingual School: In 1979, the Ukrainian Bilingual program was begun at St. Goretti School as an initiative of the Saskatoon Catholic School Board. In September 2006 it became the province's first Ukrainian Bilingual elementary school. It exists to pass on to Ukrainian children the culture, the language, the music and the tradition so intricately tied into to the Byzantine Rite of the Catholic Church. It has a close affiliation with St. George's Cathedral, Saints Peter and Paul Church, and with the Sheptytsky student residence at the University of Saskatchewan.

Cyber School: An on-line high school begun in 1999, Cyber School has expanded into the elementary schools. Special Catholic features include online Christian Ethics, and an online Chapel and priest Chaplain. A lively discussion board exists in Cyber School.

SchoolPlus, Community Schools and Alternative Education: Catholic schools in Saskatoon and area pride themselves on their inclusive framework and integrated services at all grades and levels of instruction. A complete list of programs is listed on this website.

A Multicultural Catholic Church

The Saskatoon Diocese has embraced multiculturalism and has made every attempt to provide Catholics of various cultures opportunities to worship with their own traditions, music and language. The following cultures have the opportunity to celebrate Mass in Saskatoon: French, Polish, Ukrainian, First Nations, Spanish, Portuguese, Philippino, Iraqi-Chaldean and Vietnamese.

Part VI: A Changing Time

It's Not Always Easy

If Bishop Mahoney or Monsignor Robinson were alive today, they could tell many stories about Catholics who didn't readily accept the changes that Vatican II initiated.

As the number of people in Religious orders decreased, the laity, including women and girls, had to take on more and more responsibility. In 1984, when the Pope came to Canada, he was forewarned that in Canada, women are quite proactive in the Church. But not all have embraced this reality; in fact, there are still people today - men and women - who would rather take Communion from a priest than from a lay person, especially if she's a woman.

The Legacy Continues

Vatican II mandates that the Church change with the times. It's true that not as many Catholics are filling the churches, but that doesn't mean that God is no longer working through ordinary Catholic people. Now one only has to look at the leadership provided by the diocesan ministry offices and their work with lay formation, foundations and ministry training. Opportunities and challenges for spiritual growth are abundant through organizations like Queen's House of Retreats, Catholic Family Services, St. Paul's Hospital Spiritual Care and Medical Ethics teams, St. Ann's, St. George's or St. Volodymyr's Seniors Homes or St. Mary's Redemptorist Lunch Program. The work of Catholic clergy, the Brazil Mission Team, Catholic organizations, parish councils, and ecumenical groups show that God's work is alive and well.

One doesn't have to look hard to see Christ in action amongst the staff of our Catholic schools, or amongst the Catholic school board trustees as they work behind the scenes to preserve and safeguard the privileges that our Catholic children enjoy in Saskatchewan. And our youth! No, they are not like us; they are not like the generation before us! They are a global generation. They have access to information that we will never have, and they will use that information to stand up against injustice in the world.

Changing the World, One Step at a Time

Monsignor Robinson once said, "Never deny the people the opportunity to give." The youth of today may not go to church every Sunday, but they certainly create for themselves opportunities to serve in the global community. The following are examples of little ways that ordinary young people have done the work of Christ in the world. One recent winter, when Father Les returned to the Diocesan Mission in Brazil, several young people who had given up pop and bottled water during Advent gave him the money they had saved to take to the people in the Mission. Another group of students, after investigating the unethical production of blue jeans, contacted the manufacturer and explained why they refused to buy the jeans. Then they began shopping in second-hand stores. Other young people took the time to befriend new immigrants from Sudan and Iraq and to become aware firsthand of what is going on in those countries. Recently students organized a Mardi Gras and collected more than \$3,000 for relief efforts in New Orleans. Students in all of the high schools have educated themselves about the world's water problems, and held cake and box lunch auctions to raise funds for CCODP. Students in both elementary and high schools have developed partnerships with each other, the elderly and with the community. The list could go on and on.

Ordinary people doing extraordinary things! Our past and our future! We rejoice with thanksgiving and hope!