



Quebec Diocesan Gazette

DIOCÈSE ANGLICAN DE QUÉBEC • ԺՀԺ ԵՐԿԻ՞՞ ՎԵՐՎՈՒՄՆԻ • ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF QUEBEC

German Christmas Eve a family-friendly service ‘accessible to everyone’

By Matthew Townsend
Communications Missioner

An annual gathering at Holy Trinity Cathedral offers Quebec City residents and visitors a laid-back option for celebrating Christmas: a German Christmas Eve service.

The 5 p.m. trilingual Familiengottesdienst service—in German, French and English—started shortly after the Very Rev. Christian Schreiner began as dean in 2008.

“I got an email from a German young mother living in the city who said, ‘I heard rumours that you might actually have some German,’” Schreiner says.

The priest responded that he is a German pastor. “She said, ‘That’s brilliant. Do you think there’s any way we could have a German Christmas service?’”

The two started the service together, inviting German friends and encouraging them to tell others. In the first year, more than 100 people showed up, to their surprise.

The service grew: it went bilingual in year two. “Then it became a tourist thing, too, and people come from out of town, people come from the villages around the city.”

Around 160 people came last year, and the parish has become involved in the service. It remains a very basic liturgy: four readings and hymns. “So it’s really super simple—it’s a half an hour, 35 minutes tops,” Schreiner says.

No communion is served, the priest says, to reduce complications and to ensure that all feel welcome. “The idea is to have it accessible to everyone.”

The other motivation behind the early, brief service, he says, is to allow families to open their presents on Christmas Eve, as is the tradition in Germany. The timing has made the service popular among families who prefer an earlier, shorter worship option. About half of the attendees are children, the cathedral dean says.

Those not practiced in German can come without trepidation: the readings and hymns are divided among the three languages, allowing all a moment of fluency.

The cathedral does not organize any refreshments after the service, but people have brought Christmas cookies and other treats to share in years past. “There’s definitely time to share cookies if people want to do that.” ■



Matthew Townsend photo

Canon theologian: ‘What do we imagine human beings are for?’

By Matthew Townsend
Communications Missioner

This year, the Rev. Canon Jeffrey Metcalfe, canon theologian for the Diocese of Quebec, began working in a one-third-time capacity as interim priest at St. Michael’s, Sillery. Metcalfe—who spends the remaining two-thirds of his professional time as canon while completing his Ph.D. and raising two children with his partner—recently spoke with the Gazette about balancing his diverse workload.

How did you come to work at St. Michael’s?

My work at St. Michael’s in Sillery has come out of one of the four principle points of my work.

When my position was originally proposed within the diocese, they gave me four tasks. One was serving as a theological advisor to the bishop and to the leadership on various levels of structure. So I sit on Diocesan Executive Council—not as a voting member, but to be there, in a sense, as a witness, one with a particular set of theological skills.

Another piece is discipleship, formation and education. I’ve helped to design a couple of sabbatical programs now, including for the dean and Director General Marie-Sol Gaudreau, whose sabbatical was a pilgrimage.

Another is ecclesial vocational discernment. That’s having discussions with parishes. I’ve done one of those discussions in the Deanery of Quebec with St. Peter’s, Stoneham, which was under discernment for a while as to whether it wanted to continue or close. We ended up creating a ministry based on the liturgical calendar combined with Creation. I’ve worked also with a similar reflection-based model in the Eastern Townships with St. Luke’s, Magog, which came to the conclusion that it would be more faithful, in their case, to leave their building and start meeting in different locations. That’s the kind of conversation I help to facilitate, with the local priests involved.

St. Michael’s has been the third case of working with a church. That reflection happened about a year ago. I have a particular methodology that I use, which is

a little bit ethnographic—in the sense that I go to the church, I worship with them when I can, and I conduct interviews and facilitate group discussions. With those experiences, I then write a theological reflection, reflecting back what I’ve heard them say, especially the theological and biblical themes that come out in their own reflections. I deliver it back to them, hearing their input.

The people at St. Michael’s have had something like 10 priests in 12 years. So it was really fascinating engaging in discussion with them and hearing the kind of harm that that does to a community, when you’re constantly having transitions. That marks a congregation. Very interestingly, because of that constant transition, they’ve become a highly resilient community. They’re able to put together liturgies, they’re able to lead worship, they’re able to gather together in fellowship—all those things without direct clerical supervision. They do them because as disciples of Jesus, that’s the kind of people they are.

St. Michael’s, like a lot of our churches, is also struggling with declining resources. At times, people, but also degrading properties that need to be maintained. How do they take up the gifts that their unique history has given them?

This all lead to a report, and one of the major aspects that came out of the report was that for those gifts of resilience to maintained, they did require stable leadership. At the same time, Fr. Thomas Ntilivamunda, who was there as an interim priest, was also in conversation with the bishop about engaging in his ministry—the new intercultural ministry.

What was clear was that for Thomas to be able to launch that ministry, it would be really necessary for him to give it full attention. At the same, we recognized that people at St. Michael’s had experienced many transitions and that another one would be quite harmful. In conversation with them, with the bishop, because I had already been working with them under my diocesan profile for about a year, it made sense that if a new interim were needed, it could be me.

Continued on page 4



Waiting to wake up for Jesus: Linda Roberts and Debbie Phillips march for the climate at one of two recent events in which the church in the Gaspé considered its role in Creation. For more, see page 3.

FROM THE BISHOP

Great expectations

Advent isn't about getting ready for Christmas. It's about getting ready for the end of the world as we know it.

During the few weeks leading up to the celebration of Jesus' first coming among us as a child in Bethlehem, we are called to reflect on Christ's return—the return we anticipate every time we recite the creed and say that we believe that Jesus will come again “to judge the living and the dead.”

But what will his second coming look like? Will it be fire and brimstone falling from the sky, the faithful elect being plucked up while the rest fall through the cracks in the earth to tumble down to an eternity of groaning and gnashing of teeth?

None of us can be sure until it happens, of course. But the gospel suggests that isn't exactly the kind of return Jesus has in mind. When Jesus returns, he doesn't say we should cower, or take cover, or head for the hills. No, when he speaks of his coming again in the gospel according to Luke, for example, he says that we should stand up and raise our heads, because our “redemption is drawing near.”

So Christ won't be returning like an angry parent ready to give us the ultimate grounding because we've been misbehaving while he was away, because we've made a mess of the house left in our care.

But we have made a mess of what's been entrusted to us. Things have not turned out the way God intended. Things have gone terribly wrong, and the evidence is all around us. But even in the face of the mess we've helped make, our God remains loving, steadfast, and—most importantly—forgiving. It is because things had gone wrong that Jesus came. As Jesus says elsewhere in the gospels, he came “to seek and to save that which was lost.” He came to seek and save us.

This is the journey we're on in Advent. We can't get to Christmas without going through Advent first. We can't celebrate the birth of Christ without first remembering why God had to become one of us—without remembering our fallenness, our sinfulness, and our complete and utter inability to pull ourselves out of it on our own.

That's why Jesus came in the first place. That's why he's coming again. And that's why this is good news, not something to be afraid of.

When “the Son of Man comes in clouds with great power and glory”—whatever that will actually look like—it will bring to full completion God's rule on earth. In Advent we look to that moment when Christ the King will return, not to destroy our imperfect world, but to bring it to perfection—where all our broken relationships are mended, nature is made clean again, the rich and poor are the same, the maimed are made whole, and the dead are given new life. When Christ the King returns, it will be to bring in the fullness of God's kingdom, “on earth as it is in heaven.”

Advent is all about having great expectations. What we anticipate on these days before Christmas is not the advent of our doom, but the advent of our redemption—and the redemption of all creation.



+Bruce Myers OGS

ement le genre de retour que Jésus a en tête. Quand Jésus reviendra, il ne dit pas que nous devrions nous défilier, nous mettre à l'abri ou prendre nos jambes à notre cou. Non, quand il parle de son retour dans l'évangile selon Luc, par exemple, il dit que nous devrions nous redresser et relever la tête, car notre « rédemption est proche ».

Le Christ ne reviendra donc pas comme un parent en colère prêt à nous donner la punition ultime parce que nous nous sommes mal comportés pendant son absence, parce que nous avons fait du grabuge dans la maison qu'il nous avait laissée.

Mais nous avons bel et bien fait un beau gâchis ce qui nous a été confié. Rien ne s'est passé comme Dieu l'avait prévu. Les choses ont très mal tourné et les preuves de

DE L'ÉVÊQUE

De grandes espérances

L'Advent ne consiste pas à se préparer pour Noël. Ça consiste plutôt à se préparer pour la fin du monde tel que nous le connaissons.

Pendant les quelques semaines qui nous amènent à la célébration de la première venue de Jésus parmi nous à Bethléem, nous sommes appelés à réfléchir au retour du Christ—retour que nous anticipons chaque fois que nous récitons le credo et que nous affirmons que nous croyons que Jésus reviendra « pour juger les vivants et les morts. »

Mais à quoi ressemblera sa seconde venue? Est-ce que ce sera le feu et le soufre tombant du ciel, les fidèles élus s'élevant vers les cieux pendant que les autres plongent dans les fissures de la terre pour s'enfoncer dans une éternité de gémissements et de grincements de dents?

Nul d'entre nous ne peut en être sûr jusqu'à ce que cela se produise, bien sûr. Mais l'évangile suggère que ce n'est pas exactement le genre de retour que Jésus a en tête. Quand Jésus reviendra, il ne dit pas que nous devrions nous défilier, nous mettre à l'abri ou prendre nos jambes à notre cou. Non, quand il parle de son retour dans l'évangile selon Luc, par exemple, il dit que nous devrions nous redresser et relever la tête, car notre « rédemption est proche ».

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Mais nous avons bel et bien fait un beau gâchis ce qui nous a été confié. Rien ne s'est passé comme Dieu l'avait prévu. Les choses ont très mal tourné et les preuves de

cet état de fait sont partout autour de nous. Mais même confronté au désastre que nous avons contribué à créer, notre Dieu demeure aimant, fidèle et, encore plus important, indulgent. C'était parce que les choses avaient mal tourné que Jésus est venu. Comme Jésus le dit ailleurs dans les évangiles, il est venu « chercher et sauver ce qui était perdu ». Il est venu nous chercher et nous sauver.

Voilà le voyage que nous entreprenons pendant l'Advent. Nous ne pouvons pas nous rendre à Noël sans d'abord passer par l'Advent. Nous ne pouvons pas célébrer la naissance du Christ sans nous rappeler au préalable pourquoi Dieu devait devenir l'un de nous—sans nous souvenir de notre erreur, de notre état de péché et de notre totale incapacité à nous en sortir par nous-mêmes.

Et c'est là la raison pour laquelle Jésus est venu parmi nous. C'est pourquoi il viendra à nouveau. Et pourquoi c'est une bonne nouvelle, pas une chose que nous devons craindre.

Quand « le Fils de l'homme viendra dans une nuée avec puissance et grande gloire »—quelle que soit la forme que ça prendra—il amènera à son terme le règne de Dieu sur la terre. Pendant l'Advent, nous attendons le moment où le Christ Roi reviendra, non pas pour détruire notre monde imparfait, mais pour l'amener à la perfection: toutes nos relations brisées seront rétablies, la nature redeviendra pure, riches et pauvres se confondront, les handicapés seront rétablis et les morts reviendront à la vie. Lorsque le Christ Roi reviendra, ce sera pour apporter la plénitude du royaume de Dieu, « sur la terre comme au ciel ».

L'Advent consiste à avoir de grandes espérances. Ce que nous anticipons pendant ces jours précédant Noël n'est pas l'avènement de notre perte, mais l'avènement de notre rédemption—et la rédemption de toute la création.



La virgen del Apocalipsis, Miguel Cabrera (1695–1768)

Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico

Quebec Diocesan Gazette

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Matthew Townsend, Editor
Guylaine Caron, Translator

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CONSIDERING CREATION

The dinosaurs did not have choices. We do.

By the Rev. Cynthia Patterson
Incumbent for parishes of Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands

On Oct. 27, three Anglicans, one United Church person, and one Roman Catholic walked together and held a flag of the earth viewed from space as we participated in Gaspé's contribution to the international climate marches. We joined about 400 other people, including a contingent of students (with several young Anglicans) and teachers from the Gaspé Poly's English sector, groups, and individuals greatly concerned about the climate crisis deepening day by day. Students from the Francophone schools provided an additional presence as large numbers snaked across the base of the mountain behind the Cegep, forming their own march. The women who work for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Gaspé walked with the *Régroupement des Femmes*. Representatives from the Public Health Agency were among the speakers, analysing the current and projected health risks for everyone, especially the young, the old, and those living in difficult financial circumstances.

Congregational responses to the bishop's letter on the climate march were, for the most part, sadly predictable: silence, charges that church has no place in marches, climate change denial. I felt extremely depressed. The silence was the worst of it. I remembered the quotation which has been attributed to several different people: "All it takes for evil to prevail is for good people to do/say nothing."

When you read this article, we will be in the season of Advent, preparing and waiting for the celebration of Jesus's birth. We are also waiting for ourselves as Christians to wake up for Jesus, to wake up and exercise the first directive given to us by God: to be responsible for the gift of Creation.

* * *

Once again St. John & St. Philip (Sandy Beach) opened its doors to dogs and humans for the Parish of Gaspé's Blessing of the Animals service, held two days after the feast of St. Francis.

The first reading was the Creation Story. Surely central to the miracle of Creation is that all life was created in unity. We know now through DNA that the very structure of our beings is largely shared with all life on this planet.

Prayers included that of Albert Schweitzer's for the animals. People shared moving stories about their dogs and what they mean in their lives. All were blessed. We remembered one little dog, a regular attendee, who died this past year and is still missed by Tony and Edmund.

We pushed our vision and faith outwards as we remembered the wild creatures with whom we are meant to share this planet, and read from lists prepared by the governments of Canada and Québec of species at risk or of special concern, which include many here in the Gaspé: pollinators, bats, evening grosbeaks, plovers, barn owls, the Harlequin Duck, white-throated sparrow, killer whale, right whale, and sculpins.

"As many as 30 to 50% of the planet's species may be extinct by 2050.... Our planet is now in the midst of its sixth mass extinction of plants and animals, the sixth wave of extinctions in the past half-billion years.... We are currently experiencing the worst spate of species die-offs since the loss of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago," the Centre for Biological Diversity says.

The dinosaurs did not have choices. We do.

Jesus, may we repent during this Advent season of our failure to be responsible stewards for this irreplaceable gift of Creation. May the shining light of your birth direct us to specific individual and corporate commitments to address climate crisis so that as people of hope we may also become people of action. ■

GLEANINGS

What would we say in A.D. 2019?

By Meb Reisner Wright
Diocesan Historian

There is something very odd about the December 1919 issue of the *Diocesan Gazette*. When this reader viewed it the first time, she checked the page numbers to be sure none were missing. It seemed hardly possible that it could be complete. There was no mention of Christmas. No greetings. No picture of the Christ child in the manger. No mention of plans for celebrations or services. No allusions to decorations for halls and churches. No mentions of gifts for the children. Nothing.

Toward the end of the issue, however, there is, a poem which has Christmas associations, albeit sombre and thought-provoking. It is titled *The Inn of Life*, and more significantly, subtitled

*As it was in the Beginning—
Is Now,—
And?*

<i>Anno Domini 1</i>	<i>Anno Domini 1919</i>
<i>"No room! No room! The Inn is full, Yea overfull. No room have we For such as ye Poor folk of Galilee Pass on! Pass on!</i>	<i>"No room! No room! No room for Thee, Thou Man of Galilee! The house is full, Yea overfull. There is no room for thee— Pass on! Pass on! ...</i>

The verses suggest that present-day society—that is 1919—and present-day attitudes would no longer offer accommodation even in a stable were the Holy Family to come seeking lodgings:

<i>Place have we none; And yet how bid ye gone? Stay then!—out there Among the beasts Ye may find room. And eke a truss To lie upon."</i>	<i>The place is packed We scarce have room For our own selves, So how shall we Find room for Thee Thou Man of Galilee Pass on! Pass on! ...</i>
<i>Christ passes On His ceaseless quest, Nor will He rest With any, Save as Chiefest Guest!</i>	

The poem is written by John Oxenham, author of the familiar hymn "In Christ There Is No East or West," and standing as it does in the Christmas issue of the *Diocesan Gazette* it produces a chilling effect on the 21st-century reader who cannot help but see it in the context of the present-day displacement of people seeking places where they can find shelter at a time of urgency.

December 1919 was not devoid of news, however.

There is a report that on Dec. 1 "at Kent House, Montmorency Falls, a most pleasing banquet was tendered to the men of St Matthew's Church who served in the Great War by the men of the parish who were obliged to remain at home by circumstances over which they had no control but who had, nevertheless, done their bit in support of their fellows at the front."

On that same day there was a "Laymen's Missionary Banquet in connection with the 94th anniversary of Trinity Church [Quebec]" which was held in the church hall and presided over by Mr W. Wilkinson.

Also early in December, but reported in the January issue, the Rev. Frederick George LeGallais wrote to Bishop Williams from Bonne-Espérance on the progress of his mission on the Lower North Shore. He had, that same year, been appointed to Mutton Bay.

"We are now [on Dec. 4] in the grip of winter." LeGal-



The Rev. Frederick George LeGallais

Diocesan Archives photo

lais wrote. "There is little snow but frost severe enough to freeze the inner bays and rivers, and dog driving is again the means of conveyance, as pleasant and exciting as nineteen years ago...."

His first posting when he entered the diocese in 1901 had been to Mutton Bay.

"I bought some paint from a Halifax fish-trader," he continues, "and one fine warm day in November made a 'Bee' and got the exterior of the Parsonage painted. I also bought eighteen new chairs and four more lamps for the Church. It will have to be enlarged if the Community increases, all the seats—seventy chairs—being sometimes taken at a Sunday morning service.

"To defray the expenses we had a 'Social', the first ever held here, and with most gratifying results, realizing \$150.00. With the balance, about \$75.00 I hope to get bought some material to finish the interior of the Parsonage...."

"Since coming to the coast I have found the people very willing to help in the Church's work and very obliging in taking me along in their boats and with their dogs. The coast life is certainly agreeing with me. I haven't felt better in years. I am still enjoying the work and hoping for reinforcement next year, for it is a tremendous stretch of coast to be under the charge of one Missionary, especially in winter...."

Elsewhere in the Diocese, on Friday, December 18th there was a special celebration at the Cathedral (as reported in the January issue) of the fiftieth anniversary of the ordination of Archdeacon Andrew Jackson Balfour followed up by a reception at Bishopthorpe.

One lone report on seasonal festivities did appear—in January's *Gazette*. It comes under news from the community of Island Brook in the Eastern Townships.

"The Annual Christmas tree of Christ Church was held in union with the Methodists here on Tuesday evening, December 23rd, when the Sunday school children presented in a very able manner 'The Christmas Cantata,' after which Santa Claus appeared and delivered the good things from off the tree..." As the church in Island Brook was actually St. John's and not Christ Church, this is somewhat puzzling.

It is impossible at the present time to find out how the new editor's first Christmas number was received, but in 1920 the December issue not only opened with "The Bishop's Christmas Greetings," but also contained a picture of Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus; a reprinted story about Christmas Eve from *The Brooklyn Eagle*; and several other items on Christmas themes.

In the words of Bishop Williams' Christmas message in 1920, "May our Churches all be filled on Christmas Day with devout and joyful worshippers, and may we return from our Christmas Communion filled with the spirit of love and good will towards all men, determined to dedicate ourselves more wholly to the loyal Service of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

But the December 1919 issue—stark as it is—sends an important message, too. ■

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION

Dying like a (beautiful, talented) dog

By Louisa Blair
Columnist

Christmas can be a time of warm fuzzy feelings. I love singing all the carols that I've known since I was a child. I love the young mother in her blue dress, surrounded by cuddly animals, holding her tiny baby in the lowly stable, with her humble hubby beside her.

But what does it mean, this familiar story of a poor woman giving birth in a stable? God has come to dwell with us and to share our vulnerability. The Creator of the world being a tiny baby in a stable turns our idea of an ultimate power completely upside down. How do I respond to that? A few decades later, the story turns violent. The same mother watches her son, God-with-us, being tortured and killed as a religious fanatic and leader of a rebel movement. What does the story mean now? How do I respond now?

As I write this column, Donald Trump claims proudly that he has just killed Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, another religious fanatic and leader of a rebel movement. After a gunfight, troops sent a weaponized robot and dogs, trained to sniff out explosives and attack, into a dead-end tunnel to hunt him down. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi detonated his explosive vest, killing himself and three children he had taken with him.

Trump said that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi had died a cowardly death, "like a dog." He also mentioned that no American soldiers were injured, except one dog. "A beautiful dog" added Trump, "a talented dog." But when he said Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi had died "like a dog" he did not at all mean like the beautiful, talented dog who had chased him down the tunnel. He meant that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi died miserably and shamefully, with no dignity. Scared to death as any dumb animal would be. As I certainly would be if a weaponized robot and attack dogs were chasing me down

a dead-end tunnel. The beautiful, talented dog, on the other hand, was injured in the call of duty, defending the western world.

Trump calculated his dog words carefully to conjure two main emotional reactions to this story: 1) a huge outpouring of sentimental concern for the beautiful and talented dog who was injured (tonight Trump released a photo), and 2) vengeful pleasure in the humiliating death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

But in fact, one of the great mysteries that God revealed through that adorable Christmas baby was that God loves Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as much as God loves you and me. God's love rains down on the just and the unjust. I find this a hard thing to take in, in relation to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. He was responsible for the torture and death of so many people. If it were me with a gun going after him down the tunnel, and not a robot or a dog, would I have killed him? This is an immensely difficult question. But so much simpler to resolve if I can just call him a dog, a pig, or a cockroach. And pleasurable too—my feelings of righteous anger make me feel how passionate I am about justice.

Another way to avoid the challenges of this mystery is to be sentimental, say, about the couple in a stable with a new baby, or to focus attention on a brave, injured dog. Sentimentality gives me a simple way out of facing the challenges of my faith, or following St. Paul's injunction to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling."

And feeling weepy and emotional makes me feel good, too, as though I'm a sensitive and caring person. Immersed in my emotions, I don't have to change my mind or my perspective. The feelings make no further demands on my self-image, my intellect, or my time. They are an end in themselves.

If I take action to change the situation that makes me weep, I will probably meet obstacles that will reveal me



Holy Family, Margret Hofheinz-Döring (1910-1994)
Galerie Brigitte Mauch Göppingen

as a way less caring and noble person than I thought. Better to just stay in the emotions. And this fits well with the narcissism of North American culture, where emotions are the ultimate authority and must be heard and served.

But Christ, our true but upside-down king, does not let us stay there, crowing triumphantly over a dying man or weeping tenderly over an injured dog. Let us not only wonder at the beauty and violence of Jesus' life, but at what more these strange mysteries are asking of us. ■

QUESTION & ANSWER

Metcalf on the year ahead
from page 1

The fourth part of my work is theological reflection. One of the reasons the canon theologian position was created was so that we were ensuring we're structurally embedding theological reflection into the life of the diocese. Building in reflection can be hard, partially because we live in a utilitarian culture, where things are valued for the things that they get us. Another way of saying the same thing is "instrumentalism."

It's pretty easy to, for instance, look at some of the work that's happening at St. Michael's and say the canon theologian position makes sense because of the things it's getting us in this specific parish. But a lot of the work I'm engaged in is directly related to my doctoral research, which delves into questions of what it means to belong in a place as Christians.

How is your Ph.D. going?

I'm a doctoral candidate at the University of Toronto, which means that the last thing that I have to do is write my dissertation. I'm working on my first chapter, at the moment, which deals with theological anthropology and a Yale theologian named Willie James Jennings. I'm in a combination of writing and research. Eventually this chapter is going to develop into a concrete research design—field work. In the same way anthropologists say in order to understand a certain community, we need to spend time with them, part of my argument is that to understand what kinds of people God is calling us to be requires spending time with those people.

What's ahead in 2020?

One of the things we've grown increasingly concerned about is the elephant in the room of Quebec society: Bill 21. Looking at religious symbols in public spaces and what kinds of people do we think can work for the state, and can they have religious signification.

Increasingly, we hear talk of things like a "values test"—these things are, from my perspective as a theologian, really deeply disturbing. As soon as you start getting to assigning what kinds of values are Quebecois or fitting of Quebec citizens, we start having to choose who gets to define those values, what kinds of people count as Quebecois, and what sorts of symbols are okay and are not. All of these, in the end, get back to theological anthropology: What do we imagine human beings are for?

If the state starts defining who can legitimately belong here, based on their values, I'm going to really wonder on what their imagining is around what human creatures are. As Christians, we make certain claims around what it means to be people and how we think Jesus speaks to us, of who God is calling us to be.

Another piece, which is related, is around questions of what it means for us, in a way, to be a people—and by people I'm not just talking about the people of God, I'm not necessarily limiting myself to the church—but people in a society. What's animating this thinking is the construction of Route 138 in the Lower North Shore. There are a lot of communities that are not connected. There's an ongoing political and economic debate on the feasibility of that road. One of the questions we're asking—and it came to Diocesan

Executive Council at the last face-to-face meeting—is how can we speak to this as a church? Both in terms of helping to support and advocate, but also, what is it as Christians that we specifically bring to the table? What unique, value-added things do Christians have to say, rather than just repeating the kind of discourse that's already in the contested sphere?

How can the diocese engage you?

I'm always looking for partnerships. Because the methodology I use in both theological reflection and in vocational discernment is ethnographic, it means I look for invitations to enter into conversations that are already happening. If there's a community that wants to explore an issue or to engage in its own kind of discernment, that community can contact me.

In a few cases, the discernment has orbited questions on whether it makes sense to keep a certain parish structure open—because that's what those folks wanted help with. But it could be also a question of: *In our community, here's a problem that we're dealing with. How can the church help us with that issue? What resources are there, both in terms of reflection but also in action?*

For me, the most exciting work is to help congregations and help individuals look at their gifts and address the things that most communities can already point to as important. You just have to think: *What are the people around you most afraid of? What do the people around you deeply love?* You want to talk about values tests—you can ask those questions, and we ought to all be asking these questions of our surroundings. ■