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Laity has played important role in Bishop Pearce Lacey's Life

by Anne Conway

"I have a happy life!" Wherever his priestly calling took him, these words form Bishop Lacey's recurring theme.

He is 57 years a priest, ordained in 1943 "in the biggest class at St. Augustine's. There were 13 of us that year." He has served the Archdiocese in many capacities, among them being chaplain at St. Michael's Hospital; parish priest; pastor of the then-new parish of The Transfiguration of Our Lord; Rector of the Cathedral; and as Auxiliary Bishop of Toronto Western Region.

Bishop Lacey grew up in St. Helen's Parish, in a family of seven children, of whom two became priests and one, a nun. Their mother had a strong influence on their faith development. "She'd make sure we got to Mass, and confession too," Bishop Lacey chuckled.

He felt a strong calling to parish work, and after 2 years as a young chaplain at St. Michael's Hospital, he was appointed to Transfiguration to build both the church and the parish community. "It was the last few years pre-Vatican II, and I wanted to prepare the parishioners as much as I could..." He describes getting out of the rectory and visiting parishioners in their homes. "You'd go at 4 or 5 o'clock, when the kids were home and the mother was getting dinner. You'd get a good idea of how things were in the family."

It was here that Bishop Lacey believes that his mature spiritual development began. "I owe a great deal to a young couple who not only welcomed me to the parish but also introduced me to the Catholic Family Movement, and later the Grail Movement. The laity," he emphasizes, "has played a very important role in my life." This awakening eventually led him to the Charismatic Movement, with which he has been deeply involved for over 30 years. His commitment continues in his retirement, as seen in his contribution to ***He's Alive! Vol. II More personal stories of faith, conversion, and renewal***, edited by Father Peter B. Coughlin, CCSO Bread of Life Renewal Centre, 2001.

Bishop Lacey was Rector of St. Michael's Cathedral for 13 years. He was Chairman of the Liturgical Commission in the Vatican II years, a challenging and often difficult task. Also during his time as rector, with the support of Archbishop Pocock, he organized a ministry to meet the needs of the businessperson downtown. Thus St. Stephen's Centre was opened in 1974 in an office building on Bay Street, and serves its many attendees to this very day.

Consecrated in 1979, Bishop Lacey returned to his roots in West Toronto, where he served until his retirement. He reckons he has confirmed 55,000 children in his time. "I have always had a great devotion to Our Blessed Lady, and have given every child a Rosary at confirmation, in the hope that they will develop a devotion to her as well."

In retirement, he lives with his sister in her apartment. "My life in retirement is very happy," he says. "I'm as busy and active as I want to be and my health will allow." He maintains his life-long Holy Hour devotions, and actively promotes the development of a deeper belief in and devotion to the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, as well as devotion to Our Blessed Lady. "I'll speak on these topics wherever they'll have me," he declares, "and on the need for strong religious devotions in families. It's incredible how many youngsters know hardly anything about their faith."

Bishop Lacey's avocation has long been oil painting. "I started in 1953 and off and on when time permitted I continued to paint," he says, "It's a wonderful way to relax." Many of his paintings reflect places and events with a family or personal significance. "Recently I've been doing more portraits, having studied last year under Francis Dvorak, a talented young portrait artist."

"The Shepherds' Trust", says Bishop Lacey, "is a serious extension of the Archdiocese' commitment to its priests.....They need a strong assurance that this kind of care will be there after they retire."

Uncompromising in his beliefs and in his love of God and His Blessed Mother, in the joy of his calling Bishop Lacey exudes the energy that flows from his certainty. Minister, writer, artist, and effortless storyteller, he sums up everything this way: "*I have a happy life!*"



Bishop Robert Clune hopeful that the Lord will continue to call people to serve in ministry

by Anne Conway

"I'd really rather talk about the Shepherds' Trust than about myself," says Bishop Clune at the door of his apartment.



Sitting down, he continues, "You know, this age has been described as 'The Age of the Laity,' and The Shepherds' Trust is a prime example of that. It started when Father John O'Neill, former pastor St. Mary Star of the Sea in Mississauga and Monsignor Schwab, retired pastor of Our Lady of the Airways spoke to Bernard Wilson, a parishioner, about the difficulty the Diocese was having financially in caring for the increasing number of retired priests..."

He paused for a moment. "In former times, clergy did most everything. Now the new Code of Canon Law describes the Church as the 'People of God' so that everyone is considered as equal and united. Within this People of God there are distinct ministries: bishops, priests, deacons and laity, who are all expected to work together. So, getting back to the Shepherds' Trust, the initial suggestion came from priests, but it was organized by four laymen, and now it is a cooperative venture involving both priests and laity. Just the way the Church wants us to work together.

"I joined the priesthood to be a pastor," continues Bishop Clune. "I was ordained in 1945. But to my surprise, I was sent to Catholic University in Washington D.C. to study Canon Law. When I returned I was attached to the Chancery Office as Vice Chancellor for Temporal Affairs (managing finances, property, and cemeteries for the diocese). Then I was appointed to the Marriage Tribunal for 12 years. I was Director of the St. Vincent de Paul Society and part-time military chaplain for 16 years. Interesting times, I must say!

"Then," he grins, "in 1965 I was sent to Downsview as founding pastor of St. Wilfrid's. This was my only parish really. We spent four years saying Mass in gyms before the church was built. Those pioneering years are the best of times in the life of a parish. Everyone feels a responsibility to make it work, and eagerly cooperates.

"I was reluctant to leave St. Wilfrid's but I was appointed to head up the Catholic Church Extension. The next 8 years were a *tremendous* experience! I was so impressed with the dedication of the people, the missionaries and the laity, everyone.

Bishop Clune was ordained Bishop in 1979 and served as a Regional Bishop until his retirement in 1996. Energy still crackles as he says, "I *enjoyed it!* I was so happy to be able to do things that people needed to have done!" For example, he was able to convince the Archdiocese of the need for new parishes in many different areas. All in all, during his tenure the number of parishes grew from 58 to 75. He is very proud of that.

Bishop Clune grew up in St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Toronto. His mother was very devout, and a powerful influence in their home. He recalls serving Mass for Msgr Blair, President of Catholic Church Extension, little suspecting that one day he too would be President (1971-1979) of this organization (now Catholic Home Missions).

Interestingly, Bishop Clune sees today's shortage of priestly vocations as having been helpful in opening up church ministries to laity. He is very hopeful that the Lord will continue to call men and women to serve in ministry.

Bishop Clune is still active and now lives at St. Bernard's Residence. For the past four years, and his good friend Father Gignac have been celebrating Mass at Marian Nursing Home and Queen of Peace Villa, and helping out where needed as well.

"I've been very blessed," he says reflectively. "I have a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and I know she has helped me greatly...If I have any words of wisdom to pass on, they would be, do your very best; not for yourself but for the Lord and His people. Have faith in the Lord. He is guiding the Church and us...Our crosses are simply signals that Our Lord is trying to tell us something..."

That well-known smile appears again. "There is something *wonderful* about helping people. I have had great joy and happiness in doing this as priest and as bishop."

Message from Cardinal Ambrozic



My dear friends,

The Shepherds' Trust annual collection has been a great success from its beginning some four years ago. It is taken up, as you know, in order to support the retired and disabled priests. Their number is 78 at this time. Others will qualify for retirement over the next few years.

Once again I appeal to your generosity. This year the collection occurs on the weekend of November 17 - 18.

May God reward you for caring for those who have always cared for you.

Yours in Christ,

Aloysius Cardinal Ambrozic
Archbishop of Toronto

Love of God and Church key in Monsignor William O'Brien's life

by Anne Conway

"There may be some who've been priests longer than I have, but I bet no one's had more fun!" With these opening words, Monsignor William O'Brien settles in to describe his life as a priest.



He grew up in a large family. Two of his brothers entered the Jesuits, but he wanted to be in business. So he worked as a bank clerk before 'giving in to the inevitable,' and entering St. Augustine's Seminary. He is 81 now, ordained over 55 years ago. He lives in an apartment in St. Luke's Residence, Thornhill. "I've become a pretty good cook," he says with a grin, "I can finally make stew like my mother's!"

Throughout his years as a parish priest, there seem to be two constants: his fierce love of God and His Church, and a love of sport and competition. Msgr. O'Brien played most sports, but loved hockey, playing it at a senior level, and also on the team that pre-dated the Flying Fathers. "Back in those days, Father Scanlon and I would play hockey and then go skiing. We thought nothing of it. We had so much fun!"

Msgr. O'Brien's assignments took him to all quarters of the Archdiocese. He used sport as one means of reaching the young in his parishes. "When I started out at St. Mary's, I coached baseball. I coached hockey. We built the biggest rink outside of Maple Leaf Gardens. There were kids all over the place. And I loved visiting the families. We'd go out every day; we used to look for baby carriages. People were so kind, even the non-Catholics. We appreciated that."

He was moved to Our Lady of Perpetual Help when Msgr. Egan was pastor. "He met me through playing bridge," said Msgr. O'Brien. "One event I remember was a Forty Hours devotion that was unattended one night. So I called the father of every boy who should have been there--and every boy was there the second night!"

In his recollections the sense of the priest's duty to 'do what has to be done' and 'tell it like it is' comes through very clearly. Whether it was 'giving what-for' to lax communicants at a military base, or raising funds to build a school in a rural parish, the means were found to do God's work. In the former case, the group asked Father O'Brien to preach a mission. In the latter all the resources needed for the school were found and in place in mere months.

Msgr. O'Brien continues. "I was sent to St. Paul's Parish [in Toronto's inner city] early on, too. Oh, that was something else! It was falling down around us; the church and the rectory were full of termites. I made changes which some didn't like ...but at Midnight Mass parishioners had a wonderful surprise. The entrance hymn, Joy to the World, was played first on solo trumpet, and then with organ, and then the new choirs...." his eyes sparkle as he remembers this step in winning them over.

Other parishes followed, including 12 years at Our Lady of Sorrows. "That was another great parish," he says, "we had 72 altar boys, and we kept them on through high school by giving them exclusive rights to wear the red cassocks!"

He played golf until he suffered a slight stroke, and was a member of Scarborough Golf Club for many years. "I had four holes in one, and eight eagles on the back nine," he declares. "Not many people can say that!" He still, however, plays bridge. As in other games, he plays to win. "Just don't renege," he says darkly.

When asked about the Shepherds' Trust, Msgr. O'Brien responded at once, "It's a Godsend. You can live decently on it. My apartment is affordable. I can meet my needs. Without The Shepherds' Trust many retired priests couldn't do that, through no fault of their own."

He goes on to say, "If I had some advice for people it would be this: think of where you came from, where you are going and the means to attain it. Above all remember that these things are all due to God's blessing and love."

"Not many people have had the chance to do the things that I've done," Msgr. O'Brien sums up. "God has blessed me."

Lay Trustees of The Shepherds' Trust give back to those who have given them so much

by Anne Conway

What do they have in common, the human resources executive, the corporate and commercial lawyer, and the chartered accountant/executive who are the Lay Trustees of The Shepherds' Trust?

Quite a lot, as it turns out: Neil Conway, Peter Cathcart, and Joan Breech were all educated by priests and religious who made a positive and lasting impression on them. All grew up with priests as 'part of their extended families.' They are active in their parish communities. They are active on other boards and committees in the Archdiocese as well. This common commitment to 'serving' and viewing the clergy as part of their extended families, made it easy for each of them to say "yes" to the invitation to bring their talents to the Board of The Shepherds' Trust.

"It's sort of my way of saying thank-you," says Peter, "and it's a way to be more open about my faith without 'preaching' at people." Neil and Joan share with Peter the desire to 'give back' to those who have given them so much. Joan reflects, "It's also an important part of my own faith development." Neil adds, "I've been blessed in so many ways, so it's important to do something to balance the books..."

The Lay Trustees bring from the corporate and commercial worlds experience and skills that have a direct bearing on the development and administration of the Trust. They serve as catalysts for change, bringing to the Board new ideas and ways of thinking from their specific areas of expertise. In the rest of this article, you'll read in their own words about their vision for The Shepherds' Trust, and some of the challenges they see.

Neil Conway, Senior Vice President of Human Resources at Bank of Montreal, is one of the founding members of The Shepherds' Trust. He is the first Lay Chair of the Board. Last year he chaired the Diocese-wide campaign for The Shepherds' Trust, and does so again this year. Neil is also on the Advisory Board to the Cardinal on Priest Personnel and has served in a variety of parish ministries.

Neil was educated at Loyola High School and Loyola College (now part of Concordia) in Montreal—the finest education



he could receive, he believes. He is married, with one son. "I bring to the Board a pretty good ability to see what must be done and the organizational skills to support that," he says. "And I seem to be able to get people to work together, which is certainly made easier by the support we get from Cardinal Ambrozic on down."

Neil was initially surprised by the support this project received. "I think it really touched a chord right from the beginning. In the first year, we thought \$400,000 would mean a really successful campaign. We were wrong. Contributions were over \$900,000! And each year has been more successful than the year before."

He believes the Lay Trustees' role is no different from any other: "At the end of the day, we are all responsible for the stewardship of the Trust. We just bring different gifts to the table."

This is Neil's last year on the Board. He says that he'll be satisfied to see the Shepherds' Trust take firm root in our faith community, in light of the anticipated rise in retirements in the next ten years. He would like to see it become "a good example of lay leadership on an important issue...a model for others to see that not only do we have a responsibility to give of our time and our talents, but there are ways we *can* work with and within the Archdiocese to meet a critical need."

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Peter Cathcart is a Partner at McMillan Binch, where he practices corporate and commercial law. He attended St. Michael's High School and Assumption University (now University of Windsor), followed by Osgoode Hall Law School. Father of four and a keen golfer, over the years Peter has served on many not-for-profit Boards, including the University of Windsor and Providence Centre. He currently serves on the St. Michael's Hospital Foundation and the Advisory Board of the Basilian Fathers of Toronto, and is a corporate canvasser for ShareLife.



This is Peter's second year on the Board of The Shepherds' Trust. He says that as a Lay Trustee, his responsibility "...is to provide an outside point of view—legal, in my case." which is critical to the development and passage of the pension benefit plan at the heart of the Trust. His particular gifts include his knowledge of corporate and commercial law, and his expertise in the areas of corporate governance and not-for-profit organizations.

A challenge right now, Peter says, is simply always staying on top of things, especially investments, but especially now following the tragedy of Sept. 11. A further challenge is working to understand the needs of individual priests, and balancing them against the currently available dollar resources.

Peter looks forward to seeing the definitive structure of the pension finalized, which will be good for all retired priests. He emphasizes that the role of the laity as a whole is crucial to the ongoing success of The Shepherds' Trust. "We need to continue to educate and convince the laity that the annual Shepherds' Trust campaign isn't 'just another collection,' " he said, "but a means of providing dignity and security to valued members of our faith community."

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Joan Brech is in her first year as a Trustee. She attended St. Joseph's High School and then St. Michael's College (now University). She is married with three children, two in university and one in high school. She is also active in her parish community.



Before accepting her current position as Administrator of the Fontbonne Ministries of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto about a year ago, Joan spent 12 hectic but enjoyable years at St. Joseph Health Centre, as Chief Financial Officer and Vice President "...of most Administrative functions, including Human Resources and Program responsibility!" she laughs, and a brief stint as Interim CEO of St. Joseph's Hospital and of its Foundation. As a practicing Chartered Accountant, she has had a great deal of experience with pension and benefit issues.

Joan is very much aware of the challenges facing The Shepherds' Trust as she is also on the Advisory Board of Share Life, and has been President of the Board of Catholic Charities.

Joan agrees with Peter's final observations. Given the number of priests who will be eligible for retirement in the next five to ten years, The Shepherds' Trust is still under-funded to meet this coming need. "Catholics have responded amazingly, but we have to be aware that we are competing with other fundraising efforts," she observes.

"What I bring to the Board of the Trust is all my experience from my volunteer and work lives," Joan says. "What I want to achieve is to help meet the needs of the Trust, to contribute to the growth of the Fund. I'd also like us to raise awareness of the concept of *stewardship*. We all have a responsibility to give of our time, talent and treasure for all the needs of the Church, including The Shepherds' Trust."

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The closing remarks are Neil's. "I receive tremendous satisfaction from seeing real progress made on such an important issue in a relatively short period of time, through the cooperative work of so many people across the Archdiocese."

He pauses for a few seconds and then adds, " Our priests are worth every bit of energy we devote to this worthy cause—and more."

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