

>> COMMENT

The Pope has invited us all to a 'sin-odd'

Non-Catholics, too, can join 'the path along which the People of God walk together'



Deirdre Pike
OPINION

I received an invitation from Pope Francis recently to give him a piece of my mind.

Yes, it is a pretty special occasion and I wanted you to be the first to know. I also wanted you to know it is not an exclusive offer. The invitation is open to you, too.

Francis is calling all Catholics; recovering Catholics and long-ago Catholics; Catholics with a small 'e' and Catholics with a capital 'R'; Catholics who have been abused, hurt, neglected, marginalized and excluded; and even Catholics who show up week after week and happily occupy a pew and participate fully in their parish communities.

The call is also extended to non-Catholics: people from the worlds of economics and science, politics and culture, arts and sport, the media and social initiatives, as well as people from other Christian denominations and other faith traditions.

Calling you to what? Well, here's where it gets a little complicated. It's a Synod on Synodality. Anyone old enough to remember comedian Bob Newhart's one-sided telephone call routines or Ellen DeGeneres' phone call with God, could imagine some fun here.

"You want me to participate in what, Pope Francis? (Pause.) A sin-odd? What in the name of God, oh sorry... What is a sin-odd, Holy Father?"

On the boring side of the definition, the Synod, is basically a big meeting in Rome every few years of bishops from around the world, the next being in 2023. At a deeper and more profound level, a Synod indicates, "the path along which the People of God walk together."

Francis is calling pretty much ev-

eryone to "dream and spend time with the future," instructing bishops to lead inclusive and fulsome conversations reaching to the far corners and marginalized spaces of their dioceses for input.

The guiding document urges, "special care ... to involve women, (disabled) people, refugees, migrants, the elderly, people who live in poverty, Catholics who rarely or never practice their faith, etc.," emphasizing, "creative means should also be found in order to involve children and youth."

Francis is calling pretty much everyone to 'dream and spend time with the future,' instructing bishops to lead inclusive and fulsome conversations

Of course, I wish that list was longer and included particular attention to LGBTQ+ people, but it doesn't mean we don't and won't show up in the intersections of every one of those other identified categories.

I also know the Pope has been paying attention and openly blessing the ministry of well-known queer and trans advocate, James Martin, a Jesuit priest who was once known as "the chaplain," on "The Colbert Report."

Father James recently tweeted about, "a beautiful letter," he received from Francis, "on the occasion of the Outreach LGBTQ Catholic Ministry Webinar... expressing his support for this ministry and encouraging us to imitate God's 'style' of 'closeness, compassion and tenderness.'"

Bishop Douglas Crosby has not detailed how the conversations will take place in the Diocese of Hamilton, but at the recent mass marking the beginning of the Synod, it was said, "in the coming weeks and months, our diocesan Synod team will invite parishioners, Catholics

involved in education, health care, and charitable work; practicing and non-practicing Catholics, to respond to questions."

The answers to those yet unknown questions, will be collated and forwarded to the Bishops' Conference to form the Canadian response to be shared with Rome. This will happen around the world with a final report synthesized and presented in 2023.

A national group of Concerned Lay Catholics (CLC), started in Hamilton, is excited about the opportunity the Synod will provide and wants to ensure broad participation in the conversations, no matter how they are rolled out.

Started three years ago in response to the abhorrent news out of Pennsylvania of more systemic sexual abuse by clergy; that basement conversation at St. Joseph's Parish has grown to a large membership of Catholics from nine Canadian provinces meeting virtually.

Co-founder Cathie Pead says the time is short for this important opportunity to bring the voices of lay people to the forefront and wants to make sure the word gets out.

"If voices are left out, an important piece of the divine truth is silenced," says Pead.

I hope, no matter what relationship you have with the Catholic Church, past or present, you will join your voice with mine in saying a hearty, "yes," to the Pope's invitation.

Together we can help direct this Church in the days ahead, toward a path of peace, reconciliation, and reparation.

Deirdre Pike is a freelance columnist with The Hamilton Spectator. She is a member of the Concerned Lay Catholics and is kept well informed thanks to their website found here: concernedlaycatholics.ca.

You can reach Deirdre with your thoughts on the path ahead at deirdrepike@gmail.com.

READERS WRITE

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Nothing wrong with what Ford said

I do not have any issue with Doug Ford's statement about immigrants coming to Canada and the same should apply to all Canadians. Don't expect a free ride. You are welcome to come here and work hard to make a better life for yourself. Ontario needs workers.

I am an immigrant and have worked for 42 years in Canada. I found work on farms, construction, garbage collecting, self-employment, etc. I did what I had to do to stay off social assistance during tough times. I have met many immigrants in my current job and they are all hard working entrepreneurs, employers and employees — great people.

Ontario is having employment issues for various reasons due to the pandemic, but I have to believe it is too easy to not work and sit at home when we have programs such as CRB which has been exploited in many cases.

Gary Brown, Hamilton

Something very wrong with what Ford said

I am saddened but not surprised by the number of people defending Doug Ford's xenophobic comments attacking immigrants. Don't try to tell me he was referring to everyone, otherwise he would have said everyone. He was playing to the racist sentiment that a portion of new Canadians are lazy. Not only is that almost certainly wrong, but it insulting to the average hard-working immigrant family struggling to make ends meet in Ford's Ontario.

Of course this is red meat to Ford's base, and they will probably be cheering and lining up to vote for him again. They're the same ones who would vote for Max Bernier and Donald Trump. It's scary.

Melissa Cartwell, Burlington

HCA caters to the wealthy

News of the HCA's budget surplus is no surprise to me. As a senior who has been a loyal and frequent visitor to the conservation areas in Hamilton, I am now priced out of visiting any of our areas' gems.

It now costs a flat fee of \$15 to park at Crook's Hollow to walk along the upper part of Spencer Creek. Parking meters have sprung up at most HCA sites now. (Tiffany Falls, Punchbowl, Sherman Falls, etc.) We were always allowed free entry to our trails in the past.

To visit Tews Falls, or Websters Falls it would cost a party of three seniors \$35. That's \$10 to park, \$10 day use and \$5 per person. There is no reduction for being a senior, unlike Halton Hills Conservation, where we will now be spending more of our outings.

Even with the HCA membership card, which I own, it would still cost me \$20.50 to visit either of the falls. The HCA now caters to wealthier visitors from the GTA, and other areas farther afield.

Bill Rielly, Hamilton

Reuse plastic election signs

Banning election signs would certainly be an environmentally-friendly move.

In the meantime, what to do with all the signs that already exist if a ban is slow in coming? Reusing them is certainly an option. Can they be painted over, or re-covered using labels with a new candidate's name, or repurposed in a different way altogether? Being made of plastic, the existing signs could have many uses; I'm sure creative folks can think of several.

Renate Manthei, Hamilton

Put the beavers in charge

Just read the article should the "City of Hamilton kill beavers?" (Oct. 16) and I would suggest the exact opposite.

Round up more beavers and put them in charge of keeping sewage out of the creeks and rivers and lakes. The mayor and city council certainly can't do it.

Rusty Escott, Dunnville

Cartoon QR code was't valid

If the newspaper decides to publish a political cartoon that includes a QR code it should at least be a fully valid one. You've trained us to use these for added information in the online edition even if starting in the paper edition. Shame on you!

Ippo Lehto, Hamilton

Why are hospital staff resisting vaccination?

Yes indeed, why would the large number of intelligent devoted Hamilton health-care workers be willing to sacrifice their reputation and livelihood for the sake of being unvaccinated? Obviously the vaccine and/or mandate is unacceptable to them. Why?

As a lifelong reader of The Spectator, I'd be most interested in knowing their justification for this crucial decision. Suffering the ramifications of added hospital staff shortages is sure to cause havoc in an already inadequate situation and deserves answers.

Marilyn Haughton, Hamilton

What good are those overflow tanks?

I am left wondering why we continue to have to bypass the overflow tanks during heavy rains and if this is a similar problem with other cities in Ontario.

Are Toronto, Ottawa, London, Kitchener also experiencing these same issues? What are we doing differently that they are not?

If we are to spend millions on the remediation of Chedoke Creek, will this bypass not reoccur when the next heavy rains happen? Are the recent retirement of public works officials connected in any way with the bypass situation?

We are left wondering if something is going on behind closed doors. The introduction of the large holding tanks was announced with great fanfare years ago, but perhaps they are still not enough and require new technology or ideas.

Bruno Picchelli, Hamilton

Why we should read like our lives depend on it

'The Catcher in the Rye' protagonist demonstrates a unique ability to get close to the things that matter



Thomas Froese
OPINION

Today let's talk about Holden Caulfield and kids and newspapers, along with reading in general. After all, it's Reading Week, or at least it's Reading Week season.

Ontario's universities scatter these weeks at different times through the fall. It's important.

Because, as long as you're not reading "Acme's How to Blow Up the World in 10 Easy Steps," reading helps you become more human and more whole. In a world that's hobbling on one crutch or another, that's a good thing. And you do need that in any formal studies you do to this, to pick up some good reading, any more than you need to be Holden Caulfield.

If that name rings a bell it's because you recognize him as the irreverent teen who's figuring out life in 'The Catcher in the Rye.' Now in 2021 it's 70 years old, this J.D. Salinger novel that continues to hold its posture and relevance remarkably well.

Holden, you may know, is not really feeling 100 per cent. He suffers from a type of post-traumatic stress, in addition to the anxiety and depression that saddle enough teens.

In his existential angst, he sees a world full of phoney and conformists and liars and cheats and the sort of characters that newspapers tend to spill ink on. It's true.

There's some Holden Caulfield in any newspaper that's doing its job well.

No, Holden is not interested in social niceties. And who can blame him?

But if you ask me (and I'm not saying this just because I have three teens who could blow the roof off our house) Holden has a way of getting closer to holy things than many a sheepish follower in, say, some house of worship.

This may sound strange considering that for many years "The Catch-



THOMAS FROESE PHOTO

A man reads a newspaper in Grove Cemetery in Dundas, in line with the advice of Thomas Froese. Commenting on Reading Week and the character Holden Caulfield, Froese writes, "So pick your place. And read. Read the papers. Read Salinger. Read something even more holy."

er in the Rye" was among the most-banned books in schools and libraries across North America. This was because, as you may suspect, the novel has some foul language and sexual thoughts and casual drinking. (The internet has since purified us of any false pretences on some of these matters.)

More so, it's an ironic truth that Holden is the exact sort of character who can show how we're all, in fact, beggars in need of the same bread.

There's a certain shared humanity in Holden's insecurities, even as there's a beauty. It gets into you and it runs through you, not unlike a transfusion.

That's how it often goes with good writing. It goes straight into your blood.

Of course the upright, pretentious folks who seemingly have it together, the ones who Holden especially eschews, would still tell you not to have anything to do with such a guy or such a book.

Then again, these people probably don't read the papers, or much of anything else.

So this is Holden. Say hello. Today he made the paper. Not because his story is entirely unusual.

It's just that it's a story that got into me, just one reader, a long time ago. And I thought you'd want to know this for the next time you sit at

some park bench. Or some bench. Or some favourite chair, reading in-hand, with your feet up. Or when you're going through a transition.

The book gets its title from this, a line that circles around in Holden's head, a reference to Robert Burns' poem "Comin' Thro the Rye."

It's a symbol for a time of transition, while wanting to keep something of the former, in this case childhood, while moving out of it.

And isn't this the nub of it? Some people, in the worst of ways, get stuck somewhere between childhood and adulthood, never really maturing into who they could. Others get stuck in a place that seems mature enough, but it's just a place of age and brittleness.

Which is to say that, for my money, I'll still cheer for the grimy-faced kids — with their mouths full of gum and eyes full of wonder — the kids who, in the end, will fill the Kingdom of Heaven.

So pick your place. And read. Read the papers. Read Salinger. Read something even more holy. Find stuff inside that you'd otherwise be blind to.

Find that you're not alone in your lostness.

Find that in many ways your life depends on it.

Find Thomas Froese at www.thomasfroese.com.



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