

# Latin American Mission Program

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, theirs is the Reign of God”

DIOCESE OF CHARLOTTETOWN



## ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHAIR

JUNE 12, 2016

During this past year the Latin American Mission Program of the Diocese of Charlottetown has continued to be a witness to the Gospel of the Christ of the universe, the one who immersed all life in the Creator's Love by becoming one with us. The same Spirit that lead this Christ, leads LAMP to read the signs of the times and immerse itself in the life of the world and respond as it is able to those calls which rise up out of creation, especially those cries that flow from "the least of our brothers and sisters" and this common home, often called Mother Earth.

The Latin American Mission Program rejoiced with millions around the earth when in June of this past year, Pope Francis promulgated the beautiful encyclical, *Laudato Si*. One of the reasons for the timing of this encyclical was to help the nations of the world prepare for their summit on Climate change held in December in Paris. Immersing himself in that call to read the signs of the times, Pope Francis brought together scientists, theologians, organizations and groups of people from around the globe to help him fashion this Word of Praise to the Creator and our responsibility to know and love our place within it. Within the encyclical, our responsibility is envisaged in numerous ways, including this passage from paragraph 9 of the opening chapter: "we are called to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbors on a global scale. It is our humble conviction that the divine and human meet in the slightest detail in the seamless garment of God's creation."

This mission, which LAMP has taken up for almost 50 years in our diocese, invites us to be voices with and for the most burdened by the weight of the gross inequalities among the peoples of the world; those dispossessed on so many levels, economically, culturally, socially and environmentally. Again as paragraph 49 of *Laudato Si* puts it: "the human environment and the natural environment deteriorate

together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation . Both everyday experience and scientific research show the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest."

Accordingly, in our activities, LAMP receives its life and hope as we bear witness in our participation in these struggles of creation and humanity.

## ACTIVITIES OF THE YEAR

In the past year LAMP has continued to work on our major commitments:

1. supporting our missionary in the Dominican Republic, Scott Smith;
2. organizing the Dan O'Hanley memorial lecture;
3. offering the annual education program to the diocese;
4. holding regular meetings. In addition to our monthly meetings, we spent an evening in an evaluation exercise in November.
5. We continued to collaborate with other community groups in the search for justice.

## MISSIONARY

One of our primary goals in LAMP is to send out and receive back missionaries, mainly to the Dominican Republic. Scott Smith has been our missionary in the DR for more than four years. When he returned to the DR last summer after vacation and health care time on PEI he began to wind down his activities. He returned home in December, 2015. Last Sunday we celebrated his return at Mass in his home parish of St. Brigid's. A highlight of the celebration was the presence of Scott's friend from the DR, Doña Sena (Juana López) who brought warm greetings from the people with whom Scott worked. She also sang a couple of Spanish songs.

The receiving back aspect of mission is important to LAMP. We expect returned missionaries to continue the mission work on PEI (or wherever the missionary chooses to live).

## DAN O'HANLEY MEMORIAL LECTURE

In November we had the privilege of having Dr. Heather Eaton, professor at St. Paul's University, give a public presentation on Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment. She emphasized that the Pope approached the environment not from the point of view of theology, but that of science. She commented that she found this approach to be both sound and refreshing.

Prior to the lecture fourteen PEI environmental and social justice groups

organized a march which originated at the church, Our Lady of the Assumption. The purpose of the march was to call attention to the international climate conference (to be held in November, 2015) and to call for a meaningful climate change agreement. After the march many of the participants stayed for the lecture. The attendance was the highest since we began this annual event.

An interesting note: Dan also taught at St. Paul's in the late '70's. Heather had not heard of him before being invited to do this lecture, but she planned to check with faculty to see who would have known him.

### **REGULAR MONTHLY MEETINGS**

We begin each meeting with the reading of and reflection on the gospel of the day. Much of the meeting time is spent in planning activities that will take place during the year.

### **MEETINGS WITH BISHOP GRECCO**

Three members of the Executive met with Bishop Grecco on February 2, 2016.

At his invitation, the whole executive met with the bishop on April 4. He was interested in LAMP's activities and asked for and received clarification on some of his concerns. It was a good meeting.

### **EVALUATION DAY**

In November 2015, LAMP members had met to review our mission statement, goals, and objectives. All agreed that those guides that have been the backdrop of LAMP activities since the beginning are very appropriate and we recommitted to continue to be guided by them. Scott was able to participate in the discussion by Skype

We made a 5-year plan for our activities. Our top priorities are:

1. to send out and receive back missionaries for at least two short terms over the next five years. Previously we had identified the term of mission 3 to 5 years. Because of the costs of this commitment on the part of the missionary (who may have a student debt load) and on the part of LAMP (due to dwindling contributions from the diocese) we decided it was prudent to shorten the missionary time.
2. to re-establish the Dominican Republic Faith and Justice Experience, aiming for two programs over the next five years, with 10 participants in each program.

At regular meetings in March and April, 2016, we spent time identifying the steps to be taken to achieve these goals.

## **COALITIONS**

In keeping with LAMP's commitment to work for justice on PEI, we joined two coalitions this past year

Following the workshop on the Water Act, LAMP agreed to join the coalition for the Protection of PEI Water. On November 17, 2015, Jerry Ronahan and Father Eddie Cormier, on LAMP's behalf, presented a brief to the Environment Advisory Council in Wellington. In October Lamp joined the Coalition for Proportional Representation. Catherine Ronahan presented LAMP's brief to the Special Committee on Democratic Renewal for the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island on November 15, 2015.

Lamp continues to have representation on the Trade Justice PEI Coalition, which is opposed to the trade deals that Canada is contemplating.

## **THANKS**

The work of LAMP could not continue without the moral and financial support of the people of the Diocese. We thank them for that. We also thank the parish of Our Lady of the Assumption for permitting us the use of their space for meetings and other events. I want to thank, especially, the other members of LAMP who generously commit time and energy to the work of mission.