

LEADING EDGE ... *Edge Thoughts*

Come to the Edge. *We might Fall.* **Come to the edge.** *It's too high!*
COME TO THE EDGE. And they came; and he pushed; and they flew.

Christopher Logue – *Ode to the Dodo – Poems from 1953 – 78*

ARCAN Logo Designed by Phyllis Gallant, CND



Message from Newsletter Committee

ARCAN MISSION STATEMENT

Rooted in Gospel values and inspired by the charisms of each religious congregation the mission of ARCAN is to provide a supportive network committed to adult learning, inclusive actions, embracing diversity, along with an awareness of the new consciousness that all life is sacred and connected.

ARCAN VISION STATEMENT

The vision of ARCAN is to be a mutually supportive network of Associates and Sisters in Atlantic Canada living a new and dynamic expression of religious life and spirituality for the 21st century. We inspire to invite one another to a wider embrace of Gospel values and to live a commitment of love in relationship with all.

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Anne Bown, Mercy Associate, NL

Mary MacLean, PEI Marthas Associate

Ronnie Macdonald, Charities of Halifax Associate

Deirdre Greene Lono, PBVM Associate

Welcome to the 2026 Spring edition of the ARCAN newsletter. We focus on the Synod's Final Report with recaps of Sr. Elizabeth Davis' April ZOOM presentation on the Synod, including next steps. One of our associates shares a personal reflection on the presentation. We highlight the conversation method, "Conversations in the Spirit", which was used during the various Synod sessions in Rome. We take you to the St. John's NL installation of the Global Irish Famine Way. The Global Irish Famine Way is the world's longest heritage trail, commemorating the journeys of Irish Famine emigrants across the globe. It is marked by a bronze copy of a pair of children's shoes. We reconnect with Pope Leo's April Prayer Vigil for peace and share his prayer intentions for the summer. There is a book review on Fr. James Mallon's "Divine Renovation". In our ARCAN minutes section we give a brief overview of the meeting's contents and the activities of the various associate groups and religious congregations throughout Atlantic Canada. Enjoy!

Anne, Deirdre, Mary, Ronnie

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Note the updated version of the Synodal Church Logo....NO DATES!

ARCAN 2026 SPRING MEETING COMMENTS

The Spring ARCAN meeting was held by Zoom on April 17-18, 2026. Eight Associate Groups in Atlantic Canada are members of ARCAN. They are listed with the main provinces served:

- Associates of the Presentation Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Newfoundland and Labrador)
- Associates of the Congregation of Notre Dame (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island)
- Associates of the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception (New Brunswick)
- Associates of the Sisters of Mercy (Newfoundland and Labrador)
- Associates of the Sisters of St. Martha of PEI (Prince Edward Island)
- Associates of the Sisters of St. Martha of Antigonish (Nova Scotia)
- Associates of the Sisters of Charity (Nova Scotia)

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ARCAN 2026 SPRING MEETING COMMENTS – CONT'D

One of ARCAN's chief purposes is to facilitate connection between Associate groups and also to keep in touch with the Religious Congregations we represent. This is why we begin each meeting with our "CHECK-IN". We hear reports for each Associate group and from any sisters present.

At our most recent meeting, it was so uplifting to hear how involved each Associate group is. Many continue to receive new members for the Associate journey to commitment. Much effort is put into offering retreats, reflections and study groups on various spiritual matters to associates and interested persons. Sometimes, community speakers are invited to share at Associate meetings; or books are chosen for study and reflection during the year. Our Associates are keen to enrich their personal spiritual lives and to become more educated in the issues of our times. We continue to see our associates live their charisms by offering their gifts in their churches and communities. Even though we may be decreasing in number and increasing in age, there is still a vibrancy among us. We continue to value our mentors, the sisters of our various congregations, and many groups interact regularly with the sisters.

The congregations who were present reported declining numbers. This is resulting in the need to reorganize and to plan for the future. However, congregations continue to support their local communities with projects, advice and guidance, support etc. Some congregations are having special anniversaries: The Martha's of PEI celebrate 110 years in 2026; the Presentation Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary are celebrating 250 years in 2056-2026; the Congregation of Notre Dame celebrate in 2027 the 300th anniversary of the arrival of sisters in Louisburg, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

There is of course a business section. ARCAN has been funded by the eight congregations of sisters. A financial report is provided and discussed. This year, a policy is being developed, in consultation with the sisters on how to disburse any remaining funds if/when ARCAN eventually ceases to exist. This is not expected in the short term, and ARCAN will be 25 years old in 2027.

The movement of the meetings to ZOOM has enabled ARCAN to have a spiritual program which can be shared beyond the 20+ members. It is open to all sisters and associates. This year's presentation was by Sister Elizabeth Davis, entitled: **The Synodal Church: A Spirit-Filled Vision, A Daring Promise and a Call to Hope.**

Continued on page 4

ARCAN 2025 FALL MEETING COMMENTS – CONT'D

The presentation was very enlightening. A recap (divided in two parts) is part of this newsletter. Also, Associate Mary MacLean has provided a reflection on the session. Things are supposed to be happening in each Diocese. **What's happening in yours?**

The afternoon session for the committee, was one of housekeeping. Choosing the date for the Fall meeting and inviting ideas for newsletter articles and spiritual session facilitators.

Throughout the two days we were uplifted by gathering prayers shared by Associates.

NOTE: - if you wish to see the detailed minutes of our meeting – ask your ARCAN member for a copy OR get in touch with me at ambown@nl.rogers.com

Respectively submitted – Anne Bown – Mercy Associate



CONVERSATIONS IN THE SPIRIT - METHOD

The Synod (2021-2024) used the discernment method called “Conversations in the Spirit” during the various sessions held. Conversations in the Spirit, also called Spiritual Conversation, is an ancient practice of the Church that has been revitalized through the Synod process as a tool for deep listening, discernment, and faith sharing.

The aim of spiritual conversation is to create an atmosphere of trust and welcome, so that people can express themselves more freely. This helps them to take seriously what happens within them as they listen to others and speak. Ultimately, this interior attentiveness makes us more aware of the presence and participation of the Holy Spirit in the process of sharing and discernment.

There are several steps in this process, each interspersed with moments of silence and prayer.

- **Personal Preparation** – participants prepare their own contribution to the question being discussed.
- **Speaking and listening** – each person shares their comments and listens carefully and actively to the contribution of others.
- **Sharing** what has resonated (or has aroused resistance) from the contributions of others.
- **Dialogue** to identify convergences, discordances, obstacles, new questions; ensuring everyone feels represented in the outcome of the work

In summary, what are the desired attitudes for spiritual conversation? • Listen actively and attentively • Listen to others without judgment • Pay attention not only to the words, but also to the tone and feelings of the one who is speaking • Avoid the temptation of using the time to prepare what you will say instead of listening.



Article compiled (by ARCAN member Anne Bown) from presentation by Sr Elizabeth Davis and material from the Vatican website.

RECAP of SYNOD PRESENTATION - FINAL REPORT



Sr Elizabeth Davis, rsm gave a talk to Associates and Sisters on Saturday April 18th entitled: The Synodal Church; A Spirit-Filled Vision, A Daring Promise and a Call to Hope. The following is a selected recap of her presentation.

The 67- page final document of the October 2024 session of the Synod has been released. There are 5 parts in the document, rooted in two Gospel accounts of Risen Jesus appearing to the Disciples (see John 20 and 21).

Part One – (#13-48): “The Heart of Synodality”

Part Two – (#49-#78): “On the Boat, Together” – conversion of relationships

Part Three – (#79-#108): “Cast the Net” – conversion of processes

Part Four – (#109-#139): “An Abundant Catch” – conversion of bonds

Part Five – (#140-#151): “So I Send you” – First step is caring for the formation of all.

(The document can be seen at www.synod.va / resources/ official documents)

Sr. Elizabeth referred briefly to a number of subjects (LGBTQ+ communities; Indigenous Peoples; Integral Ecology) and the related references in the Final Document. She provided more commentary on paragraph 60 (Page 22) which is specifically about women.

The document acknowledges the equality that both women and men have by virtue of Baptism, but points out that women continue to encounter obstacles in obtaining a fuller recognition and place in the life of the Church. This is in spite of the (leadership and faith formation) roles that women play in their families, churches, communities, governments. The document supports that women should be provided opportunities in areas already provided for in Canon Law - BUT indicates that the question of women’s access to diaconate ministry needs further discernment. **However, the document does acknowledge that what comes from the Holy Spirit cannot be stopped.** So, we must have hope.

The final paragraph of the document (#151) reminds us that we must be informed about and act on the themes of the Church’s social doctrine. Specifically:

- The commitment to peace and justice

RECAP of SYNOD PRESENTATION – FINAL REPORT - cont'd

- The care for our common home
- Intercultural and interreligious dialogue
- The commitment to defending life and human rights
- The proper ordering of society
- The dignity of work
- A fair and supportive economy
- An integral ecology

On June 25, 2025, the Vatican published a document called “Pathways for the implementation phase of the Synod – a guide for local churches”. It offers suggestions on how to engage community going forward, especially those whose voices have not been heard.

The first person responsible for this phase in each church is the diocesan or eparchial bishop. A suggestion is that synodal teams, representing lay and clerical members, with a focus on various kinds of diversity, be set up.

The May 26, 2026 timetable set out by the Vatican is as follows:

- Jun 2025 to Dec 2026 – Implementation paths in local churches and groupings.
- Jan – Jun 2027 – Evaluation Assemblies in dioceses and eparchies
- Jul – Dec 2027 – Evaluation Assemblies in National & International Episcopal Conferences, Eastern hierarchical structures and other groups of Churches (ie CCCB)
- Jan – Mar 2028 – Continental Evaluation Assemblies (ie Canada & the USA)

Sr Elizabeth then referenced a number of study group reports. (Please see the article on page 13).

Sr Elizabeth reminded us that both Pope Francis and Pope Leo committed to leading us on a path that is missionary and synodal. She concluded her presentation by sharing her hopes that (1) synodal missionaries and others will make the vision of listening and inclusion come alive at the grass roots level; that (2) small flames of passion and energy in parishes etc will make the vision come alive, confident that this is where the Spirit is calling; and (3) that from these small flames will come a new Pentecost announcing the good news of openness, inclusion, listening, walking together.

Recap prepared by ARCAN member Anne Bown

GLOBAL IRISH FAMINE WAY – ST. JOHN’S LOCATION

Irish Famine Way Memorial Garden, Cathedral Basilica of St John the Baptist

Presentation Associate designs garden to commemorate Newfoundland as a step on the path of the Irish diaspora

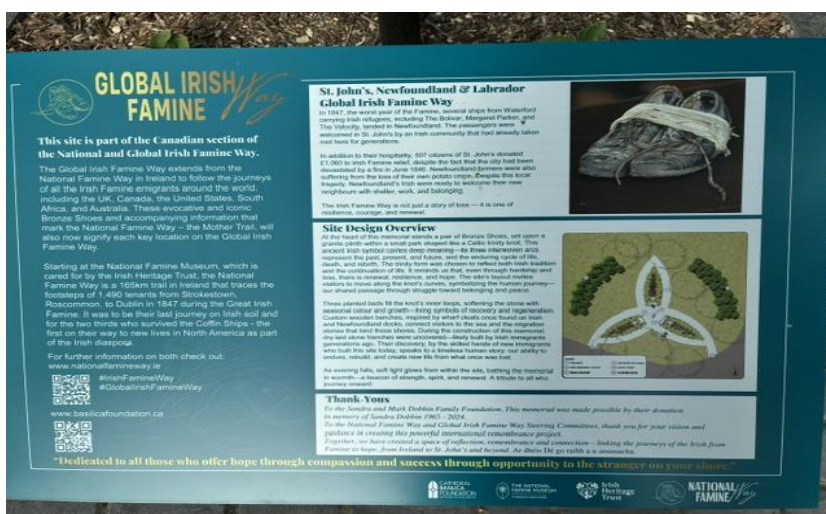
The Global Irish Famine Way is a heritage trail that extends Ireland's National Famine Way to follow the journeys of Irish Famine emigrants around the world, honouring this shared history of displacement and renewal. The trail is marked by bronze shoes cast from a pair of children's booties found left behind in an abandoned Connacht cottage after its occupants fled starvation, poverty and oppression. A pair of these bronze shoes are installed in places where Irish emigrants established communities, as far apart as Canada, the US and Australia.

The Installation at the Cathedral Basilica of St John the Baptist in St. John's, NL is set in a Memorial Garden commissioned by the Cathedral Basilica Heritage Foundation and designed by Presentation Associate and landscape architect Elizabeth Fowler. It was inaugurated in Spring 2026 as a poignant tribute to the resilience and courage of the Irish people and a testament to the capacity of the human spirit for renewal and hope.

Submitted by Presentation Associate Deirdre Greene-Lono



Bronze Shoes



Plaque in the Memorial Garden of the Cathedral Basilica



The Cathedral Basilica Memorial Garden laid out in a stone trefoil

Pope Leo's prayer intentions for June – September 2026

June: For the values of sports

Let us pray that sports be an instrument of peace, encounter, and dialogue among cultures and nations, and that they promote values such as respect, solidarity, and personal growth.

July: For respect for human life

Let us pray for the respect and protection of human life in all its stages, recognizing it as a gift from God.

August: For evangelization in the city

Let us pray that in large cities often marked by anonymity and loneliness we find new ways to proclaim the Gospel, discovering creative paths to build community.

September: For the care of water

Let us pray for a just and sustainable management of water, a vital resource, so that everyone may have equal access to it.

POPE LEO'S APRIL PRAYER VIGIL FOR PEACE**POPE LEO XIV leads Prayer Vigils around the world**

On April 11th, Pope Leo XIV asked the faithful to join with him in saying the Holy Rosary for Peace. Many churches held these vigils as Catholics came together to pray in light of escalating armed conflicts around the world— particularly in the Middle East. Pope Leo said: "Let's look for solutions in a peaceful way. And let's remember, especially the innocent, children, the elderly, sick, so many people who have already become or will become victims of this continued warfare."

Excerpt from the text of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV at the Prayer Vigil for Peace

Lord Jesus, You conquered death without weapons or violence;

You shattered its power with the strength of peace.

Grant us your peace, as you did to the women filled with doubt on Easter morning;

As you did to the disciples who were hiding in fear.

Send forth your Spirit, the breath that gives life and reconciles, that turns adversaries and enemies into brothers and sisters.

Inspire in us to trust in Mary, your mother, who stood at the foot of your cross with a broken heart, firm in the faith that you would rise again.

May the madness of war cease and the Earth be cared for and cultivated by those who still know how to bring forth, protect and love life.

Hear us, Lord of life.

Reflections on Sister Elizabeth Davis's Hope for a Synodal Church

Sr. Elizabeth Davis's presentation to ARCAN in April, 2026, remains hopeful and trusting that "What the Holy Spirit began, cannot be stopped."

Remember the local, diocesan, national, and continental consultations in 2021-2023 which led to the first session of the Synod on Synodality in late 2023 and its closing document released by Pope Francis, and then the excitement of the second session in late 2024. Pope Francis accepted the Final Document as it was written. This synod document is therefore now official church teaching. Study groups continue to have conversations on many of the themes which arose out of the Synodal Process considering what is new and where conflicting views remain. Some of these continue study and conversations on topics such as the role of women in the church, the LBGTQ2+ communities, Indigenous affairs, integral ecology, and formation for the ministry of the priesthood.

The church is now in the stage of Implementation in the dioceses where Synodal Teams are to deepen and broaden the work begun at the Synod on Synodality.

Sr. Elizabeth explained how the participants and students of the synod's documents are to become "Synodal Missionaries." What a challenge Sister Elizabeth feels, but what a challenge she has offered us. Can we as Associates become Synodal Missionaries (as indicated in ARCAN's Vision Statement)?

That the Synod on Synodality was called is a response to the movement of the Holy Spirit. We have a right and a responsibility to participate in the mission of Jesus based on our equal human dignity and our Baptismal charisms. This mission reaches and includes all the "others" who are marginalized. Many who want to be part of the church are being marginalized by the structures still being protected as essential, but are in actuality being exclusive to the point that faithful people are becoming dis-engaged. Can we be "Synodal Missionaries'?

The Vatican speaks of hope that our church will become a listening and responding church. Implementation and evaluations are to continue through 2026-2028. Another Synodal Assembly is planned to take place in Rome, in October, 2028.

You may notice that the Synod's logo no longer includes a year, so that suggests a timeless process. Will we be active participants in this Spirit-driven process? Let us hope and trust.

Submitted by Mary Maclean, Associate, PEI Martha

RECAP OF SYNOD PRESENTATION - STUDY GROUPS

Synod study groups were created following the First Session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2023. Their mandate was to conduct in-depth reflection on complex or emerging issues identified during the global consultation phase of the Synod, ensuring a synodal approach that involves listening, discernment, and collaboration with the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia.

Sr. Elizabeth reminds us that the Study Groups are NOT officially part of the Church's teaching. All published reports are on the synod Vatican site.

Sr Elizabeth referred to several Study Groups which had reported by the time of our April 2026 gathering. Four Final Reports of Study Groups which we will simply list and not pursue for this recap are:

- To Hear the Cry of the Poor and the Earth
- The Mission in the Digital Environment
- The Revision of "Ratio Fundamental Institutionis Sacerdotalis" (related to formation to Priesthood)
- SECAM Commission – The Pastoral Challenge of Polygamy

Study Group 5 reported on Women's Participation in Life and Leadership of the Church. The report was released on March 10, 2026.

The report acknowledges that conversation re full participation of women in Church began with Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI. An appendix in the report illustrates the many women and their (often leadership) roles in both the Old and New Testament. It recognizes that women play many 'authorized' roles in the current church and acknowledges the "discomfort" many women feel as members of the church. Many women feel unequal; ignored; undervalued. The report acknowledges how important it is to listen to women before decisions are made or positions taken.

Goal: To trace possible directions for development that may help define new spaces for the participation of women in the leadership of the Church (SG5 II P7) (Study group 5/Section II/para 7) . The concept that granting more active participation to women is a 'concession' granted by hierarchical authority needs to be overcome.

The subordination and condition of inferiority of women can only arise from sin." (SG5 II P16)

RECAP OF SYNOD PRESENTATION - STUDY GROUPS – Cont'd

“The role of women in the life of the Church must be described beginning from reality in its fullness, illuminated by faith. Such an approach requires moving beyond a view limited to certain characteristics—such as motherhood, tenderness, or care—that can leave little room for other equally important feminine qualities, such as leadership, counsel, the capacity for teaching, listening, and discernment.” (SG5 II P 17)

“Laywomen have the right to affirm their participation in the mission of the Church not only on the basis of their equal human and Christian dignity but also on the basis of the charisms given by God.” (SG5 II P 36)

“These charisms may also be directed toward lay engagement in the midst of the world, which is the principal calling the laity must honor: in politics, in the economy, in institutions, and in every sphere of society. . . [and] in the peripheries of the Church itself.” (SG5 II P 40)

Sr Elizabeth observed that **while** women have the right to full participation in the Church by virtue of their being created in the image and likeness of God, by virtue of their Baptism, and by virtue of the charisms bestowed on them by the Spirit, **the extent** of their participation **is limited to** access to six sacraments, to the approval of Canon Law (decided by the Pope), and to the approval of the Pope or the local Bishop for specific ministries.

Despite visible observations to the contrary, complementarity and reciprocity of roles between women and men are still the norm, reinforced by a limited interpretation of the Marian and Petrine principles (in such complementarity, the woman’s role is always subservient).

While charisms are bestowed on women by the Spirit, their discernment of these charisms is suspect & therefore subject to clerical approval. Despite many supportive and affirming comments about women’s full participation in the Church, women are still seen as “the other”

Sr. Elizabeth closes with a comment that while this Study Group is taking us further along the road to ‘full participation’ it is still far from what is the rightful place of women by virtue of being created in the image and likeness of God; by virtue of our Baptism; and by virtue of the charisms bestowed individually by the Holy Spirit.

Submitted by Mercy Associate Anne Bown

Documents

[The Synod](#) [The Synod on Synodality](#) [The Synodal Process](#) [Resources](#) [News](#) [Contacts](#)[Resources](#) > Documents

ALL THE OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS
**IN CHRONOLOGICAL
ORDER**



DOCUMENTS FOR THE PHASE 1:
**THE CONSULTATION
OF THE PEOPLE
OF GOD**



DOCUMENTS FOR THE PHASE 2:
**THE DISCERNMENT
OF THE PASTORS**



DOCUMENTS FOR THE PHASE 3:
**THE IMPLEMENTATION
FOR A SYNODAL
CHURCH**



**BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL
SPIRITUAL, LITURGICAL
RESOURCES**

**POPE FRANCIS
AND THE SYNODAL
PROCESS**

**APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION
EPISCOPALIS
COMMUNIO**

**THE INSTRUCTION
AND THE REGULATIONS**



Documents

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NEWSLETTER

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This is a SCREEN SHOT of the documents page at www.synod.va/resources

RESOURCES SECTION

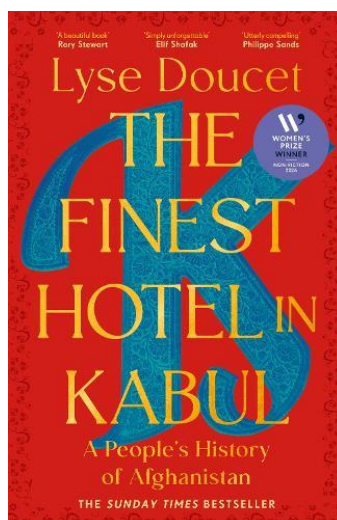
A large focus of this newsletter has been about the **Synod**. The best place to get accurate information is at the Vatican website. www.synod.va

They have their own “resources” page. One of the links on this resources page is “Documents”. Page 14 of this newsletter shows you a screen shot of the vast number of documents that are available. A recommendation is to click on the link for ALL THE OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER. This link even includes the most recent filing (May 2026) which is “Towards the Assemblies 2027-2028”. This is a guide for our church to move forward, starting at the parish level.

ANGEL STUDIOS

Angel Studios is an American independent media company and streaming platform. It produces and distributes values-based often faith-oriented films and series. Among the films it has produced is the series “The Chosen”, about the life of Jesus. The movie “Cabrini” follows Italian immigrant Francesca Cabrini’s arrival in 1889 New York, where she confronts poverty, prejudice, and political resistance while fighting to secure housing, healthcare, and dignity for marginalized communities.

It is a streaming service with a membership costing between \$17-25 Canadian per month. To check it out – go to www.angel.com



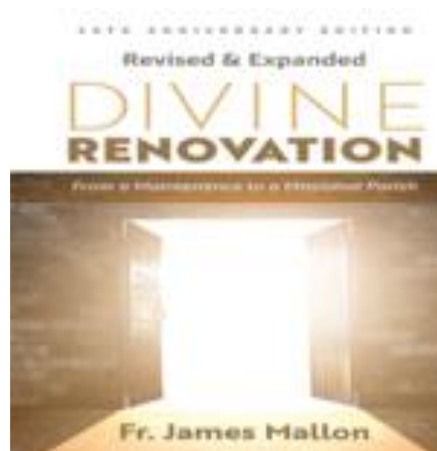
THE FINEST HOTEL IN KABUL - Canadian born, BBC Journalist Lyse Doucet has written a book about the Inter-Continental Hotel in Kabul, Afghanistan. It tells the story of Afghanistan through the lives of the people who worked in the hotel, through various political regimes. Lyse has just won the UK 2026 Women’s Prize for Non-Fiction. She reported from Afghanistan many times over 30 years and was a resident at this hotel. The book is available from Chapters at \$39 or perhaps your library.

BOOK REVIEW – DIVINE RENOVATION

Revised & Expanded Divine Renovation by Fr. James Mallon

Fr. Mallon, a parish pastor in the Archdiocese of Halifax, writes of his inspired efforts to challenge the Catholic community to become active missionaries within their parishes. As a newly ordained priest, he was excited to get to work, yet he soon recognized that most parishes were struggling just to maintain the status quo which was obviously not happening. Fr. Mallon was determined. A new kind of evangelization was needed for new life and growth. Parents needed to be evangelized to effectively evangelize their children. The pastor cannot do this. The whole parish had to become actively engaged and become “missionary disciples.” His devotion to renovating his beloved church and way of ministry is now being modelled in many parts of the world, and growing one parish at a time. This book can be unsettling, but is inspiring, challenging, and greatly needed in our times.

This book can be obtained through Novalis at a cost of \$29.95. There is also an e-book; a guidebook; and a group reading guide available.



(Submitted by Mary Maclean, Associate, PEI Martha Associates)

WATCH - CBC GEM – Documentary - Sing the World Better (44 minutes)

SING THE WORLD BETTER – features LAUDA, one of a handful of youth choirs in the world to embrace all neurotypes. They prepare for a concert, and find harmony in a world not always tuned to their rhythm.

GEM is free to watch (with ads)