



Inform

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ISSUE 142 SPRING 2024

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From Our Bishop



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

It was with profound joy and deep peace that I announced on 4 August our new cathedral would be named The Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament – *Te Hāhi Matua o te Hākarameta Tapu Rawa*.

There were three main reasons I was led to choose this patronal name: The deep affection expressed by the people of the diocese for the patronal name of the Blessed Sacrament; the fact every church built on the sacred ground of Barbadoes Street, going back to 1864, was named after the Blessed Sacrament; and the association of our Perpetual Adoration chapel with the new cathedral.

Not only have people throughout the diocese – and even further afield – expressed their joy at the decision, but we also received an unexpected blessing on the day of the announcement.

The Gospel that Sunday centred on the Eucharistic Discourse in John 6, a Gospel series we only hear from every three years, where Jesus introduces his disciples to the profound mystery of Eucharist. That Sunday, Jesus stated “I am the bread of life,” a mystery the Church has celebrated and revered from that time on.

Sunday 4 August was also the feast of St John Vianney, a priest who had a deep devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. He once stated “there is nothing so great as the Blessed Sacrament. If God had something more precious, He would have given it to us.”

Having chosen our patronal name, we now have a challenge, and a responsibility, to honour our patron, to live up to the name. We are called to celebrate and honour the Blessed Sacrament in as worthy a manner as did the generations who passed it on to us. In this spirit it is important to reflect again on this great sacrament.

The Blessed Sacrament is the source and summit of our Catholic faith. The phrase “source and summit of the Christian life” is drawn from the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, particularly from the document *Lumen Gentium*, which emphasises the centrality of the Eucharist in the life of the Church and its members.

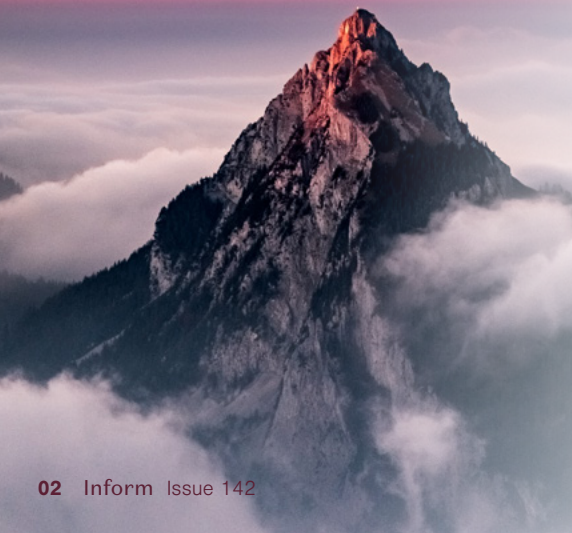
Let’s break down this concept further.

1. The Eucharist as the Source and foundation of spiritual life

The Eucharist is considered the “source” because it is the wellspring from which all the Church’s spiritual life and activities flow. In the celebration of the Eucharist, we believe we encounter Christ in the most intimate way possible on earth. This encounter nourishes the soul, provides grace and strengthens us to live out our faith in daily life. It further offers unity with Christ and the Church. Through participation in the Eucharist, Catholics are united with Christ, who is the head of the Church, and with one another as members of His Body. This union with Christ empowers us to live out our Christian vocation, whether in family life, work, or service to others. The Eucharist thus becomes the foundation for Christian living, offering spiritual strength and guidance. It is also a source of unique grace, seen as a primary channel of God’s grace.

Through the reception of the Blessed Sacrament, we receive the grace necessary to persevere in our faith, grow in holiness and overcome sin. The sacrament imparts sanctifying grace, which sustains and deepens our relationship with God.

“As the summit, it offers us a foretaste of heaven, an invitation to the heavenly banquet, where believers hope to be united with God forever.”



“Baptism, Confirmation and the sacrament of Reconciliation prepare believers to receive the Eucharist worthily.”



2. The Eucharist as the Summit

The Eucharist is the “summit” because it is the highest and most perfect act of worship that the Church can offer to God. In the Mass, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is made present, and the Church joins in offering this perfect sacrifice to the Father. This act of worship reaches its peak in the Eucharist, surpassing all other forms of prayer and devotion.

As the summit, it offers us a foretaste of heaven, an invitation to the heavenly banquet, where believers hope to be united with God forever. It is a glimpse of the eternal communion with God that awaits us in heaven. As such, the Eucharist is the culmination of the Christian journey, pointing us toward their ultimate goal. As the highpoint of our sacramental life, the Eucharist orientates all other sacraments. Baptism, Confirmation and the sacrament of Reconciliation prepare believers to receive the Eucharist worthily, while the Anointing of the Sick and Holy Orders derive their spiritual efficacy from it. The Eucharist, therefore, sits at the peak of the sacramental life of the Church.

3. Source of Evangelisation and Mission

The strength and grace received from the Eucharist propel us to engage in the Church’s mission of evangelisation, service and charity. The nourishment from the Eucharist equips us to spread the Gospel and serve others in love, embodying the teachings of Christ in the world. The Great Commission to evangelisation and mission is nourished by the Eucharist. Every Mass is a re-presentation of Christ’s sacrifice, and the

communal celebration of the Eucharist is the Church’s most significant and solemn gathering. It is in the Eucharistic celebration that the Church fully manifests itself as the Body of Christ.

In summary, when the Church teaches that the Eucharist is the “source and summit of the Christian life”, it is emphasising that all aspects of the Christian life and the Church’s activities are rooted in and directed toward the Eucharist. The Eucharist is both the beginning point and the ultimate goal of the Church’s life and mission, encompassing the full expression of faith, worship and the communion of believers with Christ and one another.

Here are four ways we can deepen our love and devotion for the Blessed Sacrament.

- 1. Prepare well for Mass.** Read the Sunday readings ahead of time; ask the Lord to prepare your heart to receive Him well in the Blessed Sacrament; arrive early to Mass allowing time to prepare well for full and active participation. Preparation also includes preparing our souls through attendance at the sacrament of Reconciliation.
- 2. Make regular visits to the Blessed Sacrament** in your parish or the closest chapel. A simple visit reminds us of the awesome gift of the Eucharist, a presence that strengthens, heals and comforts.
- 3. Pray and reflect on the Eucharistic Discourse** – Chapter 6 of John’s Gospel.
- 4. Participate in Eucharistic Adoration.** Attend parish hours of Adoration; visit the Blessed Sacrament chapel at St Gregory’s, 26 Cotswold Ave; if possible, sign up for regular Adoration.

The joy of that recent announcement is in stark contrast to the final report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care. Catholic leaders asked for the Church to be included in the Commission’s scope. That was done because we wished to contribute to and learn from an inquiry of this importance and depth. It laid bare our shameful history, but with the hope our involvement would effect meaningful change.

In recent decades, the Catholic Church – including our Diocese of Christchurch – has made significant progress in responding to abuse and in establishing robust systems and processes. We know those efforts must continue to be strengthened, and I am committed to leading our Diocese with determination and resolve.

As Catholics, that journey includes acts of repentance, of reparation and of sacrifice. We walk that path with the Lord.

As we begin a new era of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament as patron of our new Cathedral, we call on Jesus present in the most Blessed Sacrament to guide, nourish and heal us. We call on His forgiveness for the many ways we have not lived up to our call as disciples of His Real Presence. May His presence, encountered most profoundly in the Blessed Sacrament, help us to fulfil our mission to make Jesus known.

Yours in Christ

+ Michael Gielen
Bishop of Christchurch



ISSUE 142 SPRING 2024

Nga mihi nui from the editorial desk

Welcome to Inform Issue 142, our Spring edition. This issue covers Catholic life in the Christchurch Diocese from June through to the end of August.

Along with our regular pages, we cover our Year of Prayer Conference, where around 100 Catholics joined the disciples in asking “Lord, teach us to pray”. We celebrate two events where men and women took the opportunity to deepen their faith, connect, pray and share. In accord with Pope Francis, Fr John O’Connor urges us to go on an adventure in music and literature. In our central feature, Fr Nicholas Dillon speaks of beauty that inspires, profiling notre-Dame’s continuing importance as a meeting place between faith and culture.

After you have read this edition of Inform, please pass it on to others who may connect with a word or story from within its covers. Share the link to the latest Inform cdoc.nz/inform. My spirit is always lifted by reading the depth of our faith and of the many good things, so many Catholics are doing for others in the Christchurch Diocese.

In Christ

Ken Joblin, Editor

Being Men and Women of Prayer

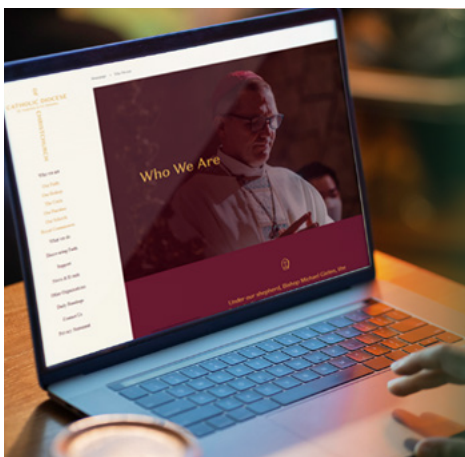
In late July, 110 people gathered in Ashburton for the Diocesan Year of Prayer Conference. In declaring 2024 as a Year of Prayer, Pope Francis encouraged dioceses to promote initiatives to remind people of the centrality of both individual and communal prayer. He desired all people to renew, every day, the joy and commitment to be men and women of prayer. This Diocesan Conference was one such initiative.

The theme of the conference was “Lord, teach us to pray”, from the Gospel of Luke chapter 11: 1-4. This request of our Lord is made on behalf of all of us, as we seek deepen in our prayer life. The day offered many opportunities for participants to explore how to pray.



After Mass, morning tea and a welcome, the conference opened with keynote speaker, Jemma Brunton offering something of her experience of prayer. She offered ten lessons about prayer to deepen our prayer life.

Workshops on an aspect or method of prayer were on offer, with many excellent options and speakers, ranging from Lectio Divina, Ignatian Prayer, the Divine Office, the Saints and many more. Many wished they could have attended more workshops than time allowed.



Visit the diocesan website >>>

www.cdoc.nz



Here you will find information about parishes, Mass times, diocesan news and events.

Parishes, schools and church groups are welcome to advertise events. Please email mstopforth@cdoc.nz.



Ten lessons about prayer to deepen our prayer life

1. We pray in our humanity
2. Prayer is a relationship
3. God is not taken in by our polite little speeches
4. Be consistent, have a routine
5. Learn to love God and pray in accordance with your personality
6. Focus not on 'doing' prayer right but on how God relates to you personally
7. Prepare for your conversational prayer
8. Prayer doesn't always look the same
9. Beware of unintentional blindness of spiritual amnesia
10. Who is God to you?



In the afternoon, Bishop Michael Gielen presented an inspiring keynote address on the Our Father. This was Jesus' response to the apostle's question of 'how to pray' and is also the theme of the Year of Prayer. This moving presentation is available to watch on YouTube here www.youtube.com/watch?v=BDJ29V8x6UI

The conference ended with a time of Eucharistic Adoration and sung Evening Prayer. It was a very blessed day and the feedback was excellent.

“A very worthwhile conference ... the speakers and workshops were well chosen, helping us to grow our prayer life.”

“It was most beneficial and enjoyable with great speakers.”

At the start of the new millennium, St Pope John Paul II asked that all parishes “become genuine “schools” of prayer”. “From these schools of prayer” he wrote, “the entire Church should set out into the deep on mission and evangelisation”. This is the path on which Bishop Gielen is leading the diocese. All the workshop presenters are very happy to present their workshop in parishes. If you would like to take advantage of this, please contact Matt O'Connell mocconnell@cdoc.nz Tel: 03 366 9869.

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Men and women hold events to connect, pray, share

In early August, around 170 men gathered at St Teresa's Church in Riccarton for the second annual **Men's Breakfast**, hosted by Bishop Michael Gielen. The event opened at 6.30am with Adoration, followed by breakfast. Two of the men shared something of their own faith, and how it had deepened with the help of the consecration to St Joseph. The first breakfast last year unveiled a statue of St Joseph, which has now been given to the Holy Family parish and will be in men's homes for three months before it moves on to the next parish.

The second **Catholic Women's Night** of the year was held in July and was a remarkable success, bringing together 170 women from throughout the diocese to celebrate sisterhood, faith and connection. The event was a vibrant testament to the strength and unity among women of all ages and stages, creating an atmosphere filled with inspiration, a deep sense of community and prayer.

A major highlight of the evening was the heartfelt talk by Bishop Michael Gielen and his sister, Anna. Bishop Gielen spoke about the positive and supportive influence of the women in his life, including his mother and sisters. He acknowledged the crucial role women play in society, particularly in their leadership within families, partnerships, relationships, workplaces. Together, Bishop Gielen and his sister Anna, reflected on their special bond as siblings, sharing insights into

their relationship as a big brother and younger sister. Anna's contribution to the evening was particularly poignant. She shared her personal journey as a mother, daughter, sister and partner and how in challenging times, she has drawn strength and courage from her faith, prayer and her relationship with the Lord. Her story resonated deeply with many in the room, especially as she highlighted the often invisible sacrifices women make for their families.



A touching moment of the night came when Anna played the song, "I See You" from 'The Stations', which moved her and was enjoyed by many of the attendees, further enhancing the sense of unity and shared experience. The event concluded with a beautiful time of Adoration. The

women sang "Jesus, my Lord, my God, my All", followed by a precious period of silent personal prayer. This Women's night was not just an event; it was a celebration of the bonds that connect us all and a reminder of the strength we draw from each other.





Ken Joblin, Jubilate Director, with students



Roncalli Choir

In Tuneful Accord

by Ken Joblin, Jubilate Director

Jubilate is our Diocesan Sacred Music programme and is well established. Indeed, it is in its ninth year. Alongside four regular Christchurch city concerts, bringing together our primary, secondary and parish choirs and instrumentalists, Jubilate visits our regions.

parts and accompanied by well-known Christchurch pianist, Michael Lawrence. He also provided his own piano bracket. The Jubilate Trio, formed for this concert, offered three pieces for unaccompanied men's voices: meticulous Gregorian chant and well blended three part motets.

“ Many people have said how uplifted they felt after singing and listening to a wonderful variety of music ”

In August, Timaru hosted Jubilate South Canterbury, featuring singers from Sacred Heart Primary and Roncalli College. St Patrick's School, Waimate re-joined them this year for an hour of singing in the stunning Sacred Heart Basilica. This church must surely be among the ten most beautiful Catholic churches in New Zealand, both for its classical architecture and gentle, reverberant acoustics. “The concert was a success. We have certainly had positive feedback.” said Debbie Plant, Sacred Heart School Director of Religious Studies. “Many people have said how uplifted they felt after singing and listening to a wonderful variety of music.” said Holy Family Parish choir Director, Carrie Cooper. She went on to say that it is great to see our Diocesan Sacred Music programme “Promoting the depth of our resources of sacred music.”

A little later in August, Jubilate was offered for the Christchurch South and West parishes and their schools. A key feature of the evening was the more recently formed, but already well disciplined choir of St Peter's School, Beckenham. Under their director, Victoria Panckhurst, a lively African spiritual and an arrangement of Lord of the Dance bookended Cyndi Lauper's True Colours. All pieces were sung in

Sarah Lowe is Principal of St Peter's School. She commented that “Our choir really enjoyed the occasion and it was well worth the effort and preparation.” Victoria Panckhurst directs their choir. She observed “Music is so valuable and it was wonderful to have an evening where it was so obvious to all who attended”.

Two more Christchurch concerts and a Jubilate West Coast will complete this year's series.



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Excellence in Catholic Tertiary Teaching Awards: 2024

by Mike Nolan, Manager, Catholic Education Office



Mike Nolan, Cushla O'Connor and Rory Patterson

Inform joins our Catholic Education Office in congratulating Cushla O'Connor in receiving this award. Cushla's dedication to 'teaching teachers' and her ability to encourage students to succeed, makes her a deserving recipient of this award. Cushla is very much a Cantabrian and is employed by the Christchurch Education office. Nevertheless, as a lecturer, she also works with Te Kupenga Catholic Theological College.

Cushla's enthusiasm, her Catholic faith and desire to ensure our schools have teachers empowered to share this faith, is evident in her tertiary teaching. In her

lecturing role, she shares her passion for high-quality scholarship and prepares her students with the knowledge and skills to excel as teachers of religious education. Cushla travels all over the Christchurch diocese, often returning to a school after the teaching component is complete, to provide tutorials or one-to-one assistance on the structure and writing of assessments. She goes above and beyond what would normally be expected.

The Christchurch Diocese boasts the highest rate of teachers with qualifications in Religious Education in Catholic schools in New Zealand.

Dozens of young people join the Revolution

by Mark Currie

In July, more than 145 leaders and rangatahi gathered from all over the diocese at Woodend for the Catholic Youth Team's Revolution Camp. "But who do you say that I am?", was the question providing the theme of the camp. It is taken from the Gospels, which set the tone for a great weekend. Matt Clark is a seminarian for the Christchurch Diocese and is studying at Holy Cross, our national seminary in Auckland. He broke open the theme as he challenged campers to consider what their answer to that question might be. A highpoint of the weekend was the time of Adoration, combined with praise and worship on the Saturday night. Bishop Michael Gielen celebrated the final Mass on Sunday morning. Alongside the talks and liturgy, was the usual camp programme of small groups, team challenges and free time, which helped create what many are calling the best camp ever.

The next camp is for Year 9-13 students. Registrations are open now at cyt.org.nz/what-we-offer/events/antioch



Desiring God

by Colin Renouf, Spiritual Director, on behalf of Whakakōingo o te Ngākau:
The Yearning Heart, the Diocesan Spiritual Directors' Group

Desire for Olympic Gold has shaped and defined the lives of the athletes who represented our country at the Paris games. That one desire has defined their daily routine, the food they ate, the people they spent time with and where they went for many years. Kiwi sprinter, Zoe Hobbs acknowledged to media that since she started the sport as a five-year-old, her aim has been to compete at the Olympics. Everything she has done since then has been shaped by that desire.

English priest and theologian, James Alison, argues that our entire lives are shaped by desire. He concludes that: "It is not the "I" that has desires, it is desire that forms and sustains the "I." I am shaped and formed by my desires." What is your greatest desire? Comfort and security? Olympic Gold? Family and a nice home? All valid desires, however, at the core of our being there is an insatiable desire for God. Saint Augustine expressed it like this: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."

A restless desire for God has defined my life. It compels me to set aside time every day for prayer and quiet reflection in God's presence, to attend Mass regularly and to pursue activities that will deepen my relationship with God. That desire led me many years ago to attend my first weeklong silent prayer retreat at Teschemakers near Oamaru. What would it be like to spend a week in silence? How might God speak into my life and change me as a person? It was all a new

unknown, but I was open to God and the work of the Holy Spirit within. God drew my attention to reflect on his nature as Our Father through considering each verse in Matthew 5-7 that spoke of God as Father. It was comforting to realise that Our Father knew our needs before we asked, yet waited for us to come with our needs to him in prayer. God longs for a personal relationship with us. As William Barry S.J. wrote: "God, the holy Mystery who is three in one, not only wants a personal relationship with each person, as an individual and as a community, but also acts in the world to bring about such a personal relationship."

That retreat significantly deepened my relationship with God. Over the almost 30 years since then I have attended five or six week long retreats. Each one has been a profound experience of encounter with the Living God. On my most recent retreat I wrote a series of poems in response to the Holy Spirit's work within me. I conclude with a portion of one poem.

*Living God
Maker of all things
Beauty and Majesty flow from you
Captivating Entrancing God
Take my heart captive
Let me be your lover
Devoted entirely to you
For then I will be your love
Flowing, moving in purity
Giving life.*

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St Joseph and Vocations to the Priesthood – a reflection

by Matt O'Connell, Vocations Coordinator



When we think of Patron Saints of Vocations to the Priesthood, St Joseph does not always immediately spring to mind. We might think of St John Vianney, the Patron Saint of Diocesan Priests or St Ignatius Loyola in terms of discerning one's vocation. I think St Joseph, Foster Father of Jesus, is also a powerful intercessor and guide for those discerning a priestly vocation.

Over the past few weeks, I have been completing a 33-day consecration to St

from Herod into Egypt, he provided for him, he educated him, he taught him a trade and the value of work and he loved him.

Further on in the book, Fr Calloway reflects on St Joseph's death. He writes that "St Joseph's main purpose in life was to get the Blessed Virgin Mary and his divine son to Calvary". He writes that St Joseph, "adhering to God's plan, had already offered his loving sacrifice before Jesus and Mary offered theirs at

“ Without priests, we will not have the ‘Living Bread of the Eucharist today’ ”

Joseph. As I have journeyed through these 33 days, I have become more and more convinced of the role St Joseph can play in fostering and supporting vocations.

I really began to ponder St Joseph's role in vocations as I read about his vocation as the foster father of Jesus. On Day 13 of the Consecration by Fr Donald Calloway MIC, we read that the Latin translation of "foster father" is "Nurturer of the Son Of God". St Joseph was a true father to Jesus; he named him, he protected and watched over him, especially when fleeing

Calvary". His physical presence was not required – his task was complete. This is very powerful. There are so many more reflections in the book but what does it have to do with vocations?

All of us are called to be disciples of Jesus. A disciple is supposed to imitate the one who is being followed. What about Priests? The Sacrament of Holy Orders, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us "Configures the recipient to Christ by a special grace of the Holy Spirit, so that he may serve as Christ's instrument for his Church. By ordination one is enabled to act as a representative of Christ, Head of the Church, in his triple office of priest, prophet, and king".

A priest therefore acts in the person of Christ – in persona Christi. "It is the same priest, Christ Jesus, whose sacred person his minister truly represents". Priests by virtue of their ordination are 'other Christs', possessing "the authority to act in the power and place of the person of Christ himself".

St Joseph, nurturer of the Son of God, wants to nurture, protect, form and encourage those men that God is calling to 'act in the person' of his foster son as priests. St Joseph is a powerful intercessor and patron. He will help any man discerning the call to become a

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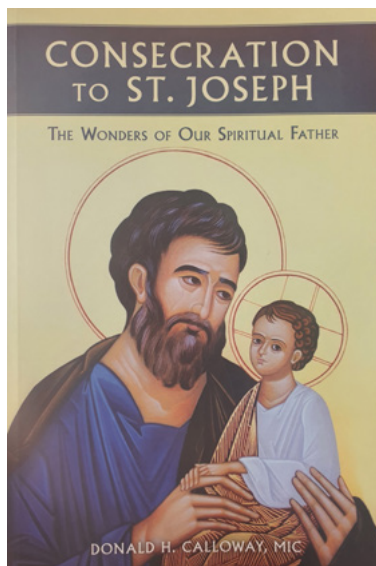
www.svdp.org.nz

 Society of St Vincent de Paul New Zealand

priest. He is also a powerful intercessor for the entire Church before his Son in heaven, asking the Lord of the Harvest for “ardent but gentle servants of the Gospel”.

Fr Donald Calloway writes that “without St Joseph we would not have the Living Bread of the Eucharist”. Without priests, we will not have the ‘Living Bread of the Eucharist today’. All of us, in all our needs must, in the words of Venerable Pope Pius XII – “Ite ad Ioseph” – “go to Joseph” – “go to Joseph and do what ever he tells you” (Gen 41:55).

For more information contact
Matt O’Connell, Vocations Coordinator,
03 366 9869 – vocations@cdoc.nz



Annual Vocations Dinner

by Matt O’Connell, Vocations Coordinator

Late June saw the second annual vocations dinner to be held at Nazareth House. 35 priests were joined by 30 men for dinner, testimonies and prayer.

Drawing upon moving and funny stories, Frs Monty Bamford and Peter Costello shared something of their vocational journey to priesthood. The evening concluded in the Nazareth House Chapel with Night Prayer from the Divine Office. Please continue to pray for those discerning a possible call to priesthood: that our Lord will provide shepherds for His people ... and raise up worthy ministers for His altars and ardent but gentle servants of the Gospel.

Prayer to St Joseph to Know One’s Vocation

O Great Saint Joseph,
you were completely obedient to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
Obtain for me the grace to know the state of life that God in His providence, has chosen for me.
Since my happiness on earth, and perhaps even my final happiness in heaven, depends on this choice, let me not be deceived in making it.
Obtain for me the light to know God’s Will, to carry it out faithfully, and to choose the vocation which will lead me to a happy eternity.

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Language in Motion

by Fr John O'Connor

“we should not be allowed near people as priest pastors unless, through good literature, we had entered and felt the joys, hopes, griefs and anxieties of the complex lives of others”

In my first year at Holy Cross College, well over four decades ago now, I was fortunate to have many teachers who were wise, holy and experienced. There were several Jesuits on the seminary staff through my time (five in my first year) and I am deeply grateful to them for my attraction to sound catholic (universal) education and for encouraging me to think laterally, creatively and fearlessly.

One of these Jesuits, Fr Bernard O'Brien SJ (1907-1982) was born in Christchurch and lived in Germany in the 1930's. He was a study companion of some who became notable names during and following the Second Vatican Council, including Karl Rahner and von Balthazar.

By the time I arrived at Holy Cross College in Mosgiel in 1980, Fr O'Brien was suffering from significant dementia. However, the Rector, Fr Tom Liddy, (a priest of the Christchurch diocese) was keen to keep him teaching whatever he could teach without stress. I remain grateful to Fr Liddy and to God that we, fifteen first-year seminarians, were assigned to Fr O'Brien for two hours each week, one for Appreciation of music and one for English literature.

In the music class Fr O'Brien would begin by speaking, perhaps for five or ten minutes, about a composer or a genre of classical music, before inviting us to prepare ourselves to listen with every sense: hearing, tasting, even seeing the music, to enable our minds and our souls to be fully engaged. Then he would reach into his custom-built cabinet shelves of several hundred long playing (LP) records, take one LP and place it on the turntable, gently lower the needle to the vinyl and our adventure would begin.

His method in each English class was similarly simple. First, a few moments introducing an author, a chapter or a short story. Then he would read to us. His gentle, rich and cultured voice was, well, delicious and as we listened, the text he held would leap to life, lively and colourful, engaging and personal, certainly formative and in moments – life-changing.

I will never forget his rendering of Katherine Mansfield's *The Dolls House*, a simple story cleverly revealing the crime of the injustice of class distinctions in New Zealand. I recall holding it together through his powerful reading, but being moved to tears at his empathetic delivery of little Else's little line: "I seen the little lamp."

Unfortunately Fr O'Brien's health deteriorated over that year, until the day when he needed to move from the seminary in Mosgiel to Nazareth Care in Christchurch.

What were we to do without our weekly diet of literature and music?

To the rescue came Auckland Sister of Mercy, Pauline Engel, who had opted to spend her sabbatical, studying with us at Holy Cross. She began our first class by asking "what are you guys reading?" We responded, listing our theology texts, before she interrupted "No! What are you really reading... books, novels, literature?" We were blank then, excusing ourselves with "we don't have the time."

Sr Pauline (and readers who knew her will understand this), erupted. Dropping in an expletive or two and shouting at us, she let us have it, explaining that while we (relatively sheltered youngish males) couldn't experience everything in life

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10.30am Board Games
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“ The literary word is a word that sets language in motion, liberates and purifies it ”

Pope Francis



first-hand, we should not be allowed near people as priest pastors unless, through good literature, we had entered and felt the joys, hopes, griefs and anxieties of the complex lives of others.

While I was a bit of a reader before this point and had studied some prose and poetry as a high school student, my love for literature: fiction, poetry and reading, really took off at this point. A few years later, as a young priest serving on the West Coast, I taught Year 13 English for two years, while enrolled in distance learning English papers at Massey University. Then with another Sister of Mercy, Leonie O’Neil, I took some diploma courses through Trinity College in London. Sr Leonie was from Fairlie and was well known and much loved in her teaching throughout the Christchurch Diocese.

All that by way of introduction to the delight I experienced a few weeks ago, when Pope Francis published a reflection on the importance of literature in human maturation. The letter opens: “I had originally chosen to give this letter a title referring to priestly formation. On further reflection, however, this subject also applies to the formation of all those engaged in pastoral work, indeed of all Christians. What I would like to address here is the value of reading novels and poems as part of one’s path to personal maturity.”

In his brief letter, Pope Francis rues the loss of literature in contemporary formation of priests. “Regrettably, however, a sufficient grounding in literature is not generally part of programmes of formation for the ordained ministry. Literature

is often considered merely a form of entertainment, a “minor art” that need not belong to the education of future priests and their preparation for pastoral ministry. With few exceptions, literature is considered non-essential.”

Pope Francis continues: “I consider it important to insist that such an approach is unhealthy. It can lead to serious intellectual and spiritual impoverishment, deprived people of that privileged access which literature grants to the very heart of human culture and, more specifically, to the heart of every individual. With this Letter, I would like to propose a radical change of course”. [since] literature has to do, in one way or another, with our deepest desires in this life, for on a profound level literature engages our concrete existence, with its innate tensions, desires and meaningful experiences.”

You’ll get a sense of his tone and emphasis in the sub-titles he uses in the letter. Pope Francis reflects on faith, culture, an embodied Christ, the great good, learning to listen to others and seeing through the eyes of others, learning to be truly discerning, paying attention and digesting what is nutritious. In short, Pope Francis is writing of the spiritual power of literature.

Many of the same points were powerfully made a couple of months ago, in a NZ Listener article (6-12 July) entitled “Welcome to the Danger Zone.” New Zealand novelist Kirsty Gunn, suggests

that: “all literature might come with a warning on its cover, like on a packet of cigarettes” [because] “all kinds of people live inside fiction’s world, with all kinds of lives — some appealing, some stomach churningly unpleasant. Literature has us think about nice things, sometimes, as well as difficult and ghastly things that might take us into the darkest part of our own psyches, temperaments and prejudices.” How exciting it is to think that, what I read, might shame me into thinking differently. Behaving differently. For shame, that most acute form of self-consciousness, can only bring in its wake, humility and then kindness, care and awareness of others, its most lovely and generous effect.

As Pope Francis concludes, in a line which would have delighted Fr Bernard O’Brien, Sr Pauline Engel, Kirsty Gunn and the many wonderful readers I know: “The literary word is a word that sets language in motion, liberates and purifies it. Ultimately, it opens that word to even greater expressive and expansive vistas. It opens our human words to welcome the Word that is already present in human speech, not when it sees itself as knowledge that is already full, definitive and complete, but when it becomes a listening and expectation of the One who comes to make all things new.”

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Notre-Dame de Paris

Beauty that inspires homesickness for heaven

by Fr Nicholas Dillon

Editor's Note: I invited Fr Nicholas Dillon to submit an article for Inform in light of the Paris Olympics and the timely restoration of Notre Dame Cathedral. He speaks eloquently about how a beautiful cathedral reaches beyond the catholic diocese it serves, to the wider culture of a region and country with the potential to further Christ's mission.

In December 1999 – January 2000 I had the great privilege of travelling through the Holy Land and Europe with the Choir and Orchestra of Christchurch's Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament. It was an extraordinary itinerary that provided an opportunity to discover some of the great sites of our Christian heritage, and to present sacred music in places of worship that have resounded with the Church's song for centuries. At the end of the tour, I made my way to Paris, determined to discover one of the top destinations for all organists – Notre-Dame Cathedral.

On a cold winter's night, I sat in a dimly-lit Notre-Dame de Paris listening to a performance given by Olivier Latry on the grand organ of *Méditations sur le Mystère de la Sainte Trinité* (Meditations on the Mystery of the Holy Trinity), a work by the French composer Olivier Messiaen. The experience was enthralling – not only the phenomenal sound of the grand organ, which completely enveloped the interior at times with thunderous intensity, but also the sheer magnificence of the extraordinary building, so full of history, beauty, and mystique. A chance meeting

with Messiaen's widow Yvonne Loriod, who was at the performance, brought home the fact of Notre-Dame's continuing importance as a meeting place between faith and culture.

Notre-Dame is like an enormous living time capsule, a repository of French history down through the centuries to this day. Construction began in 1163 on Île de la Cité, under the reign of King Louis VII. The Cathedral was largely completed by 1345. Through the centuries there have been many alterations and additions. It has also faced the threat of destruction on more than one occasion. The Notre-Dame music school has had an enormous influence on Western music, being the first place to produce polyphonic repertoire that gained wide circulation.

During my week-long visit to Paris in 2000, I was drawn back to Notre-Dame daily, to experience the vitality of what is literally the heart of the nation. All major thoroughfares in France lead to and from Notre-Dame de Paris. Away from the constant murmur of tourists shuffling along the designated path through the Cathedral, solace could be found in the chapel in the apse where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, or by attending chanted Vespers and Mass in the choir area.

Subsequent visits over the years have given me an opportunity to discover more of this fascinating building, and in November 2017 the opportunity to play the choir organ. This was thanks to Johann Vexo, one of the choir organists of Notre-Dame. (He was playing for the Mass during which the alarms sounded the night of the fateful fire in 2019). Mr Vexo has given concerts in New Zealand, including at St Mary's Pro-Cathedral. I was able to witness his skills during Sunday Mass in Notre-Dame, where in the great French tradition, the choir organ and the grand organ take different roles, each in alternation.

The power of the liturgy is what truly animates a building like Notre-Dame and can have a dramatic effect on both pilgrim and tourist. One famous example



is that of Paul Claudel (1868-1955) who on Christmas Day in 1886 when he was eighteen years old, attended High Mass at the Cathedral. Later in the day he returned for Vespers. He subsequently recalled listening to the psalms and Magnificat at Vespers and how this experience deeply changed him:

“It was the gloomiest winter day and the darkest rainy afternoon over Paris... Then occurred the event which dominates my entire life. In an instant, my heart was touched and I believed. I believed with such a strength of adherence, with such an uplifting of my entire being, with such powerful conviction, with such a certainty leaving no room for any kind of doubt, that since then all the books, all the arguments, all the incidents and accidents of a busy life have been unable to shake my faith, nor indeed to affect it in any way.”

“I was drawn back to Notre-Dame daily, to experience the vitality of what is literally the heart of the nation”

While such a dramatic conversion may not be granted to every visitor to a cathedral, it does serve as an important reminder to us that art, architecture, and music are vital tools that have served well Catholic efforts at evangelisation. In an age of draconian minimalism where we have come to accept a functional approach to church architecture – the building as a mere shelter for what goes on inside – it is good to reflect on why people are so drawn to the beautiful churches, large and small, of times past, places that inspire a homesickness for heaven. The fact that Notre-Dame Cathedral occupies such an important place in the heart of French people, whether believers or not, shows that what we build matters – that our architectural and artistic efforts help people to find a home.

The devastating fire that engulfed the roof of Notre-Dame on 15 April 2019 caused universal alarm – that one of the great treasures of art and architecture was about to be lost. The world watched on as the fire raged through “the forest” with the spire eventually collapsing through the stone-vaulted ceiling. Footage showed

the large crowds that had gathered at different vantage points, looking on in disbelief as Our Lady of Paris was ablaze. Who could forget those scenes of spontaneous prayers that arose from the people of Paris, especially the chant that began, as through tearful eyes they sought the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary: “Je vous salue, Marie, pleine de graces...”?

The tragedy that struck Notre-Dame de Paris evoked in the minds of all who had visited there the mystery and beauty of the Cathedral. It was an important reminder that the richness of Catholic culture can make a deep impression on the wider culture.

With the restoration of Notre-Dame continuing apace, we have seen the Church engage artists and craftsmen

with all the diverse talents and areas of expertise needed in such a complex project. The much-anticipated re-opening of Notre-Dame to the public later this year will allow us to see the fruits of their labour.

In an address on “The Cathedral from the Romanesque to the Gothic Architecture: The Theological Background” (18 November 2009), Pope Benedict XVI pointed out that one of the merits of Gothic cathedrals “is that the whole Christian and civil community participated in their building and decoration in harmonious and complementary ways. The lowly and the powerful, the illiterate and the learned; all participated because in this common house all believers were instructed in the faith.”

Perhaps the restoration of Notre-Dame Cathedral will be the starting point for a fresh appreciation of the way of beauty that can lead all people to encounter the luminous truth enshrined in our great churches, leading us all more deeply into the mystery of Christ. ✠

Fr Dillon is a priest of the Dunedin Diocese on loan to the Archdiocese of Melbourne, where he serves as Parish Priest of Blackburn North. He is a former Assistant Organist of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Christchurch.



To Hope and Act With Creation

Season of Creation 2024

by Kathleen Rushton RSM on behalf of the Laudato Si' Action Group

The Season of Creation Celebration which extends from 1 September until 4 October, the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, offers us a way to take steps towards believing more deeply in God as Creator. Throughout this month-long celebration, the world's 2.2 billion Christians come together to care for our common home.

This year's theme is: "To Hope and Act with Creation" and the symbol inspired by Roman 8:19-25 is: "The first fruits of hope." In his letter to the Romans, Paul pictures the earth as a mother, groaning in childbirth. Later, Francis of Assisi referred to the earth as our Sister and our Mother. Today our relationship with the earth is one of subjection and exploitation rather than one of nurturing and respect.

There is, however, still hope and expectation for a new unfolding future.

In a biblical context, hope does not mean to stand quiet and still, but rather God calls us to groan, to cry out and strive for new life amidst the struggles. Just as in childbirth, we go through a period of intense pain but new life springs forth.

The Season of Creation is a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment together. We join our sisters and brothers in the ecumenical family in prayer, solidarity and action for our common home.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis echoes St Pope John Paul II who called us to "ecological conversion" which is a "summons to profound interior conversion." What everyone needs, Francis writes, is an 'ecological conversion,' whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them" (*Laudato Si'* 217).

In the *Laudato Si'* Movement Prayer Book (laudatosimovement.org/prayer-book), Cardinal Michael Czerny, who is now the Prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, writes that in this booklet "you will find inspiration for how to express: exhilaration, awe and joy at the wonders of the natural world, gratitude for all of nature's gifts that sustain us, sorrow and shame at how we humans have mistreated the earth and each other and committed to do so, commitment to heal the earth and our human relationships."

During October, the month of the Most Holy Rosary, we can pray Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious and Luminous Mysteries which are set out with scripture passages followed by special reflections for each mystery.



TO HOPE AND ACT WITH CREATION
SEASON OF CREATION 2024

The firstfruits of hope
(Rom 8:19-25)

Contact: kprushton@gmail.com

On the Season of Creation: seasonofcreation.org/resources

Catholic Liturgical Guide: drive.google.com/file/d/1qv2Q46TCv9L5w5HYeXImVgFODwh9exbM/view



Our Lady of Victories
SOCKBURN, CHRISTCHURCH



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"We are thrilled with our wonderful refurbished multi-purpose area and lovely classroom with functional breakout spaces. The multi-purpose area is a vital space in our kura. It is a very welcoming and beautiful space, enjoyed by all. WSP who designed and project managed our upgrade were great to work with from start to finish!"

Collette Sandilands, Principal

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Pro-Life Award for service to life and family for Kenneth Orr

Media Release 30 August 2024

Right to Life celebrates the granting of the St Gianna & Pietro Molla Award for service to life and family presented to the founding President of Right to Life, Ken Orr. The annual award was made in Christchurch on 28 August 2024, by Michelle Kaufman, Chief Executive Officer of Family Life International NZ, in the presence of Father Shenan Bouquet, Director of Human Life International, who is currently visiting New Zealand on a public speaking tour.

The award citation states that it was made for “the outstanding contribution to serving life and family by defending the life of unborn children and for consistently holding governmental and other agencies accountable through persistent inquiry.”

We are all called to defend life from conception to natural death. Ken Orr is humbled by this award, and states that he has only done what we are all called to do, defend the lives of God's precious infants, protect their mothers from the violence of abortion, and protect the vulnerable from being killed by a doctor with a lethal injection or assisted in suicide under the End of Life Choice Act. He is indebted to others for their inspiration, example, and support.



St Gianna Beretta Molla (1922-1962), an Italian mother and pediatrician, is a pro-life Saint, as when diagnosed with a fibroma in her uterus during pregnancy, she refused medical advice to have an abortion and have her womb removed by undergoing a hysterectomy. Instead she had surgery to remove the fibroma, resulting in septic peritonitis, and she gave up her life in order that her unborn daughter Gianna would live, which she did.



Promoting a culture of life in 2024

by Ken Orr, Right to Life, New Zealand

On the Feast of the Assumption 1993, Pope St John Paul II addressed young people at World Youth Day. He warned them and us all by saying "Woe to you if you do not succeed in defending life."

Here in New Zealand, there can be no doubt that we are facing an enormous clash between the "culture of death" and the "culture of life". We cannot escape responsibility for choosing to be unconditionally pro-life. As we know, abortion and euthanasia offend God, the Author of life and violate human rights. To know more about these matters and how you might find ways to help protect life, visit righttolife.org.nz

St Gianna died on 28 April 1962 from septic peritonitis a week after her fourth child Gianna Emmanuela Molla was delivered after a caesarian section. St Gianna Beretta Molla was canonized on 16 May 2004.

Vatican investigation prompts decrees for Sons of the Most Holy Redeemer

The faculties of priests of the Sons of the Most Holy Redeemer in ministry in Christchurch were removed in July, following a series of recommendations from the Holy See.

Bishop Michael Gielen last year asked the Vatican to open the investigation after a series of troubling allegations were raised. A retired Australian bishop conducted the inquiry and provided a report to the Vatican.

Bishop Gielen accepted the advice from the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, one of the Vatican's departments.

As a result, the Sons of the Most Holy Redeemer lost their faculties – the

equivalent of a licence to practice – on July 15. Any ministry carried out in the Diocese after that date is unauthorised and liturgical celebrations are illicit – that is, outside the rules of the Church.

All members of the Sons of the Most Holy Redeemer were asked to leave the Diocese within 90 days.

The decrees Bishop Gielen issued also saw the suppression of the Daughters of the Most Holy Redeemer, an association established without Church approval within which a group of women presented themselves as nuns.

The Sons of the Most Holy Redeemer appealed against Bishop Gielen's

decrees. In late August, the Vatican confirmed that decrees removing the faculties of the priests remained in place, but suspended the decrees requiring members of the order to leave the Diocese and the suppression of the Daughters of the Most Holy Redeemer.

Msgr Brendan Daly, the canon lawyer acting for the Diocese of Christchurch, said the appeal procedure is an essential part of due process within the Church's legal framework. The Diocese will respond to the Holy See in due course.

“We continue to encourage people with a devotion to the Traditional Latin Mass to attend a licit Mass at Kaiapoi, which offers such a Mass each Sunday at 11am,” he said.

Growing a Great Marriage

with Help from the John Paul II Centre for Life

by Maria Schmetzer, Acting Director, John Paul II Centre for Life

A husband and wife, intertwined with God at the centre of their relationship. This is the threefold cord which Scripture presents as the ideal for a joy-filled, life-long marriage. This is much more than having a Church wedding and going to Mass together. If we have not found our identity in Christ and our security first in our relationship with Him, then our marriage cord will not be as strong as it needs to be, to survive in our sometimes toxic culture and to overcome a host of challenges, including those which come with raising a family.

From the time of a couple's engagement, through to the golden, diamond and ruby anniversaries, the John Paul II Centre has been creating more opportunities for

couples to reflect on their own marriage goals and work at forging their already good marriage into a truly great marriage.

Dio Date Night at the Commodore Hotel in June and the Marriage Unplugged seminars in Christchurch and Timaru, were three such marriage-related events. The John Paul II Centre also schedules Joy-Filled Marriage Preparation courses every few months for engaged couples, introducing them to the Theology of the Body – a rich and enlightening teaching on God's astounding plan for our sexuality and relationships. Couples who have attended these courses, have welcomed the insights gained and come away with a deeper appreciation of their spouse and of God's ever-present help.

“A cord made of three strands is not quickly broken.” Ecc1 4:12



Recently, we have also established our confidential, free Marriage Mentor service. Married couples with queries or concerns are welcome to approach one of our experienced Mentor couples for one-to-one support, a listening ear or advice. For more information on our Marriage Preparation and Marriage Enrichment Courses, please see the 'Our Services' section on our website: jp2.org.nz

St Vincent de Paul Canterbury

True to the Calling!!!

The Society of St Vincent de Paul has continuously supported families and individuals in Canterbury for the last 157 years and counting.

The Society is only able to sustain this work through generous organizations and businesses giving financial support. This has



enabled us to fund community initiatives, have allowed us to build housing for vulnerable families and provide professional services such as budgeting advice, counselling and advocacy.

Our Canterbury schools active participation helps us with projects that continue to supply food for our food banks. They also take part in learning about St Vincent de Paul and what it means to be immersed in the Society and develop a greater understanding for Social Justice, that heavily affects the people we support. Your donations of pre-loved clothing, household items, cash and food, enables us to help others.

Finally, our Volunteers are the heart of our operation. These people work in the shops, process donations, deliver and collect items and assess needs. They respond with food or advocacy. The combined welfare effort for the month of July totalled 787 cases for the Central Canterbury area.

We wish to thank all of you who help us in any way, it is so very much appreciated.

We all know the pressures in the economy – our wallets tell us that things are hard out there in our community. For us to continue with the volume of demand, please consider what you can do to help us – we need good quality furniture, cash donations, food and volunteers.

Please contact: Robyn Casey – General Manager Canterbury, 021 512 246 robyn@svdpchch.co.nz



John Doocey and Robyn Casey distributing blankets from St Vincent de Paul Society at a Catholic Social Services Soup Kitchen



Catholic Kāhui Ako —North Hub Cultural Festival

by Abraham Atherton, Principal, St Albans Catholic School

On Thursday 22 August, the Catholic Kāhui Ako—North Hub Cultural Festival was held at Marian College. The day was filled with excitement and pride as our North Hub Catholic students performed not once but twice, showcasing their incredible talents and dedication.

During the day, the students from St Joseph's Papanui, St Bede's College, St Joseph's Rangiora, Marian College, and St Albans Catholic School took to the stage in front of an impressive audience of 700

students. The energy was electric as the students performed with confidence and grace. The audience witnessed Kapa Haka, Filipino, and Pasifika cultural groups.

In the evening, the schools performed again for an equally large audience of approximately 700 people. The visiting Apifo'ou College from Nuku'alofa, Tonga treated the audience to a special performance. Our students shone brightly once more, proving their dedication and hard work.



Marian College Kapa Haka group

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the families who supported this event. Your encouragement and presence made the day even more special for our students. This festival was a true celebration of our culture and community.

South West Kāhui Ako Cultural Festival 2024

by Chrystie Coburn-Woods, Assistant Head of Science, Villa Maria College

The Southwest Kāhui Ako Cultural Festival was a vibrant celebration of cultural diversity, featuring performances from seven Catholic schools in our community. The event began with a remarkable opening by Our Lady of the Assumption (OLA) Hoon Hay, who performed Whai Hua Tātou, E Tu Kahikatea, and Toia Mai/ Tahu Potiki.

St Teresa's School Riccarton, followed with a high energy Samoan dance which energised the audience. Villa Maria College then took the stage with a dance titled "Hopelessly Devoted", which explored the themes of love and loss through varied choreography. Our Hip-hop trio also captivated the crowd with a performance that had everyone clapping along to the beat.

St Bernadette's School Hornby, impressed the audience with their cultural attire as they performed the Sasa and showcased their Kapa Haka and Filipino groups. St Peter's Beckenham, looked amazing in their cultural attire and performed three beautiful waiata: Tai Aroha, Ka Waiata and Hauika. Our Lady of Victories (OLV)

Sockburn, then graced the stage in their impressive cultural dress, delivering fabulous performances of Te Iwi e, E Te Pono and the Haka — Hawaikinui. The festival concluded with a lovely Samoan hymn and an impressive school haka by St Thomas of Canterbury College. The event closed with a heartfelt prayer, followed by a waiata sung by the entire southwest hub.

This was the second time that the seven Southwest Catholic schools have gathered for a cultural festival, with the St Thomas stage providing a spectacular setting for each performance. We cherish these opportunities to come together as one and celebrate our diverse cultures.



St Bernadette's cultural dance



Our Lady of the Assumption Haka



Our Lady of the Assumption waiata



Our Lady of Victories waiata



24-Hour Move it Challenge Raises Money and Awareness for Poverty in the Pacific

It began as a fundraiser, but ended with a closer school community as students from both Marian and St Bede's Colleges participated in the Caritas 24 Hour Move-It Challenge.

While this was the second year for Marian students doing the challenge, by embracing the focus for the year – Community – it seemed fitting to invite our brother school to join us in the challenge.

“We didn’t just want to host the same challenge again, but find a way to take its success to the next level,” Marian College Head Student Gaby McKey said: “Not only did we want to increase participation rates, but we also saw it as an opportunity for us to work more closely with our brother school. It was a way for students to connect with others who they may not have met before, and as a community, we can work towards a good cause.”

The Marian and Bede’s student leaders worked together to create promotional content, run meetings, and organise the activities which would take place over the 24 hours. “Caritas is a non-profit organisation that follows Catholic social teachings to make a difference in the lives of many, and so by taking on their 24-Hour Move-It Challenge we knew we would be offering our support in a way that is fun and interactive for students,” Gaby said: “This event was the perfect opportunity for students to take what they have learnt about being Catholic in the classroom into a practical environment, and by supporting Caritas we are allowing them to

continue doing good work in communities across the world.”

The students set themselves a goal of raising \$2500. During the 24 hours, students participated in traditional team sport, primary school games, dance, yoga and pilates among other activities. They opted for particular time slots throughout the 24 hours, with more than 60 students participating at any one time.

“One of my personal highlights was seeing how the students from both schools interacted with each other. Everyone was very respectful and kind to each other, and to see them all enjoying the event, which we had poured our hearts into, was most rewarding as it meant that our efforts in organising the event brought people closer together to raise money and awareness for poverty in the Pacific.”

In total, Marian College and St Bede’s College raised \$3000 each which was matched by the New Zealand Aid Programme to become \$12,000 donated to Caritas.

(Right) Marian College Young Vinnies hosted its annual morning tea for members of Age Concern recently. The event has been running for more than five years, allowing Marian College students to interact with and give back to their local community.



Embracing faith: Meet Marian’s new Head of Special Character Ella Malone

Marian College’s new Head of Special Character Ella Malone is determined to create a school environment where the Catholic Special Character can be celebrated by students and their families together. A devout Catholic, having been supported in her faith by her family and the St Peter Chanel Parish in the Waimakariri, Ella knows firsthand how important being able to celebrate faith at school is. “I was at a non-Catholic primary school which was challenging, but

because of my home life and my parish I was really grounded in my faith,” Ella said. She moved to Marian in Year 11.

The head students decided at the beginning of the year, that ‘Community’ would be the theme of the year and that has been a focus for ‘Special Character’ as well. “We’ve brought in fortnightly Masses in the chapel which the community is welcome to attend. We also have Rosary group there.”

Champagnat Marist: Continuing the Mission to Make Jesus Loved and Known

by Mathew Harris, Director of Religious Studies, Catholic Cathedral College



Catholic Cathedral College boasts a rich history, formed from the merger of Sacred Heart Girls College and Xavier College. The latter, a Champagnat Marist boys school, brought with it a distinctive spirit that, alongside the Mission Sisters' influence, continues to shape our kura.

The Marist mission itself is deeply rooted in New Zealand's Catholic history, stretching back to the founding of our diocese. Recently, our resident Marist Brothers embarked on a new chapter to the North Island. Yet, in the true Marist spirit, the mission does not end, but continues with a new generation.

Catholic Cathedral College held a gathering to honour the legacy of the

Marist Brothers. The kura came together to celebrate the mission inspired by the spirit of Marcellin Champagnat. As Brothers Os, Alan and Mark departed Christchurch, the school community took the opportunity to thank them for their dedication and support. This event marked a significant milestone as the school community embraced the responsibility to carry forward the Marist mission. The passing of the baton from the brothers to the school was a reminder of the ongoing commitment to the values and principles that define Champagnat Marist. Mr Daniel Dungey, the Champagnat Marist Partnership coordinator, was acknowledged for his contributions in supporting the school's mission.



INVEST IN THEIR FUTURE

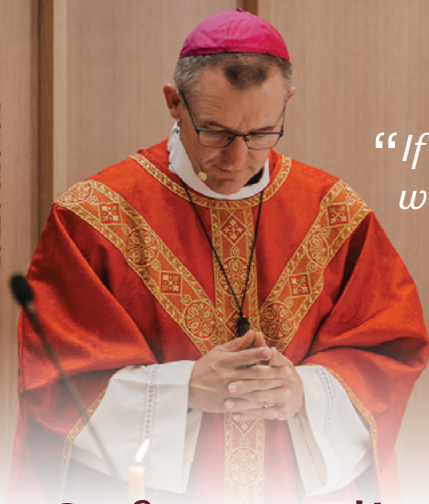
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*“If one member suffers,
we all suffer together with it”*

Bishop Michael Gielen



Safeguarding Status

The Diocese of Christchurch takes the safeguarding and protection of children and vulnerable persons seriously. Care for those who are our most vulnerable is part of the mission that Christ entrusts to His Church.

A “Culture of Safeguarding” ensures that preventative practices and actions are in place to protect everyone with a particular focus on child and vulnerable adult protection. It is a collective responsibility for all to wear a “lens of safeguarding”, and to raise a concern in the event of any harm.

Since 2017 all catholic entities in New Zealand have been implementing the Churches National Safeguarding Guidelines safeguarding.catholic.org.nz/documents-policies

The New Zealand Bishops Conference requires all bishops, priests and religious in ministry to:

- Comply with Integrity in Ministry – Principles for ministry in the Church and the highest standards of pastoral practice. safeguarding.catholic.org.nz/documents-policies
- Complete police vetting every three years.
- Complete the course Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand (SCCANZ) through Te Kupenga and the National Office for Professional Standards. tekupenga.ac.nz/catholic-theological-college-2/so-you-want-to-study/our-programmes/other/safeguardinganz
- Implement parish/entity Safeguarding Review recommendations as conducted with diocesan Safeguarding Officer.

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF CHRISTCHURCH

TE TAKIWĀ Ō TE PĪHOPA

Status of Safeguarding in 2024

- Over 2000 volunteers throughout the diocese, including priests and religious have already attended at least one safeguarding workshop. Upcoming workshop dates see website: cdocsafeguarding.nz/workshops
- Most volunteers have signed a Code of Conduct and a Volunteer Agreement.
- Volunteers in ministries that involve working with children or vulnerable adults are police vetted every three years.
- Clarity regarding raising concerns and complaints are publicly accessible in church locations and websites. cdoc.nz/contact-us/concerns-and-complaints
- 0800 posters for the National Office for Professional Standards (NOPS) who oversees the Churches safeguarding policies and practices and respond to complaints of abuse within the church are on public display in church locations and websites.
- Priests, religious and some lay leaders have completed further in-depth safeguarding training provided by Te Kupenga - The Catholic Institute. SCCANZ Course (Safeguarding in the Catholic Church Aotearoa New Zealand).

Safeguarding, at its core, has the principle that each one of us has a responsibility to act. That together, we demonstrate care and that we each choose to see ourselves as having an active part to play. In our Catholic communities safeguarding is an important and precious outworking of God's love for the vulnerable and a healthy expression of our love for our neighbour. The Church has Zero tolerance for abuse.



National Office for Professional Standards

The Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand

“Working Together for a Safe Church”

For concerns or complaints involving someone
within the Catholic Church call:

0800 114 622

Or report directly to the New Zealand Police
or Oranga Tamariki.

Phone: 03 365 1993 or 0800 114 622
Email: prof.standards@nzcbc.org.nz
www.safeguarding.catholic.org.nz



IMPORTANT CONTACT DETAILS:

Diocesan Safeguarding Contact:
Clodagh Ward, 022 0124142, cward@cdoc.nz

Report a Safeguarding concern of harm
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Christchurch Diocese Offers a Memorial Mass for Fr Benito Velasco

by Joyce Roa, Philippines Chaplaincy

The Christchurch Diocese farewelled Fr Benito Velasco on 31 July, with a memorial Mass, celebrated by Bishop Michael Gielen. More than 20 priests joined him at the altar. St Mary's Pro-Cathedral was at full capacity with people from various parishes and organisations served by Fr Benito.

Prior to Mass, a short tribute was offered. Serge Ruiz, a volunteer of the Philippines Chaplaincy, shared how Fr Benito strengthened his faith through various personal conversations which helped him gain clarity in his life, his spiritual journey and personal mission.

“My life is not my own. I will go where the Lord takes me and that makes me happy”

Ronjay Reforial was a regular altar server during Fr Benito's Masses. She is daughter of Lolong and Jay Reforial, who supported Fr Benito in his ministry. She shared that during a South Island trip, Fr Benito was mistaken as her lolo (grandfather) and he became unofficially her grandfather. When she asked him one time why he never seems to rest, he said “My life is not my own. I will go where the Lord takes me and that makes me happy.” That thought really inspired her. She added that she hoped we can all

recognise the incredible strength needed to avoid being drowned by sorrow when faced with adversity. This is a strength Fr Benito showed.

In his homily, Bishop Gielen recalled that at their first respectful meeting, Fr Benito asked him when he was ordained and when he was born. When he learned that Fr Benito was ordained just one week ahead of him and born but one year before him, the bishop reminded him often that he was kuya, his (older brother).

Bishop Gielen added that each priest is asked during their ordination: “Do you

resolve to be united more closely to Christ, the high priest, who offered himself to the Father as a pure sacrifice and to consecrate yourself for the salvation of all?” He said that Fr Benito said “I do” and didn't stop saying I do for the next 27 years. The bishop concluded by saying that Fr Benito knew his Redeemer lives Arlene Wilkins is chairman of the Philippines Chaplaincy Christchurch. At the conclusion of the Mass, she thanked everyone who contributed to its beauty. She thanked Fr Benito for his invaluable

and indelible service to the various Filipino and religious groups in Christchurch.

Fr Benito served in the Christchurch Diocese from 2014 until his retirement in 2022, due to ill health. He returned to the Philippines at the end of 2023 and passed away on 28 July. May he rest in peace.



Christchurch Chaplaincy volunteers pose in front of Fr Benito Velasco's portrait at the narthex: From left to right, Sheila and Ariel Abalos; Arlene Wilkins; Jay Reforial; and Edward and Lui Palad

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Reflections on the Legacy of Priesthood

A Tribute to Fr Jim Nicholas

by Fr Tien Cao, Vocations Director, Christchurch Diocese

As a young priest attending the funeral of an older brother priest, Fr Jim Nicholas, I was deeply attentive to almost every word that of the homily preached by Fr Kevin Burns. Why? Because I want to make my ministry meaningful to the people I serve. I want to listen, learn and improve my ways of serving the Lord and His people. Every time I attend a requiem Mass for a brother priest, I seek to learn from their lives and legacies in priestly life. Though each of us is called by God in a unique and unrepeatable way, in the end, we all serve the Lord.

“Self-effacing by nature, sharp in intellect and with a cheerful and cooperative personality”

These words touched me when I heard Fr Burns preaching and I thought to myself, “Wow, I want to be like that priest, for the Lord.” Most wonderfully, I can do it because I am already a priest. I can carry on these wonderful legacies and in doing so, I am proud to be a member of the clergy of this diocese. How I wish every young man who might be called by the Lord to be a priest, could hear these words of Fr Burns as he spoke about his brother priest. I wish to recall some of his homilies in this article.

“Throughout these past 60 years, Fr Jim entered every parish he was appointed to by his bishop with a joyful, ever-fresh commitment to nourish and lead his people in their pursuit of holiness.

His priesthood was modeled on Christ the Good Shepherd, who came to love, protect and lead His flock. Shepherds were plentiful in Jesus’ time. Sheep were plentiful too! They were independent

animals, prone to wander off and get lost. Sheep were in need of shepherds.

The motif of the shepherd is found throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. One such example we are all familiar with is the shepherd boy, David, who cared for his father’s sheep. He protected them in a hostile environment, sought nourishment for them and led them to fresh water with love, tenderness and patience.

Jesus claims, ‘I am the Good Shepherd; I know my sheep, and they know me.’ With Jesus, the Good Shepherd, as his

model, Jim exercised his priestly vocation with commitment throughout his adult life. Self-effacing by nature, sharp in intellect and with a cheerful and cooperative personality, Fr Jim entered each parish proclaiming the Good News, comforting the sorrowful, celebrating the Sacraments, building up the Church and nourishing the living Body of Christ.

John Chrysostom, a saint and theologian of the fourth century, wrote a thesis on the importance of the pastor in the life of the Church. His thesis was possibly the earliest formal direction for pastors in the Church and is still relevant today. John Chrysostom wrote: ‘Pastors, more than anyone else, need clear and unshakable wisdom; pastors need patience that disarms pride, and they need exceptional prudence in dealing with souls.’ These ideals were not distant in the life of Fr Jim. Those of us who knew Jim were touched by his directness, humility and prayerfulness. His prayerfulness was developed in his early

seminary days under the guidance of the Jesuit Fathers at Holy Name Seminary here in Christchurch.

During his studies at Holy Cross College, Mosgiel, Jim was sent by Bishop Joyce to Rome for further studies. Fr Pat Crawford, who has shared many thoughts with me in preparation for this homily, recalls how Jim had a strong preference for the pastoral life over the academic one. Consequently, he chose to return to our Diocese of Christchurch following his ordination to the priesthood in Rome.

Jim’s respect for creation and love of nature never waned; he was born and reared in the heart of God’s creation on the West Coast of New Zealand. Jim knew his New Zealand fauna and flora and he could easily name and identify them amongst the rocks, tussocks and fertile bush.

This is our Jim!

Pope Francis wrote in *Laudato Si*, “A sense of deep communion with the whole of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness and compassion and concern for our fellow human beings. We give thanks that Jim the priest upheld and preached these ideals.”

While the world was and still is passing by, the testimonies of a good life remain not only in the hearts of God’s chosen people but, most importantly, in the heart of God Himself. I am reminded of a quotation from St John Vianney, found on the wall of the chapel of Holy Cross, our national Seminary:

“The priest will not understand the greatness of his office till he is in Heaven. If he understood it on earth, he would die, not of fear, but of love.”

Father James Patrick (Jim) Nicholas died peacefully on 10 August 2024 at Nazareth house, aged 90 years. Fr Jim grew up in Hohonu, Teremakau Settlement before starting his studies at the Holy Name Minor Seminary, Riccarton at the age of 12 years, followed by Holy Cross College, Mosgiel and Propaganda Fide College, Rome. He was ordained in Rome on 23 November 1958, arriving in the Christchurch Diocese in 1961. Fr Jim was a well-loved priest, serving in many of the parishes around the diocese and on the Boards of many of the schools before retiring in 2013. His Requiem Mass was celebrated on 14 August in St Mary’s Pro-cathedral.



Father Anton Rex McLean, RIP

by John Perriam

The following is taken from a tribute given by John Perriam, long-time friend of Fr Anton McLean, for whom a Memorial Mass was offered in St Mary's Pro-Cathedral on 10 June 2024, before his Requiem Mass in Oamaru the following day.

“Deeply compassionate, extraordinarily kind, never judgmental, deeply spiritual”

“In 1967, I had been Anton’s friend for seven years. I have now been his friend for 62 years.

Anton was goodness personified. When pressed for help or assistance in any way, the word NO was not in his vocabulary. Anton was the people’s priest and so much will we miss him.

He had absolutely no ambition to rise in rank or prestige. He was interested only in a life of service. To those of us who knew him, he was truly a prophet in our midst.

Deeply compassionate, extraordinarily kind, never judgmental, deeply spiritual. He was indeed a true disciple of Jesus, whom he called his friend and his God.

I remember well one day a long time ago, when he asked me “John, how do you pray?” I answered him and then asked him how he prayed. He answered in this manner: “I think I don’t pray in any conventional way. I talk to Jesus, but I don’t think I use words. I sense his presence around me and through me all my waking hours. This presence is sometimes quite intense, sometimes less intense, but it is always there, like a

shadow. I relate with Jesus as my friend. I am never alone.”

I had never heard anyone talk this way before. It was then I realised that I was in the presence of spiritual greatness.

This realisation was strengthened in me, some five days before he left us, when he said to me, “John, the end is now very near. I sense Jesus is closer than ever before. His presence is overwhelming. I suppose some would say I should say some prayers, but I see no need for that. That’s not what it is about. I will just continue to live and love the life that he has given me, until it is finished. I am not afraid of God, I have never been. He is my friend. I look forward with anticipation to what is to come. My sense is that it will be truly astonishing.”

That is a uniquely moving and deeply personal insight into the man we farewell today. I think his humility and his lived experience of the human condition, made him so loved by so many. His legacy will live on long after this day is done. There remains for us now to say not goodbye but simply “Au Revoir”, until we meet again. Go well, go well my friend. We will surely miss you.”



Br William (Bill) Dowling CFC, RIP

by Br Joe Lauren CFC

Br Bill Dowling was a very well known Christian Brother in Christchurch Catholic education, Canterbury school cricket and rugby. He died peacefully of cancer on 9 July, the day after watching the requiem of one of his blood brothers online.

Br Bill spent much of his teaching life at St Thomas of Canterbury College in Sockburn. He also spent a significant time at St Peter’s in Auckland and in Arusha in Tanzania. He had been the Cluster Leader of the Christian Brothers in New Zealand for the past seven years.

Br Bill was one of those incredible people who never seemed to forget your name, what your parents did or what you hoped to be, where you lived and who your siblings were. He carried those skills with him, to parallel tasks in different countries, notably Tanzania and Sierra Leone. His wide smile and simple enjoyment of life, helped him make and keep friends across decades and generations.

Two very large gatherings were held at St Thomas of Canterbury College for Br Bill. Past pupils, parents and friends joined with family and Brothers in farewell someone who really knew them and would always be pleased to hear about them. The family and Christian Brothers are deeply appreciative of the staff and students of St Thomas of Canterbury College, for their logistical help, hospitality, music and haka.

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Investing in the good of our Catholic community

by Liza Sparrow, CDF Marketing & Business Development Manager

The Catholic Development Fund (CDF) has produced its 2024 Summary Annual Report, which showcases a year of solid financial achievements and reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the Diocese of Christchurch. The report highlights the CDF's vital role in strengthening the diocese's spiritual, educational, and communal vitality.

Among the highlights in this year's report are a \$500,000 distribution to Bishop Michael Gielen and \$1.3 million in interest payments to investors during the 2023-24 financial year. These figures underscore the CDF's financial stability and dedication to fostering the growth and sustainability of diocesan initiatives.

Graeme Wilson, Chair of the CDF, expressed his optimism about the fund's ongoing mission: "With our strong capital base and investment policies, we are confident that the CDF will continue to support the diocese going forward. As change continues within our diocese, we expect both demands and opportunities for the CDF



Catholic Youth Ministry's Firepower Youth Night

to increase. We will provide loans to enable our diocese to evolve, and we have the financial capacity to do so. The surpluses we achieve also provide ongoing benefits to the diocese."

Janice Rennell, Manager of Finance and Support Services, elaborated on the board's vision, adding, "We are deeply committed to upholding the legacy of service and dedication to the diocese. The CDF prioritises the rights and interests of its investors, offering an investment portfolio grounded in Catholic teaching while carefully evaluating loan requests for capital projects across New Zealand."

As the CDF looks ahead to 2025, it remains dedicated to supporting the Diocese of Christchurch, ensuring it thrives and fulfills its spiritual and communal responsibilities.

For more information on the CDF's financial performance and its impact on the community, please visit the CDF website to view the full Summary Annual Report and Financial Statements.



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St Joseph's Year 8 Caterers at Golden Catholics, Ashburton



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FAITH AND NETWORKS

"We are deeply committed to upholding the legacy of service and dedication to the diocese. The CDF prioritises the rights and interests of its investors, offering an investment portfolio grounded in Catholic teaching while carefully evaluating loan requests for capital projects across New Zealand."

Janice Rennell, Manager of Finance and Support Services

The financial distribution provided annually by the CDF touches essential services, including:

- **Social Services:** Counseling, courses, and educational diagnostics.
- **Youth Ministry:** Events, camps, and youth worker training.
- **Chaplaincy Services:** Pastoral care in hospitals, prisons, and universities.
- **Education Office:** For property development due to roll-growth.
- **National Seminary:** Education and formation of our diocesan priests.



CDF Summary Annual Report and Financial Statements

www.cdf.org.nz/about-cdf/annual-reports

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*Trustees: Terry Foote Deputy Chair, Graeme Wilson Chair, Michael Toomey, Simon Roughan (outgoing), Dina Kubala, Kintilla du Boucher-Ryan (absent).
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**FY24
IMPACT**

\$500k
distribution
to the Bishop of Christchurch

\$1.3m
interest paid
to investors

\$1.0m
loans
property development

\$32.7m
depositor funds
under management
as at 31/3/24



74 young people with Bishop Gielen, Mons Loughnan and Fr Castillo. Photo credit: Lynne Berry



The four young adults with Bishop Gielen and Fr Castillo

Celebrating the Gift of the Holy Spirit

by Fr Alister Castillo, Assistant Priest, the parish of Christ the Redeemer, Christchurch North

On 23 June, the parish of Christ the Redeemer celebrated a momentous occasion as 74 young people and four adults received the Sacrament of Confirmation. Our Lady of Victories (OLV) in Sockburn hosted the candidates, as well as their families and friends, as neither of the current church options in the North were large enough for the assembled group. Bishop Michael Gielen was joined at the altar by Msgr Loughnan and Fr Alister Castillo.

In his homily, Bishop Gielen inspired those

receiving the Sacrament to draw on the life of St Francis of Assisi, challenging them to embrace their faith boldly, even when it means going against the grain of societal expectations. He noted that, like St Francis, each of us is called to listen to God's voice and follow His path, no matter where it leads.

For the young people, the Confirmation preparation programme included a Confirmation camp at Blue Skies in Kaiapoi, where the candidates deepened their understanding of the faith. A special

sponsor night highlighted the importance of mentoring and supporting these young people in their spiritual journey. Fr Castillo led the four adults in their own preparation, exploring the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit and His effects in our lives.

As a parish community, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to these newly confirmed members of the Church. We will continue to hold them in our prayers, asking the Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen them as they embark on the next chapter in their life of faith.

Selwyn Parish

Over the past month, the Parish has welcomed 17 people into the Catholic Church. Nate Farrell and Jacob Lange-Hope were received into the Catholic Church by Fr Brian Fennessy and in the presence of Bishop Mykola Bychok, who was visiting NZ. Bishop Mykola is the Australasian Ukrainian Rite Bishop. Bishop Mykola attended the mass in appreciation of Jacob's service with the NZ Army training Ukrainian soldiers in the UK. Jacob is due to return to the UK with the next contingent of NZ soldiers to train a new intake of Ukrainian soldiers.



(Above) First Communion - 2024 Lincoln Church; (From top left) OCIA: Bevan Killick (Sponsor), Fr Brian, Jacob de Lange-Hope, Bishop Mykola Bychok, Nathaniel Farrell; Jenna & Paul Greenwood were welcomed into the Catholic Church at Leeston on 14 July; First Communion - 2024 Darfield Church.

Inform

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