

Reading the news and keeping the faith

Catholic lessons learned at school, home carry through to the newsroom

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Lisa LaFlamme's Catholic faith has helped her learn empathy, the concept of truth and "doing right by another person."

"Those are the same principles that guide good journalism as far as getting to the truth on something and particularly focusing on the oppressed in the world," the new chief anchor and senior editor of *CTV National News* told *The Catholic Register*.

She has taken these values with her to the prestigious position she assumed Sept. 5 when LaFlamme replaced Lloyd Robertson, the long-time anchor known as Canada's "most trusted news anchor."

Growing up in Kitchener, Ont., LaFlamme attended St. Daniel Catholic Elementary School and St. Mary's High School before entering the University of Ottawa where she earned a communications degree.

"I grew up in a very Catholic family so my faith has always been a part of everything in my life from the very beginning," she said.

And lessons she learned in Catholic school have carried through to her adult life.

"I think there's as much beauty in the Muslim faith, the Jewish faith, the Catholic faith. And I was taught that, by the way, in Catholic school."

In 2007, LaFlamme was recipient of the Waterloo Catholic District School Board's Distinguished Graduate Award. The award honours graduates of Waterloo Region's Catholic schools who have demonstrated outstanding commitment to their faith and have made significant contributions to their community.

She began her broadcasting career in 1988 at CTV's affiliate in Kitchener-Waterloo, CKCO. She has worked as parliamentary correspondent for CTV News, co-host of *Canada AM*, national affairs correspondent for *CTV National News* and was a part of CTV's national broadcast team at the Vancouver 2010 Olympics.

LaFlamme has received five Gemini nominations in the Best News Anchor category and has won several Radio-Television News Directors Association



Whether at the anchor's desk or on location, like her two months reporting from Afghanistan, Lisa LaFlamme says her Catholic faith and upbringing keep her grounded. (Photos courtesy of CTV News)

awards. In 2006, she received an honorary doctor of laws degree from Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo.

It was announced that LaFlamme would be Robertson's successor in July 2010. Large shoes to fill as Robertson had held that role as anchor or co-anchor since 1976.

"It's really been an overwhelming experience," said LaFlamme, just under two months into her new position. "It's been great to get so much support from so many friends, family and complete strangers just sort of rooting me on as *CTV National News* moves into this new era... I'm finding my pace and really enjoying the new challenge."

Over the years she's covered top stories of the day, including the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, Saddam Hussein's trial in Iraq and spent two months in Afghanistan reporting on the Canadian mission there.

LaFlamme was also on the scene in Rome when Blessed Pope John Paul II passed away. And although she had been covering

the pope's illness, his impact on the world and who the possible successors would be, nothing could have prepared her for the actual moment when word came out he had died.

"I walked out into the square and I saw these Salvadoran priests, a small group, and they were all crying and I ran over to them... And I started crying. He was such a powerful, iconic figure and, at that exact moment, I felt the loss. I felt it just like everybody else in that square did," she said.

"It was just a very powerful, powerful story to be covering as a Catholic."

When LaFlamme isn't breaking news, she likes visiting her family in Kitchener as often as possible, getting together with friends and speaks to her mother on the phone every day. She's also a self-professed movie addict (she just saw *The Ides of March* with George Clooney and Marisa Tomei).

"I love that feeling of getting into the cinema and the lights go down, nobody can bug you, turn the Blackberry off and you're entertained for two hours."



So far, LaFlamme's new role is offering what she's always loved about journalism: it keeps you on your toes.

"When you wake up in the morning, you have no idea what your day is going to look like, you have no idea what the news of the day will be and every day is different."

The difference now is that she spends more time in the studio.

"You have more of a role in framing the entire show as senior editor than when you're in the field just doing one item. So I've loved that."

Looking forward, there's still

many things LaFlamme wants to achieve. But her goals aren't all surrounded by journalism. Namely, she hopes to do a lot more work volunteering in developing countries.

"I love being where I feel that we can actually make a difference... I believe that you get more by giving and I've felt it myself."

Over the past six years, LaFlamme has volunteered in Benin (West Africa), Peru and Haiti.

"And that's something I'm hoping when I find my pace in my new job that I will have an opportunity to do."