

(CCCB – Ottawa)... On the opening day of their annual Plenary Assembly, currently underway until 23 October at the Nav Canada Centre, Cornwall, Ontario, the Bishops of Canada learned they would focus on a wide diversity of questions this week. In addition to reviewing activities from over the past months, the Bishops will also consider possible approaches to future pastoral activities.



Dr. Richard R. Gaillardetz, Murray/Bacik Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Toledo in C

In his report for 2008-2009, Most Reverend V. James Weisgerber, Archbishop of Winnipeg and President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB), spoke with emotion about the pain caused by the recent arrest of Most Reverend Raymond Lahey, Bishop emeritus of Antigonish. This “has been especially painful, because of the seriousness of the charges, and also because it involves a former member of our Assembly, an episcopal colleague, a close associate and, for many of us, a friend,” Archbishop Weisgerber said.

He went on to note that for almost 20 years, following the publication of the document ***From Pain to Hope***

, the dioceses of Canada have remained determined to “protect and safeguard the human family and the community of faith from serious violations of human dignity” with particular concern for victims and their families.

Archbishop Weisgerber also outlined various questions that CCCB members will need to reflect on during their Plenary Assembly: the involvement of Development and Peace in a number of development projects in countries from the Global South; the role of Bishops in life issues; and the pastoral approach to poverty, a problem affecting more and more Canadians.

Following the report of the CCCB President, two representatives of Catholic agencies involved in the question of refugee sponsorship – Mr. Carl Hétu, National Secretary of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA), and Dr. Martin Mark, director of the Office for Refugees of the Archdiocese of Toronto – described the situation facing refugees, particularly Christians from Iraq and Tamils from Sri Lanka.

Following reports on the activities of the Catholic Organization for Life and Family, the Canadian Catholic Aboriginal Council, and the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, the Plenary Assembly heard a presentation by American theologian Dr. Richard R. Gaillardetz, Murray/Bacik Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Toledo in Ohio, on the impact of the Second Vatican Council on the priesthood today. The Bishops, observers and guests then broke into smaller workshop groups to discuss the main points in the presentation.



Seen here in the company of Archbishop V. James Weisgerber (left), Archbishop Luigi Ventura, Apostolic Nuncio to Canada.

At the closing of the first day of the Plenary Assembly, the Bishops of Canada welcomed His Excellency Archbishop Luigi Ventura, who will shortly be leaving the country after being Apostolic Nuncio to Canada for eight years. In his address, Archbishop Ventura expressed his gratitude for “the many expressions of fraternal affection and friendship” he received from the Church in Canada while serving here. As a token of appreciation, Archbishop Weisgerber presented the Apostolic Nuncio with an Inuit sculpture on behalf of all the members of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

