



Inform

A PUBLICATION OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOP OF CHRISTCHURCH

ISSUE 139 ADVENT 2023

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From Our Bishop

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

We stand together in this great period of anticipation, the season of Advent, watching and waiting for the joy of the birth of the Saviour of the World. In a world torn apart by violence, we long for the stillness that only the Prince of Peace can offer.

For the people of our Diocese, this season of Advent is also a moment of contemplation about our future. As my recent pastoral letter outlined, it is almost time for important decisions to be taken about the location of our new cathedral. I have shared my own perspective, preferring the rich history written at the site of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament to be extended. Pioneering religious women established our first school there; the history of our Catholic tangata whenua is traced to that site; our story, the good and the bad, has unfolded at Barbadoes Street.

I reiterate my earlier invitation for your prayers for this project, but also to share your thoughts on where our new cathedral should be placed. While we would never have wished for the disaster wrought by the earthquakes, we now - in faith - have a chance to imagine how we can be the Church that God is calling us to be in our city and our Diocese.

Indeed, the universal Church is seeking to answer a similar question through the global Synod on Synodality. Three New Zealanders, including Archbishop Paul Martin SM, were among more than 350 voting members of the Synod who gathered in October for prayer, discussion, reflection and discernment during the first of two sessions.

As the Holy Father said at the beginning of the Synod, where mission, communion and participation are central themes, the Holy Spirit is “the protagonist of Church life” that “leads the Church forth”.

“The Holy Spirit,” Pope Francis said, “guides us by the hand and consoles us.”

The guidance of that same Spirit is irreplaceable in this journey of synodality, of the whole Church “walking together”. The Pope

concedes that the path is “not easy”, but “very beautiful”.

Looking back on the year that has been, there may well have been times that were not easy; the losses of those gone too young and the despair of opportunities missed, alongside the times that were very beautiful; the highs of family weddings and the promise of new beginnings. Our year has not been without its challenges, but light conquers the darkness, joy can overcome sorrow and hope trumps despair. Our God is the source of that light, that joy, that hope.

One joyous new beginning that I have had the privilege of being part of was the blessing of the long-awaited new Marian College. This has been a long journey for all involved and it is a delight to see the hard work and planning of so many come to fruition. May our Mother Mary watch over and guide the students of Marian College as they settle into their new home.

In our Diocese, I reflect on the generosity of the young people who served on our NET team, the trust in God of those who chose to become Catholic in a world that can be hostile to religion and the constancy of that person whose faith draws them to Mass each Sunday even when their body resists. I marvel at our prayer champions, those who serve the most vulnerable and those who pass on the faith to our next generations.

I pray that this Christmas season is one during which the Child Jesus, first celebrated on our shores 209 years ago, will abundantly bless you, your families, your celebrations and your travels.

Yours in Christ

+ Michael Gielen
Bishop of Christchurch



Confirmation Mass at Christchurch South Parish.



Thank you to Imam Gamal Fouda and Farid Ahmed who hosted Bishop Michael at Al Noor Mosque on 14 November. They prayed together for peace in all war torn parts of our world.



BISHOP'S APPEAL 2023

SEMINARIANS

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

As we approach the season of Advent, we are called to prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ, who is the source and the goal of our mission as the Church. Christ entrusted us with the task of proclaiming His Gospel to all nations and making disciples of all peoples. He also gave us the gift of His grace to enable us to fulfil this mission.

One of the most essential aspects of our mission is to ensure that we have enough priests to serve God's people and to administer His sacraments. Priests are the co-workers of Christ and the stewards of His mysteries. They are the ones who preach His word, celebrate His Eucharist, forgive sins, heal wounds, and shepherd His flock.

That is why I ask you to support the Bishop's Advent Appeal for Seminarians. This appeal helps to provide for the education and formation of our future priests, who are currently discerning and preparing for their sacred ministry.

Our diocese is blessed with six young men who have answered God's call to the priesthood. They have left behind their families, careers, and worldly ambitions to follow Christ more closely and to serve His people more faithfully. They need our prayers and our financial assistance to continue their journey towards ordination.

The cost of educating and forming a seminarian is nearly

\$400,000. This is why the Appeal for Seminarians is so vital. It allows us to share in the responsibility and the joy of preparing these men for their sacred ministry.

As St John Vianney, the patron saint of parish priests, said: "The priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus. When you see a priest, think of our Lord Jesus Christ." When we support our seminarians, we are supporting Christ Himself, who chose them to be His instruments of love.

Please be generous in your donation to the Bishop's Advent Appeal for Seminarians. You can use the envelope provided in the pew or make an online donation by scanning the QR code below.

Thank you for your kindness and generosity. May God bless you and your families during this holy season of Advent. Please know that you and your intentions are always in my prayers and in the prayers of our seminarians.

Sincerely yours in Christ

+ Michael Gielen
Bishop of Christchurch



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Recently Ordained Gathering

On 21-24 August, 11 recently ordained diocesan priests from the six dioceses in New Zealand gathered at the St Francis Friary and Retreat Centre in Auckland for a time of prayer, reflection, and fellowship.

Left-Right: Fr Isaac Fransen (Hamilton), Fr Vuj Hoang (Palmerston North), Fr Tang Phan (Christchurch), Fr Suu Nguyen (Dunedin), Fr Trung Nguyen (Palmerston North), Fr Peter Chadwick (Dunedin), Fr Thomas Park (Auckland), Fr Alfred Tong (Wellington), Fr Monty Bamford (Christchurch) and Fr Mark Napa (Auckland).

Nga mihi nui from the editorial desk

Nga mihi nui from the editorial desk.

Welcome to Inform Issue 139, our Advent edition. My thanks to all who submitted stories to Inform in 2023.

Inform Issue 139 looks back over the last four months of Catholic life in our diocese. Along with our regular content, we read of new plans and approaches to encourage priestly vocations for this diocese. We remember those who have died with a focus on the Month of the Holy Souls. We celebrate the blessing of our new Marian College campus. In an Advent feature, Karen Meehan prepares us for Christmas.

Please Inform yourselves and pass on its stories to others either in hard copy or online: cdoc.nz/inform. We wish you well as you prepare for the coming of our Lord at Christmas and at the end of time. *"Maranatha, come Lord Jesus"*.

In Christ

Ken Joblin, Editor &
Caitlin Godfrey, Assistant Editor



Christchurch Hosts 56th Annual of the Canon Law Society of Aust

The 56th Annual Conference of the Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand was successfully held on 4-7 September. The event gathered approximately 80 canon lawyers and lay delegates from Australia, New Zealand, Oceania, Canada, Great Britain and Ireland, and the USA. Such conferences promote the professional development of and foster fellowship among the members of the Society in their service of the Catholic Church.

Bishop Michael celebrated the Society's Conference Mass and his presence was cordially welcomed at dinner. Also present were notable international delegates from sister societies.

This year's conference speakers addressed topics which were current to Church life today, and presented papers on topics such as "Church Records and Privacy", "Vulnerable persons, the Code and Vos Estis", "Canon 1392: Clerics



NZ Tribunal Contingent (Back: Maria Sequeira, Msgr. Brendan Daly (Judicial vicar), Bishop-elect Richard Laurenson (Canon Law Society Executive Committee Member), Andrea Schmidt, Teena George, Damian Dempsey (NZCBC Executive Officer); Front: Louise Kelleher, Pam Wood, Fr Anthony Malone (Associate Judicial Vicar), Suzie McCarthy, Elizabeth Ong (Judge/ Canon Law Society Executive Committee Member)

For a complete list of

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in all parishes throughout the Christchurch Diocese visit:

www.cdoc.nz/christmas



Conference Australia and New Zealand

Abandoning the Sacred Ministry” and practical issues in Church Tribunal related ministry. The Society also congratulated Christchurch priest Msgr Brendan Daly, Judicial Vicar for the Tribunal of the Catholic Church in New Zealand, on his recent publication of his second book, *Penal Law in Action*, which has been received positively both locally and internationally, as a most useful practical guide and text on a complex topic.

Membership of the Society embraces lay persons, clerics, and religious working in the canonical field, from diverse nations and cultures, especially across Oceania and Southeast Asia. The promotion of the role of canon law as an essential

instrument of the pastoral mission of the Church, and to encourage canonical education, are some of the objectives of the Society. New Zealand currently has two Doctoral students studying in Canon Law at St Paul University in Canada. Ms Elizabeth Ong from the Christchurch Diocese is a Tribunal Judge, National Privacy Officer for the NZCBC, and an Executive Committee member of the Society. She is the first married lay woman canonist in New Zealand to study towards a doctorate in Canon Law. Rev Francis Poon is a priest of the Auckland Diocese. He is Promoter of Justice for the Tribunal, and is presently in Ottawa, completing his doctoral studies.



Conference Presenter Professor Michael Nobel (Saint Paul's University Ottawa), Elizabeth Ong (Judge/SPU Doctoral Candidate), Pr Chad Glendinning (Dean of Canon Law Faculty at Saint Paul's University Ottawa)

The Conference was a memorable and joyous occasion for the Society, as it has been approximately a decade since it was held in the garden city of Otautahi, Christchurch, and was also the first in-person conference post-Covid since 2019.

Christchurch Travels to Palmerston North

On 30 September, a significant number of Christchurch Catholics were among the 700 who crowded the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Palmerston North for the ordination and installation of Most Rev John Adams as its third bishop. In a Mass with Bishop Stephen Lowe of Auckland as presider, the richness of the Rite of Ordination of a Bishop was witnessed by all.

Of particular interest to Inform readers are comments made by Bishop Adams in his concluding observations. “In June, I was phoned by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Novatus Rugambwa, to ask if I would accept the post of bishop. I did so with a mixture of honour and trepidation, the latter not least as I was about to have open-heart surgery. During the operation, my heart was stopped for 90 minutes. ‘What is the lord doing?’ I remember asking myself, until I discovered that the word ‘Manawatū’ means ‘to have a still heart’.”

From the heart, he addressed his brother priests of the Christchurch Diocese, saying “I also leave behind the family



Bishop John with family and friends who travelled from Christchurch for his Ordination

I had expected to serve out my days with in Christchurch. Led by Bishop Michael Gielen, my brother priests from Christchurch - many of whom are with us today - have been nothing but gracious in their farewell to me. A sign of this graciousness being this crosier I hold; a gift from them. Thank you brothers.”

Many from Christchurch stayed on to join

Bishop Adams in a solemn choral Mass in his cathedral the following day, the music for which was provided by our Cathedral Choir and Orchestra. Many travellers then returned home, but not before dealing with extreme winds which disrupted the flight plans of New Zealanders in the first week of October. (The Mass of Ordination remains available on youtube.)



PHOTO: PIP'S OFFICE

“Whatever you have done to the least of my Brothers and Sisters, you have done to me.”

(Matthew 25:40)

Editor's note:

Whenever I think about the work of our Catholic Social Services (CSS) or read submissions to Inform from them, I pray for the needs they seek to meet and the services they strive to provide. Their work reflects Our Lord's love for the poor. I am sure I am not alone in this response of prayer.

The "Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church" addresses this teaching directly. Question 520 reads: "By what is love for the poor inspired?" The answer: "Love for the poor is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes and by the example of Jesus in his constant concern for the poor. Jesus said, "Whatever you have done to the least of my brethren, you have done to me." (Matthew 25:40) Love for the poor shows itself through the struggle against material poverty and also against the many forms of cultural, moral, and religious poverty. The spiritual and corporal works of mercy, and the many charitable institutions formed throughout the centuries, are a concrete witness to the preferential love for the poor which characterizes the disciples of Jesus."

It is always good for us to be reminded of the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy:

1. Feed the hungry.
2. Give drink to the thirsty.
3. Clothe the naked.
4. Shelter the homeless.
5. Visit the sick.
6. Visit the imprisoned.
7. Bury the dead.

With the corporal works of mercy in mind, I invite you to read the following article from our Catholic Social Services Manager, Luis Arevalo.

Catholic Social Service Practice Informed by Research

by Luis Arevalo - Manager, Catholic Social Services (CSS)

I hear that the epitome of madness is doing the same thing, yet expecting a different outcome. As I wrote in the last issue of Inform, societal statistics around homelessness, food poverty, inequality, and mental health stress are increasing. So, it seems obvious to us that a change in tactics is needed, if we are to be in a position to help reverse some of these statistics.

Here at CSS, we have developed a strategy of participatory social services. We aim to deliver services informed by the community we serve. We seek to listen to the community, and try to understand what they require to move forward in a positive way. Ultimately, we seek to follow the example of Jesus in his constant concern for the poor.

Listening to our community and understanding what we are hearing may be as easy as a hui with the community and asking them what they need. Examples of participatory social services here are our recent soup kitchens, free barber service, and our outreach to schools with psychology learning assessments.

Meeting immediate need is an essential part of our work. On its own, it is not enough. How well we know the expression, "It is better to have the ambulance at the top of the cliff, not at the bottom of the cliff." At CSS, we know we also need a more in-depth analysis of what lies behind societal statistics so that we can work in a way which does not need an ambulance at the top or bottom of the cliff.

We must have research, on a scale that allows us to extract both qualitative and quantitative answers, in enough detail to clearly understand what the community requires, both now and in the long term.

With the help of the Maurice Carter Trust, we have been able to commission a capacity building research project, focused on determining unmet needs for children between 5-12 years and their whānau within Christchurch City. We are especially interested in quantifying the extent to which truancy (unexplained

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Volunteers with Megan Woods MP at our last Soup Kitchen

school absence) is an issue in these communities and for this age group. We wish to explore, through a qualitative approach, the needs, barriers, and issues around truancy at primary school level, and identify the service needs and gaps.

This research will seek to identify: well-being service gaps for children aged 5-12 years within Christchurch city, best practice service delivery for children with high levels of non-school attendance at primary school level, and the extent to which these needs and services are available to whānau within the catchment area. We want to know what, if any, additional services CSS should strive to deliver to address unmet needs and fill service gaps.

We are very excited about this research. It will solidify the participatory or 'bottom up' strategy we have been working towards over the last 12 months. It will allow CSS to truly deliver research informed social service practice - something quite uncommon in the sector, but we believe it is essential, if we want to reverse some of those statistics. The research will be completed by March 2024. I long for the day I can speak about the positive changes I can see in our societal statistics. Such a change will mean we

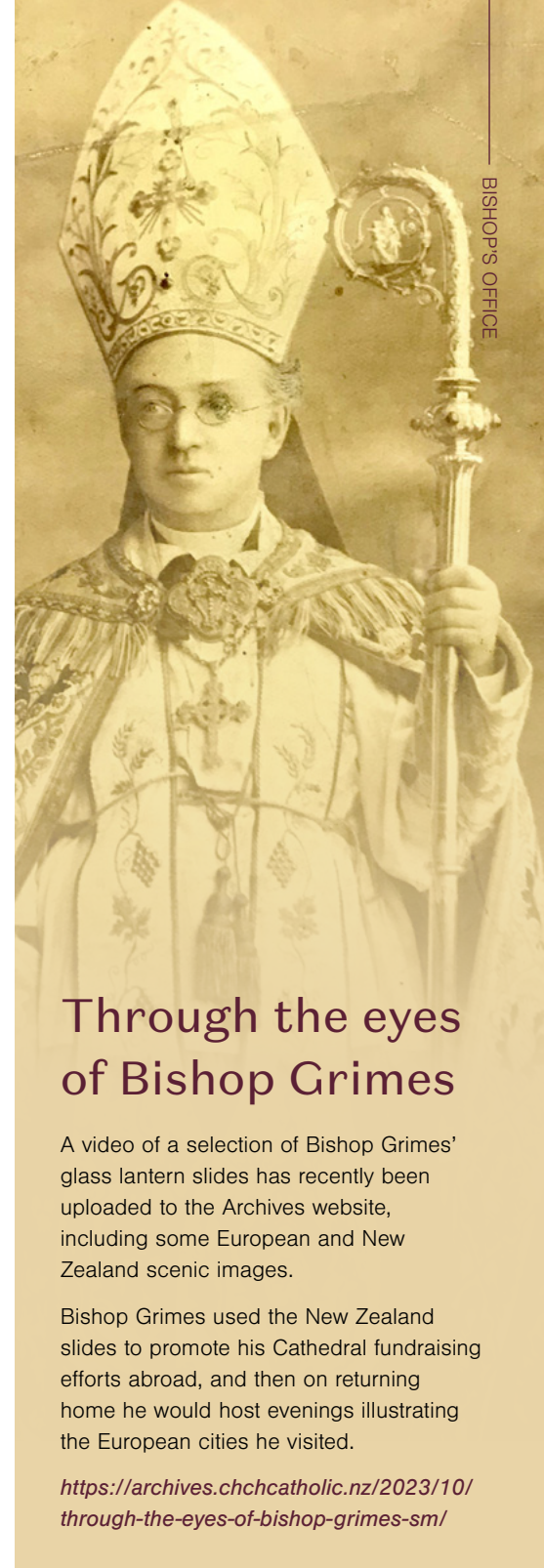


Barber Service

really are witnessing the preferential love for the poor which characterizes the disciples of Jesus. Then we will have shaken off the epitome of madness: we will be doing a different thing and can justifiably expect a much better outcome.

We are extremely grateful for all the support we receive and look forward to helping to address the needs of the community in the coming year.

God bless.



Through the eyes of Bishop Grimes

A video of a selection of Bishop Grimes' glass lantern slides has recently been uploaded to the Archives website, including some European and New Zealand scenic images.

Bishop Grimes used the New Zealand slides to promote his Cathedral fundraising efforts abroad, and then on returning home he would host evenings illustrating the European cities he visited.

<https://archives.chchcatholic.nz/2023/10/through-the-eyes-of-bishop-grimes-sm/>

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Update on Vocations

Vocations Retreat

In early November, a vocation and discernment retreat was held at Sr Eveleen Retreat House in Sumner. It was offered for any man wishing to explore the possibility of a vocation to the priesthood.

Eight young men participated in a weekend of talks, prayer, quiet reflection, Adoration, Mass, and fraternity. Several priests from the Diocese came to the retreat to give talks, hear confessions, and share testimonies. Vocations director Fr Tien Cao was present for the whole weekend, and Vocations Coordinator Matt O'Connell looked after logistics and food.

It was a truly blessed event. The young men in attendance were open, prayerful, mature, and discerning. One retreatant commented that "it was a great experience and I definitely took a lot from it".

In his book 'Ministers of Your Joy,' Cardinal Ratzinger, the late Pope Benedict XVI, wrote that the parable about the Sower who went out to sow, in the Gospel of Luke 8:4-15, sometimes makes us think as if the Sower of the word is in reality only sent out to achieve nothing, to fail, and yet there are always seeds that bear fruit for the harvest (p19) ... there are far too many dangers opposed to the seed growing: the unworkable stony ground, the weeds, the bad weather - everything seems to condemn his work to failure ... and yet, much is done in vain; there are always seeds that germinate and thrive for the harvest, that despite all perils, grow to bear fruit and reward all the toil many times over... this is an image of hope and trust in the power of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Kingdom of God. What Jesus wants to say with this story is that all truly fruitful things begin in this world with what is small and hidden (p13). Somewhere in silence, their seed is ripening. Nothing is in vain. Secretly, the world lives from the fact that in it, people are still continually believing, hoping, and loving (p15).

There are many young adults in the Christchurch Diocese who are open to the Lord's call in their lives. Please keep them and the eight young men in your prayers, as they continue to discern.

Seminary Update

Bishop Michael has accepted Matthew Clark as a candidate who will enter Holy Cross seminary in 2024. Mr Clark is 26 years old and is originally from Wellington. He is a member of the Christchurch West Parish and is currently teaching at St Francis of Assisi School in Mairehau. Several years ago, he was a member of the CYT Mission Team. Please keep Matt in your prayers. One of our Vietnamese students, Tuong Duong, will join him, while our other two students will remain in Christchurch learning English.

Plans for 2024

This year has been a good one for the Vocations Team, with new initiatives such as the 35 young men who attended the dinner with priests in August, and the recent retreat. In 2024, we will continue these events and add new ones. A monthly vocations group begins in early December for men who are open to discerning a vocation. We will also hold a women's vocation retreat next year, and re-establish the weekly Thursday Holy Hour to pray for vocations. Fr Tien will also attend the annual Hearts Aflame Catholic Summer School which has been a great source of vocations for more than 30 years.

For further information, please contact the Vocations Team at any time on the numbers below.

Vocations Director

Fr Tien Cao - 021 181 4721 - petercaochitien@yahoo.com

Vocations Coordinator

Matt O'Connell - 027 536 9407 - mocconnell@cdoc.nz





(L-R) Fr Tien Cao (Vocations Director), Bernadette Chen, Monica Lee and Tema Colati (Consecrated Virgins)

Consecrated Virgin: An Honourable Vocation in the Church

by Fr Tien Cao, Vocations Director

Some time ago, I had the privilege of assisting with a vocations retreat in Palmerston North. To my surprise, among the seventeen young men and women in attendance, several women approached me seeking more information about the vocation of a Consecrated Virgin. These women were drawn to this way of life because it offers both independence and the opportunity to consecrate themselves to God.

Upon returning to the Diocese of Christchurch, I felt a strong calling in my heart to do something about this growing interest. Following the diocesan rite of the consecration of Tema Colati, I decided to reach out to all the Consecrated Virgins within our diocese. Through conversations with these remarkable individuals, I came to understand that they find deep contentment in their way of life and take great pride in their vocations.

Living as a Consecrated Virgin requires financial self-sufficiency, while dedicating one's life to prayer and holiness in a secular world. To meet these demands, these daughters of the Church engage in various forms of work, using their work environments as opportunities to bear witness to their vocation.

During my discussions with them, I also became aware of their concern that the vocation of Consecrated Virgin remains relatively unknown to the public. Few people realise that it was one of

the earliest forms of Consecrated Life, preceding the establishment of religious institutes and orders. The Edict of Milan in 313 AD granted religious tolerance to Christians and allowed them to freely practise their faith within the Roman Empire. This edict is a crucial milestone in the history of Christianity and religious freedom. While Christians were no longer persecuted by an empire, requiring them to be martyred for the faith, many individuals continued to consecrate themselves to God as Virgins, bearing witness to their renunciation of worldly pleasures in favour of eternal joy.

For our Consecrated Virgins, God has chosen them, both for themselves and for

the greater good of the Church. Through prayer and discernment, these women have come to understand God's will for them. As with other forms of consecrated life, God calls us to live a life of grace in Christ, one that complements, rather than contradicts our human nature. For those who embrace the life of consecration, God becomes their top priority.

Women and girls of deep faith who wish to explore the life of a Consecrated Virgin are invited to seek out one of these consecrated virgins within our diocese. These dedicated individuals are more than willing to share insights into their way of life and provide guidance.



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Remembrance Mass Reflection 2023

by Joanne Hope - Pastoral Worker, Parish of Christchurch South

“We buried our Dad this year. He was 93 and if asked, he’d probably say that he’d had a ‘good innings’. For us, the innings wasn’t long enough, the sense of loss we feel has nothing to do with his age.

Many of you here tonight have farewelled aging parents. For some, the grief may have been tempered by the realities of

our hearts tonight, or how long ago they died, and the varied circumstances of their lives and deaths, we are united here in an experience of loss, and in gratitude for the love of those who have gone before us. It could be said that none of us need a special feast day or even a Mass to remember our loved ones, they are always a part of us, and us of them.

tonight and in memory of those we love. Whether attending Mass is a common practice in our lives or not, there’s something comforting about familiar rituals and prayers and gathering together with the Christian community, who know how to celebrate together and know what it is to accompany one another in grief. We gather as a community of faith, a bunch of human beings who know loss, doubt, uncertainty, and occasionally despair, who have no glib answers for why there is needless suffering in the world and why bad things happen to good people.

Nor do we really have any insider knowledge on what heaven or eternal life is like. We simply trust in Jesus, that there is life beyond grief and hope beyond our pain, resurrection beyond death. In grief, it can help to lean heavily on the faith of others to make sense of the unfathomable and provide hope when things seem hopeless.

The Feast days we celebrate this week; the feasts of All Saints yesterday and All Souls today, are a gift from the Church, acknowledging the mystery of what awaits us and the promise that we don’t need to be afraid. In tonight’s Gospel Jesus invites us to come to him, all who labour and are overburdened, and we will find rest. Feast days like today hold a space



“Death can challenge our faith, and it can also challenge our long-held images of God.”

their advancing years, declining health, and quality of life. For others of you, a family death came as shocking, untimely, unexpected, and unfathomable. The grief you experienced is still raw and palpable. Some of you are also dealing with many griefs in your lives - and not all of them to do with death.

So we gather here tonight, at this Mass of Remembrance - with this Catholic community of Christchurch South. Regardless of who it is that we have in

For some of us, not a day has gone by that they are not in our minds. But every Mass is a Mass of Remembrance. At the heart of every Eucharist is a remembering - of the violent death of an innocent man - of a loving God who yet did not spare his Son - of a Son whose last acts before his death were to break bread with his friends, take up a basin and a towel and wash their feet, and remind them that in the face of fear and threat, this is the best way to remember. We do this in memory of him

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South Canterbury Mass of Remembrance

A beautiful Mass of Remembrance at the Sacred Heart Basilica in Timaru was held recently. Flowers and candles were brought forward and placed in front of loved ones' photos. Prayers were prayed and tears were shed. May they rest in God's eternal peace.



NOVEMBER: THE MONTH OF

for trusting that beyond death awaits more than we can possibly imagine. It is the Church's confidence in the promise of the resurrection and a life with God beyond this one, that can sustain us when we feel less sure, or less hopeful, when pain threatens to overwhelm us, and when we can't get a straight answer from God about why there is so much injustice in the world.

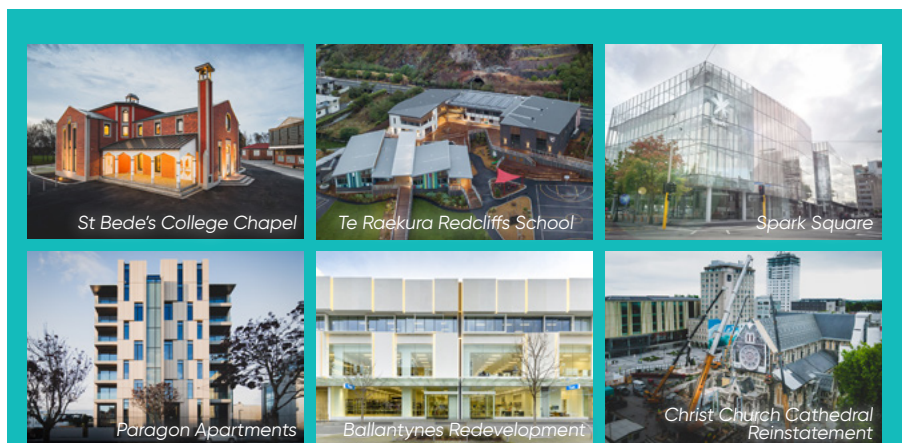
In the face of hardship and tragedy, the writers of the psalms lament and rage against God. So I think it's ok for us to do this too. Death can challenge our faith, and it can also challenge our long-held images of God. Eventually we may have to consider relinquishing an image of a God who causes disasters, who will prevent accidents, cure cancer, defeat terrorism, or stop the bombing in Ukraine or Gaza. We may find we have to expand our faith beyond a God who simply controls everything, chooses one side over the other, or punishes the wrong-doer and rewards the good.

So what are we left with? Tonight's Gospel offers an alternative - a God who is gentle and humble of heart, a compassionate God who weeps with us, shares in our pain and distress, who is at home with us in the messiness of our lives and in our vulnerability, who stands with those who are powerless and overwhelmed. The Beatitudes are very insistent about this - God is with those who mourn - God is with those who are low in spirit - God

is with those who question, who seek justice and fairness - God is with the poor. This is a God who is closer to us in our powerlessness than in our strength. This feast day calls us to remember that nothing can separate us or our loved ones from the love and mercy of God; not even a lack of faith or disillusionment about the Church.

In a recent homily, Pope Francis reminds us, "God loves us all; God loves us as we are, not as we wish to be or as society expects us to be: as we are. He loves us with our flaws, limitations, and desires to progress in life." The message of scripture is very clear: there is room in God, in

heaven and in the Church, for everyone. So we gather tonight with our worries and our burdens, our flaws and limitations, as a community welcomed, loved, forgiven, to break bread and become a people who live God's mercy and love. We come together in community to pray for those we hold in our hearts, trusting that they are now incorporated into the great compassionate heart of Divine Love. We come in the knowledge that we have a God who is gentle and humble in heart, and nothing that exists, nothing still to come, can separate us or our loved ones from the love of God."



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The children gather at the Shrine of Mary dressed as their favourite Saints

All Saints - a Foretaste of Heaven!

Families celebrate with the Beatitudes Community at the Sanctuary of Fourvière

by Michael Loretz, Leithfield

On 1 November, the feast of All Saints was celebrated by the House of the Beatitudes in a very special way. Families from all around the North Canterbury region, and beyond, gathered at the Sanctuary of Fourvière with its golden statue of Mary, Mother of the Light, to celebrate the feast.

The region has a large home-schooling community and so, even though this year All Saints Day fell on a Wednesday, the families were able to celebrate the Feast of All Saints whole-heartedly, with the children dressing up as their favourite saint and joining in with fun activities. Before the Mass, the children got into teams for a quiz, testing their knowledge of the lives of the saints through the centuries. Meanwhile, the younger children

went through the Sanctuary of Fourvière, looking for symbols of saints that were hidden strategically for them to discover.

The children processed in costume to the Shrine of Mary, Mother of the Light, and sang hymns to Mary. One of the children's favourites is "Mo Maria", written by Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier, the first Bishop of Oceania. The Sanctuary of Fourvière celebrates the mission of the Gospel to New Zealand and the Pacific, with particular links to Bishop Pompallier, St Peter Chanel, and the Venerable Suzanne Aubert.

During the midday Mass, the saints that the children had dressed as were included in a beautiful sung litany, and the altar was lovingly decorated by members of

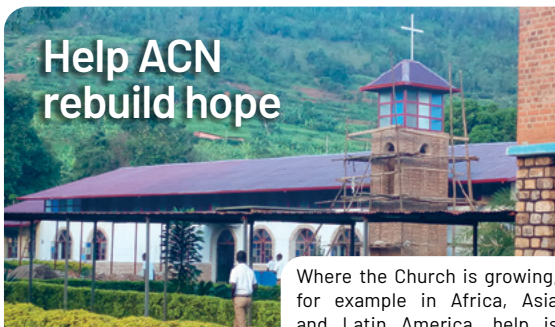


Philomena Loretz (aged 10) dressed as St Bernadette

the Community, with relics, photos, and paintings of the many saints loved by the Community, as well as the families that live nearby.

After the Mass, the families stayed to enjoy a festive shared lunch and much conviviality. For one of the children, Philomena Loretz, it was an extra special day. Philomena was born on the Feast of All Saints in 2013, after doctors warned that the pregnancy would surely result in her death and the death of her mother. But thanks to the intercession of the saints and the mercy of God, Philomena was born safely and all was well. The children delighted in singing her a birthday song and sharing a special All Saints Day birthday cake. Philomena dressed as St Bernadette, a saint she learned about on a recent pilgrimage to Lourdes with her family.

For all the families and the Beatitudes Community, the day was a very special feast - indeed a foretaste of heaven, where the communion of saints together praise God in perfect happiness and joy!



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St Mary's Hokitika Announces Plans

In early September, St Mary's Parish Council announced the outcome of its consultation process and made its recommendation regarding its church. This process began in April with a survey and two follow-up meetings. This consultation approach was adopted because the Parish Council was conscious that a community is bigger than a building or a parish.

The Parish Council wanted to better understand how St Mary's needs to see itself in the coming decades and what it would need in the practice of its faith. The emerging vision would need to recognise the limitations and challenges experienced by the parish now and in the future. Over 140 submissions were received from throughout the parish, school, and the wider parish community.

The Parish Renewal Team collated

feedback and combined it with further information regarding the challenges facing the parish at this time.

These challenges include changing demographics, declining income streams, rising costs, and a weak balance sheet. The information incorporated a thorough risk analysis and financial modelling.

Taking all feedback and information into account, the Parish Renewal Team recommended that St Mary's pursue the option to build a new fit-for-purpose church and associated facilities. The St Mary's Parish Council will therefore seek our Bishop's approval to proceed with the building of a new church. The ultimate aim for the community is to provide the resources to allow the parish to grow in Christ. We wish to establish a vibrant Catholic community, which is sustainable and will provide a wonderful resource for our parish and its school, the town of

Hokitika, and Westland itself.

The parish does, of course, also have emotional ties to the existing St Mary's church. No decision has been made regarding the status of this historic and iconic church. Our Parish Council wishes to engage with the Friends of St Mary's group, who may, in turn, wish to establish a charitable trust and consider taking on the restoration of the existing church. This would be subject to the Diocesan approval process.

In making this decision, the Parish Council has considered the wishes of both the active Catholic community and the wider Hokitika community. We pray that this decision will benefit both, and sustain the faith for future generations.

More information can be found on our Parish webpage: cdoc.nz/about/parishes/hokitika.

Samoan Community Celebrate 60 Year Milestone

The Catholic Cathedral Samoan Community recently celebrated 60 years in our Diocese. The Cathedral parish-based Community, the oldest of five Samoan Communities in the Diocese, was established in 1963 and is guided by the patronage of St Michael the Archangel.

The Cathedral Samoan Community continues to grow and thrive under the chaplaincy of Fr Paulo Filoialii, who fosters a sense of unity and spiritual strength among all Samoan communities within the Diocese. We are privileged to have such a vibrant and devoted community enriching our Diocese with their faith and traditions.





Hurunui's Got Talent

In early October, many Catholic residents of Hurunui gathered in the Hawarden church grounds for a parish picnic. Despite a less-than-promising weather forecast, the day turned out to be brilliantly sunny and everyone was able to enjoy the wonderful feeling of spring in the countryside. The day began with Mass in the Church of St Raphael, which was just big enough to hold all the families. After Mass, some of our dads got the barbecue fired up, cooking sausages and a locally grown lamb, donated for the purpose. While that was going on, there was an "icebreaker" for the adults, while the youth headed to the paddock behind the parish centre for some rough and tumble fun. A shared lunch followed, and then tables were set up for the next item on the agenda: "Hurunui's Got Talent."

Of the three judges, Fr Pui took on the role of Simon Cowell and some hilarious "back and forth" took place between the contestants and the judges table. The Parish was able to enjoy songs, poems, karaoke, and family choir pieces. The first prize was taken out by brother and sister duo, Amos and Rose Muir of Waipara.

Further fun in the day included a lolly-scramble for the smaller kids, and several nail-biting tugs-of-war in the paddock. Despite the distance separating us, it was a fantastic day to get together and share our special place as the Catholics of the Hurunui in our wider community.



Nearly "Gone with the Wind!"

On Saturday 14 October, just as Hurunui priest Fr Michael Pui was about to commence his travels to celebrate Mass at Hanmer Springs, gale force winds were wreaking havoc in Canterbury. It was reported that wind gusts reached over 200 kms per hour. Earlier in the day, a

Civil Defence warning alert was sent to Cantabrians via cell-phones, asking people not to travel if they did not have to. Just before he got into the car, Fr Pui saw his chicken coop roll away. He just managed to grab it before it blew over the fence. To his horror, he also saw that the 'fences' he staked in the ground to confine the chickens were all blown over, and the chickens were eyeing up his freshly planted lettuces. After fixing that, there was just enough time to get to the 5:00pm Vigil Mass in Hanmer Springs. On the way there, he witnessed a few harrowing scenes, including a caravan that had been blown over earlier and the car towing it at the bottom of the cliff. Surprisingly, at Hanmer, it was not so windy. After celebrating the second Vigil Mass in Culverden, he returned to Amberley to find that several giant trees in the neighbourhood had toppled over. Two of them broke the Presbytery fence. To add to his woes, there was a power cut for more than 24 hours. "The clean up has just about finished, awaiting insurance claims to fix the fences. It sums up a day in the life of a 'country-bumpkin priest'.





Christchurch East Celebrates its Ethnic Diversity and Unity in Christ

On 3 September, Catholic Cathedral College provided the venue for a great parish celebration. The faithful of our Mass centres in the Christchurch East Parish came together as one family. The day celebrated the richness of our ethnic diversity and gave us the opportunity to promote, deepen, and strengthen parish unity.

In our eucharistic celebration we thanked God for the many blessings he continues to bestow on the parish and its members. Our parish priest, Fr Job Thyikalamuriyil, presided at Mass, and was joined at the altar by four priests. Parishioners were in good attendance, and the Mass was spiced with good liturgical songs in English and other languages. The prayer of the faithful was offered in several languages, manifesting the multicultural nature of the parish.

Assorted food from our various nationalities was shared by all to the satisfaction of everyone, and we were entertained by an array of cultural items. It was definitely a day well celebrated.

A Welcome Visit to South Westland

In early November, Bishop Michael Gielen made a short pastoral visit to the South Westland Parish. This was a great opportunity for many parishioners to meet the Bishop, and for the Bishop to experience West Coast hospitality. Who could have guessed that whitebait would become the Bishop's new favourite delicacy?

Parish Priest Fr Michael Mahoney sm took the Bishop as far south as Fox Glacier. Haast will have to wait for next time. He visited four of the five church communities spread across the more than 200km that make up our parish. What a wonderful opportunity to meet the people and celebrate Mass in Franz Josef and in Whataroa.

In Whataroa, the Bishop blessed a piece of mosaic tiling from the sanctuary floor of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament. As part of the demolition process, these artifacts were offered to parish priests, so

Fr Mahoney was pleased to receive one for each of our five churches. Anthony Kennedy made a totara frame for the taonga, secured to the back wall of Our Lady of the Woods church. As part of the blessing, Bishop Gielen invited each person to touch the artifact and offered appropriate prayers. These tiles are a tactile link with the diocese and our forebears, who sacrificed so much for our shared faith.



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Jubilate 2023

- The Series is Complete

by the Inform Editorial Team



Chch North - St Albans Catholic Choir

In our last issue of Inform, we celebrated the commencement of Jubilate 2023 and covered the first three concerts in the series. Two more concerts have since taken place in St Mary's Pro-Cathedral, and the final one in St Patrick's, Greymouth.

On 17 August, the Christchurch East Parish presented a dynamic concert, featuring a number of its parish and school choirs. Fr Paulo Filoiali'i hosted this

Jubilate, encouraging his young singers to consider the parable of the mustard seed and be part of a rich harvest for the benefit of others. A jubilate Choir of around 150 led the assembled audience in the singing of eight quality hymns. These were in English, Māori, and Latin. Samoan choirs from St Anne's Woolston and St James Aranui brought energy and flair to the concert in contrasting pieces. School choirs from New Brighton Catholic, St James Aranui, and St Anne's Woolston offered their own heart-felt feature items.

In welcoming everyone to the evening, Jubilate Director Ken Joblin observed, "Last year when we did this in the church, the East provided such a good contingent that we decided this year it was best for the East to have your own Jubilate, rather than share it with any other region, and I think that was a good decision. There is

no other diocese that brings our parishes and parish schools together in this way. It is good to be able to trail-blaze a bit, and it is something I hope the other dioceses might pick up at some stage. It is great to be able to sing the musical treasures of our Church, both old and new. When I say "old", I mean timeless. We never get sick of hearing them, they go with us right through our lives and contain important truths of our faith which, when we recall the music, it is much easier for us to remember exactly what it is that we believe as Catholics."

Fresh from attending World Youth Day celebrations in Portugal, Bishop Michael was present at Jubilate for the East. In his concluding remarks, he said, "They say that when you sing, you pray twice. You've been doing a lot of praying tonight. It's very beautiful how you have led us



Chch East - St James Aranui Samoan Choir



Chch East - St James Aranui Choir



Chch East - St James Aranui, St Anne's Woolston, Staff, and Fr Paulo

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Chch North - Christ the King Choir



West Coast - John Paul II High School

in these, our hymns, that sing praise to God...But of course, we know that we are most joyful when we are singing at the top of our voice. Nothing is more important than celebrating the love of God. I pray you will prepare your life and your hearts for what you are made for. You are made to praise, worship, and honour God, and you are most at peace when you do this.”

The thoughts of St James Aranui School Principal, Rose Firth-Scott, sum up those of many others throughout the series: “Our tamariki and whanau really enjoyed it and were very proud of St James. It was fantastic to listen to all the other choirs singing so wonderfully as well. I am always impressed with the smooth organisation of the evening which only comes from hard work behind the scenes.”

Jubilate for the Christchurch North Parish and associated schools took place on 5 September. Msgr Rick Loughnan and Fr Alister Castillo hosted the event which featured both Marian and St Bede’s College choirs, whose student catchment includes the north. They offered items from their Big Sing repertoire and did so to a high standard. A feature of this Jubilate was that three of the Catholic primary schools offered their own items, having recovered from Covid interruption. Christ the King and St Joseph’s primaries were joined by St Albans Catholic School, who featured for the first time. The same blueprint was followed

with a jubilate Choir of 190 singers leading the audience in the same hymn selection. Msgr Rick was very enthusiastic about the evening and delighted that his schools and the Christchurch North Parish united in this musical event.

The series concluded on 26 October at St Patrick’s in Greymouth, when St Patrick’s and St Mary’s primary schools were joined by singers from John Paul II High School in fielding a choir of forty. This is the first time all three schools have sung at Jubilate. Greymouth Pastoral Assistant, Ivory Racho, led the St Patrick’s School Choir in feature items, and St Mary’s and John Paul II contributed to the hymnody. The historic Hobday organ accompanied them all in a rousing conclusion to the evening.

Theresa O’Reilly, Director of Religious Studies in Hokitika. “Our group of children thoroughly enjoyed the experience. And I had very positive feedback from parents also.”

This year’s Jubilate involved 650 singers from throughout the diocese. “It is gratifying to know that when we add up singers and audience numbers, we would have the equivalent of a full Christchurch Town Hall.” said Ken. “I am grateful to our Jubilate team and the many choir directors involved who ensured its success. Dates are being confirmed for the 2024 series when we will again unite parishes and their schools in song to give glory to God.”



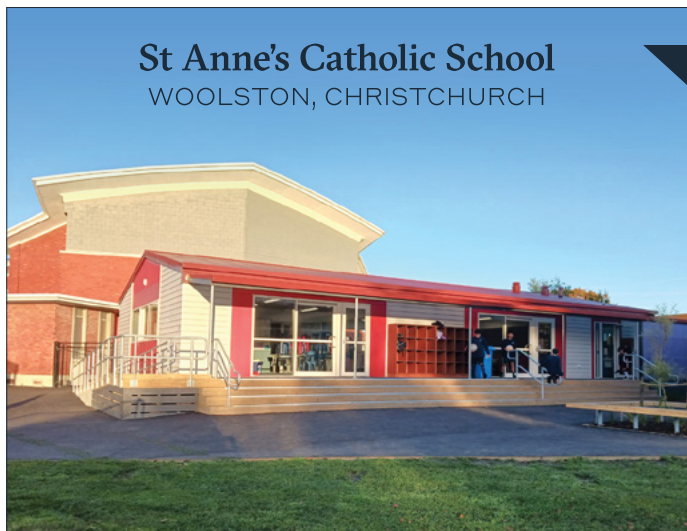
West Coast - Jubilate Director Ken Joblin and Guide Dog Tait rehearsing with students from St Mary’s School, Hokitika



West Coast - The Jubilate West Coast Choir of St Patrick’s Greymouth, St Mary’s Hokitika, & John Paul II High School



West Coast - St Mary’s Hokitika



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Christchurch CCJP Annual Competition 2023

by Barbara Te Miha, Convenor, 2023, CCJP Essay Competition

For many years now, the Christchurch Catholic Commission of Justice and Peace (CCJP) has run an annual essay contest for Catholic school students based on Social Justice Week.

This year, we decided to ask Years 7-8 and Years 9-10 to enter into a poster competition, illustrating the theme; "Peace Begins With You". We were amazed at the number of entries submitted, which made judging very difficult! Some very sophisticated posters came forward. The winners were those who showed a profound understanding of what peace is and the origin of peace - God.

What impressed us about all the posters was just how global problems affect our tamariki and how well the Gospel message is being taught in Catholic schools. Today's world and its problems can appear insurmountable but the simple, uncomplicated faith of children has much to teach us, especially about peace.

The winner in Years 7-8 is Sofia Syme of Our Lady of Victories School. Sofia has won a personal award of \$150 and \$100 as a Class Award. The winner in Years

9-10 is Seyara de Silva of Marian College. Seyara has won a personal award of \$300 and \$100 as a Class Award.

Students from Years 11-13 were asked to demonstrate in an essay; "How does the real, personal peace we need help us to become the peacemakers the world needs?" Again, we were impressed by the thoughts and understanding demonstrated by the students who took part. The winner in Years 11-13 is Ruby Love-Smith from Marian College. Ruby put together a peace booklet, featuring examples of peace from the lives of people she knew or those whose actions she was aware of. Each example was different but each portrayed how, as individuals, we can create a peaceful environment that can extend ever outward. Ruby has won a personal award of \$500, a \$100 Class Award, and the Justice and Peace Cup for Marian College.

We congratulate the winners, their schools, and thank all students who entered the competition. We look forward to what you will produce in 2024.

"What impressed us about all the posters was just how global problems affect our tamariki and how well the Gospel message is being taught in Catholic schools."



Years 7-8 Winner Sofia Syme
of Our Lady of Victories School



CCJP Competition winners from Marian College
Seyara de Silva and Ruby Love-Smith

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Season of Creation 2023

Season of Creation in Christchurch South Parish

Artwork from the children of St Peter's school adorned the church for the Season of Creation.



SCHOOLS

Season of Creation Tree Planting at St Patrick's School

by Jenny Carter, Laudato Si' Group

To celebrate the Season of Creation (1 Sept - 4 Oct), the diocesan Laudato Si' Group was able to offer free native trees and shrubs to schools and churches in the Christchurch region. These plants were provided by Trees for Canterbury (see: www.treesforcanterbury.org.nz).

We had a small, enthusiastic response to planting these small treasures. These trees will eventually grace our degraded areas, increase biodiversity, increase our children's knowledge of biodiversity, and encourage loving care of themselves and the environment.

In September, Young Vinnies at St Patrick's School in Kaiapoi, along with some Vincentians and their teacher who is the Director of Religious Studies, had a wonderful time identifying plants for specific areas, soaking them in a seaweed solution, and planting sixty native plants. The Young Vinnies weeded and tidied the Spiritual Garden and learned about looking after creation.

When the work was done, all enjoyed a picnic under a big tree. Satisfy Food Rescue provided some treats for the children. One of the children commented: "I will be able to tell my grandchildren that 'I planted that tree.'" Another said: "I had the best day ever planting trees and now we know how to plant trees in the future."

May God bless the growth of these trees, with beauty, shade and biodiversity, where all will thrive. We all need to act now! The Laudato Si Group will be offering invitations to join further planting activities in March 2024, when more plants will be made available by Trees for Canterbury.

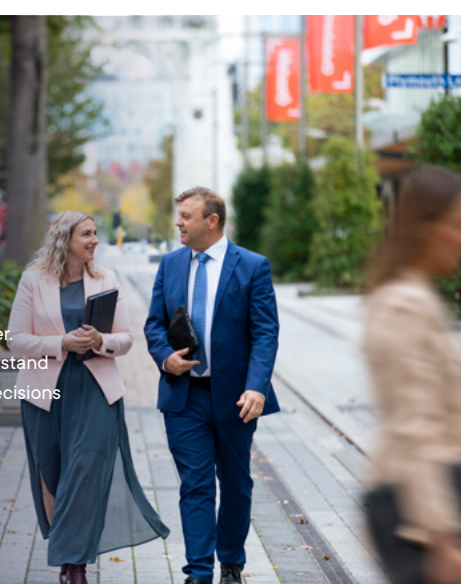
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The Blessing of our New Marian College

Thanksgiving was the theme of the day on Friday 24 November, as students and staff, both past and present, celebrated the Whakamoemiti and Blessing of the new Marian College in Northcote.



Head student Brie Benns (left) and Ellen Scott before the Whakamoemiti and Blessing of Marian College

Maaka Tau and Kaumatua Tira-Roa Rueben from Ngāi Tūāhuriri commenced the blessing with a Whakamoemiti alongside Bishop Michael and Monsignor Rick Loughnan, who blessed the school.

Bishop Michael spoke of the courage of women such as Mother Mary, Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop, and Venerable Catherine McAuley, who said 'yes' to God's plan. "What marked them above all, they were women of faith. In the face of the greatest hardships, they believed God had a plan. You moved sites in the hope of something beautiful. Today your faith has been rewarded."

Bishop Michael went on to acknowledge the "Brave men and women who, in faith, said yes to the school, and prayed that it



Junior students waiting to go inside their new school

would be a place where students will learn to have the courage to say 'yes' to God. Yes to becoming who God has made them to be, yes to giving their best, that



Years 9 and 10 students from Marian College get their first glimpse at the Chapel of Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop

First Southwest Catholic Cultural Festival

by Chrystie Coburn-Woods

Recently, the seven Catholic schools of the South West Catholic Kahui Ako converged on St Thomas of Canterbury College for their first cultural festival.

This event was opened by the senior Choir of St Thomas', who were absolutely outstanding. St Peter's, Beckenham, then followed with a cultural dance expo, encompassing six young dancers who were Filipino, Irish, Scottish, Indian, and Tongan. Our Lady of Victories School looked incredible in their cultural dress and performed *Tuhia / Te Iwi E*, *the Blessing / Ko Te Whirika* and the *Hawaikinui / Haka*. Next up was St Teresa's School, Riccarton, who brought so much energy to the stage with their



performances of Tongan and Samoan dance, Sasa, and their school Haka. St Bernadette's show-cased their amazing junior and senior Kapa Haka groups, and Our Lady of the Assumption School, Hoon Hay, performed three beautiful waiata, *Whai Hua Tātou*, *A Te Tarakihi*, and *Purea Nei*. Then it was the Wahine Toa from Villa Maria College. The very talented Filipino Maria's executed a beautiful performance, showing immense skill and rhythm. They were followed by their incredible Kapa Haka group, who performed three items, including *Ka Waiata* and a powerful performance of the chant *Ka tū te tītī*. St Thomas' closed this event with their breath-taking Choir and very impressive school Haka.

The St Thomas' stage was an absolute visual symphony with each performance, showing an excellent display of diverse and unique cultures. To quote our final young speaker, "Our hearts will be swollen with pride." A credit to all the southwest school staff who helped make this event so successful.

they will step out into life knowing God is with them. He will do great things with their 'yes' to life."

While Marian College's new home is a unique first in its architectural design and sustainability for an educational facility, the almost 13 years without a site to call their own has taught those who have passed through the school an important lesson: "Schools are not about buildings, they are about people," said Principal Mary-Lou Davidson. "This school is about our faith and about family. Wherever we have been, and whatever buildings we have been in, the heart of Marian College has remained constant. In each of our locations, the experiences of students, staff, and our families have been constant - in our celebrations, our traditions, our work, and our school values. It clearly was not about the buildings - Marian is special."

Mrs Davidson paid tribute to those who have supported the school as it navigated what its future may be post-earthquake, including the now Archbishop Paul Martin, who initially chose the site for the school. He "supported the unique and sustainable design, and ensured we have the beautiful St Mary of the Cross MacKillop Chapel at the heart of our school," and Monsignor Rick Loughnan who "cared for the school during the uncertain years."

Mrs Davidson observed that "Good things take time, and I am a firm believer in the hand of God in our lives. Faith makes us people of hope, and we have held to that hope since the earthquake forced our move from Marian College in North Parade in 2011."

The official opening of Marian College will take place in the new year.



Jubilee Pilgrimage

by Sr Clare of Assisi, Beatitudes Community, Leithfield

The Beatitudes Community is celebrating fifty years since its foundation in France in 1973. As it is a jubilee year, it is a special opportunity to be reconciled, to remember God's blessings, to offer Him thanksgiving, and to let ourselves be renewed in the joy of our vocation. Our jubilee journey in five steps began in Lent, when we looked back over our history, recognising our human frailty and infidelities, and asking pardon. At Easter we remembered God's goodness to us and the history of our foundation in New Zealand. We gave thanks for those who have been part of our 'family' over the years and have shared our joys and sorrows.

In April, a delegation of the Community traveled to Rome for a private audience with Pope Francis. They received a beautiful, personal, spontaneous address, and the apostolic blessing. On 25 May, the anniversary of foundation, a Jubilee Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated in our General House in France, presided by the Archbishop of Toulouse. Sr Therese and the Loretz family providentially found themselves there at that time and were able to be part of this historic moment!

Step four was the renewal of our consecration to Mary and pilgrimage to a Marian shrine. While our brothers and sisters around the world made for such shrines as Lourdes, Fatima, Pontmain, and Guadalupe, including our two families, the consecrated members did not go quite so far. We chose to head for one of the most isolated Marian shrines in our part of the world and renewed our consecration



Outside the church at Motuti with members of the local community

"Our Pilgrimage started in Lourdes, where we met with members of the Beatitudes Community from different houses around France to participate in the Community Annual Session held in Lourdes. We were blessed to be there as three new priests were ordained for the brothers' branch of the Community! It was very special to visit Lyon and the Sanctuary of Fourvière - and to see the beautiful sacred places from where the journey of the Gospel to New Zealand began. We also visited the Shrine of St Peter Chanel in Cuët and the Basilica of St Jean Marie Vianney in Ars. It was a blessed time of prayer and communion with our Community." - Thomas and Ellie Peacock



The Peacock family at Fourvière, Lyon

"For us, the chance to go to France and to stay with the Community of the Beatitudes, as part of our formation in the Community, was a special grace and a trip of a lifetime! Being immersed in their charism and life of prayer was a particular joy and a taste of the fraternity of heaven! For our youngest four children, the experience of praying in the great basilicas in the presence of the relics of Saints, and absorbing the rich history and culture of this Catholic nation, was a great education and experience we hope will spur them on in their faith. Singing in Māori at the Basilica at Fourvière, processing in the evening light at Lourdes, sharing the 50th Jubilee with the Community at Blagnac, and a mini-pilgrimage to Pontmain with the Community at St Broladre were special highlights. We are forever grateful to God for this time of consolation and encouragement."

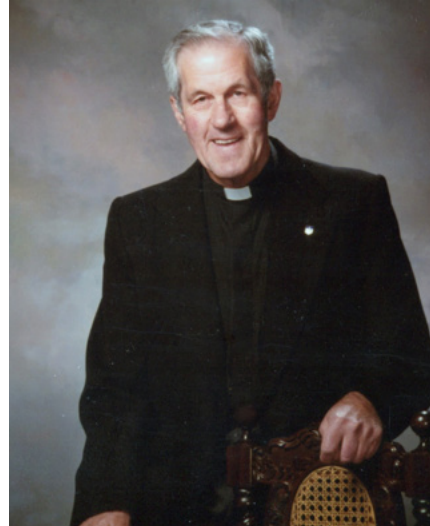
- Michael & Rebecca Loretz

to Mary in the beautiful little church of St Mary's at Motuti, in the Hokianga. Bishop Pompallier, who celebrated the first Catholic Mass on New Zealand soil near this church in 1838, is interred beneath the altar. We were privileged to pray before his casket, which was raised for our veneration.

The final and ongoing stage of our jubilee pilgrimage is to bear witness to the joy of our calling and to allow what we have received from God to overflow into our mission and apostolates. We hope to share this abundance with you and your families. We would love to welcome you to our events and retreats and the beautiful shrine of Mary, Mother of the Light, in the Sanctuary of Fourvière, so that you too will be renewed in your faith and encouraged in your daily witness for the greater glory of God!



Beatitudes with Pope Francis



Fr Paul Shannahan sm *Rest in Peace*

The requiem Mass for Fr Paul Shannahan sm was offered at Sacred Heart Church, Addington, on Friday 24 November. He died on 18 November, aged 88. The following are the final thoughts taken from a tribute given by Fr David Kennelly sm at that Mass.

"The Society of Mary Constitutions, our Marist 'Rule of Life', stipulate that we are "to go from place to place" to the "urgent needs" (12 and 14).

Paul, Shan, there's no doubt that you had a tremendous openness and warmth for people, matched with a rather irrepressible energy to be out and about in the community, qualities that proved wonderful for a life of ministry. I admire you for the way that you took on such a variety of ministries and so many challenging projects. I also salute you for taking up studies for a theology degree in your eighties at what was Good Shepherd College and while pastor at your last parish appointment, Akaroa. Somehow you completed that degree in between corralling cruise boat after cruise boat of unsuspecting passengers, who before they knew it, found themselves at St Patrick's Church, donating to its renovations! And many weren't even Catholics!

"To go from place to place", wherever the need is urgent. Place to place for you, Paul, wasn't just a matter of geography, but of mind and heart as well. How rewarding that stipulation played out in your life, in your ministry - and not just for yourself, but for so many of us as well."

Making History at our Carmelite Monastery

by Sr Cushla, Prioress, Carmelite Monastery

On 15 October, the Solemnity of St Teresa of Jesus, our own Sister Teresa of Jesus made history in our Carmelite Monastery, as the first nun to reach 75 years of Religious Profession. We combined our private celebration of the anniversary with our honouring St Teresa.

Pamela Kelleher was born in Auckland, but moved with her family to various locations before reaching Ashburton. At 17, she entered the Carmel of Christ the King, less than two years after the end of World War II. She settled into the life of prayer and eighteen months later, she made her first profession.

Sr Teresa featured in the 1969 documentary on the Carmelites, discussing contemplation with presenter Bernard Smyth, while milking a cow. A decade later, Sister spent a year assisting a Carmelite Monastery in Australia. At the airport on the way home, she met up with one of her nephews for the first time. She was delighted when he later joined the



Carmelites and is now Fr Shane Kelleher.

Sr Teresa has used her many talents over the years, playing the organ, tending the gardens, and painting. Her good friend Fr Miles O'Malley, impressed by her talent, encouraged her to print her paintings in a book. Sadly, he did not live to see the day that "Reflections in a Monastery Garden" was printed. She is a prolific reader and looks forward to the arrival of *L'Osservatore Romano*, and any new books. Sister has had a lifelong interest in seismology, after remembering being caught up in the Gisborne earthquake as a preschooler.

On Pentecost Sunday this year, Sister Teresa suffered a stroke and spent more than a month recuperating in Burwood Hospital. She was so happy to get home again and now resides in our infirmary, while taking a full part in the life of our community. Her prayers for all those near and far continue.



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Keep Your Eyes On The Road Ahead At Advent

[the Holy Innocents | Matthew 2:16-18]

by Karen Meehan

Every learner driver will eventually face what is probably the hardest lesson of all: avoiding the instinct to swerve when a flock of fluffy ducklings slowly waddles across the road in front of them. For the greater good, drivers have to keep their eyes fixed on the road, stay the course, and resist the natural instinct to preserve innocent life.

Tucked away near the end of Matthew's account of the Christmas Story, sandwiched between the Holy Family escaping to Egypt, and their returning safely, lie three of the most neglected, and difficult, verses of the Christmas Story. The slaughter of the innocents. It is brutal and bloody, and begs the question, why?

"Christmas is also accompanied, whether we like it or not, by tears. The Evangelists did not disguise reality to make it more credible or attractive. They did not indulge in words that were comforting but unrelated to reality. ... On the contrary, they relate the birth of the Son of God as an event fraught with tragedy and grief."

Pope Francis, 2016
(Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to Bishops on the Feast of the Holy Innocents)

It's easy to forget that Jesus was born into a perilous world, when Christmas in New Zealand means school holidays, summertime, and spending time in the garden. But the reality is that Joseph, warned of Herod's plans to execute the child king, had to pack up his family under the cover of night and leave. Nothing more, nothing less, just leave! Resisting the natural instinct to preserve other innocent life, he put their sacrifice out of mind, and saved Jesus.

It's such a horrible thought, isn't it? That Joseph, protector of families, could have saved other children too, and didn't. But everything is not as black and white as

it seems. Joseph had been told that this child would save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). So, with eyes fixed on the road, staying his course despite the horror overshadowing other infants, Joseph saved Jesus.



Why does God allow such evil?

This child who has come to save us, needed his fellow under-two brothers and his foster-father Joseph to save him first. Joseph couldn't risk altering the course of God's plan for salvation. The shedding of innocent blood by the boys of Bethlehem at Herod's hands, **BOTH** fulfils the Old Testament prophecy Matthew quotes from Jeremiah (31:15), which depicts Bethlehem as a city of great sorrows; **AND** it points to Jesus' own execution and the pouring out of his innocent blood at Pilate's hands (Matt 27:24-25); and thus, it gives meaning to this harrowing story. The spilled blood of innocent children does not only save Jesus, but it parallels his own fate and future when his innocent blood will be sacrificed to save us.

"Anyone who really wanted to get rid of suffering would have to get rid of love... because there can be no love without suffering..."

Pope Benedict XVI (God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald)

The accounts of the Holy Innocents and the Passion are like imaginary bookends

to Matthew's writing. When you read one, you are meant to draw parallels with the other. These three sorrowful verses serve to point us to the end of the Gospel story, the real reason this season is joyous, Jesus has come to save us! The Evangelists did not hide from the reality nor the complexities of Jesus' life. Innocent blood, righteous blood, the pouring of blood onto the ground, are central themes to Matthew's account.

Suffering is a part of life, a part of love, and a part of the Christmas Story. Inspired by the example of Joseph, who protected Jesus at the first Christmas; seek to protect Jesus in your life from the Herod's in our world who oppose him still today. We have a rich heritage of Catholic feasts, fasts, and traditions, that strengthen us at this time of the liturgical year; use these to stay the course. Protect Jesus in your heart and in your home. Save Jesus.

He is always with you, be always with Him, through all your actions, in your sufferings, when your body is exhausted, remain in His sight, see Him present, living in your soul

- Elizabeth of the Trinity



Karen Meehan lives in rural Mid Canterbury with her husband and family; and teaches Bible Studies in the Catholic Parish of Mid Canterbury. She holds a Graduate Diploma of Theology from Good Shepherd College and is working towards a Bachelor of Theology endorsed in Biblical Studies at Otago.

Do You Know How to Listen to Your Heart? (Part 3)

by Kevin Gallagher

Pope Francis defines discernment in his recent catechesis series as "listening to your heart." In part three of this series, we explore with him the key interior movements of feelings and moods, experienced as we discern God speaking to our heart.

The first interior movement of discernment outlined by Pope Francis is desolation, which he defines as: "darkness of soul, disturbance in it, without hope and Love. One finds oneself lazy, tepid, sad as if separated from God." At times, everyone experiences desolation, an experience needing interpretation. The sadness experienced is not necessarily negative. It can be like a traffic light warning us to "Stop!" If we desire to follow the good path, we need to be prepared for temptations and moments of sadness. Approaching our desolations with openness and awareness can strengthen us and guide our choices. "There is a price to pay with your heart for important choices in life," writes Pope Francis. Being desolate, therefore, offers you an opportunity for growth, to deepen your relationship with Christ and with those you love.

The second interior movement is consolation, which is an experience of interior joy, a felt experience of God's love that lets us see and experience God's presence in all things. It strengthens faith and hope and our ability to do good. Pope Francis states, "When we are consoled, we want to do so much good,



"There is a price to pay with your heart for important choices in life."

always, instead, when there is a moment of desolation, we feel like closing in on ourselves and doing nothing, consolation spurs us forward in service to others, society, other people." This is the beauty of the gift of consolation.

Let us be careful to distinguish well, between the consolation from God and its imitations. Pope Francis tells us that "Authentic consolation is like a drop on a sponge - it is soft and intimate - its imitations are noisier and lacking in

substance, leading us to close in on ourselves and not to take care of others." In the end, false consolation leaves us empty, far from our centre. Authentic consolation leads us to good choices, confirmed by an interior peace that lasts.

To assist us in discerning, it is important to be accompanied by a skilled spiritual director. This is important for self-knowledge, which is an indispensable element for discerning interior movements. For Pope Francis, "Looking at oneself in the mirror, alone, does not always help, as one can adjust the image. Instead, looking at oneself in the mirror with the help of another helps a great deal." A spiritual director who walks alongside you, listening with you to the inner voices that

stir in your heart, where God speaks, is an essential aid to discerning the interior movements of the heart.

All fourteen sessions on discernment by Pope Francis are available on the Holy See website (www.vatican.va/audiences).

Kevin Gallagher offers this third of a three-part series on discernment on behalf of the Christchurch Diocesan Spiritual Directors Group, *Whakakōingo o te Ngakau: The Yearning Heart*.

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CWLANZ, Christchurch Diocese Our Ecumenical Partnership

by Liz Roche, International Secretary CWLANZ

Catholic Women's League Aotearoa New Zealand (CWLANZ) members are present in several parishes in the Christchurch Diocese. We contribute to the social, intellectual, and spiritual life of New Zealand, and the life of the Church, and in so doing, positively impact on the lives of vulnerable people, especially women and children. CWLANZ have close ties with women's organisations from other Christian traditions. We recognise the need to forge ecumenical friendships with other Christian women and have representation on various inter-denominational committees, such as Church Women United and the Pan-Pacific and Southeast Asia Women's Association (PPSEAWA), which was established in New Zealand in 1928. The Mission Statement stands to strengthen the bonds of peace by fostering a better understanding and friendship among the women of all Pacific and Southeast Asia areas, and to promote cooperation among the women of these regions, for the study and improvement of social, economic, and cultural conditions. It brings together discussion of ways to raise money for good causes, including the PPSEAWA "Empowering Women" Scholarship.

On 20 October, members of CWLANZ Christchurch Diocese joined with women from local Methodist, Presbyterian, and Anglican Churches, for the 36th Annual Meeting of Church Women United and the gathering service for the Fellowship of the Least Coin - a movement of Prayer for Peace and Reconciliation

and Justice for all. Collecting our "Least Coins" at our meetings denotes our equal standing in fellowship with each other, regardless of economic or social status. The theme for the gathering was "Women Caring for God's Earth," and the guest speaker was Sr Kathleen Rushton RSM, who gave a challenging talk, reminding us that as New Zealanders, we are women of the Pacific, which therefore gives us ownership and responsibility for our common home, the most endangered part of the world. In uniting with other Christian women, we become aware and are able to respond appropriately to the needs of our sisters and brothers both in New Zealand and in our wider mission communities in the Pacific region.

For our own part, for example, CWLANZ has donated money for school uniforms in Vanuatu; mattresses for Sisters of the Society of Mary in Tonga; books and school supplies for Tonga, and goods following the tsunami; money for a drinking water tank in the Solomon Islands, and much more. We are always grateful for the generous support our fellow Parishioners give us through our fundraising efforts. We may be a group of mostly older women, but have long and dedicated "Faith and Service" to our organisation. We would love to have new members join us, so that our work in the parishes may continue.

For more information contact Sylvia Mellish, cwlnat.president@gmail.com, and follow us on Facebook.

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- 9.00am Board Games
- 10.00am Morning Tea
- 10.30am Arts and Crafts
- 12.00noon BYO Lunch / Socialise
- 12.45pm Exercise Class
- 1.30pm Variety Hour
- 2.30pm Afternoon Tea

THURSDAYS

- 9.00am Board Games
- 9.30am Mass
- 10.00am Morning Tea
- 10.30am Board Games
- 12.00noon BYO Lunch / Socialise
- 12.30pm Housie (numbers limited)
- 2.15pm Afternoon Tea
- 3.00pm Exercise Class

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Prayer & Communication are the Keys

by Mike Stopforth, Director - Bishop's Pastoral Office

A marriage educators forum was held at the Papanui Pastoral Centre. Those participating are involved in the ministry of preparing couples for marriage throughout the diocese. The forum began with a spiritual reflection from Sr Clare of the Beatitudes Community, emphasising the importance of personal prayer life. She encouraged couples to pray together. Tim and Jennifer Goulding gave a testimony about their journey and the

importance of good communication in a marriage. Noel and Zita Descalzo spoke about the role of husband and wife in a family. Participants broke into discussion groups, sharing their perspective on questions posed by the speakers. The forum provided a good mix of spiritual nourishment and enrichment of resources for their ministry, and the opportunity to connect with fellow marriage educators.

Miscarriage: Grief, Faith, and Comfort

Miscarriage is a sorrow that no parent wishes to face, and yet in today's society, one in four pregnancies will end in the heartbreak of a miscarriage. As Catholics, the understanding that life begins at conception shapes the emotional landscape when a miscarriage occurs. Regardless of whether this loss occurred at three weeks or 17 weeks, this little life existed as a gift from God. Therefore, even though parents may go on to have other children, their miscarriage will always be remembered and cherished as the irreplaceable gift that it was.

The grief that accompanies parents and families who have experienced a miscarriage is often a silent one. A sorrow so real - as dreams for the future fall flat and cherished memories of the pregnancy are locked away. Miscarriage is unique compared with other family loss, as the loss of a parent or sibling is known and recognised by the friends and community around you. But a miscarriage will often occur when no one, not even family members, are aware. Therefore this journey

of grief can often be the most lonely and secret.

However, despite the sorrow, as Catholics we can find comfort in knowing that your child is at peace and happy with God, and parents are able to hold on to the hope that one day, they will be reunited with their child again in heaven. In the meantime, they become prayerful companions, cheering on their parents from above. Throughout the grief, confusion, and pain which accompanies a miscarriage, the John Paul II Centre for Life stands as a pillar of support for grieving parents.

The Centre has recently developed a grief support ministry, offering retreats where those who are grieving may find healing and peace. In addition, the John Paul II Centre for Life also offers Miscarriage Boxes. These small, thoughtful gift boxes provide comfort to parents navigating the emotions of a miscarriage. Inside, parents can find tokens of remembrance - a candle to symbolize the life that their little one brought to their lives, a prayer card, a

shawl for both baby and mother, and even a packet of flower seeds, symbolizing hope and the beauty of life. These miscarriage boxes provide tangible comfort, a reminder that even when things seem darkest, there is a community standing by to pray and offer support. Additionally, the John Paul II Centre provides small coffins designed for miscarriages, stillbirths, and infant loss. These infant caskets provide a dignified way to lay to rest a child gone too soon.

At the John Paul II Centre for Life, we are privileged to have walked alongside many families who have experienced the loss of a child through miscarriage. We continue to offer support in any way we can, with practical provisions, comfort, and a listening ear. If you would like to find out more about our grief support, please contact Lara on 021 0814 8834.



Christchurch Catholic Health Professionals Meet

Christchurch has established a Catholic Health Professionals Group. This is an opportunity to meet with other professionals across a spread of health disciplines in the industry, and to discuss and support each other in both faith and vocation. All health professionals are most welcome to join by emailing christchurchcma@gmail.com.

Our first gathering was at the Sprig and Fern in early November, which was an informal meet up over drinks, and we plan to have more events in the new year, starting with Mass for World Day of the Sick on Sunday 11 February 2024, celebrated at St Mary's Pro-Cathedral. More information to come.



The Christchurch Health Professionals Group was instigated following a contingent of Christchurch-based professionals attending a weekend retreat of the New Zealand Catholic Medical Association (NZCMA) in Wellington earlier this year. During the Wellington retreat, we heard from the Sisters of Compassion on Blessed Suzanne Aubert and about her time in New Zealand. They shared the progression of Blessed Suzanne Aubert towards sainthood, with the inspirational New Zealand healing story related to her.

Not only did National Chaplain, Fr Chris Denham, offer us the Sacrament of

Reconciliation, Adoration and Mass, he also led us in prayer. He gave us encouragement in our work in health care, reminding us we are not alone. He reminded us to see the face of Jesus in those we come into contact with during our work, and that our call remains to attend to our patients (and all others) as carefully and compassionately as we would Christ. He encouraged us to read CS Lewis' essay 'The Weight of Glory'.

Dr John Kleinsman, from the Nathaniel Centre for Bioethics, gave a talk on 'Beginning and end of life health care in

the face of differing narratives on suffering and compassion'. The presentation can be found on the NZCMA website www.newzealandcatholicmedical.co.nz. In this presentation, Dr Kleinsman challenged the popular opinion around suffering and compassion.

Dr Cathy Black and Alicia Reeve RN from Billings Life, introduced the group to the Billings Ovulation Method. Not only did they give a practical overview of Billings, but also the research behind it. This information was greatly received by various professionals for their practice. Cathy and Alicia have given those health professionals, wanting training in this method, the opportunity to pursue this.

The NZCMA is a group supported by the NZ Catholic Bishops Conference, which aims to support those working in health to join others in the Church living their vocation in health care. The organisation looks to provide a community that gives support and chaplaincy. This includes monthly national prayer zooms. If you would like to join, please email: newzealandcatholicmedical@gmail.com.

We hope to also see you at the future Christchurch Health Professionals meet ups throughout 2024 - just send an email to get the next event details and more: christchurchcma@gmail.com.

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St Patrick's School fundraiser
 – 800 cans donated to the
 Vinnies Annual Food Drive
 in Christchurch.

www.svdp.org.nz

 Society of St Vincent de Paul New Zealand

Philippine Chaplaincy News

by Joyce Roa, Communication Committee, Philippine Chaplaincy

October Rosary Month

October is Rosary month, so Filipino Catholics in Christchurch once again held a month-long October Family Rosary Crusade. Each day, the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary is transferred from one sponsoring family to the next. Each night, visitors come to pray the Rosary in the sponsor's house and a meal is offered. This is repeated each night for 31 days in October.

A culminating Mass was held on 29 October at St Patrick's Church in Kaiapoi, presided by Fr Benito Velasco, Philippines chaplain.

Philippine Chaplaincy Website

Filipinos, friends, and family who want to attend a Tagalog Mass, need help, or want to be updated on what is happening can now go to our Philippine Chaplaincy website:

www.philippinechaplaincychch.com. It is linked to the Philippine Chaplaincy Facebook group, where updates on the week's coming activities are usually posted.

Jane and Raphael Lee (back right) hosted the Rosary on the 5th of October



Concert For Faith And Light

In October, around 100 people gathered in the beautiful St Bede's College Chapel to enjoy the wonderful music of Fr Chris Skinner. He offered a fundraising concert for Faith and Light, an international organisation which seeks to enable people with intellectual disability to share the joy of friendship, and to deepen their faith and friendship with Jesus. Faith and Light welcomes families with an intellectually disabled member, and those who

wish to be friends of people with intellectual disability, to our communities. There are two Faith and Light communities in Christchurch who meet monthly for a time of sharing. If you would like to know more, contact Anne-Marie Pike, 027 227 2471, rogerandannemarie@hotmail.com, or Cathie Anderson, 021 125 8077, cathie_norm@hotmail.com.





“I want to be like these people.”

Farewelling our NET Team

by Grace Challies, NET Team Coordinator

The National Evangelisation Team (NET) arrived in the Diocese on 19 February and recently returned to Brisbane to conclude their ministry year. While here, they were hard at work each week in a school and parish. They visited nine of our parishes and fourteen of our Catholic schools.

CYT has had a great response from those who spent time with the team. Some of our young people have said, “We enjoyed meeting people who are living their lives for Jesus, by working to

help others become closer to him.” “I enjoyed when the members of the NET team prayed for us. I really felt good after that and I feel like God has heard me.” “I want to be like these people.”

Teachers were impressed with the way the Team was able to connect with their students. One Director of Religious Studies (DRS) reported that “seeing five young people sitting prayerfully and quietly, my students followed suit. When given the opportunity to be prayed for, I was sitting in disbelief as many of the students took up this great blessing. I know God can work in amazing and mysterious ways, but this was something else.”

A parish priest commented, “I was very impressed with their ability to engage the young people from Years 7 and 8 up to Year 13. They led well and were able to really get alongside the young people, and also imparted a real sense of faith as well as providing a good lot of fun and games.”

Throughout this year, the team connected with thousands of young people throughout the diocese and brought new energy. We have seen a major increase in the numbers coming to CYT events, and we believe the team was a large factor in that. We are forever grateful for what the team has achieved, and look forward to continuing to see the fruits of their service.

Christchurch NET team (L to R): Hendrick, Matilda, Kaiya, Talia, Patrick



Catholic Youth Camps See Unprecedented Demand

by Mark Currie, Diocesan Youth Ministry Coordinator

The full house signs were certainly up this year as the two Catholic Youth Team (CYT) camps were met with unprecedented demand. The Woodend Christian Camp was again our iconic venue for the usual 'Revolution' for intermediate students in June and 'Antioch' for high school students in September. Thanks to the outstanding promotional work of the NET team and an excellent response from our parishes, nearly 250 young people and leaders participated in these camps. Both camps were also a testament to the success of our previous Mission Team ministry, as both keynote speakers were Mission Team alumni. Josh Chisholm, team leader of the 2021 team, was our Revolution camp leader, and Antioch speaker Gerard Trolove was part of the inaugural team in 2011.

The theme for our camps this year was "More." It was based on the well-known verse from the Gospel of John, John 10:10, "I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full." Throughout the weekend, our two keynote speakers and the young leaders encouraged our young people to explore what it means to live life to the full and that living life in Christ brings us so much 'More' than life without him.

Both camps featured keynote sessions, small groups, worship, and free time, with the team challenges in the afternoons being particularly tightly fought. This year also saw the introduction of a panel session, where young leaders and Fr Phillip Suelzer of

the Community of St John shared and answered questions about their personal experiences of past worship nights, of Eucharistic Adoration, being prayed for, and the sacrament of Reconciliation. The young people then had the opportunity to enter into their own time of Adoration, accompanied by the CYT worship band. The response from young people was exceptional. One of our pastoral team members remarked later, "The young ones were literally tripping over each other to be the next in line for "Reco" and prayer. I had to assure them they would get their turn!"

Both camps ended with Sunday Mass celebrated by Fr Philip, and brought together many friends and families of our campers.



First Holy Communion

Chch North Parish: On the last weekend of October, 126 children celebrated their First Holy Communion. It was a beautiful celebration of this special sacrament which took place over three Masses.

St Mary's Parish, Hokitika: On 10 September, six children from St Mary's celebrated their First Holy Communion at Seaview Chapel in Hokitika.




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