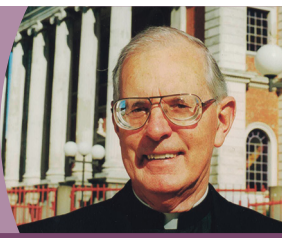


CARDINAL
THOMAS
WILLIAMS



REST IN PEACE

PAGES 10 AND 11

FIRST COMMUNION



CATHOLIC PARISH OF WAIRARAPA

PAGE 13

TRANSFORMING
LIVES
THROUGH
EDUCATION



MISSION IN PNG

PAGE 20

WelCom

FEBRUARY 2024
ISSUE 420

FREE

NauMai

A newspaper for the Wellington and Palmerston North Catholic Dioceses

www.welcom.org.nz

WINNER OF THE 2023 AUSTRALASIAN CATHOLIC PRESS ASSOCIATION (ACPA) AWARD FOR BEST LAYOUT AND DESIGN FOR A PRINTED PUBLICATION

“Behold I make all things new” – Rev 21:5



Young Catholic adults from all over the country attended the 31st Hearts Aflame Summer School at Ngā Tawa Diocesan School, Marton, 29 December–7 January. They came for 10 days of prayer, formation, learning and sharing the joyful experience of a community of faith. This year’s theme was ‘Behold I make all things new’ – Rev 21:5.

Pictured with a group at the summer school is its chaplain and regular attendee, Palmerston North’s Bishop John Adams.

Hearts Aflame changed my life, says Bishop John. ‘It was at my first Hearts Aflame that my vocation first dawned on me. Until then I had always thought the Church was behind the times and out of date. But it was there that I realised it was me who was out of date. I really woke up with an intellectual conversion and I’ve gone to Hearts Aflame every year since, for the last 21 years.’

Bishop John was appointed its chaplain 15 years ago. ‘I’m thrilled Hearts Aflame is in my diocese and I can now be more present and help with some of the organising each year,’ he said.

The school is run by lay volunteers from around New Zealand who are passionate about Hearts Aflame mission. The school will take place again in January next year.

Visit heartsaflame.org.nz.

Photo: Supplied

Synodal process powerful tool for Religious Life

Michael Fitzsimons

The synodal process offers religious orders a powerful tool to be less hierarchical and more transparent in the way they operate, says Sr Margaret Anne Mills, Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Compassion.

Last November, Sr Margaret Anne attended meetings for Superior Generals of religious congregations which focused on ‘Synodality: A Renewed Call to the Prophecy of Hope’. The meetings were held in Sacrofano, 40 minutes out of Rome, and were organised by the executive councils of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG women) and the Union of Superiors General (USG men).

The UISG delegates met for two days receiving reports of the UISG’s projects (www.uisg.org). This was followed by a combined gathering of over 250 Superiors General, evenly distributed between male and female religious leaders from around the world.

The focus of the gatherings was on the ability of religious communities to promote synodality as a way of life and on the call for religious to be prophetic bearers of hope in today’s world.

Sr Margaret Anne said that, through synodality and the greater involvement of lay people in decision making, the Church is being called to be more transparent and accountable in the way it operates.

‘Historically very hierarchical structures have led to the abuse of vulnerable people, including women religious who didn’t have a voice and had no idea where to go,’ she said.

‘But that is changing. So accountability, transparency, good organisational structures that encourage greater participation, that’s a big thing for UISG, and USG.’

Sr Margaret Anne said that religious life would always be there in some form or another because it’s been going for so many years. But change is a constant.

Sr Margaret Anne was impressed with the synodal process of discernment, which ensured the voices of all participants were heard at the gatherings.

‘The process begins with silence to pray and focus. Then each member shares on an issue without discussion. The next round is not what do I think, but what did I hear? What’s the Spirit saying? The third round involves coming to a conclusion as a group. What I



Sr Margaret Anne Mills dolc meets Pope Francis and has a brief chat about Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert.

Photo: Supplied

found really interesting myself was, I go to the table with an idea, and I come away with a new

» Continued on p 5

From the editor

Annette Scullion

Tēnā koutou
Greetings to everyone.

In this first edition of WelCom for 2024 we wish all our readers a very Happy New Year.

After the challenges for many brought about by Cyclone Gabrielle a year ago, especially in Hawke's Bay and Wairoa regions, as well as the cost of living impacting so many, 2023 was a tough year for a lot of people. We hope that 2024 is a more settled and positive year for everyone.

It is with some sadness that we feature the passing of Emeritus Archbishop of Wellington, Cardinal Tom Williams, who died, aged 93, on 22 December 2023. Cardinal Tom was a much-loved member of the Catholic priesthood and renowned for his service and community work. (See pp 10 and 11).

On Tuesday 6 February, we celebrate Waitangi Day across New Zealand. Marking this special day to reflect on the meaning of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the significance it has for us as a country, will be the customary Waitangi Day Mass for the archdiocese in Wellington at St Mary of the Angels Church at 9am. Masses will also be celebrated in Palmerston North at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit at 9am and at Our Lady of Lourdes

Church at 10am. (See p 3).

February also sees the start of the Season of Lent, with Ash Wednesday on 14 February. Archbishop Paul Martin SM provides a reflection in his column on this page about Lent and the spiritual journey we are called to observe in preparation to celebrate the death and resurrection of Our Lord.

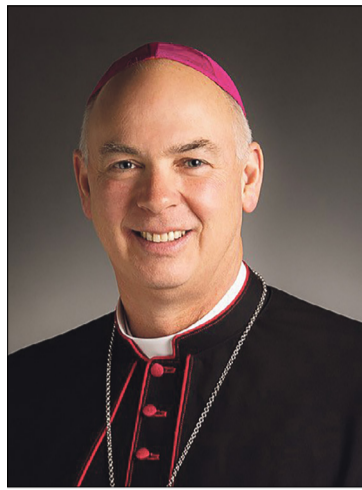
As WelCom begins the new year we would like to take the opportunity to invite you our readers to let us know about important developments and news happening in your parishes and schools so that we report on and share more of your stories with our many readers.

Please send in information, photos and details about initiatives and activities going on in your communities. Each month, our contact details are in the information box at the bottom left corner of this page.

We rely on you to let us know about what is happening in your area and we look forward to hearing from you throughout the year ahead.

Ngā mihi

Lent: preparing to celebrate the death and resurrection of Our Lord



Archbishop Paul Martin SM
Archbishop of Wellington

Tēnā koutou katoa

Greetings to you as we begin a New Year. I hope that the holiday period has been an enjoyable one for you all and you have had some time for rest and relaxation. For those of you who have worked over the holidays so that others may rest, thank you.

A number of parishes in our

two dioceses are changing their priests this year. It is never easy for us when there is change like this. I hope you will welcome your new priests and help them as they settle into the new faith communities to which they have been appointed.

In two weeks, we begin the season of Lent. It occurs relatively early this year, with Ash Wednesday on 14 February. It usually takes us a while to settle into the year and so an early Lent can catch us out. Yet this is an important time for us all in terms of preparation to celebrate the death and resurrection of Our Lord. This reality lies at the heart of our Christian lives, the mystery of God's generosity in sending his Son and then his dying and rising so that we might have eternal life.

The Church calls us to enter into a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving during Lent. All three are key parts of the spiritual journey, for they involve communication with God, denial of ourselves in material things, and care for our brothers and sisters. We need all three of these if we are to be truly ready for Easter.

I want to encourage you to make

the most of Lent this year. Set aside a time each day for some personal prayer. Read the scriptures for Mass each day or find a resource that provides some reflection for you. If your parish is having a time of Adoration then commit to attending it, make it a priority. In terms of fasting give up something that really costs you, which will be a challenge. For almsgiving be generous – the Caritas appeal is a key way that we as Catholics support financially those in need, it is our agency and they rely on our support. You might also decide to do something for others on a regular basis during this time of Lent. Don't settle for just a little thing, do something significant.

I know from my own experience that when I have really challenged myself during Lent in these areas the fruits have been significant, both in terms of celebrating Easter but also in my life with God and with others. I hope that you too will discover this for yourself again as we embrace this upcoming Lenten season.

Blessings to you in Christ.

Caritas Lent Appeal 2024

Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand's annual Bishops' Lent Appeal, now underway for this year, shares several stories of transformation.

Caritas' mission across the globe builds on the strength of local partners to drive community development. For example, in Papua New Guinea, longstanding partner Lujan Home for Girls, transforms the lives of young vulnerable women.

Located in Vanimo, PNG, the home is a compassionate refuge run by the Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará (ssvm) Sisters, where three dedicated nuns support and care for 21 young women and girls aged from two to 30.

The home offers a safe haven

for girls who have faced tough challenges, including forced marriages, abuse, impoverished families, limited access to education, and severe risk of harm from suffering such diseases like TB and malnutrition, to facing threats due to false accusations of sorcery.

Lujan Home for Girls warmly embraces and protects vulnerable women and girls in a loving and joyful family environment. In addition to emotional support and physical safety, essential life skills are attained for continued success when they leave the home.

Strong partnerships like this are the foundation of Caritas' mission. This partnership, which began in 2017, gives hope and empowers the

women and girls them to realise their full potential and lead lives of dignity and hope.

A special gift to the Bishops' Lent Appeal 2024 will help ensure transformational work like this can continue. Please visit Caritas.org.nz/Lent to learn more or donate.

Special Lent reflection booklets are available on Caritas' website – caritas.org.nz/lent-resources. These resources, for use in small groups or individually, are to help guide prayer and reflection on your Lenten journey.

Ash Wednesday marks the first day of the Season of Lent, which falls this year on 14 February; with Palm Sunday 24 March, Good Friday 29 March, and Easter Sunday 31 March.

WelCom www.welcom.org.nz

Published by The Archdiocese of Wellington and the Diocese of Palmerston North.
Editor: Annette Scullion. Ph: (04) 496-1712. welcom@wn.catholic.org.nz
Advertising: Ph: 0274 800 209. welcomadvertisements@gmail.com
Catholic Centre, PO Box 1937, Wellington 6140
February 2024 WelCom was published on 29 January 2024.

Sending articles to WelCom

In our mission to communicate about news and events in the Wellington and Palmerston North dioceses, WelCom publishes information, stories and photos received from readers.

Contributed articles should be no longer than 300 words unless by arrangement with the editor. Please send as a MS Word document attached to an email or pasted into an email message including your name, address and phone number. Articles may be edited for length or clarity at the editor's discretion.

Photos should be in original format (unedited, uncropped), large file size of at least one megabyte (MB) and attached to your email as separate photo files – JPEG, TIFF, GIF or bitmap (BMP). Please include names for a caption.

Email to: welcom@wn.catholic.org.nz

Deadline for March 2024 issue: Monday, 12 February 2024

WelCom is published monthly and is available free at parishes and schools in the two dioceses.

Member of Australasian Catholic Press Association (ACPA).

As part of the global Catholic Church, WelCom sources a range of news, articles and opinions from local, national and international sources. Views and opinions published are those of the author and don't necessarily reflect the policy or position of the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Bishops' Lent Appeal 2024
The Time is Now!
Ko Tēnei tonu te Wā!

The time is now to empower vulnerable families to thrive. Donate online at www.caritas.org.nz or call 0800 22 10 22

Caritas
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

The Catholic Agency for Justice, Peace & Development

I.C.MARK LTD

FUNERAL DIRECTORS & STONE MASONS

0800 426275 ~ (06) 368-8108

545 - 547 Queen Street East, Levin www.icmark.co.nz

Funeral Directors REGISTERED FOR THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Catholic Bishop Michael Gielen and Anglican Bishop Ross Bay in Rome and Canterbury for international dialogue

Bishop of Christchurch Michael Gielen says it is a great privilege to be representing New Zealand's Catholic bishops at a major Anglican-Roman Catholic gathering underway in Rome and then moving to Canterbury, UK.

Bishop Gielen, along with the Anglican Bishop of Auckland, Ross Bay, were representing New Zealand at the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM) conference.

The week-long summit, between 22 and 29 January, for ecumenical discussion and pilgrimage in Rome and Canterbury took place during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

The IARCCUM gathering is called Growing Together. More than 50 bishops, in pairs of Catholics and Anglicans representing 27 regions of the world, took part in the first such event since 2016. IARCCUM aims to foster closer co-operation between the Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions and to put into practice progress made in theological conversations.

Visiting holy sites, the bishops have been praying together, reflecting and learning from one another. There is an aspiration to discuss ways of growing together in joint witness and mission in the world.

Bishop Gielen said he has been inspired by the rich history of

IARCCUM during the gathering.

'It has been a deep privilege to join with fellow bishops of our respective churches from around the world, hearing their stories and, in many cases, their profound challenges, while continuing to celebrate the Good News of Jesus Christ we share,' Bishop Gielen said.

Bishop Bay attended the last IARCCUM summit in 2016. He said walking alongside Bishop Gielen, with whom he serves as a co-chair of the local New Zealand Anglican-Catholic dialogue, has opened up opportunities.

'As a result of being together here I hope that we will grow in our commitment to express our unity in more tangible ways through our common mission,' said Bishop Bay.

Among the highlights of the gathering was a liturgy for the participating bishops with Pope Francis and with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby.

On 25 January, at the tomb of St Paul in Rome, Pope Francis and Archbishop Welby commissioned the bishops 'in pairs, to be witnesses to Christian unity,' before the bishops moved to Canterbury until 29 January to discuss the future work of IARCCUM.

Source: NZCBC



Bishop Michael Gielen and Bishop Ross Bay at the Vatican for IARCCUM.

Photo: Supplied

NZ bishops seek to limit abortion by supporting young families

New Zealand's Catholic bishops say a rise in abortion numbers since a 2020 law change is a tragedy and they want the new coalition Government to promote policies that reduce stresses that can lead to mothers opting for abortion.

In a statement issued 18 December 2023, Bishop of Auckland Stephen Lowe, President of the NZ Catholic Bishops Conference, says the bishops will continue to advocate for the legal right to life of all unborn children who have no voice themselves.

'We know we are living in a time of increased financial constraints and that this only adds to the stress on families. We urge the new Government to keep the wellbeing of young parents and families to the fore in their policies, and we urge all Catholics to ensure that

our faith communities are places of non-judgemental, welcoming and generous love, compassion and care.'

The number of abortions peaked at 18,511 in 2003 before falling steadily to 12,823 in 2016, when an initially slow rise began, up 434 over five years to 13,257 in 2021. Then followed a big one-year jump of 907 or seven per cent to 14,164 in 2022. The number of abortions for each 1000 known pregnancies has risen to 193 from a low of 177 in 2016.

Abortion became simpler to get after members of Parliament passed the Abortion Legislation Act in 2020.

Bishop Lowe says every new human life is a gift from God and has an unconditional dignity that gives them an absolute right to life.

'As highlighted in *Te Kahu o te Ora*, we all need to back up our teaching on life with action. We need

to remember that our obligations and responsibilities extend to creating an environment within families and society where pregnant mothers and their partners are supported and children are made welcome. In cases where continuing a pregnancy poses challenges for those most directly involved, it is vitally important people do not see abortion as the only or most desirable possibility.

'We will continue to advocate for the legal right to life of all unborn children who have no voice themselves. It is up to all of us to lobby to make our country a safer place for every unborn child, and that must flow through to the care and support we offer to families after birth,' says Bishop Lowe.

'Abortion is abusive, causing long-term harm to the mother,

which is almost never addressed. It also causes damage to the father of the child, something also often not addressed, and, of course, it ends the life of a human being.'

The statement is on the bishops' website at: catholic.org.nz/news/media-releases/abortion23/

The statement refers to (and links to) the bishops' recent new teaching document *Te Kahu o te Ora: A Consistent Ethic of Life*. The bishops sent all 123 MPs a copy of *Te Kahu o te Ora* in December.

The statement also links to the Ministry of Health's Abortion

Services Aotearoa New Zealand 2023 Annual Report, in which the Director-General of Health appears proud of how they have increased the number of abortions, crediting the doubling of the 'abortion workforce', more facilities providing abortion services, increased accessibility through midwifery abortion services and new phone and online services for 'early medical abortion', in which women can collect an abortion pill from a pharmacy to take at home.

Source: NZCBC

Waitangi Day Masses in Wellington and Palmerston North

The customary Waitangi Day Mass in Wellington will be celebrated by Archbishop Paul Martin on Tuesday 6 February, 9am, at St Mary of the Angels Church, with the combined choirs of St Mary of

the Angels and Te Ngākau Tapu Parish for Māori in Porirua. There will be a blessing of the National Shrine following the installation of Taonga gifted to Hata Maria from Ta Mark Solomon.

In Palmerston North, Mass will be celebrated at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit at 9am. There will also be a Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes Church at 10am.

All are welcome to the Masses.



St Patrick's College Wellington

New Zealand's oldest Catholic boys' college

Warmest congratulations to St Patrick's College 2024 Manu Taupua Matua (Head Student), Aaron Moe, and his co-Manu Taupua Deputies - MJ des Tombe, Ben Stephen, and Samson Te'o, and House Captains: Chanel - Jazaius Kalolo; Kennedy - Marco Scoble; Redwood - Dante Ford-Tuveve; and Watters - Harvey Anderson.

St Patrick's College warmly welcomes all new students to our College especially the 2024 Year 9 student group.

Sectare Fidem – Hold firm to the Faith



PIONEERING FAMILY WINEGROWERS SINCE 1973
NELSON • NEW ZEALAND • SEIFRIED.CO.NZ



Archbishop Novatus Rugambwa

The Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Novatus Rugambwa, who suffered a severe stroke in October last year, has been recovering in hospital. Monsignor Giosuè Busti, the Deputy Head of Mission at the Apostolic Nunciature, has advised: 'His Excellency is still at Kenepuru Hospital and his recovery is going well.' Please continue to pray for Archbishop Novatus.

2024 clergy moves announced

Archbishop Paul Martin sm and Bishop John Adams announced in December the following clergy shifts and appointments for the Archdiocese of Wellington and the Diocese of Palmerston North for 2024.

Diocese of Palmerston North

Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Palmerston North	Fr Vui Hoang, assistant priest
The Catholic Parish of New Plymouth	Fr Trung Nguyen, assistant priest
Immaculate Conception, Stratford	Fr Nathaniel Brazil, parish priest
Returning to Ōtaki, Archdiocese of Wellington	Fr Alan Roberts
The Catholic Parish of Hastings	Fr Marcus Francis, parish priest Fr Vijay Dungdung, assistant priest

Archdiocese of Wellington

Sacred Heart Cathedral Parish	Fr Patrick Bridgman, assistant priest Debbie Matheson, lay pastoral leader Fr Viator Muyuni – Diocese of Bukoba, Tanzania, studies, In residence at Viard House
Catholic Parish of Otari-Karori-Wilton	Fr Joy Thottankara, parish priest Long Tran, pre-seminarian in residence
Catholic Parish of Wellington South	Fr Ravi Kumar Voliganti, assistant priest Dyester Abo-Abo, pre-seminarian in residence
St Francis of Assisi Ohariu Parish	Msgr Gerard Burns, parish priest Fr Alfred Tong, assistant priest John Quang, pre-seminarian in residence
Te Pariha o Te Ngākau Tapu, Porirua	Msgr Gerard Burns, administrator Fr Alfred Tong, assistant priest
Holy Family Parish, Porirua East	Fr Isaac Songa mf, parish priest Fr Nicholas Phone Myint mf, assistant priest
Te Awakairangi Parish – Society of Divine Word (svd) assumes responsibility for the parish	Fr Raja Kommareddy svd, parish priest Fr Uili Uvea svd, assistant priest
Te Wairua Tapu Parish, Lower Hutt	Fr Akuila Taliauli svd, assistant priest
St Mary's Parish, Ōtaki	Fr Alan Roberts, parish priest
St Joseph's Parish, Levin	Fr Bruce England, parish priest
Catholic Parish of Wairarapa	Fr Dennis Nacorda, parish priest Matthew White, assistant deacon
Te Whetu O Te Moana – Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish, Marlborough – Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (msc) assume pastoral responsibility for the parish	Fr Simone Volavola msc, parish priest Fr Tavita Lemusu msc, assistant priest
Holy Family Parish, Nelson-Stoke	Fr Noel Corcino, cjm, assistant priest (Fr Marlon Tebelin returns home September 2024)
Our Lady of the Bays Catholic Parish, Richmond, Motueka, Takaka	Fr Michael Bellizzi, parish priest Fr Jaya-Praveen Yenubari, assistant priest Seminarist Emilio Capin, pastoral year

Other changes

- Fr Peter Roe sm – concludes contract as administrator of St Francis of Assisi Ohariu Parish.
- Fr Ron Bennett – retires as parish priest of Otari-Wilton and becomes senior-priest-in-residence at Holy Cross Seminary, Auckland.
- Fr Alliston Fernandes (Archdiocese of Malta) – returns to Malta from 1 March 2024.
- Fr David Orange – in retirement.
- Fr Michael McCabe – in retirement.
- Fr Seph Pijfers – appointment pending.
- Fr Cirilo Barlis – leave of absence for 2024, returning to the Philippines.

Christchurch's bishop nominates preferred location for new cathedral

Christchurch Bishop Michael Gielen has signalled the preferred location for a new cathedral precinct to replace a former building that succumbed to the earthquakes in 2010 and 2011.

The 115-year-old Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament on Barbadoes St, was demolished in 2020, after it was badly damaged in the 2010 and 2011 Christchurch quakes.

Three possible locations are being investigated by the Catholic Diocese of Christchurch.

In a letter to the diocese, Bishop Gielen emphasised the urgency of clarity regarding the Christchurch cathedral, stating that it's time for decisiveness.

He then addressed the key question of the cathedral's location, proposing three potential sites: Barbadoes St – the site of the former cathedral; Armagh Street – until his letter the current proposed site; Manchester St, the site of St Mary's Pro-Cathedral.

Bishop Gielen said the diocese preferred to build the new cathedral at the old Barbadoes St site.

'The advice given to me is that Barbadoes St – returning to our humble roots – is the best place for us to locate our mother church,



The ruined Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament on Barbadoes St, before it was demolished in 2020. Photo: RNZ

our Cathedral.

Catholic Māori spoke of it as being an anchor.'

'The cost-of-living crisis means our community needs us more than ever before; and the realities of global inflation necessitated a wholesale rethink of the project.

'My vision is that our new cathedral is beautiful, timeless in design and is a worthy house that honours God and represents our

faith tradition.

'It must be a place where all feel welcome so we can continue to foster the faith we have received and to grow in our own call to holiness.'

The diocese will seek feedback on the proposed locations over the coming months.

New EA for Archbishop's office

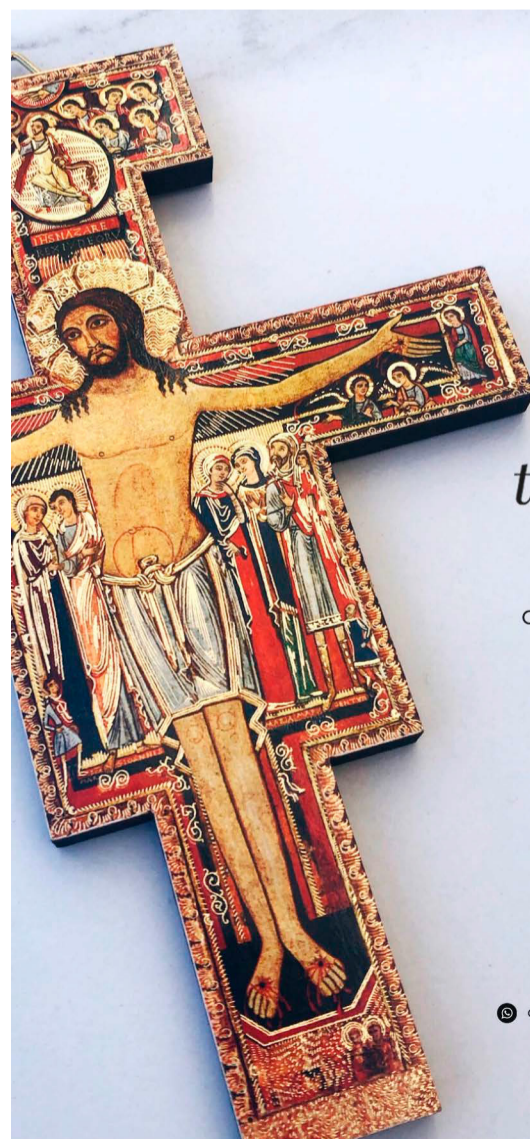
Archbishop Paul Martin sm has appointed Ms Jude McKee as his new Executive Assistant. Jude commenced in the role on 29 January 2024.

Announcing the appointment in December, Archbishop Paul said, 'Jude has worked for the Hurricanes and Wellington Rugby Union for the last 24 years. In that time she has held a variety of roles and she comes with much experience in office management and function organisation. Jude is a parishioner of St Theresa's in Plimmerton and is currently a candidate in the Launch Out programme of the archdiocese.'

Tania Halliday, who has worked for the Archbishop of Wellington as the Executive Assistant since 2026, resigned from her role at the end of last year.



Jude McKee



the Catholic Shop

Your best range of instore and online religious gifts and church supplies
373 Manchester Street, Christchurch

Shop online now...

www.thecatholicshop.nz

☎ catholicshop@cdoc.nz / 03 366 2853

📱 thecatholicshopchch

Colossal Signature Choir a huge cultural success

Signature Choir, an ecumenical Christian choir, performed with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra at a one-off concert at Spark Arena in Auckland, last November. The choir sang folk songs in six different Pasifika languages from the islands of Tokelau, Samoa, Niue, Cook Islands, Fiji and the Kingdom of Tonga.

Several choir members from the Archdiocese of Wellington travelled to Auckland to take part in the special concert. Music directors Fepulea'i Helen Tupai and Jdrah Tupai come from the Catholic Parish of Wellington South and the Pacific Island Presbyterian Church in Newtown.

The 50 members from Wellington arrived on 22 November to join 30 Auckland singers and others to form the 180-member choir and to perform with the NZSO.

A sold-out crowd of over 7000 people from all over Auckland and New Zealand came to support and

witness the 'colossal performance' says Melania Luka-Lui, Pasifika Community Engagement contact for the Archdiocese of Wellington. 'People danced in the aisles and near the stage, and cheered on the choir and orchestra.'

The performance was described by many as a moment of 'pheromonal pride and cultural experience that will never be forgotten'. As it was a one-night only concert, tickets sold out quickly from the success of the Wellington concert the previous year.

For many, it was the first time they had heard the NZSO, especially as they played each country's popular songs' says Melania. 'The concert was an immediate success and reported over social media, radio and television news making it a global Pasifika news success. Our community is very proud of Signature Choir for this grand achievement and looks forward to more.'



Signature Choir performs on stage with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra to a sellout crowd at Spark Arena.

Photo: Supplied/Mana Moana

>> continued from p 1.

idea, having gone through a genuine collaborative process. And that is synodality in action. Everyone has an equal voice. That's the process of contemplative listening.'

Sr Margaret Anne said that globally religious orders are at various stages of development, some in a growth phase, others like the Sisters of Compassion are coming to completion.

'The Sisters of Compassion have time to ensure the Sisters are cared for and that structures are in place to enable the Compassion ministries to continue. There is also the reality that many of the works of religious can be done beautifully by other people. Or in some cases the social needs which religious orders were meeting in the past have changed. And so the laity-led church, described in Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes*, is finally coming through. It's taken 60 years of searching and exploring to get there, but we're getting there.

'It's a transformation that I think Pope John XXIII wanted – church as the people of God. There's something emerging which is bigger than the brotherhood or the sisterhood and that is the greater participation of

lay people. Lay people are picking up the charisms, such as our charism of compassion, and in many cases are the decision makers.

'This transformation expands possibilities for religious and lay people to participate at all levels and have their voices heard. It may sound simple but in fact there's still a long way to go, especially in countries where women are subservient and controlled by bishops.'

Pope Francis addressed the gathering and afterwards engaged with every delegate who wanted to shake his hand.

'His witness was amazing, coming into the auditorium in a wheelchair,' said Sr Margaret Anne. 'The various groups had each prepared a question for him. Ours was: "what are your dreams after the synodal process". And his response was "a better question would be what are your nightmares?" That sent everyone into an uproar!'

Pope Francis affirmed the importance of keeping talking to one another, listening intently and praying, said Sr Margaret Anne.

'He himself was totally engaged when everyone he met. He is just an extraordinary person.'

Challenge 2000 Marist looking for new interns for faith-filled gap year

Kitty McKinley
Founder | Acting CEO
Challenge 2000

For the past 15 years, Challenge 2000 in partnership with the Society of Mary has been providing an amazing 'gap year' formation and employment opportunity for young people committed to the community, while gaining skills and spirituality to live their gospel call to love and serve.

Each year, six to eight participants have accepted the challenge to spend time working, learning, developing and serving others in many different communities.

As the new year starts, we are again calling for individuals to join our internship programme. We are looking for people aged 18–25 (or a little bit older) who are passionate about justice and following gospel-based values.

Based in Wellington, our Service/Intern Gap Internship project provides participants either a five- or ten-month time in which to develop the social, spiritual, cultural, intellectual, employment, wellbeing and physical elements required for a positive, successful and balanced life.

Interns experience a diverse range of amazing, stretching opportunities that help them to

work out who they are and how they want spend the next few years of their life.

To date over 100 participants from around Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas have accepted this invitation and have graduated from the programme.

It's a great programme so please contact Challenge if you or someone you know is keen to have a chat. Contact Kitty on 021 491 459. Visit challenge2000.org.nz for more information.

All enquiries welcome!

challenge2000.org.nz/youth/gap-year

Jacob Bang - former gap year intern looks back

My name is Jacob Bang. As I reflect on my journey since the Challenge 2000 Marist Gap Year Internship in 2013, I can't stress enough how pivotal that year was for me. It's not often an internship includes a holistic package of personal, professional and spiritual development with opportunities to question and figure out what kind of life you want to lead. Back to when I was an awkward 18-year-old living in Dunedin, I recall being convinced I disliked most people and vice versa. University was an option – and an expectation – but I didn't want to go for the sake of going and racking up debt, especially when I didn't know what I wanted to study.

It's so strange that within the space of a year you go from needing permission to go to the bathroom in class to then being expected to figure out a direction for your life. The Gap Year offered me the support, independence and opportunity to broaden my worldview while also getting me work ready.

While the awkwardness hasn't changed much, I later went on to study a BA at Victoria University,



Jacob Bang counselling at Challenge 2000, January 2024. Photo: Supplied

I worked as a youth worker for several years; I finished a Master of Counselling and am now working fulltime as a counsellor at Challenge 2000. Hindsight strings together a narrative but it's always just been one foot in front of the other – a series of saying 'yes' to life often not knowing the next step.

If I distil my experience of the

Gap Year, it'd be courage – the courage to make mistakes, to speak out, to give 100 per cent, to ask for help, to make a difference, to be curious, and to be inspired by those we meet along the journey. Are you ready for the challenge?

PART OF
YOUR
COMMUNITY
SINCE 1946

SALT OF THE EARTH

We are the salt of the earth and the light shining in our world. We are invited to listen to God's call and be led to bring forgiveness and healing into all our relationships. Through this we will experience the depth of his love for us.

We at Gee and Hickton are here to help honour this call.

www.ecofriendlyfunerals.co.nz
www.geeandhickton.co.nz

**CORNWALL
MANOR**
LOWER HUTT
566 3103 anytime

KINGSWOOD
UPPER HUTT
528 2331 anytime

GEE & HICKTON

FUNERAL DIRECTORS

Serving Hutt Valley families since 1946



Church bells in Gaza are visible amid destruction caused by an air strike.

Photo: Caritas Jerusalem

Caritas responds to Gaza famine warning

After 100 days of conflict in the Israel-Hamas war, the entire population of Gaza faces a growing risk of famine, says Caritas Australia.

Since the conflict began, more than 23,000 Palestinians and 1,200 Israelis have been killed, with over two-thirds of the casualties being women and children. At least 70 per cent of all housing in Gaza has been damaged or destroyed and only 13 of its 36 hospitals remain partially functioning. The Gaza Strip also remains under an electricity blackout.

In the West Bank, thousands of people have lost their jobs or had work permits go unrenewed, with those who used to work in Israel also losing income sources as they can no longer cross checkpoints.

Caritas Australia said its partner agencies are working with an existing network of supermarkets to distribute supplies from Rafah and Deir el-Balah. Work is also being undertaken with the World Food Programme, leading to the distribution of 3,380 food parcels to families.

'Food deprivation in Gaza has reached extreme levels with the entire population at imminent risk of famine,' said Sally Thomas, humanitarian emergencies lead at

Caritas Australia.

Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand says on its website 'Gaza's entire population is experiencing severe shortages of electricity, water, fuel, food, and medicine.'

'Caritas Jerusalem staff are continuing to provide basic food, water and medical services in extremely difficult circumstances. Some staff have remained in northern Gaza to serve the needs of people in shelters, using supplies available from the damaged Caritas Jerusalem health centre in Gaza City.'

Caritas staff are also working in southern Gaza where many of the 1.7 million internally displaced people have relocated to.

Caritas International is a confederation of over 160 Catholic relief and development organisations. Donations to support the work of Caritas in Gaza can be made online: www.caritas.org.nz/where-we-work/holy-land

» Letter from the West Bank, Br Peter Bray, p 15.

» Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand supporting Holy Land humanitarian crisis, p 15.

Faith leaders call for urgent climate action

Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar gave video addresses to COP28, which was held in December in Dubai, and signed a declaration of support for urgent climate action.

In their video messages to delegates at the inauguration of the first Faith Pavilion at COP28, Pope Francis and Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmed Al-Tayeb spoke of the urgency and hope for robust climate action.

The Faith Pavilion brings interfaith cooperation to a global stage with the aim of inspiring firm commitments on climate change.

The Pope and Grand Imam also signed the Interfaith Statement on Climate Action for COP28, which indicates a commitment to take decisive action to address the climate emergency and is signed by faith leaders from across the world.

In the statement, faith leaders call on heads of state, governments, civil society and business leaders to respond urgently to the crisis by actions including the acceleration of energy transitions, transition to circular models of living in harmony with nature and rapid adoption of clean energy.

The statement was drafted by

faith leaders ahead of COP28 at the Global Faith Leaders Summit, which was held in Abu Dhabi in November.

In his video address, Pope Francis said: 'Today, the world needs alliances that are not against someone, but for the benefit of everyone. Let us, as religious representatives, set an example to show that change is possible, to demonstrate respectful and sustainable lifestyles, and let us fervently ask the leaders of nations to preserve our common home.'

Source: The Tablet

'The Lord blesses everyone,' says Pope

Pope Francis responded publicly to questions about the Vatican's declaration on blessings for same-sex couples for the first time in a television interview in January.

In an appearance on an Italian talk show, the 87-year-old Pope was asked if he 'felt alone,' after the publication of *Fiducia Supplicans* was met with some resistance.

'Sometimes decisions are not accepted,' Pope Francis replied. 'But in most cases, when you don't accept a decision, it's because you don't understand.'

The Pope underlined that 'the Lord blesses everyone' and that a blessing is an invitation to enter into a conversation 'to see what the road is that the Lord proposes to them. The Lord blesses everyone who is capable of being baptised, that is, every person.'

'But we are to take them by the hand and help them go down that road, not condemn them from the beginning,' he added. 'And this is the pastoral work of the Church. This is very important work for confessors.'

The Vatican Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith's 18 December declaration made it permissible for priests to offer non-liturgical blessings for couples in 'irregular' situations, including same-sex



Pope Francis speaks with priests in the Archbasilica of St John Lateran on 13 January, 2024.

Photo: Vatican Media

couples, noting 'that it offers a specific and innovative contribution to the pastoral meaning of blessings, permitting a broadening and enrichment of the classical understanding of blessings.'

Following widespread backlash from bishops' conferences in Africa and Eastern Europe, and strong denunciations from some of the Church's senior prelates, the Vatican's doctrine office issued a five-page press release on 4 January to provide clarification on the document, writing that its application will depend 'on local contexts and the

discernment of each diocesan bishop with his diocese.'

Pope Francis also responded to questions about the declaration on same-sex blessings during a closed-door meeting with 800 priests from the Diocese of Rome in the Archbasilica of St John Lateran.

According to *Vatican News*, the Pope said the Church's doctrine on the sacrament of marriage between a man and a woman has not changed and that 'people are blessed, not sin.'

Source: CNA

Pope plans trip to Oceania

Pope Francis plans to visit Oceania for the first time this year, confirming in a televised interview he has several foreign trips planned for 2024, including a trip to Melanesia in August and a potential visit to Argentina.

In the interview, Pope Francis said he is in good health and has no plans to resign. The Pope said, 'It's neither a thought nor a concern nor even a desire.' He jested in the interview that

'I'm still alive,' despite several health challenges last year, including two hospital stays and a recent bout of bronchitis that forced him to cancel a planned trip to Dubai in December for the COP28 UN climate summit.

On Argentina, a trip that would mark his first return visit since his election, he said, 'I want to go, it's been ten years. I would like to go.'

The PNG Government has since

announced Pope Francis will make a 'three-day visit' to the country in August. The trip is expected to be part of a broader ten-day tour in the region, including Indonesia and East Timor, starting around August 21. It would be the 87-year-old pope's longest trip since the start of his pontificate in 2013.

Source: *Crux*

Francis announces Year of Prayer

Pope Francis has announced the start of a Year of Prayer in preparation for the Catholic Church's 2025 Jubilee Year.

The Pope said that a Year of Prayer, which began in January, is 'a year dedicated to rediscovering the great value and absolute need for prayer in one's personal life, in the life of the Church, and in the world.'

'Dear brothers and sisters, the coming months will lead us to the opening of the Holy Door, with which we will begin the jubilee,' Pope



Francis said. 'I ask you to intensify your prayer to prepare us to live this event of grace well and to experience the power of God's hope.'

The Vatican and the city of Rome are expecting an estimated 35 million people to come to the city for the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope – the first ordinary jubilee since the Great Jubilee of 2000. A jubilee is a special holy year of grace and pilgrimage in the Catholic Church. It typically takes place once every 25 years.

Male Survivors Wellington

The Road Forward Tāne Whai Ora

Abuse takes place in isolation
– recovery works well with others.

We provide peer support to male survivors of sexual abuse through individual and group peer support, therapist-led workshops, referral to counsellors and other agencies as needed.

Contact Richard Brewer:
support@theroadforward.org.nz
Tel: 021 118 1043
www.theroadforward.org.nz

Wellington Sexual Abuse HELP

We support individuals, whānau and communities affected by sexual violence. Our free 24/7 crisis support line, social work and counselling services are available to everyone – regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or sexuality.

For immediate support call (04) 801-6655
(press 0 at the menu).

To find out more about our services
visit www.wellingtonhelp.org.nz
or email support@wellingtonhelp.org.nz



Experts dismiss claim AI could replace priests

A new poll published in a British Government report claims the priesthood is in danger of being replaced by artificial intelligence algorithms.

The UK Department of Education study, analysing the impact of ChatGPT systems on the job market, ranks priests and vicars at number 12 in a list of 365 jobs mostly likely to be at risk from AI.

Telephone salespeople top the list, followed by solicitors and psychologists. Street traders are ranked the fifth category most at risk. However, the danger of AI replacing clergy is less than chatbots doing the work of government administrators, ranked at number 11 in the survey.

The statistics were based on the key skills used in each profession, including written comprehension and inductive reasoning, and how easily they could be replicated by AI.

The *Tablet* editorial consultant Fr Alban McCoy OFM Conv dismissed the notion of replacing priests with algorithms.

'To say that AI will replace priests suggests a very truncated, post-reformation and secularist view of



An AI program, says one expert, can never hope to replace the spiritual services and empathy given by priests. Image: Bing AI

what priests are and what they're for, implying that their fundamental role is preaching,' Fr McCoy said.

'It leaves out of account completely their sacramental role, by which I mean not just administering the sacraments but being themselves a sacrament, as we all are in different ways, some more explicit than others but no less real.'

John McManus, head of media communications at the Jesuits in Britain, said: 'What strikes me is

that there is no comparison between the spiritual services provided by a priest and what AI can replicate.

'Priests offer a face-to-face interaction that AI can't do. It's programmed. Human beings are not programmable creatures. They have souls. An AI program can never hope to replace the spiritual services and empathy given by priests. Priesthood has a sacramental side.'

Source: *The Tablet*

Irish bishops urge return to Mass

Concern that attendances at Mass have not returned to pre-pandemic levels has prompted the Irish bishops to prepare a special pastoral letter on Sunday Mass.

The pastoral letter will be issued this year, with resources. It aims to 'help achieve a greater appreciation of Sunday, knowing that the Eucharist is the source and summit of our spiritual and pastoral life,' the bishops said.

Following their winter general

meeting in Maynooth, the bishops described Sunday Mass as 'the very heartbeat of the Church and of our personal faith'.

In their statement in December, they acknowledged that while some may have drifted away from regular attendance at Mass, others have developed the habit of watching online instead of joining the community in person.

They appealed to families and individuals who are able to do so to

return to Mass for Christmas and the New Year, 'knowing the importance of the Sunday gathering in the life of our parishes'.

Earlier last year, a poll carried out by Amárach Research showed that 41 per cent of Catholics who attended Sunday Mass before Covid-19 no longer did so.

Source: *The Tablet*

Myanmar army occupies cathedral

The military junta in Myanmar has occupied the Loikaw cathedral complex and plans to use the building as a shield in its war against resistance forces, says the local bishop who was forced to flee the complex.



Christ the King's Cathedral, Loikaw, Myanmar. Photo: UCA News

The junta, in its attempts to control the strategically important Loikaw city, the capital of Kayah state, has taken over the Christ the King's Cathedral complex. The complex houses the bishop's residence, pastoral centre, clergy house and a clinic.

The takeover forced Bishop Celso Ba Shwe of Loikaw and resident priests and religious to flee. At the time, the complex had 82 people, including 10 priests, 16 religious and some employees, Bishop Shwe said in a letter.

Some 50 soldiers occupied the cathedral complex 'to make use of it as a shield' against the resistance

forces, said the letter that the bishop wrote before fleeing.

The junta assumes the resistance force will not advance if they have to harm a religious place such as a cathedral or a church, according to a source. There is a significant Christian population in the state and the Karenni resistance force, which opposes the junta, is believed to have Christians among its members.

Kayah, Myanmar's smallest state, has some 300,000 people, some 45 per cent of them Christians. Catholics number about 91,000.

Source: *UCA News*

Sharp rise in persecution of Christians

Christians across East and West Africa are facing twin threats from jihadists and dictatorships, according to the 2024 World Watch List.

The report from Open Doors, which ranks the 50 nations where Christians face the worst persecution and discrimination worldwide, said that jihadists and autocratic governments backed by larger powers have driven attacks on Christians in sub-Saharan Africa, where at least 4,606 Christians were killed last year for their faith. The real number killed is probably much higher, the report says.

Open Doors chronicled a

growth in the scope and intensity of persecution, with 365 million Christians – one in seven worldwide – now facing high levels of persecution and discrimination. This has increased from 360 million in the 2023 report. The report describes a surge in violence, with a seven-fold increase in attacks on churches, Christian schools and hospitals from 2,110 listed in last year's report to 14,766 in the latest report. Attacks on homes have also risen 371 per cent.

North Korea remains the most dangerous place to be a Christian, with reports of mass repatriations of

escapees sent back from China.

The Chinese government is also tightening its restrictions on Christianity, closing an estimated 10,000 house churches and increasing its cyber surveillance of Christians.

There was an exponential rise in violent persecution in India, now number 11 on the World Watch List. Faith-based killings of Christians in India rose from 17 to 160, while 62,000 were forced to leave their homes, driven in part by ongoing violence in Manipur.

Source: *The Tablet*

Laity to preside over funerals

A major vocation crisis could result in fewer than 10 active priests in the Clogher diocese in the north of Ireland in less than 20 years, according to the local ordinary, Bishop Larry Duffy. 'Over the past few months, over 40 people from 12 parishes across the diocese have taken part in a formation course to enable them to accompany people and families at the time of bereavement,' Bishop Duffy announced in a Christmas pastoral letter. Other parishes have indicated a 'willingness' to nominate people for a similar course in the spring, he wrote.

Lord's prayer could be axed

For more than 100 years, MPs in the State of Victoria, Australia, have started each parliamentary sitting day with the Lord's Prayer. But this could soon change, with the new premier conceding the tradition does not reflect the state's growing cultural diversity. 'We are seeing greater cultural diversity. I think it's important we do look at reflecting that in our parliamentary practices,' Jacinta Allan, Premier of Victoria, told reporters.

Nicaragua releases bishops, priests

In January, the Nicaraguan dictatorship of Daniel Ortega released and sent to the Vatican two imprisoned bishops along with 15 priests and seminarians. In tears, Managua Auxiliary Bishop Silvio José Báez, exiled due to persecution by the Ortega dictatorship, confirmed the news of the release of Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa and Bishop Isidoro Mora of Siuna and the remaining priests and seminarians: 'Our pastors are free.'

Scorsese to film new Jesus movie

Oscar winner Martin Scorsese has confirmed a script for his new movie, *A Life of Jesus*, is now finished. Scorsese said he plans to shoot it later this year. The film will be based on Shūsaku Endō's book *A Life of Jesus*. Scorsese said the film will focus on Jesus' core teachings in a way that explores the principles but doesn't proselytise. 'I'm trying to find a new way to make it more accessible and take away the negative onus of what has been associated with organised religion,' Scorsese said.

Pope announces first World Day of Children

The Church will celebrate its first World Day of Children in May 2024, Pope Francis has announced. The Church's first children's day will be held in Rome and the Vatican is expecting thousands of girls and boys from all over the world to travel to Rome for the event with the Pope. According to Vatican News, the event was inspired by a 9-year-old boy named Alessandro, who proposed the idea to the Pope to have an international event like World Youth Day (an international gathering for young people ages 16 to 35) for younger children.

Disconnecting from social media 'essential'

To connect with God, Christians must disconnect from the 'pollution of vain words and chatter' that reach them through social media and instead seek silence in the desert, Pope Francis says. He said the desert is 'the place of silence and essentials, where someone cannot afford to dwell on useless things, but needs to concentrate on what is indispensable in order to live.'

Local People
Caring in our Community

Harbour City Funeral Home
harbourcityfunerals.co.nz

Lower Hutt Ph: 04 5700 111
Upper Hutt Ph: 04 5288 924
Wellington Ph: 04 387 8301
Kāpiti Coast Ph: 04 298 4888

Guardian Funeral Home
guardianfunerals.co.nz

Tawa Ph: 04 232 1588
Johnsonville Ph: 04 477 4025

The Wilson Funeral Home
wilsonfunerals.co.nz

Karori Ph: 04 476 5292
Newtown Ph: 04 389 6069

'Angel Gabrielle' honoured for her service to St Vincent de Paul

When Gabrielle Carman was invited to a friend's place for lunch last November, she was surprised to find out just how many other people there were there when she arrived.

Most of them were from St Vincent de Paul where Carman volunteers in New Plymouth.

And the surprises kept coming. A woman from the St Vincent de Paul Taranaki area conference stood up and gave Carman a certificate for all the work she'd done for the Society.

'I thought OK, wonderful,' Carman said.

Then there was another speech and another award. This time a Kiwibank local hero award.

'I thought "just remain calm". My mind was racing 100 miles an hour. Everybody in that room from St Vincent de Paul could have got that award. I was stunned.'

Carman moved to New Plymouth from Auckland in 2014 and got involved with St Vincent de Paul straight away, she said.

'I thought I could be pretty useful somewhere, and I'm a member of the Catholic Church.'

One of the first things Carman did was help set up the community dinners at St Joseph's parish hall on Tuesdays at 5.30pm. They get between 30 and 50 people for dinner every week, she said.

'Last year we provided 2906 meals. That's a lot for a small group of people. Things like this don't happen because of one person.'

She was also involved in setting



Gabrielle Carman with community dinner regular Ken Ranford (file photo, 2018).

Photo: RNZ

up Whare Kai, which offers weekly cooking classes to young families.

Sometimes, her volunteering role felt like it was 24 hours a day, she said.

'Churches seem to be places where people go if they want stuff. So, people would wander into the parish office and say they had no food or they had nowhere to live and a lot of the time I responded to these in the weekends, at night. When things go wrong, it's usually not in the middle of the day.'

But Carman has recently stepped back a bit due to her husband's health, she said.

Her reasons for volunteering are varied, but mainly because she feels she is 'very fortunate'.

As a child growing up in Wellington, Carman and her siblings used to catch the train to Hāwera to visit their grandmother, who also belonged to St Vincent de Paul.

'I came from a family that didn't have very much. My mother was very smart and determined, and she could make money and food stretch. We all went to university and got reasonable jobs. I realise I've been very lucky in my life. And I have some skills, and I'm ready to use them in the service of other people if I can. And I was retired.'

Source: Taranaki Daily News

2024 Kiwibank Local Hero Medallist citation

'Known to her community as "Angel Gabrielle" Gabrielle Carman is a dedicated volunteer, advocate and champion for people who need support. Since 2014 she has been a member of St Vincent de Paul, where she manages various community activities such as the weekly Community Meal (managing a team of 50 volunteers!). Gabrielle volunteers at weekly Whare Kai sessions,

supporting parents to cook meals cost effective meals for their young families. She is a key contact for people seeking emergency help and acts as an advocate for people dealing with government services and has worked on the Board of the New Plymouth Emergency Shelter Trust. Since 2014, when Gabrielle arrived in New Plymouth, her work with St Vincent de Paul has involved an array of charitable

works bringing hope and practical support to those in need. Patient, empathetic and always willing to walk a mile in someone else's shoes, Gabrielle consistently lifts people up with her trademark respect, hope and joy.

Source: Citation, Kiwibank 2024 Local Hero Medallist

Parish salutes 125 years of faith

Sue Seconi

Celebrating Eucharist at 5.30pm Mass followed by a shared meal on Sunday 26 November 2023, were among the highlights marking 125 years of Catholic faith shared by early settlers to present-day parishioners at Eketahuna's Sacred Heart Parish in the Tararua District.

Parish priest Fr Marcus Francis and Monsignor Brian Walsh from Palmerston North celebrated Mass. Fr Bernard O'Donnell was also present along with many guests at the special celebrations. People came from near and far to attend, including parishioners from the Tararua Parish area, as well as many former parishioners who travelled from as far as Timaru, Oamaru, Waihi, Taupo, Tauroa, Wellington, Palmerston North, Fielding, and the wider Wairarapa.

A display of memorabilia showcasing photos took parishioners down memory lane, particularly three banners depicting

the three different church buildings.

The evening's programme was thoughtfully planned with parishioner Paul Bailey as the popular MC keeping the celebrations on schedule and everyone entertained.

Special appreciation was credited to floral arranger Catherine Bailey for her beautiful creations, which enhanced the atmosphere of the occasion.

After dinner, local parish historian John Harman, who was for 60 years a parishioner and resident of this small rural settlement, gave a brief history especially around the present church built in 1983, as multi-purpose. The design became a trail blazer for other parishes.

Near-90-year-old Peter McKenna cut the centenary cake. Peter's great uncle Fr Don McKenna was the first parish priest.

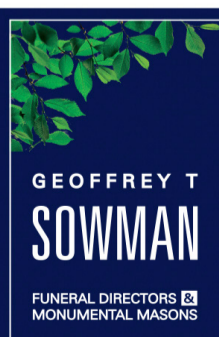
This is the second church in Tararua Parish to celebrate 125 years of faith. Dannevirke marked theirs in October last year.



Peter McKenna cuts the centenary cake marking 125 years of Catholic faith for Sacred Heart Church and parish, Eketahuna. MC Paul Bailey is standing behind Peter.

Photo: Supplied

Local people supporting our local community



Feel safe in the knowledge that you are working with a professional and experienced team who have been caring for the Marlborough community for generations.

Corner Hutcheson & Parker Streets, Blenheim
03 578 4719

www.sowmans.co.nz



I will donate \$400 to the Cathedral Restoration fund for every parishioner's home I sell.

I have great local knowledge, professional advice along with fair flat fees and New Zealand's #1 FREE marketing package, making me the **obvious choice** when selling your property.

Thinking of selling? **Let's talk.**

Anna Geremia-Young

Sales Consultant

021 118 5833

anna.geremia-young@tallpoppy.co.nz

BULSARA T/A TALL POPPY LICENSED UNDER REAA 2008



Miramar school's creative migration story

Holy Cross School at Miramar, Wellington, recently put on an excellent production and story for their community. **Fr James Lyons** interviewed Frances Wooles (Frankie Leota), the creator and director of the production.

Te Tatou Haerenga - Our Journey

Three months in the making, a story of migration to New Zealand lifted the life of a whole school community in a production last year.

Thanks to the creative skills of arts practitioner, Frances Wooles (Frankie Leota), with family connections to Holy Cross School, Miramar, students and staff surprised themselves and thrilled audiences with a September production of *Tor Tatou Haerenga - Our Journey*.

Devised and directed by Frances, the show was part of the 'Creative in School' project supported by Creative New Zealand.

With 31 nationalities represented in the school, and wanting to include every student, Frances built the production around movement, music and colour - totally without words.

The hour-long programme

was presented as a book of images flowing through eight 'chapters'.

'I wanted an evocative piece to tell the story of our migration journey through music and choreography, evoking emotions to identify with each scene,' Frances explains.

'The students themselves told the story through their movements and costumes. Background music and visual images gave further substance to the presentation. Words weren't necessary.'

The school hall was transformed into an arena, the audience surrounding the action, involving them more completely in the children's interpretation of each chapter.

The junior class opened the 'book' displaying a Land of Birds. Then came *Te Moana-nui-a-kiwa*, the ocean embracing the land and the arrival of people navigating their way, *Te Wheke Kupe*.

European settlers and missionaries were followed by New

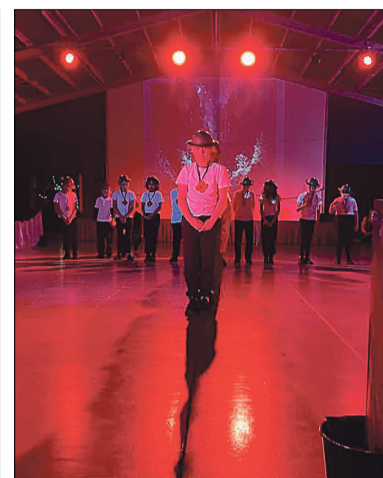
Zealand's journey to World Wars I and II. The final chapters, showing the arrival of Pacific and global nations, made *Our Journey* fully inclusive and a most appropriate climax.

With the support of the teaching staff, the lead-up to the production saw elements incorporated into the school curriculum, particularly through art, maths, social, religious and environmental studies.

What Frances found particularly rewarding was the joyful reaction of both audience and participants and the fact that every student - 'even those who, in other activities, would likely miss out' - had a part to play.

'It was a wonderful example of the transformative power of theatre,' said Frances, who, as well as creating and directing *Our Journey*, also designed the costumes and assisted the children in their construction.

Photos: Holy Cross School Facebook



Room at the Inn

Suzanne O'Rourke

Greenstone Doors has been helping pregnant women and their whānau in the Hutt Valley for over a decade - and now they are making a move.

When close to Christmas they needed to move out of their Dudley St, CBD premises, the future location for their Lower Hutt services was still undecided. The option of consolidating their services into their Upper Hutt base at the Chanel Family Centre was considered, but given the amount of counselling and support activity Greenstone Doors delivers, this was going to be a tight squeeze.

The solution emerged 'right on Christmas' and Greenstone Doors has moved their Lower Hutt base into the heart of Naenae to the St Bernadette's Parish offices, which they will share with the Te Awakairangi Lay Pastoral Leader Barbara Rowley.



Wendy Hill, Kevin Lampen-Smith and Suzanne O'Rourke of Greenstone Doors complete the shift into part of the Naenae presbytery. Photo: Supplied

'It's a great place to locate our work,' according to Greenstone Doors General Manager Wendy Hill. 'This move puts us in the middle of a great community where we are already well known.'

The move from Dudley St to 194 Naenae Rd took place over the Christmas break and Greenstone Doors is once again fully functioning at both its Upper and Lower Hutt centres.

The move has been brought about for a couple of reasons. Like many charitable organisations, Greenstone Doors has found the last year to be financially challenging and the Trustees' decision not to extend the lease on the location that has served them so well for ten years, was not taken lightly. Ms Hill says, 'While the move from the CBD location is financially prudent, the real opportunity this gives us, is to extend the reach of our support and services into the wider community and to connect

with those other organisations that are also active in this area.'

Greenstone Doors services are offered freely and include pregnancy testing, baby clothing, playgroups, counselling and access to all manner of support networks. 'Some people find their way to Greenstone Doors to join a playgroup, to seek a listening ear through counselling, to access the food programmes, or to participate in the Greenstone Doors Men's Programme. Whatever brings them to Greenstone Doors, they are welcome - this is "a safe place to talk". Every family is different and the story of someone's life is a taonga, which deserves to be handled with care.'

With its Lower Hutt Doors open once again but now at 194 Naenae Rd next to St Bernadette's school and church, the work continues.

greenstonedoors.co.nz



END OF LIFE PLANNING
is about making great decisions, ahead of time

THE LYCHWAY FUNERAL DIRECTORS



06 357 8143 Palmerston North
www.thelychway.co.nz
FORMERLY THOMAS GRIGGS & SON

JOIN THE VINNIES



Young and old, town and country. Vinnies harness the generosity of Aotearoa NZ - whānau, churches, community groups, schools. Get involved and help those who are going through tough times.

You can join up with your local Vinnies Conference or make a donation to:
Society of St Vincent de Paul
02-0528-0208598-027

Please use your name and email address as a reference and we will send you a receipt.

www.svdp.org.nz



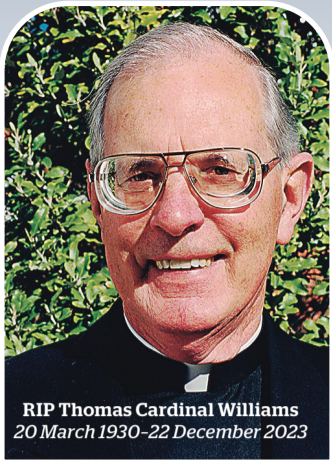
St Patrick's School fundraiser - 800 cans donated to the Vinnies Annual Food Drive in Christchurch.



Society of St Vincent de Paul New Zealand

Cardinal Thomas Stafford Williams Emeritus Archbishop

20 March 1930 - 22 December 2023



Cardinal Thomas Stafford Williams, ONZ, Catholic Archbishop Emeritus of Wellington has died, aged 93. He passed away peacefully on 22 December 2023 at Charles Fleming Retirement Village, Waikanae, north of Wellington. Cardinal Tom lived in Waikanae since his retirement in 2005.

A much-loved member of the Catholic priesthood renowned for his service and community work, Cardinal Tom Williams was a well-known figure in the New Zealand Catholic community and had worked as parish priests at multiple churches in the Wellington region and Samoa.

The Cardinal had a strong interest in the wellbeing of his fellow men and women and was a 'passionate' advocate for the local churches he served.

Two decades after his priestly ordination in 1959, he was consecrated 6th Archbishop on Wellington 20 December 1979, following the death of Cardinal Reginald Delargey.

Cardinal Tom was Archbishop of Wellington from 1979 until his retirement in 2005.

He was created a cardinal by Pope John Paul II on 2 February 1983.

He was the third New Zealander to hold the rank of cardinal.

Cardinal Tom was appointed a Member of the Order of New Zealand, New Zealand's highest civilian honour, in the 2000 Queen's Birthday Honours List. Only 20 living people can hold this honour at any one time.

At the time, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet called him 'the voice of the New Zealand Catholic community,' being well known for his interest in social justice and welfare issues.

Thomas Stafford Williams was born on 20 March 1930 in Wellington. He attended Holy Cross Primary School, Wellington; Ss Peter and Paul School, Lower Hutt; St Patrick's College, Wellington; and St Kevin's College,



Cardinal Tom Williams's First Holy Communion certificate, Ss Peter and Paul Church, Lower Hutt, 31 October 1937.

Image: Archdiocese Archives



Cardinal Tom Williams, ONZ, Archbishop Emeritus of Wellington, pictured with Pope John Paul II at the plenary meeting of cardinals in Rome in 1994.

Photo: Supplied

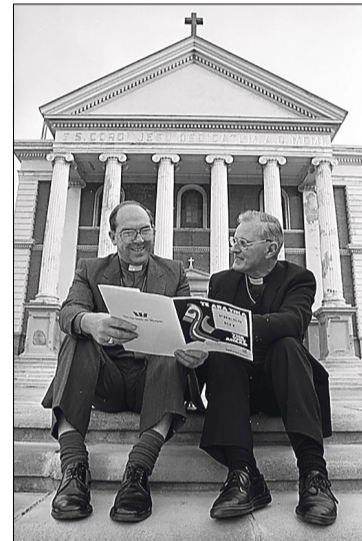
Oamaru; before studying for a Bachelor of Commerce degree at Victoria University, Wellington, then working as an accountant for several years.

He was deeply involved in the Catholic Youth Movement and for a while worked fulltime for it. 'It gave me my vocation,' he said in a 2020 interview. 'I wouldn't have become a priest if had I not had the background in the formation in the Catholic Youth Movement.'

He began studying for the priesthood in 1954 at the National Seminary, Holy Cross College in Dunedin, and in 1956 went to the Pontifical Urban University in Rome where he gained a licentiate in theology. He was ordained a priest in Rome on 20 December 1959. He then attended University College, Dublin and received a degree in social sciences.

Returning to Wellington, he was

assistant director at the Catholic Enquiry Centre, which to the present day continues to bring the light of faith to many non-Catholics and Catholics alike. He was parish priest at St Patrick's in Palmerston



Anglican Archbishop Brian Davis and Catholic Cardinal Thomas Williams, Wellington, on the steps in front of The Metropolitan Cathedral of the Sacred Heart and of Saint Mary His Mother, May 1990.

Image: Dominion Post (Newspaper). Ref: EP/1990/1813a-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/23242075

North for two years, a priest in Samoa for five years, and from late-1975 parish priest at Holy Family Parish, Porirua East, one of the archdiocese's most multi-cultural parishes. Four years later, he was named Archbishop of Wellington.

'Above all, I thank God for giving me a share in the priesthood of his son, Jesus Christ, as I thank God for

those in earlier years who formed me and prepared me to respond to his call to priestly ministry,' Cardinal Tom said in December 2019 in a homily marking his 40th anniversary as a bishop and his 60th as a priest.

In that homily, he expressed gratitude to his parents, Thomas and Lillian, 'who made huge sacrifices in nurturing my faith', to the Mercy and Marist Sisters and the Marist Fathers, to the Catholic Youth Movement chaplains as well as his brother bishops, 'especially Cardinal John Dew, who supported me and tolerated my eccentricities and enthusiasms.'

In an article on Cardinal Williams, the Vatican reporter for the *American National Catholic Reporter*, John Allen Jr, wrote: 'Despite his modest style, Cardinal Williams is nobody's fool. He has thought long and hard over a quarter-century about the distinctive contribution of Catholicism in Oceania, by which Williams has in mind not just people like himself, but also indigenous populations such as New Zealand's Māori, as well as the cultures of Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Fiji. All this makes Williams a passionate advocate for his local church, which has sometimes meant defending it when he believes Rome hasn't sufficiently grasped its challenges and its promise.'

In a 2019 interview with *NZ Catholic*, Cardinal Williams said he'd seen considerable changes in the Church: 'The degree to which New Zealand has become very, very secular is quite alarming. I'm very grateful to God that, while

Requiem for Cardinal Thomas Williams

Cardinal Thomas Williams ONZ ChStJ Archbishop Emeritus of Wellington died on 22 December 2023 peacefully at Charles Fleming Retirement Village, Waikanae, aged 93 years.

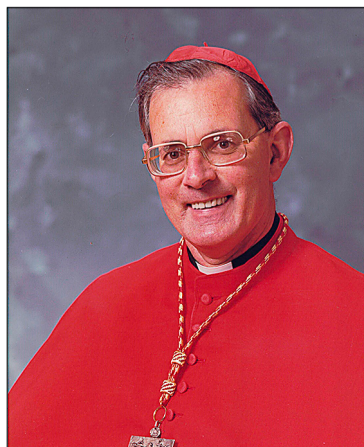
Respected priest and Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Wellington, Cardinal Tom was a loved brother and brother-in-law of Maureen, the late Veronica, Kathleen and the late Tony, the late Pat and Ann, Michael and Charlotte, Laurie and Alice, and a much-loved uncle to his nieces and nephews.

A Mass was held at Our Lady of Kāpiti, Paraparaumu on 27 December and a Vigil at St Teresa's Church, Karori, Wellington.

A Requiem Mass was celebrated for Cardinal Tom at St Teresa's Church on 28 December 2023 followed by an interment at the

Karori Cemetery.

Cardinal Tom's brother Laurie Williams welcomed mourners to St Teresa's Church, packed with hundreds of friends, supporters, family members and priests. All New Zealand's bishops participated.



Archbishop Paul Martin presided at the Mass, during which he read messages of condolence from Pope Francis and Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State. Members of Cardinal Tom's family, Joanne Williams and Christine Malone, led the Prayers of the Faithful. Emeritus Bishop Peter Cullinane gave the homily and the Samoan Community sang hymns as a tribute to Cardinal Tom.

We give thanks for Cardinal Tom Williams' ministry and witness to the Archdiocese of Wellington and the Church of New Zealand and we pray eternal rest for his soul and consolation for those who mourn him.

Requiescat in Pace.

Archbishop Martin read the following messages of condolence from Pope Francis and Cardinal Pietro Parolin addressed to him 'on the mournful occasion of Cardinal Thomas Stafford Williams' passing'.

*To the Most Reverend Paul Martin
Archbishop of Wellington*

Saddened to hear of the death of Cardinal Thomas Stafford Williams, Archbishop Emeritus of Wellington, I send prayerful condolences to you and to the clergy, religious and lay faithful of the Archdiocese recalling with immense gratitude the late Cardinal's many years of priestly and episcopal ministry among Christ's flock in New Zealand and his contribution to the Church throughout Oceania. I willingly join you in commending his noble soul to the love and mercy of our Heavenly Father. To all who mourn Cardinal Williams in the sure hope of the Resurrection, I cordially impart my blessing as a pledge of consolation and peace in the Risen Lord.

Franciscus

Please accept my condolences, together with the assurance of my prayers that God will mercifully grant Cardinal Williams the reward promised to those who faithfully labour for the Lord and His Church.

*Cardinal Pietro Parolin
Secretary of State
Dal Vatican, 24 December 2023*

Cardinal Tom Williams ONZ ChStJ

Bishop of Wellington

2 December 2023



Cardinal Tom Williams (centre back) with his brothers and sisters at his jubilee celebration, 60 years a priest and 40 years a bishop, December 2019.



Long-time friend Bishop Peter Cullinane (l) shares a moment with Cardinal Tom Williams (r) at his jubilee celebrations, December 2019. Photos: File

“As an active bishop for 25 years I was called to ordain some 40 men to priesthood. In my ordination homilies I emphasised priesthood has nothing to do with power and privilege, but everything to do with sacrifice and service, seeking nothing for the priest himself but striving only to please God, to imitate Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd, and to commit himself unreservedly to his pastoral responsibilities.”

– Cardinal Tom Williams at his 60th jubilee, 2019

Cardinal Tom Williams was:

- President of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference, 1980–1988.
- Conference Deputy for Hospital and Prison Chaplaincies, 1981–2004.
- Catholic Communications, 1982–1985.
- Created Cardinal-Priest of the titular church of Jesus the Divine Teacher at Pineta Sacchetti by Pope John Paul II on 2 February 1983.
- Te Runanga o te Hahi Katorika ki Aotearoa National Catholic Māori body, 1983–1988.
- Member of Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, 1983–1988.
- Member of Congregation for Divine Worship, 1983–1988.
- Member of Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, 1983–2008.
- Catholic Commission for Justice, Peace and Development, 1985–1991.
- NZ Catholic Education Office and Catholic Schools Catholic Education Council, 1986–2004.
- Founding President of the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania, 1990–1998.
- Moderator of the Tribunal for the Catholic Church in New Zealand, 1990–2005.
- Appointed Military Ordinary in 1995, responsible for Catholic Chaplains to the Defence Forces, 1995–2005.
- Member of Pre-Synodal and Post-Synodal Councils, 1995–2006.
- President Delegate of the Synod of Bishops for Oceania, Rome, November–December 1998.
- Appointed a Member of the Order of New Zealand, New Zealand’s highest civilian honour, in the 2000 Queen’s Birthday Honours.
- Member of Commission of Cardinals for Organisational & Economic Affairs of the Holy See, 2001–2006.
- Archbishop Emeritus of Wellington, from 21 March 2005.
- Military Ordinary Emeritus for New Zealand, from 1 April 2005.
- Participated in the conclave of April 2005, which elected Pope Benedict XVI.

all the Churches have declining membership, the Catholic Church, which has now become the largest minority in New Zealand, has not declined to the same extent.’

That reflected an essay he wrote in 2004, where he said: ‘We have rejected the moral sustenance of the past and are attempting to live on junk food provided by a bankrupt liberalism.’ He warned that while today’s barbarians ‘may be soberly suited and stylishly presented,’ their impact was still ruin.

Also, in 2019, Cardinal Williams said that, having ordained 40 men to the priesthood, he had always emphasised in his ordination homilies ‘that priesthood has nothing to do with power and privilege, but everything to do with sacrifice and service, seeking nothing for the priest himself but striving to please God, imitate Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd, and commit himself unreservedly to his pastoral responsibilities.’

Cardinal Williams ‘heartily

disliked’ the different forms of address for prelates, such as ‘My Lord’, ‘Your Grace’ and ‘Your Eminence’: ‘I hope they have been consigned to the domain of [the] historian and archivists.’

“Over the past six decades I have come to the conviction that my vocation to priesthood, seeking to serve as Christ served, although it has inevitably involved sacrifice and commitment, has been an incredibly rich source of fulfilment and deep-down happiness because it is rooted in love – Christ’s love.”

– Cardinal Tom Williams

Looking back over the years, Cardinal Williams noted some of highlights in his life: his two ordination ceremonies, his five years in Samoa, the 1981 Springbok Tour, the 1986 papal visit, the archdiocesan synods of 1988 and 1998, the 1998 Oceania Synod in Rome, the Church Leaders Social Justice Initiative, the consistories, the funeral of Pope St John Paul II,

the election of Pope Benedict XVI, and the Launch Out Programme for forming lay pastoral leaders [in the archdiocese].

Cardinal Williams lived in retirement in Waikanae, where for

many years he celebrated daily Mass for fellow residents at the Charles Fleming Retirement Village. He died there at 2.30am, 22 December 2023.

Asked by NZ Catholic how he would like to be remembered, Cardinal Williams hesitated before saying, ‘I don’t expect to be greatly remembered but...I would like to be remembered as a dedicated servant.’

For Cardinal Tom Williams

*Homily at Requiem Mass
Bishop Peter Cullinane*

E te hoa pūmau, e Tamati; kia au tō moe; Kia tau te rangimarie ki ā koe.

Sisters and brothers,

When I think of Cardinal Tom’s untiring commitment to the work that came his way; when I think of his thoroughness, his efficiency, and that annoyingly tidy desk! When I think of his conscientiousness, and the careful preparation he put into everything, I am left with one impression: Tom gave his all.

So, where does that kind of giving come from? Well, if we hadn’t already noticed a connection between this commemoration and what we commemorate in Christmas, the second scripture reading chosen for this Mass certainly makes the connection, because that reading

is emphatically about self-giving – starting with God’s own self-giving.

In St Paul’s own words: ‘Since God did not spare his son but gave him up to benefit us, after such a gift, is there anything God could refuse us?’ Then, referring to the one God sent: ‘He not only died for us, but rose, and now at God’s right hand pleads for us.’ And then, as if to draw a conclusion from this: ‘There is absolutely nothing that can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Jesus Christ.’

In other words: the meaning, dignity and worthwhileness of our own lives has its origin in the gratuitous giving of a God – who never even needed to create us in the first place – and the self-giving love revealed in the Person and the ministry of Jesus.

During Advent, we allowed

ourselves to journey with the Old Testament prophets who visualised us walking ‘in darkness and a land of deep shadow’, but who have ‘now seen a great light’. Their symbolic language is about us emerging from not knowing God’s purposes and the meaning of our own lives, to now knowing, and being overwhelmed by how much we are loved.

Pope St John Paul II put it cogently: ‘deep amazement at the worth and dignity of the human person is another name for the Gospel.’

Cardinal Tom’s own self-giving, expressed in the details of his work, derived from that awareness of God’s self-giving which reveals how much we mean to God.

His commitment to social justice is well known. It would have made complete sense to him to read

On the final page of his 2014 memoir, *A Kiwi Cardinal’s Chronicles*, Cardinal Williams wrote that he had made mistakes aplenty in his life and had much to atone for.

‘In planning my funeral – I have reached the age when it is prudent to do so – I have expressed one wish, which I have to accept may be ignored. It is that my eulogy and homily be reduce to just eight words: He was a sinner. Please pray for him.’

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Source: NZCBC

Pope Benedict XVI’s teaching that gratuitous giving, forgiving and compassion need to be brought even into trading relationships, business practices and industrial life – in that way pre-empting the imbalances and inequities that otherwise need to be redressed afterwards, in various forms of re-distribution. That’s because love for others, modelled on God’s love for us, is compassionate and forgiving, and capable of transforming all human relationships. It is also a circuit-breaker where otherwise tit-for-tat and getting even are as far as we could ever go.

In other words: Tom knew that lives which originate from the gratuitous gift and self-giving of God can be true to themselves only through their own self-giving and being there for others. That is the

unfinished work of the gospel; that is what Tom gave his life for, and that is what he would challenge us to continue.

So, now, let us give thanks to God for Cardinal Tom’s life. But we don’t stop there: in line with our ancient tradition, we also ask God to give him a merciful judgment.

***Eternal rest grant unto him,
O Lord,
and let perpetual light
shine upon him.
May the souls of all the
faithful departed,
through the mercy of God,
rest in peace.
–Amen–***

Young Catholics



Dr Kevin Shore, Chief Executive, NZCEO.

Catholic Education 2024 - looking ahead

Dr Kevin Shore
Chief Executive
NZ Catholic Education Office

Kia ora koutou

Every year is unique and has its issues and challenges and 2023 was no exception. Adverse weather, which repeatedly impacted on Northland, Auckland, Coromandel, and the East Coast of the North Island, including Gisborne and the Hawke's Bay, was particularly challenging. The resilience of these communities was inspiring as their character was tested, in many cases, multiple times. NZCEO acknowledges the staff and communities in our Catholic schools who faced this adversity and in the best traditions of Catholic communities rolled up their sleeves to help and support those in need. At times, this meant putting their own needs second to others and this generosity of spirit and action was appreciated. Let's hope the weather is kinder in 2024.

School attendance was a significant issue in 2023. There is no doubt in my mind if the young people in Aotearoa are to fulfil their potential, they need to regularly attend school. The downward trend of regular attendance at school since 2016 has affected both state and state integrated schools and our Catholic schools are no exception. While rates of attendance in Catholic schools are on average higher than state schools there is still room for considerable improvement. The issues at the heart of non-attendance are complex but could be improved immediately if schools could get the full support of their parent community to ensure their child attends school every day. Attendance to school and success at school go hand in hand and there is no secret in that recipe.

The election of a new coalition government in late 2023 signals a different flavour of approach to education in 2024. What will not change is a strong focus on literacy and numeracy and the work that has been done to date on best-practice models of pedagogy

should continue and that is to be applauded. The focus by the new Education Minister, Erica Stanford, on an hour of reading, writing and mathematics will not be a major change for most of our Catholic schools as much of this is already in practice. How the Government intends to refocus the curriculum on academic achievement and not ideology has not been signalled at this stage and NZCEO looks forward to some clarity on what is intended here.

The coalition agreement has signalled partnership schools (previously charter schools) are to be reintroduced and that the model includes the option of existing state schools (and possibly state integrated schools) moving into the partnership model. At the time of writing, NZCEO has not seen any material on the process of how this will be rolled out and what regulations will govern the partnership school model so it is difficult to comment on the impact this may have on the state integrated education network. NZCEO will continue to watch this space very closely.

In 2024, NZCEO is excited to be hosting the first National Catholic Education Convention since 2018. The Catholic education community is excited by the opportunity to gather again, celebrate and recognise those in our sector and discuss how we continue to align with the mission of the Church in educating the 67,000 students who attend Catholic schools in Aotearoa New Zealand. The conference will be held in the TSB Arena in Wellington from Wednesday 19 June through to Friday 21 June 2024. Information is on our conference website: www.cathedconvention.co.nz/programme

In terms of education, 2024 will be a time of adjustment to a new government and policy change. However, what is unlikely to change is the commitment by all in Catholic education to ensure that every student is educated within an environment where a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is the bedrock for everything else.

Ngā manaakitanga

Suzanne Aubert Tertiary Scholarship Awards

Three students have been awarded the Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert Tertiary Scholarship to assist them in completing their studies in 2024.

The Sisters thank the Home of Compassion Trust Board who make this possible, and congratulate the following students on their successful applications.

Atawhai Lynch is a student at Massey University. In 2024 she will be studying her third year of Nursing.

Atawhai says, 'I have enjoyed my time as a student nurse and I am really looking forward to my final year. I hope to contribute to Aotearoa by being the most compassionate, kind and caring nurse I can be. I would love to work with children on a general medical ward when I graduate, as I have a passion for looking after and protecting our tamariki. Receiving this scholarship is an honour and I will continue to look up to Mother Suzanne Aubert, with her compassion and courage, forever inspiring me along my nursing journey.'

Imilia Ruocco is a student at Victoria University of Wellington Te Herenga Waka. In 2024, she will be studying a Master of Health Psychology.

Imilia says, 'Studying a Master of Health Psychology will enable me to gain further knowledge of the intersections and connections between mental, physical, and spiritual health. I will also be



Atawhai Lynch



Imilia Ruocco



Leona Coral

focusing on Māori health and health promotion in Aotearoa.

With this qualification I hope to work in community environments such as hospitals, mental-health sectors, or within the public sector like the Department of Corrections. Specifically, I want to focus on health for women, especially Māori and Pasifika women in the workforce.

'This is an important cause for me as I have been raised and taught by many amazing women and because of this, I am passionate about uplifting women. Receiving this scholarship is very meaningful to me as I grew up in Island Bay and have visited the Home of Compassion many times. And I have heard Meri Hōhepa's story many times, I know she will be an inspiration for me in the years to come. I am so grateful to receive support from an organisation I

have grown up with and the support from the sisters means so much to me. With this scholarship, I feel confident to continue my educational journey.'

Leona Coral is a student at Whitireia Polytechnic Porirua. In 2024, she will be in the last year of her Bachelor of Nursing degree.

Leona says, 'Once I complete my three-year-degree course, I hope to continue serving the community, helping, and caring for those who are vulnerable, sick and dying, with compassion, kindness and determination. I want to be able to make a difference in Aotearoa New Zealand with my nursing profession, using the knowledge and skills I have learned and gained in nursing school. Receiving this scholarship really means a lot to me as this supports and encourages me to work harder in my nursing studies.'

Catholic Schools Commissioning Masses 2024

Special Commissioning Masses for Catholic school teachers and staff are held annually to celebrate and begin the new teaching year together. Eucharist and whanaungātanga (connections, relationships) are celebrated and all who serve within each Catholic school and college community are commissioned and blessed in their ministries.

The Masses are scheduled as follows:

Archdiocese of Wellington

Lower North Island

Monday 12 February: 5.30pm,
St Mary of the Angels Church,
Wellington

Upper South Island

Friday 9 February: 5.30pm, St
Mary's Church, Nelson

Diocese of Palmerston North

Taranaki

Thursday 8 February: 4.30pm, St
Joseph's Church, New Plymouth

Whanganui

Friday 9 February: 3.30pm or
4pm, Cullinane College Chapel

Hawke's Bay

Thursday 22 February: 4.30pm,
Sacred Heart Church, Hastings

Palmerston North

Wednesday 6 March: 4.30pm,
Our Lady of Lourdes Church



On their way to Christmas carols in the Challenge 2000 van are former interns Rose at the back and RenC with guitar. Photo: Supplied

Young Catholic Leaders Camp

In December the Archdiocese of Wellington brought together 71 students from its nine Catholic colleges to attend the 19th annual Young Catholic Leaders (YCL) camp. The camp prepares students going into Year 13 for leadership roles for the year ahead.

Held at Forest Lakes Ōtaki, the five-day camp included sessions,

games, workshops and service projects for the students to learn and develop leadership skills.

Archbishop Paul Martin sm joined the camp for a day. He led Mass and held a Q&A session for the students to ask him about his life and his role. There was also Reconciliation with six priests from the archdiocese.



Students at a leadership-learning session at the YCL camp. Photo: Supplied

Rangatahi Katorika

Focolare's Genfest 2024: Brazil

A Kiwi contingent is invited to take part in this year's international Genfest in Brazil and neighbouring countries from 12–24 July. Organised by the Focolare Movement's youth arm, Y4UW International, it offers an experience of universal fraternity for thousands of young people from around the world.

Genfest will be in three parts: 'social action' – volunteer projects across South America; a 'festival' in

Aparecida, São Paulo – international celebrations and performances; 'community pathways', in Aparecida – activities promoting fraternity; and local social and political engagement within a global context.

For more information contact the organisers: newzealand-w@focolare.org or mario.merlo@focolare.org.au or call Mario on 022 622 0170 or Gloria on 022 193 1957. More details: focolare.org/en/ or focolare.org



Participants at a previous Genfest.

Photo: Supplied

Tuākana assigned for 2024

Three youth ministers have been appointed to Catholic colleges in Wellington as Tuākana (youth ministers) for the archdiocese's 2024 Youth Minister programme.

Now in its fourth year, the programme assigns each Tuākana to a college to accompany students in their faith journey and support and encourage the students with their college's Catholic character.

Timothy Ale is at Chanel College; Nick Meli is at Bishop

Viard College; and Sarah Beamish is at Sacred Heart College. It is Timothy and Nick's second year and Sarah's first year.

The Tuākana began their ministries in January with a week of formation before starting at their schools. Louise Lloyd, Young Church Coordinator, supports them throughout the year with their college projects, running archdiocesan events, visiting one another's schools, and a retreat.



Nick Mele



Tim Ale



Sarah Beamish

New Plymouth young Catholics well represented at Life Teen Camp

In January, 24 young people from the Catholic Parish of New Plymouth were among 305 other young people at the 2024 Life Teen Camp. The annual camp offers opportunities to connect with Jesus through keynote sessions, group discussions and fun.

St Peter's College in Cambridge, it was the 8th Life Teen Summer Camp. The annual camp offers opportunities to connect with Jesus through keynote sessions, group discussions and fun.



The Catholic Parish of New Plymouth's 24 young people prior to leaving early morning to head off to Life Teen Camp.

Photo: Supplied



As part of the Catholic Parish of the Wairarapa, St Patrick's School Masterton and St Mary's School Carterton combined to celebrate First Communion for 30 children on the Feast of Christ the King, Sunday, 26 November last year. The children are pictured with parish priest Fr Bruce England on the altar at St Patrick's Church, Masterton. (Fr Bruce been appointed parish priest for Levin in 2024.)

Words and photo: Christine Connor DRS, St Patrick's School; Corey Kennedy DRS, St Mary's School




INTERNSHIP YEAR 2024

GET INVOLVED IN:

- YOUTH JUSTICE
- RETREATS
- OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES
- LEADERSHIP AND MENTORING
- CAREER OPPORTUNITIES
- YOUTH MINISTRY

PAID OPPORTUNITIES

TRAINING AND ACCOMMODATION PROVIDED

JOIN GREAT STAFF AND VOLUNTEER WHĀNAU

HIRING

FEB 2024

APPLY NOW

ARE YOU 18 – 25 WITH A PASSION FOR HELPING AND ENGAGING WITH RANGATAHI AND TAMARIKI?

ALL ENQUIRIES WELCOME!

Contact Kitty : kittymckinley@challenge2000.org.nz
or visit our website: www.challenge2000.org.nz/youth/gap-year/

Obituary

Joy in ordinary living

Michael Fitzsimons

Bern Atkins was a man of great exuberance and warmth, who brought a rare vitality to the many spheres of his life. His sudden passing, aged 67, while on a cycling trip in Northland was a huge shock to his family and wide circle of friends.

The church of Our Lady of Kāpiti, Paraparaumu was packed for his funeral service at the end of November. Bern and his wife Jude were members of the parish and before that were longtime members of St Anthony's parish in Seatoun, Wellington where Bern was a leading member of the music group.

Bern was born and raised in Waipukurau, the middle child of three. He grew up in the company of about 30 cousins and two of his uncles, his namesake Bernard Atkins and Noel Delaney, were Marist priests. Both uncles taught at Hato Pāora College where Bern's family and cousins spent holidays, making the most of the swimming pool and tennis courts. Bern's involvement with the college sparked a lifelong appreciation of Māori language, culture and music.

Bern attended St Joseph's Primary School in Waipukurau and Central Hawke's Bay College before going to St Patrick's College Silverstream for his final college years. He had no sooner arrived at St Pat's when he received the devastating news that his father had died suddenly, aged 51.

Bern was an outstanding sportsman as a young man, excelling in many sports at school. He was in the Central Hawke's Bay College First XV and was a Hawke's Bay Under-18 rugby rep. He was quickly earmarked for the Silverstream First XV and was senior tennis champion.

After school, Bern worked briefly in the Post Office at Waipukurau



'The joy Bern found in ordinary life was contagious.' Bernard (Bern) Thomas Atkins, 3 February 1956–14 November 2023. May he rest in peace.

and then moved to Wellington to work in the Woods family grocery business. So began a working life in sales related to the grocery trade, at which he was very successful, bringing his characteristic humour and big-hearted extroversion to everything he did.

'Bern was born to be a salesman,' said his long-time friend Pete Woods in his eulogy. 'Not because he had the gift of the gab or a silvery tongue but because of his personality. Everyone he met liked him and he liked them. And this is exemplified by the many long-lasting friendships he made in the trade.'

The joy Bern found in ordinary life was contagious and the family home he created with Jude was a place of great hospitality. He was also a talented guitarist with a lifelong infatuation with the Beatles. Singalongs in the great tradition were a feature of the Atkins household and wherever Bern was having a good time.

Bern and Jude have four children and six grandchildren, of whom Bern was immensely proud. In recent years nothing gave him more joy than time spent with the grandkids.

How good is this

For Bern Atkins

How good is this,
you always say,
your mighty embrace of the now.

We are singing and laughing
and playing the guitar
and heaping more off-cuts onto the fire in the backyard,
flames leaping out of the chimney,
sparks flying into a sea of darkness.
How good is this.

Beatles songs, Uncle Noel's songs, waiata,
songs with no pause between them,
songs without end,
we are riding a river of song,
the walls are shaking, the roof is lifting off.
How good is this.

You take me to the rooftop,
a king and his kingdom,
look this way, a harbour glittering at night,
turn the other way, planes taking off and landing
and then a spa on the deck overlooking Kāpiti island.
Did you bring your togs?
How good is this.

It could be a shoebox.
It could be a tiny cottage on a hill.
It could be a sausage on a barbecue.
How good is this.

Before dinner you produce a Brown Brothers' Patricia,
top drawer Australian cabernet
and it flows like happiness.
About 8 or 9 you say to Jude
Is it time to take the roast out of the freezer darling?
How good is this.

You have your own galaxy,
your stars and moons,
your compass of faith,
a family voyage through the heavens
with friends too many to count.
How good is this.

Every decision is a right decision.
Every path leads home.

In your company,
no one knows when to go home.

This is not another poem about a person dying.
This is a poem about a roaring fire, Irresistible,
sparks flying into the night,
all that heat, all that light.

How good was that.

– Michael Fitzsimons

Michael Fitzsimons wrote and read aloud his poem 'How good is this' in memory of his close friend Bern Atkins at the funeral service.

Monsignor Charles Harold Pascal Cooper

10 December 1933 – 3 January 2024 – Rest in Peace

Monsignor Charles Harold Pascal, a much loved and respected priest of the Archdiocese of Wellington, died on 3 January 2024, aged 90, peacefully at Vincentian Home, Berhampore, Wellington. Charles had been recently diagnosed with terminal cancer but died more

quickly was expected.

Monsignor Charles was the loved son of the late Harold and Noelle and late brothers Michael, John and Arthur (Bill).

A Vigil Mass was held at San Antonio Church, Eastbourne, on the evening of 8 January, where

Monsignor Charles had served and lived for many years.

Charles' Requiem Mass was held at Sacred Heart Church, Petone, on 9 January, followed by a private cremation.

A tribute to Monsignor Charles and his many contributions,

particularly in the field of Church music, will be published in next month's WelCom.

Requiescat in Pace.

Monsignor Charles Cooper

Photo: WelCom file



"It's a privilege to care for you and your family during your time of loss."

At Vospers we walk beside you on your journey as you lay your loved one to rest. From the very first time you call us, we will be with you every step of the way, giving advice with compassion, caring and understanding. We can even help with pre-arrangement and prepayment options. Call us today to find out more.

 **vospers**
funeral services

Jacqueline Cox
FUNERAL DIRECTOR



Phone 06 7590912 - 257 Devon St East - New Plymouth - www.vospers.co.nz - FDANZ

BELMONT PLUMBERS

Residential & Commercial Premises

Plumbing • Drainlaying • Certified Gas Fitter • Roofing

Hot Water Cylinder Installation & Replacements

Craftsman Plumber



Master
Plumbers
Representing Excellence

027 443 2694

Letter from the West Bank

Br Peter Bray fsc, a De La Salle Brother originally from Taranaki, was the vice-chancellor of Bethlehem University until the end of last year. Bethlehem University is a Catholic university located in the city of Bethlehem, in the West Bank; it is the first higher education institution founded in the occupied Palestinian territories. During his tenure, Br Peter has written frequent letters to Catholic organisations in New Zealand with updates about the university, the students and graduates, and the challenges. Here is his final letter as vice-chancellor, written 22 December 2023.

Greetings as we again prepare for the most important day of the year for this little town of Bethlehem even in the midst of the war in Gaza and the attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank! I hope and pray this finds you safe and well and making your own preparations to remember Christmas.

The celebration of the Golden Jubilee of Bethlehem University at the beginning of October 2023, was a major event for us and we were so pleased with the gatherings we had. The dedication of the new Georgette Salameh Visitors and Fitness Centre was the highlight of the celebrations. The gathering of some of the 20,000 graduates was a very affirming experience. Those who came were so positive about their memories of being here at Bethlehem University. We are very proud of them and it is satisfying to come across graduates in all sorts of situations in various parts of the world who really treasure the experience they had here at Bethlehem University.

I take comfort from such engagements because I think it indicates to me that we are doing something worthwhile here and that is what keeps hope alive! So many of these graduates are contributing back to the Palestinian society since those first 112 students walked onto the campus to begin Bethlehem University on 1 October 1973.

The calendar year that is ending has been a disrupted one. With the attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank a regular occurrence, it meant that when someone was killed in the Bethlehem Governate or a major incident in the West Bank, there was a strike in protest, which meant sometimes we would go several weeks without a full week of classes. The current semester has been even further disrupted because of the war in Gaza and the slaughter of almost 20,000 Palestinians there, 70 per cent of whom were women and children, and over 51,000 injured. This has



Br Peter Bray fsc was presented with the Papal Cross of Honour – Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice (For the Church and the Pope) from Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches, for his service to the Church and education, during a visit to Rome in 2023. It is one of the highest honours the Pope can bestow upon the laity and religious.

Photos: Vatican Media

been a traumatic time for so many people here because many students, faculty, and staff have relatives and friends in Gaza. Hearing about what is happening there and not being able to communicate with their relatives and friends is making it very difficult for them.

The war in Gaza has put extra pressure on the organisation of the University. The Israelis closed all the checkpoints around Bethlehem when the war began and so the 40 per cent of the students from Jerusalem as well as students from Hebron and surrounding villages have not been able to get to campus. This led us very early on to move teaching online, with all the complications resulting from such a sudden decision.

The easy availability and access students have to AI has become a challenge for faculty! There are moves afoot to bring Bethlehem students and those around Bethlehem who can get to campus to attend and have a hybrid arrangement with those who are unable to come. That is



Two Israeli Christian women, Nahida Anton and her daughter Samar Anton, who were killed by a sniper, as they walked across the courtyard at the Catholic Church of the Holy Family in Gaza.

being explored for the new semester.

The tragedy of the situation here is that the first casualty of the war is truth! It is very difficult to find out what is actually happening in detail and the means of finding out is severely restricted. However, we do know that the middle and southern sections of Gaza are hosting almost two million internally displaced people. In addition, the health authorities recently documented

360,000 cases of infectious diseases in shelters, including diarrhoea, influenza, meningitis, hygiene-related conditions such as lice, and 1,500 cases of intestinal disease are reported daily due to food shortages. There are around 600 people sheltering in the Catholic Holy Family Parish church and school in Gaza. On 16 December, two Christian women, Nahida Anton and her daughter Samar Anton, were walking in the compound when Nahida was shot by a sniper. When Samar went to assist her mother, she too was shot. Both died while others were wounded. In addition, an Israeli tank fired a rocket at the Convent of the Sisters of Mother Teresa and severely damaged the building, thus displacing 54 disabled people who were housed there.

The focus of attention is on Gaza, but it needs to be remembered that the military and settlers are taking advantage of that focus to expand their control of the West Bank. Since the beginning of the war in Gaza on 7 October, there have been almost 280 Palestinians, including some 70 children, who have been killed on the West Bank while almost 3,500 Palestinians have been injured by Israeli forces and settlers. In addition, over 4,500 Palestinians have been arrested since 7 October.

It is against such a backdrop that Bethlehem University is seeking to operate. There is a pervading uncertainty about what the future holds for Palestinians in the West Banks as well as Gaza, because it is impossible to go back to how things were on 6 October! What the alternative will be is far from clear.

Given that backdrop, it is difficult to welcome the Christ child with joy! As a result, all festivities in Bethlehem have been cancelled and our remembering Christmas on campus is very subdued. Instead of the festive lighting of the Christmas tree, we had a sombre remembrance of the children who have been killed

in Gaza. There were four panels on the tree with some 5,000 names of the children who are known to have died. We also had a different Christmas scene in the Chapel of the Divine Child reflecting this reality.

As we remember the birth of Jesus here in Bethlehem I am reminded yet again that what we are remembering is the birth of the Prince of Peace! It is far from a place of peace at present. Yet my engagement with Palestinians here at Bethlehem University and their response to what is offered, shows me that what we are doing is worthwhile and that is the source of hope! In the midst of the anxiety and fear I see God's Spirit at work. In the resistance among the people holed up in Gaza, I see God's Spirit at work. In the determination of people here to carry out our mission to serve the young people entrusted to us, I see God's Spirit at work. We are seeking to respond to that Spirit and create here an environment where people can move towards living life to the full, despite the occupation, the oppression, the restrictions, and the challenges they face. To live life to the full was central to Jesus' message and I feel so blessed to have had the opportunity to help make that possible, here where Jesus was born!

My time as Vice Chancellor ends on 13 December 2023. These fifteen years have been a blessed and deeply enriching time for me and for that I am deeply grateful. So, from this little town of Bethlehem, for the last time, I send you Christmas greetings and best wishes as you remember the birth of Jesus and hopefully experience a growing sense of peace in your own life. Please keep us in your prayers!

Best wishes and thanks for your interest in and support of our mission here over these past fifteen years.

Br Peter Bray, FSC, EdD
Vice Chancellor

Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand supporting Holy Land humanitarian crisis

Ben Sokimi

Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand has been working tirelessly with our partners Caritas Jerusalem and Bethlehem University to support the thousands of people in need during the ongoing crisis in the Holy Land.

From the generous donations of many New Zealanders, through our partners we've been able to deliver vital supplies to more than 100,000 people – including blankets, mats, and mattresses for 600 families as well as food and other emergency supplies. The situation for our partners is extremely dangerous, and though we continue to help them it is often unsafe for them to operate amid the warzone.

Caritas Jerusalem affirmed their 'dedication to serving people of all faiths in the Occupied Palestinian

Territories' and their 'commitment to fostering hope, compassion, and peace' in a statement (see caritas.org.nz).

In solidarity with our partners, and all people of the Holy Land, we have been advocating for a ceasefire to protect civilians, as well as for further humanitarian aid. We are committed to the path of peace, and in December we wrote to Prime Minister Christopher Luxon and Foreign Minister Winston Peters urging them to use all means at their disposal to call for an immediate ceasefire. We also called for the New Zealand Government to vote in favour of a resolution for ceasefire at the United Nations General Assembly, which the Government did.

Over the Christmas period, we joined with our brother and sister Caritas agencies around the world



Devastation in the Holy Land is widespread, with continued aid and relief desperately needed.

Photo: Caritas Jerusalem

in signing onto the [#CeasefireNOW!](https://www.change.org/p/ceasefire-now) Petition. It has been signed by over

one million people worldwide, including Christian, Jewish, and

Muslim organisations.

As the crisis continues, we remain in solidarity with all people in the Holy Land. Each day at noon our staff join in saying the Rosary to pray for peace, justice, and an end to suffering, and we have led international Caritas staff in weekly prayer for the Caritas Oceania Moana Breeze.

We are deeply grateful to all those who have donated to our humanitarian efforts. The human cost to this conflict has been tragic, with thousands of casualties in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including hundreds of children. Your ongoing support provides hope and relief to those in need through the work we do with our partners. Please visit caritas.org.nz for more information.

Pope Francis' letter on promoting theology

Pope Francis released a new apostolic letter as a *motu proprio* on 1 November 2023, entitled: *Ad Theologiam Promovendam - To Promote Theology*. The 1500-word letter, divided into 10 articles, has been described as: 'presenting an ambitious vision for the renewal of theological pursuit within the life of the Church, cognisant of the shifting cultural landscapes and the Church's mission in the contemporary world.' **Emeritus Bishop Peter Cullinane** of the Palmerston North Diocese comments on Pope Francis' new letter.

A letter from Pope Francis titled 'On Promoting Theology' might seem a bit esoteric – intended for a special group within the Church, not ourselves. After all, its aims are pretty sturdy: In 2014, the International Theological Commission had acknowledged the need for further reflection on teachings that meet resistance by the faithful, 'in order to communicate more effectively the essential message'; and it admitted that in some cases, resistance 'may indicate insufficient consultation of the faithful by the magisterium.' Now, this letter of Pope Francis endorses the need for widespread consultation, ensuring theology is at the service of the Church's mission,

amazement at the worth and dignity of the human person is another name for the Christian gospel' (Pope St John Paul II.) So, doing theology means looking for the signs of God's presence and God's love wherever these have been or are being revealed in our lives. Even common sense is described as a 'theological source in which many images of God live...' But it is in the body of Christ, the community of Jesus' disciples, that we can expect God's word to be more explicit.

There was real drama when the Council rejected a draft description of the Church based on Holy Orders. The Council opted for a draft based on the meaning of Baptism. This

"Ultimately, Pope Francis wants theology to be a way of living our common calling to discipleship, and emphatically at the service of the Church's mission in the world." – Bishop Peter Cullinane

and allowing it to be 'challenged by reality'.

These aims are rather general. They only become specific in the process of doing the work. So, again, perhaps a task for others, not ourselves. Really? A close look shows Pope Francis is calling for theology to be done through interaction with all the baptised – that's us – as well as with people of other traditions and other faiths and no faith. Here the Pope is drawing down yet another corollary of the Second Vatican Council's teachings.

Theology explores what God has said and is saying to the world about how much we matter to God – and therefore to ourselves: 'Deep



'Pope Francis' letter endorses the need for widespread consultation, ensuring theology is at the service of the Church's mission, and allowing it to be 'challenged by reality' – Bishop Peter Cullinane.

Photo: pn.diocese.org.nz



Pope Francis released a new *motu proprio* on 1 November 2023. Entitled *Ad Theologiam Promovendam - To Promote Theology*, and addressed to the Pontifical Academy of Theology, the Pope calls for a new understanding of the science of theology for the era we are now living.

Image: Vatican Media

was a tectonic paradigm shift. Pope Francis was not the first to draw out the implications of all this. Pope Benedict XVI, for example, taught that the laity are 'not just collaborators of the clergy'. They are 'co-responsible with the clergy for what the Church looks like and how it acts'. So, it's all of us.

In his turn, Pope Francis calls for all of us to listen closely to one another, and with one another to the Holy Spirit. He wants a 'culture of dialogue'. But he also wants theology to be a way of understanding divine

revelation that can be 'acted upon', and 'addressed to the open wounds of humanity and creation...'

Actually, this deep-seated, long-buried, need was foreshadowed in the Council's call for smaller dioceses, where people, priests, religious and bishops could work more closely together (*Pastoral Office of Bishops*, 22-24). It is not exaggerating to say the Diocese of Palmerston North and the re-shaped Archdiocese of Wellington have their origins in the Council's desire for that closeness which later

popes would call co-responsibility and synodality. The Diocese of Palmerston North's decision to adopt the Acts of the Apostles as its mission statement echoes the co-responsibility and synodality of the first generation of Christians.

Ultimately, Pope Francis wants theology to be a way of living our common calling to discipleship, and emphatically at the service of the Church's mission in the world. But it is to be 'worked out on one's knees, pregnant with adoration and prayer' and leading to wisdom.

Canterbury's Fr Michael Pui new director of MissioNZ

Fr Michael Pui – parish priest of Good Shepherd Parish Hurunui in North Canterbury – has been appointed National Director of MissioNZ, the local face of the Pontifical Mission Societies.

He takes over from Fr Bernard Espiritu SVD, the national director since 2012.

The Pontifical Mission Societies are a group of four missionary bodies under the jurisdiction of the Pope via the Vatican's Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples. The societies connect local churches to the Catholic Church's missionary work around the world.

They are best known to most people for overseeing the World Missions Sunday collection on the third Sunday of October each year in all Catholic parishes around the world.

Fr Michael was ordained in Christchurch in 2000 by Bishop John Cunneen after a secular career as an engineer with the former Electricorp and Foundation for Research, Science and Technology. He has served as parish priest in several Christchurch diocese parishes since his ordination, most recently at Good Shepherd, Hurunui since 2020.

'I am taking up the position with

some trepidation, and also with some sadness at the thought I will no longer be a parish priest among my flock,' says Fr Michael.

'The role of the national director is far more than dealing only with the collection of Mission Sunday or generating a revenue to fund mission work in the world. It includes promoting a missionary sense within local parishes, religious institutions and schools with particular attention to World Mission Sunday, and establishing a stable and good relationship with the bishop who liaises with MissioNZ within the New Zealand

Catholic Bishops Conference, currently Bishop Michael Gielen, Bishop of Christchurch.

'I think in time I will be visiting all the parishes in New Zealand, on weekends!' says Fr Michael.

Bishop Michael Gielen says: 'Fr Michael has shown his great passion for mission, outreach and evangelisation in his priestly ministry. In this new role, he will carry that zeal around the country to serve the national Church, and ultimately the Church's missionary efforts around the world.'

MissioNZ website: missio.nz



Fr Michael Pui, new National Director of MissioNZ. Photo: Supplied

KCA KĀPITI LIMITED
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

Advisors to Business Owners and Trustees of Family Trusts

Nick Maher 04 902 6148 nick@kapiti.accountants
127 Rimu Road, Paraparaumu

Ray's Vehicle Services

"A" Grade Imports with varying kilometres (as low as 5000ks)

New stock arriving regularly many under \$10,000

Vehicles may be viewed at 16 Jamaica Drive Tawa, Unit 27

Tuesdays and Thursdays between 10am–12 noon

or by appointment contact Ray

Ph 027 442 1902 or 04 232 9573

Email relindsay@xtra.co.nz

R.E. (Ray) Lindsay Ltd

(in association with Sommerville Cars)

Pope Francis' Prayer Intention

During the month of February 2024 Pope Francis' intention is: *for the terminally ill.*

We pray that those with a terminal illness, and their families, receive the necessary physical and spiritual care and accompaniment.

A Litany Revisited

The final segment of this series in which **Fr James Lyons** has explored titles of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as found in the 16th century Litany of Loreto.

Comforter of the afflicted

Many years ago, in a broadcast training session, I learned that writers of religious talks for radio should aim to produce scripts that ‘comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable’. This is the aim of any preacher or ‘proclaimer of the Word’ who, following the example of Jesus Christ, is sensitive to the importance and significance of compassion and challenge.

As a title honouring Mary, the mother of Jesus, *Comforter of the Afflicted* would seem to favour the compassionate aspect. We might be tempted to see Mary as a ‘soft touch’, someone to run to when things aren’t going our way. Someone who’ll take our part and reassure us with ‘There, there!’ and ‘Don’t worry!’. Someone who’ll ‘kiss it better’ and make everything all right.

But this is not the comfort Mary offers. Mary is not the one to approach if that is the kind of comfort we are seeking.

A comforter is a person who comforts or consoles me; someone who lessens the severity of my grief or disappointment. A comforter doesn’t take the pain away or allow me to pretend, but shows a level of understanding, likely to come from their own lived experience. Their closeness, or empathy,

makes the pain more bearable, even perhaps giving the pain some meaning or purpose.

In this sense, the comforter is also a disturber – stirring up within the one being comforted other feelings about themselves or their relationships that may need some attention, healing or redirection.

“An encounter with Mary - who found her own comfort in the gift of herself - will open a way for the afflicted to recognise affliction and to become comforters themselves.”

Mary, *Comforter of the Afflicted*, welcomes with open arms anyone lost or troubled, hurt or broken, lonely, sad, afflicted in any way. She welcomes them for she knows they are the very ones Jesus came to seek out with his message of hope.

Comforting is multi-dimensional. It is touch and spoken word; it is presence, it is both listening and hearing, and it is silence. To be with someone suffering in a positive way is to recognise their need and to sense the best response. The comforter leaves the ‘self’

out of being and replaces it with the ‘other’.

But, like her Son, Mary knows that no one can be truly comforted without also being challenged. An encounter with Mary – who found her own comfort in the gift of herself – will open a way for the afflicted to recognise affliction and to become comforters themselves.

*I knew before she spoke.
Something in the gap between
my greeting in opening the call
and her words
‘Mum died last night.’
The news came before the words.
The silent moment
cradled new born grief
and told me pain was near.*

*Listen to the silence.
It is the space between us
filled with invitations to enter.
Listen to the silence.*

*It is the voice of all in need
of comfort and a heart that loves.
Mary, Comforter of the Afflicted.
Pray for us.*



Madonna della Consolazione (Our Lady of Consolation), oil on panel painting by Perugino, c 1496–1498, completed in 1498, has since c 1820 been preserved in the National Gallery of Umbria in Perugia.

Help of Christians

This invocation was added to the Litany of Loreto following the Battle of Lepanto (7 October 1571).

Catholics throughout Europe had prayed the Rosary for Our Lady’s intercession and protection and attributed victory to her help. This became the date for the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary.

Following the release of Pope Pius VII from imprisonment under Napoleon in 1813, the Pope instituted the Feast of Our Lady, Help of Christians, to be honoured each year on 24 May.

But, from the earliest days of the Christian era, Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus the Christ, has been recognised as the ideal advocate, a person to call on in time of need.

The wedding at Cana (*John 2:1-11*) has Mary, aware of a potential embarrassment for the hosts and a social gaffe with the wine running out, encouraging Jesus to save the day. Her caring motherhood steps in to defuse a cultural and family disaster, pointing out to Jesus that *they have no wine*.

Her words to the wine stewards: *Do whatever he tells you*, have relevance for all who would follow Jesus. Mary’s intercessory power has consequences for all seeking her help: we are to listen more closely to Jesus and act on his words.

Mary accompanied Jesus on his mission

and stood with him even when others fled. The only Apostle with her at the foot of the cross as Jesus died, was John. The others abandoned him and ran away.

But Mary did not abandon them.

She helped all the disciples with her presence and her unfailing love, gathering with them as they regrouped, shamefaced and humbled (*cf Acts 1:12-14*).

Mary, as mother of Jesus, is mother of the Body of Christ, the Church, the People of God. She is our mother, gifted by Jesus from the cross to John and, through him to all who follow the Christian way.

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, this is your son.’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home. (John 19:26-27)

Motherhood carries a special gene of care. The unique and, in a sense, unbreakable bond between mother and child, holds them close regardless of the separation that comes with time and distance.

Pope St John Paul II writes, ‘Mary, who from the beginning had given herself without reserve to the person and work of her Son, could not but pour out upon the Church, from its infancy, her maternal self-giving. After her Son’s departure, her motherhood

remains...interceding for all her children...’ (*Redemptoris Mater – Mary, in the Life of the Pilgrim Church, 1987, n.40*)

*Mary, woman of care.
Sensitive to the needs of your children.
Your mothering is strong yet gentle
echoing your own time of being without.
Seeking security, safety and shelter,
exchanging Bethlehem for Egypt,
you learned the secret of suffering
and the healing power of love.
Comfort us in our uncertainty.
Strengthen our trembling
that, like you, we may be
strong in faith.
unbending in hope.
generous in love.*

Mary, Help of Christians - Pray for us.

The Battle of Lepanto, a large naval engagement involving more than 400 warships, took place on 7 October 1571 in the waters off southwestern Greece. A fleet of the Holy League, a coalition of Catholic states arranged by Pope Pius V, inflicted a major defeat on the fleet of the Ottoman Empire in the Gulf of Patras during an Ottoman campaign to acquire the Venetian island of Cyprus.



The venerated image that Pope Leo XIII granted a Canonical coronation on 13 February 1903. Oil on canvas, by Roman artisan Tommaso Andrea Lorenzone (1824–1902). The Basilica of Our Lady Help of Christians, Turin. Source: Wikipedia

Serving Wellington and the Kāpiti Coast

The Kapiti Coast Funeral Home has all the facilities of a Wellington Funeral Home without all their costs. Now with easy access via Te Ara Nui o Te Rangihaeata (Transmission Gully) we’re able to provide the best of service while saving you money. We’re based on the beautiful Kāpiti Coast, in Paraparaumu, with access to many venues in Wellington and two chapels in Kāpiti, including our tranquil crematorium set in the peaceful rural setting of Awa Tapu Cemetery, just up the road from the funeral home. Feel free to phone us or go to our websites for information.



MEMBER Funeral Directors ASSOCIATION OF NZ NZIFH

HINEMOA ST PARAPARAUMU 04-298 5168 www.kapiti coast funeral home.co.nz

- No hidden costs, prices on website
- No charge for streaming services in our chapel
- No charge for our follow up Bereavement Care after a funeral held with us
- No markups on items purchased for you, like flowers or newspaper notices
- No charge to set up Pre Arranged funerals or Pre Paid funerals



Helping to support refugee families into homes

Kamau Holland
Director
Catholic Social Services

Catholic Social Services are part of a collaboration that provides household goods and pantry packs to help in the settlement of newly arriving refugees. We can do this because of the generosity of our parish communities and others who have donated household goods, pantry packs and turned empty houses into homes.

Since 2015 when this project started, thanks to kindness of these groups CSS have supported the resettlement of over 1000 people in and around Wellington – that’s around 310 households. Some 534 people have been helping with collecting and supplying household goods and pantry packs; and just over 900 people have helped to set up the homes.

More recently, the housing shortage has meant patterns for resettling refugees have changed with smaller families and many single people now being accommodated. This puts pressure on providing resources. For example, expensive items needed to set up homes were previously shared by a larger number of people in the same household. Now, instead of

providing one microwave, vacuum cleaner, rice cooker, electric jug, say for a six-person household, we have to multiply those items six-fold for six individual households.

When the project began in 2015 many parishes and other groups leapt at the opportunity to support and help set up homes for newly arriving refugees. But the changing patterns of resettlement has meant many have found it difficult to sustain this support.

In December last year, CSS worked with the Anglican



Household goods and items are needed to help set up homes around the Wellington region for newly arriving refugees. Photo: CSS

Movement to settle 12 families. We struggled to pull together what was needed for another 13 people arriving before Christmas. Our resources were almost depleted and we were concerned about providing items for families due to arrive in January. We appealed to staff at the Archdiocese of Wellington office and were blown away by their generous response with donations worth more than \$1600.

The need for support is ongoing. From mid-January more people began arriving and others will continue to arrive during 2024. With resources almost exhausted CSS is appealing for your support to have items available to transform empty houses into homes ready for people as they arrive this year.

Groups and individuals who would like to help with gathering household goods, pantry packs and setting up houses are needed this year. For information and to offer your help, please email our coordinators Vera or Mercy at refugees@wn-catholicsocialservices.org.nz or phone (04) 385 8642.

Donations can be made at: wn-catholicsocialservices.org.nz/ Donate or ph (04) 385 8642.

Gospel Reading: Sunday 4 February 2024

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – MARK 1:29-39

²⁹ On leaving the synagogue Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John.

³⁰ Simon’s mother-in-law lay sick with a fever. They immediately told him about her.

³¹ He approached, grasped her hand, and helped her up. Then the fever left her and she began to wait on them.

³² That evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were

ill and those who were possessed by demons. ³³ The whole town came crowding at the door. ³⁴ He cured many who were sick with various diseases; he also drove out many demons, but he would not allow them to speak because they knew who he was.

³⁵ Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed. ³⁶ Simon and those who were with him set

out in search of him. ³⁷ When they found him, they said, ‘Everyone is looking for you.’

³⁸ He answered, ‘Let us go on to the nearby villages so that I may proclaim the message there too. For this purpose have I come.’

³⁹ And he went into their synagogues, preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee.

Where is Jesus?

Dr Elizabeth Julian rsm

Recently, I attended a party for a woman celebrating her 100th birthday. Sr Juliana’s 80 years of music ministry as a disciple of Jesus has been sustained by her prayer life. Today she is most often found in the chapel deep in contemplation.

At the end of today’s gospel we find Jesus at prayer communing with his father. It was this relationship that enabled him to usher in the reign of God through preaching, healing and driving out demons.

Jesus’ public ministry in Capernaum, the little fishing village on the edge of the Lake of Galilee, begins in the synagogue (suggesting it is the Sabbath) and continues in the local area. He enters Peter’s house and heals (the same verb is often used in the resurrection accounts because in the ancient world sick people were believed to be gripped by the powers of death) his mother-in-law. She immediately begins ministering to/serving others.

Remember that Jesus says repeatedly that he has come ‘not to

be served but to serve’. This woman then is the first person in this gospel to act like Jesus. Crowds gather at the door as people bring their sick and possessed to Jesus. (Because the sun has gone down they are not guilty of carrying burdens on the Sabbath.) Jesus becomes the Good News he is preaching. Everyone he touches is healed and restored to wholeness.

Then we are told that everyone is looking for Jesus. Where is he? In a lonely place communing with his father prior to embarking on another round of preaching, healing and driving out demons. It was by the power of God that Jesus addressed the needs of his day.

As disciples of Jesus that is our task today. We can bring healing in many different ways – through a smile, a greeting, a word of encouragement, a touch, a phone call, an offer to help. We too, can be the Good News for others. But of course, before any of this we have to do what Jesus did and Sr Juliana does with such fidelity, that is, find a quiet place and deepen our relationship with God.



“...find a quiet place and deepen our relationship with God.”

Photo: Kopua Monastery/Annette Scullion, WelCom

DIGNITY, SENSITIVITY AND THE RESPECT YOUR LOVED ONES DESERVE.

Proud to have served the families of Wellington for over 135 years, we are committed to providing quality, personal service with compassion and integrity. Contact us about pre-planning and pre-payment options.

Wellington: 306 Willis Street
Ph 385 0745

Johnsonville: 7 Johnsonville Road
Ph 477 6855

Karori: 89 Karori Road
Ph 476 6472

LYCHGATE FUNERALS

www.lychgate.co.nz

Our Wellington Catholic Future

Archdiocese OF Wellington

Remembering tomorrow’s Archdiocese of Wellington today

Our Catholicism in Wellington and what we have in our Archdiocese today is a tribute to the efforts and generosity of those who have come before us. Please consider leaving a bequest in your Will as a long-lasting gift towards strengthening our mission. Ensure our tomorrow with a gift today, large or small, in your Will, to the Catholic Archdiocese of Wellington.

Please contact:
The Archdiocese of Wellington

Ph: (04) 496-1788
 Email: r.norris@wn.catholic.org.nz

PO Box 1937
 Wellington 6140

FREEBAIRN & HEHIR LAWYERS

I’ve been sorting out wills, enduring powers of attorney and retirement village agreements for the Catholic community since 2009. If I was any better at keeping confidences, I’d be a priest.

LIAM HEHIR

Give me a call today - 0508 345299 fhlaw.co.nz

DATES AND EVENTS – WHAT’S ON

To list events free, email welcom@wn.catholic.org.nz with event name, date, time, location and contact details.

Tuesday 6 February

➤ Waitangi Day – Masses in Wellington and Palmerston North (see p 3).
 ➤ Challenge Youth Ministry – liturgies at St Francis of Assisi Parish, Johnsonville, and workshops for parishioners and community members to help deepen understanding of Te Tiriti. Workshops 3pm to 5pm; kai 5pm to 6pm; prayer and reflection 6pm to 7pm. Contact Mitch on 0220218970; Ana on 0212273754; Kitty 021491459.

Thursday 8 February

A Conversation with Tomáš Halík: What does it mean to have faith? Belief in today’s world, with acclaimed Czech Catholic priest, philosopher, theologian, professor of sociology at Charles University Prague, Templeton prize winner. Organised by VUW, Te Kupenga: Catholic Leadership Institute, Archdiocese of Wellington, 5.30pm–7.30pm, LT1 Old Government Buildings, Pipitea Campus, Wellington. Free entry.

Wednesday 14 February

Ash Wednesday
Sunday 3 March
 Young Church Mass – Archdiocese of Wellington, information@ADWYoungChurch.

Sundays 3 and 10 March

Love is a Decision – archdiocesan marriage preparation course for engaged couples, 10am–4pm. Register: wn.catholic.org.nz/about/church-mission/marriage-ministries

Saturday 9 March

Come and See Vocations – begins with 9am Mass, Our Lady of Fatima Church Tawa, finishes 12.30pm. Contact Lucienne at l.hensel@wn.catholic.org.nz to register.

Saturday 16–Sunday 17 March

Engaged Encounter – marriage preparation weekend for couples in Karori. Visit www.cee-wellington.co.nz for information and to register.

Tuesday 26 March

Chrism Mass – Upper South Island, 11am, Garin College Gym (Sneddon Centre), 35 Champion Rd, Richmond, Nelson.

Wednesday 27 March

Chrism Mass – Wellington region, 7pm, Pro-Cathedral, St Teresa’s Karori.

Palmerston North Young Catholics

All 18–35-year-olds invited after each Sunday 6pm Mass, to Cathedral lounge at 7.15pm, for great opportunity to meet like-minded people, form new friendships and get involved.

Archdiocese Church Mission programme 2024

Church Mission team has a range of formation programmes for 2024 to support parishes: creating and implementing a parish pastoral plan; hospitality 101; building families of faith; marriage and enrichment; place for young people (two parts); Pope Francis’ writings. For information please email churchmission@wn.catholic.org.nz or ph (04) 496-1709.

Historic reunion November 2024

Calling all Sacred Heart and Redwood College Nelson past pupils and staff. Our reunion organising committee is reaching out to New Zealand parishes and overseas to contact past pupils and staff of Sacred Heart and Redwood College, Nelson, for an historic reunion in November this year.

This will also be a celebration of Nelson’s early settlement history. Sacred Heart College, Manuka St, Nelson, closed its doors for the last time in December 1982. Sadly, the historic 100-year-old wooden building was destroyed by fire in 1983.

Dates: 15, 16, 17 November 2024
 Location: The Granary, Heritage Park, Nelson. Register now on our website: redwoodsacredheart.com
 Join our Facebook group: facebook.com/groups/sacredheartredwoodreunion
 For more information contact Bernadette King-Turner at: SHReunion2024@gmail.com



WHĀNAU MERCY MINISTRIES

Ko Te Hapai O / Executive Director WHĀNAU MERCY MINISTRIES

Bring your best

- Senior leadership role
- Faith-based enterprise
- People-savvy is vital

We have a significant opportunity for an experienced senior leader with advanced people skills and affinity with a faith-based mission.

Whānau Mercy Ministries Trust is a recently established Catholic enterprise in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy. We oversee the governance of eleven ministries across New Zealand in areas of education, health, housing and community development.

The Board seeks to appoint its foundation Ko Te Hapai O/ Executive Director. Each entity has its own Board and executive leadership, so this role is one of influence, collaboration and support – as much leading from behind as from the front.

Key to your success in the role will be your emotional intelligence, your business skills (including finance, property and people management), your ability to work from a Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Catholic foundation and your experience in supporting effective governance.

The ability to blend strategic grasp with operational detail, to relate in an emotionally mature manner with a wide range of partners and stakeholders and to communicate in a clear and compelling way will also be vital.

You will report to the Chair of Whānau Mercy Ministries, with the role location open to discussion.

For a confidential discussion about the role, contact Gerald Scanlan (Trustee) on 021 375292.

For an information pack or to apply for the role, email Gerald at mercy@scanfam.nz.

Applications close on Monday 19 February.

World Marriage Day

Parishes and communities throughout New Zealand are encouraged to celebrate and support married life on World Marriage Day, 13 February.

Simone Olsen is the Archdiocese of Wellington’s new Marriage Ministries Coordinator, supporting engaged couples on their journey to marriage. Simone, with her husband Shane, has been a volunteer with this ministry for over 10 years. ‘I’m excited to be a part of this work, coordinating the archdiocesan marriage preparation courses and supporting couples on their journey to prepare for their lifetime together.’

To learn more about Marriage Preparation pathways, download the new 2024 brochure: tinyurl.com/Marriage-Preparation-Pathways

Register for the ‘Love is a Decision’ course, 3 and 10 March, at: wn.catholic.org.nz/about/church-mission/marriage-ministries and for more information.



Simone Olsen, Marriage Ministries Coordinator.



MEN'S MEETINGS

Joshua aims to encourage, support and strengthen men in their Christian calling. Come and join us.

<p>Wellington</p> <p>Loaves & Fishes Hall, Hill Street Thursday 15 February, 7:30pm Contact: David 027 447 7280</p>	<p>Palmerston North</p> <p>St Mary’s Church foyer, Ruahine Street Tuesday 20 February, 7:00pm Contact: John 027 688 7750</p>
--	---

‘As for me and my house we will serve the Lord’ - *Joshua 24:15*

Sponsored by **Monastra QS Consultants Ltd - Quantity Surveyors**



Thinking of buying or selling a home?
Call me today!

Andrea O'Donnell AREINZ

H 06 351 2825 200 MILLION
O 06 356 5122
M 027 483 4211
E andreao@pb.co.nz
f Andrea O'Donnell Property Brokers
globe andreaodonnell.pb.co.nz



Proud to be here pb.co.nz
 Property Brokers Ltd Licensed REAA 2008



Are you the new
Events and Volunteers Coordinator
 for the Sisters of Compassion Group?
Apply via Seek today!



Following the mission of Jesus and in the spirit of Suzanne Aubert we share with people faith and compassion

Missionary life of serving, leadership and transforming lives through education

Fr Philip Gibbs SVD, OBE, President of the Catholic Divine Word University in Madang, Papua New Guinea, was visiting family in Lower Hutt over the summer break. He caught up with WelCom to talk about his missionary life as a priest of 50 years in PNG, and his work leading the university there. Through its Catholic faith-centred, integrated and holistic approach to educating 'the whole person', the university is transforming the lives of its students and their communities.

After leaving St Bernard's College Lower Hutt in 1964, Philip began his studies at Holy Name Seminary in Christchurch. He completed a Bachelor in Sociology at Canterbury University in 1969 and a later Diploma in Anthropology at Sydney University in 1972.

He recognised his calling was for missionary work in Oceania, and in 1971 joined the Society of the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) formation novitiate in Queensland.

After spending time in PNG as a student in the early 1970s Philip was ordained a priest in Hamilton in 1978. His first assignment was in the remote Porgera-Paiela region in the Western Highlands province of PNG where he was a parish priest.

'I went to PNG in 1973 and have been there ever since,' he says, 'except for some time out in the mid '70s to study a Master in Theology in Chicago then later a Doctorate in Theology at the Gregorian University in Rome from 1989 to 1995.'

His studies led to several teaching roles and human rights work. He has been involved in research field work for HIV-AIDS and Sorcery Accusation Related Violence (SARV). In 2016, he was asked to take a research professor role at

Divine Word University and three years ago he was appointed as President/Vice Chancellor. In 2019, Philip was awarded an OBE for his dedicated work with the people of PNG.

Philip considers it a challenge and a privilege being in charge at a young multicultural university in a developing country.

DWU was established in 1996 under the leadership of the Divine Word Missionaries. It has since become a leading tertiary institution in PNG with some 3500 students across its five campuses – Madang, Port Moresby, Rabaul, Wewak, and Tabubil.

Privately governed with some government support, the university is ecumenical and coeducational. It is committed to the integral human development of students and their communities in PNG and the Pacific Region.

'Integral human development is the first of PNG's national goals and directive principles in the Preamble to its Constitution,' says Philip. 'It reminds us of the importance of fostering community service, and development in the local community.'

'Our educational philosophy is embedded in Catholic values as stated in our charter: "The institution should be a Christian community

based on love for all people for each other, because each is a child of God."

'The university provides for students' intellectual as well as spiritual growth and development to prepare them as people ready and committed to contribute to national development, as well as Christian leadership for our country.'

Although DWU is a Catholic university, only a third of the students are Catholic so a lot of ecumenical work goes on among the students of other denominations to encourage them in their faith. Christianity is the faith majority in PNG.

DWU has faculties in business studies and informatics, medicine and health sciences and nursing, communication arts and media, education and preparation of committed teachers for PNG schools.

'We have a special interest to advance opportunities for individuals from isolated rural communities to help build the economic and social capacity of the region.'

In a country with high levels of gender-based violence DWU also has a special interest in providing educational opportunities for women. Parents favour the university as a place where their daughters can grow and mature in peace, safety and respect.

'Of more than 1800 students currently enrolled at the Madang campus, more than half are women, which is significant,' says Philip.

'We are taking a real stand in educating women but ensuring the students are safe. A lot of work is done in terms of respect of culture and gender differences. Male violence is not tolerated at the university.'

DWU also has number of ventures 'outside the classroom', for example courses and programmes for the wider public to sign up for online.

'We are about to start a farm. We've got the land, but we're starting from scratch and we need a farmer to work with us. A PNG farm is very different from New Zealand farm,' says Philip. [If you can help, contact Philip at: gibbs199@gmail.com].

'We also have a medical school, training and preparing doctors to teach in a developing country where they are expected to have universal standards. We graduate about 20 doctors a year.'

There is a very low ratio of doctors in PNG, therefore midwifery is very important since currently the maternal death rate is very high. 'So we are also looking for people qualified to teach in a medical school.'

DWU has an agreement with the Fred Hollows Foundation that supports the eye-care programme with the academic standard required.

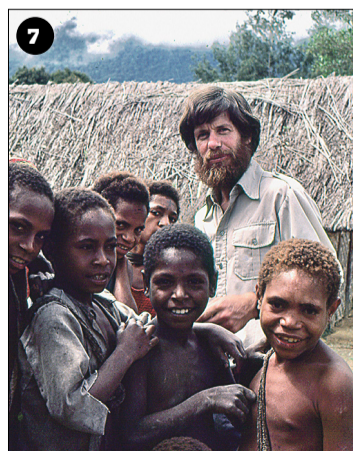
'We train about 10 to 12 eye-care specialists every year,' says Philip. 'We recently opened a special facility for eye-care specialists to have highest level of training and accreditation standards.'

Other programmes train physiotherapists, doctors, environmental support workers and rural health officers, so people are skilled to go to the rural areas.

'We want our students to be job ready, with a well-rounded education – although it can be a bit of a problem keeping them in the country as they graduate with universal qualifications that are highly sought after in other countries.'

'Our people do very well. PNG's future will be found in its well-educated young people performing and contributing to positions into the future.'

Philip has just been appointed by his Religious Congregation with another three-year term at Divine Word University. He says he has plenty to do in PNG, developing and supporting his students – as well as pursuing his interests in filmmaking and photography.



1. Fr Philip Gibbs (r) celebrating 50 years of missionary service in PNG. 2. Fr Philip Gibbs (r) and an official of the Digicel Foundation Campaign for Men of Honour, which aims at breaking the cycle of violence through focusing on positive behaviour for PNG men. 3. DWU staff who have studied in New Zealand, gathered last year with newly appointed NZ High Commissioner Peter Zwart. 4. Students graduating at DWU Rabaul campus. 5. Receiving OBE award from PNG Governor General Sir Bob Dadae. 6. Student celebration at a cultural exchange at Madang campus. 7. Village ministry in the 80s. 8. Fr Philip giving an address at public meeting in Madang.

Photos: Supplied/Fr Philip Gibbs