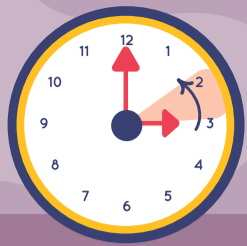


DAYLIGHT
SAVING ENDS
SUNDAY
7 APRIL



CLOCKS GO BACK ONE HOUR

NATIONAL
VOCATIONS
AWARENESS
WEEK

DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

PAGES 10, 11

NATIONAL
DAY OF
REMEMBRANCE

ANZAC DAY

PAGE 20



WelCom

APRIL 2024
ISSUE 422

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



Heaven and earth rejoice. Alleluia!

Easter Sunday. 'Christ is Risen' – statue above the altar at St Mary's Catholic Church, Palmerston North.

Photo: David Lupton/WelCom

Countdown on for Cathedral reopening weekend in June

Annette Scullion

The countdown is on for the reopening of the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart over the weekend of 7 to 9 June this year. Parish volunteers are busy planning a schedule for the opening.

The Cathedral has been closed for a number of years for strengthening and refurbishment to take place. This work is soon coming to an end.

In a video update Archbishop Paul Martin said he is very

excited for the future of the Cathedral, 'both that it is safe and the work that has been done inside is helping it to be a place of beauty and reverence and also a place of community and worship.'

'I think you will be really delighted when you see the work that has been done and for us to be able to come home again to that place, I know, so many are looking forward to.'

Overall, the project has cost around \$13m and \$1m is left to fundraise to be able to finish the work. Archbishop Martin said, 'donations towards this amount

would be really appreciated and are a real contribution to the life of the whole archdiocese.'

'Sometimes, when you're not in Wellington you might think, "What's this Cathedral thing all about?" But it's the heart of our diocese, it's the place where the Bishop's chair, the cathedra, lives. It's the focal point [where] a church binds us all together, that we belong to, because it's the Cathedral.'

Archbishop Martin thanked everyone who has donated their time, their talents, and 'especially if you've contributed your funds as

well – it's very much appreciated.'

'I know you'll look forward to seeing the Cathedral, as am I, and we will be able to have lots of opportunities in the future to celebrate there together. Thank you and God bless,' he concluded.

For more information and to donate to the Cathedral Restoration fund please go online to: cathedralcampaign.org.nz

» Cathedral restoration project architect Jane Kelly finalist in 2023 Wellington of the Year Awards, p 8.



Photo: WelCom

From the editor

Annette Scullion

Tēnā koutou kātoa

Easter greetings to everyone.

We have published this April edition of WelCom a week earlier to coincide with Easter Sunday, the day of the Resurrection of Christ.

Our front cover photo, taken at St Mary's Church, Ruahine St, Palmerston North, depicts the Risen Christ above the altar, as a fitting image to symbolise this most important day in the Catholic Church's calendar, and the start of the Easter Season for the weeks ahead.

On 21 April, the Church observes its annual World Day of Prayer for Vocations, a day dedicated to promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life. In his message for World Day of Prayer for Vocations, Pope Francis summarises Christian Vocations in this way:

'Our life finds fulfilment when we discover who we are, what our gifts are, where we can make them bear fruit, and what path we can follow in order to become signs and instruments of love, generous acceptance, beauty, and peace, wherever we find ourselves.'

The Day of Prayer for Vocations also commences National Vocations Awareness Week. To mark this week

and World Day of Prayer for Vocations, we feature a range of stories of vocational journeys by people in Wellington and Palmerston North dioceses, pp 10 and 11.

We also present a recap of the Synod on Synodality journey to date as the Church prepares for the Second Assembly in Rome in October this year, see pp 14 and 15. The scale and scope of this journey, on which Pope Francis wants 'all the people of God' to walk together, is historic in its importance and magnitude for the Church.

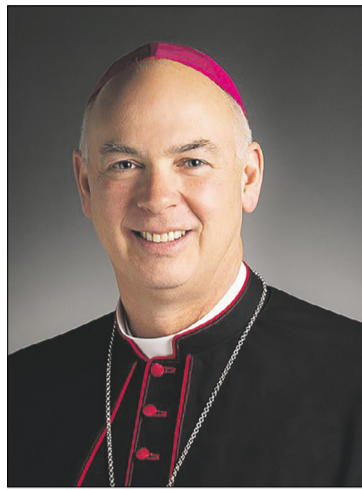
April is the month in which we mark the National Day of Remembrance on Anzac Day, 25 April. Once again, former Military Chaplain Fr Brian Fennessy ED, has provided WelCom with a thoughtful reflection with a focus this year on peace in a troubled world.

We also bring a range of other news and stories about our local, national and global Church.

Happy reading and Happy Easter.

Ngā mihi

'We are an Easter people and Alleluia is our song'



Archbishop Paul Martin SM
Archbishop of Wellington

Tēnā koutou katoa

Easter Greetings to you. I hope you have had a fruitful time of Lent and that these days of the Easter Triduum have been a blessed time as you pray and reflect on the gift of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for each one of us. It is a time for celebration for us as Christian people.

I have been thinking about how much we are able to be people who rejoice in our experience of being in relationship with God. One of the opportunities of Lent is to reflect on what God has done for us, and what we have received from him, as well as the privilege of being a child of God. The question I keep asking myself is do I allow that to show forth in how I am in the world I

move in? Do people experience me as a person who is joyful and able to express why I find my peace in God and knowing him and being loved by him? The great words of St Augustine, 'We are an Easter people and Alleluia is our song' is not just for the weeks that follow Easter, it is for all the days of my life. I wonder if people experience that in me?

"Our Saviour has died for our sins and risen so that we might share in the life of God now and for eternity."

To that end, as we gather for worship do we participate in ways that show we are delighted for the opportunity to gather together? Do I prepare well for liturgy, read the scriptures before getting to Mass, listen to the homily, sing the hymns remembering that to sing is to pray twice? What do I do during the week which feeds my faith life? Do I take time to pray each day, or to pop into church and 'pay a visit' or listen to podcasts or read material that reflects on faith or things of the Church? These are some small ways of feeding our spiritual lives and allowing the Holy Spirit to be stirred up in our hearts. Otherwise, we can become stagnant and dulled to the wonder of God and what is available to us.

The other reality is our communities of faith, our parishes, only really work well when people make themselves available to participate in the life and events

that take place. We need people to take up the ministries within the parish, to form groups for various reasons, be they prayer groups, social justice groups, youth groups, family groups etc. We are all busy people, but usually being busy means that I put my energy in the activities that are most important to me. Where does my faith life, my Church life, fit into all of that?

As we enjoy this wonderful Eastertime I do encourage you to reflect on these matters in terms of allowing the joy of this time to inspire you to really inflame your faith life and experience. We know there can be tough times and they are real and a challenge. By immersing ourselves in the most fundamental relationship there is, with God and our brothers and sisters in Christ, we can face these with confidence, knowing that our Saviour has died for our sins and risen so that we might share in the life of God now and for eternity.

May the peace and joy of the Risen Christ be yours this Easter.

– Archbishop Paul Martin sm.

Bishops' Lenten Appeal for Caritas Aotearoa NZ

If you haven't donated yet I would encourage you to do so. The link to the website is www.caritas.org.nz/lent

Please give generously, it enables us to help so many of our brothers and sisters.

– Archbishop Paul Martin sm

WelCom www.welcom.org.nz

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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 May 2024 issue: Monday, 15 April 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.

Papal Nuncio Archbishop Novatus Rugambwa returns to Rome

Archbishop Novatus Rugambwa, the Apostolic Nuncio to Aotearoa New Zealand, left New Zealand for Rome on 16 March, as he continues his recovery from a stroke. Archbishop Rugambwa arrived in Rome after a smooth journey. On Monday 18 March he entered a Catholic facility there to continue his rehabilitation.

Archbishop Rugambwa was appointed the Apostolic Nuncio – the Pope's chief diplomatic representative in New Zealand – in March 2019.

He suffered a stroke on 27 October last year and has been recovering and undergoing rehabilitation in Wellington since.

Archbishop Rugambwa left Wellington accompanied by Sr Maria Ann Singer Isp (Little Sisters of the Poor) and Fr Giosuè Busti, First Secretary-Deputy Head of Mission at the Apostolic Nunciature of the Holy See (papal embassy). Archbishop Rugambwa will continue his rehabilitation at a Catholic facility in Rome.

Bishop of Auckland Stephen Lowe, the President of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference, asks Catholics to keep Archbishop Rugambwa in their prayers.

'It is with much sadness we farewell Archbishop Novatus', said Bishop Lowe. 'The bishops acknowledge our deep gratitude



Archbishop Novatus Rugambwa (l) at St Theresa's Pro-Cathedral of the Archdiocese in Karori, after the Installation Mass for Archbishop Paul Martin sm on 17 June 2023.

Photo: Bernie Velasco/WelCom

for his services to the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific. We pray for his safe travels to Rome and we invoke the prayers of Our Lady Assumed into Heaven, our New Zealand patroness, for his healing and continued wellbeing.'

Bishop Lowe noted Archbishop Rugambwa had overseen the appointment of bishops in five of the country's six dioceses during his time here – Bishop Lowe in Auckland, Archbishop Paul Martin

sm in Wellington, Bishop Michael Gielen in Christchurch, Bishop John Adams in Palmerston North and Bishop Richard Laurenson in Hamilton.

Some two years of Archbishop Rugambwa's time in New Zealand encompassed the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, with churches often closed by government decree as a public health measure.

Source: NZCBC

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Cardinal overwhelmed by support

Cardinal John Dew has been overwhelmed by enormous support following his statement and the letter from Archbishop Paul Martin sm in response to media coverage about an allegation of sexual abuse.

The New Zealand Police have concluded their 10-month investigation and have determined that no charge will be laid against Cardinal John Dew, retired Archbishop of Wellington.

In response to media coverage

about Cardinal John, Archbishop Paul Martin sm, the Archbishop of Wellington, wrote a letter on 7 March 2024 to the people of all the country's Catholic parishes, schools and agencies. At the same time, Cardinal Dew issued a personal statement.

The text of the letter and the statement is on the New Zealand's bishops' website and is republished on this page.

Cardinal John stepped down

from his role as Archbishop of Wellington in May last year upon reaching the age of 75, which is the standard retirement age for Catholic bishops. Following the Church's protocols, Cardinal Dew withdrew from all public Church activities once the allegation was made known to the Church.

Cardinal John wrote in his statement: 'From the time that I became a Bishop, I have lived by my Episcopal motto, "Peace through integrity". Integrity has always meant a great deal to me and the words of that motto have guided my life.'

Cardinal Dew represented the Catholic Church during the Royal Commission investigating abuse in State Care and Faith-based Institutions, acknowledging that 'we caused you pain, hurt and trauma and this continues to impact you'. 'Any kind of abuse is unacceptable and indefensible. We are deeply sorry,' the cardinal had said. He has pointed out he would not have been able to testify and issue a public apology on behalf of the New Zealand Catholic Church if the allegations against him were true.

Now that the police investigation has concluded, Cardinal John continues to stand aside while Church inquiries proceed [under *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*], Archbishop Paul Martin said in his letter.

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference office has advised that the Church is not commenting on this matter as a Church process now proceeds, as mentioned in Archbishop Paul's letter.



'Peace through integrity' – Cardinal John Dew, Emeritus Archbishop of Wellington. Photo: WelCom

Archbishop Paul Martin's letter



ARCHBISHOP OF WELLINGTON

7 March 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

I am writing to you regarding recent media coverage of an allegation against Cardinal John Dew about events alleged to have taken place in the 1970s.

The New Zealand Police investigated the allegation. They have stated that they have concluded their investigation and no charges will be laid.

Cardinal John retired as Archbishop of Wellington in May last year on reaching age 75, the normal retirement age for Catholic bishops. In accord with our protocols, Cardinal John stood aside from all public church activities when the allegation was brought to the attention of the Church. Cardinal John has asserted his innocence throughout.

Inquiries by the Church are not run concurrently to those being undertaken by the Police. Now that the Police investigation has concluded, Cardinal John continues to stand aside while Church inquiries proceed.

This has been a distressing situation for all involved. I would ask that we pray for all those affected and offer support where we can.

Yours in Christ
+Paul Martin SM
Archbishop of Wellington

Cardinal John Dew's media statement

Media Statement

Cardinal John Dew, Emeritus Archbishop of Wellington
March 7, 2023

My retirement as Archbishop of Wellington was announced on 5th May last year. On Saturday 6th May, I was informed that an allegation of sexual abuse had been made against me which dated back 46 years to when I was an Assistant Priest in Upper Hutt.

I stated immediately, and state again now, that there have never been any instances of improper or abusive behaviour in my 48 years of priesthood.

I learned that the complaint made against me had been submitted to the Church's National Office for Professional Standards and the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse. I followed

church protocols, and stepped aside from any ministry while the Police were investigating this. Thirty weeks later I was interviewed by the New Zealand Police in the presence of my lawyer.

From the moment I was told of this alleged behaviour, I have strenuously denied that the events described ever happened.

This has now been thoroughly investigated by the New Zealand Police, others have been interviewed, and sworn affidavits provided to the Police prove that these allegations could never have happened.

The Police have informed me that this investigation has now been concluded, their file has been closed and no charges will be laid against me.

From the time that I became a Bishop, I have lived by my

Episcopal motto, 'Peace through integrity'. Integrity has always meant a great deal to me and the words of that motto have guided my life.

I do not know the person making the allegations and have never met him. The allegation against me is false, it may come from a well of anguish and grief arising from other reasons.

I am acutely aware of how distressing this is for many: survivors who have put their trust in me, our church community, and my family and friends. I state once again that all incidents of abuse are wrong. I hope and pray that all abuse victims will find peace and healing.

I restate that these alleged events never happened.

I have nothing further to add.

The Bishops and Congregational Leaders of the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand encourage anyone who has a complaint or report of abuse to approach the Police. Church authorities will always cooperate with Police investigations. Church leaders have established the National Office for Professional Standards (NOPS) to ensure that people who have suffered abuse can disclose this in the expectation of receiving a sensitive response and be supported.

***"What a God we have! How fortunate we are!
Because Jesus was raised from the dead,
we've been given a brand-new life and have
everything to live for, including a future in
heaven - and the future starts now! God is
keeping careful watch over us and the future.
The Day is coming when you'll have it all - life
healed and whole."***

- 1 Peter 1:3-5.

The Message (Catholic/Ecumenical Edition)


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Gaza crisis: joint statement from Caritas agencies

On 15 March 2024, Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand, Caritas Australia, Development and Peace – Caritas Canada, issued a joint statement calling on their countries' respective prime ministers and governments to act to urgently to prevent famine, additional destruction and the further regional spread of the Gaza-Israel conflict.

Their statement reads:

In a joint statement dated 13 December 2023, the prime ministers of Australia, Canada and New Zealand called for a ceasefire and peace in Gaza. On 15 February 2024, they reiterated the call, adding that they were 'gravely concerned by indications that Israel is planning a ground offensive into Rafah,' which, they warned, 'would be catastrophic.'

As members of the world's second-largest humanitarian association operating in over 160 countries and as organisations that have provided aid in Gaza and the West Bank for decades, we, the Caritas agencies of Australia, Canada and New Zealand, acknowledge the importance of these statements and share the prime ministers' assessment.

A month on, however, we are disturbed to note that Israel is not heeding their call to 'listen to the international community', and that the plight of vulnerable civilians in Gaza is worsening rapidly.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports over 31,300 people killed and over 73,100 injured in Gaza. Moreover, starvation has become a very real danger. Already 27 people, including 23 children, have died of malnutrition and about half a million people are facing catastrophic levels of food insecurity.

Given this context, **we urge the Government of Australia to restore**



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

Photo: Caritas Jerusalem

funding to UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East), in line with the policies of Canada and New Zealand.

While the provision of aid to the besieged people of Gaza by any means is welcome, it is our consensus that air drops, in addition to being undignified, are like proposed maritime deliveries in being neither viable nor sustainable. A single truck can deliver up to 10 times as much aid as an airdrop. As the World Food Programme's deputy executive director said, 'Airdrops are a last resort and will not avert famine. We need entry points to northern Gaza that will allow us to deliver enough food for half a million people in desperate need.'

Therefore, Caritas Australia, Development and Peace – Caritas Canada and Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand urge the prime ministers and governments of Australia, Canada and New Zealand to deploy all diplomatic, political, legal

and economic means possible to immediately bring about:

- **a permanent end to hostilities** by all parties in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel;
- **the release of all hostages and arbitrarily detained people** by Hamas and the Israeli authorities;
- **the establishment of guaranteed humanitarian corridors** to permit the safe and efficient delivery of food, water, fuel and relief supplies and the free movement of aid workers.

These measures are urgently needed to prevent famine, additional destruction and the further regional spread of the conflict.

As the people of Gaza mark the holy periods of Lent and Ramadan, we call on our prime ministers to act on their conviction 'that a sustainable ceasefire is necessary to finding a path towards securing lasting peace for Israelis and Palestinians.'

caritas.org.nz/where-we-work/holy-land

New co-chief executive for Compassion group

Deacon Rebecca Packer (née Elvin) has been appointed as Tumu Whakarāe | co-Chief Executive for the Sisters of Compassion Group, the religious order founded by Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert. Rebecca joins Deacon Danny Karatea-Goddard, appointed in April 2022, as Māori Tumu Whakarāe | co-Chief Executive of the group.

Rebecca previously worked at Crown Law, specialising in public law. She is very familiar with the Sisters of Compassion mission, having served on the Mother Aubert Home of Compassion Trust Board and the Sisters of Compassion Group Board for several years.

Rebecca and her husband Matthew were recently ordained as Deacons in the Anglican Church. Rebecca has remained committed to advocacy on behalf of the marginalised and to the pursuit of justice and reconciliation in her work in the justice sector, her governance responsibilities, academic study, and voluntary activities.

A morning pōwhiri was held at Our Lady's Home of Compassion in Island Bay to welcome Rebecca and other new staff who have joined the Sisters of Compassion Group.

Rebecca says, 'It is a privilege to step into the role of Tumu Whakarāe | co-Chief Executive of the Sisters of Compassion Group at this time.'

'I look forward to partnering with Compassion whānau to build on the strong foundation of prayerful and practical service established by Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert and faithfully embodied by the Sisters of Compassion and by supporters and volunteers over many years.'

'I am very pleased to take up this opportunity and to help ensure the transformational work of Compassion continues to flourish in Aotearoa New Zealand, for the benefit of our communities and to the glory of God.'

The Venerable Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert (1835–1926) founded the Daughters of Our

Lady of Compassion (the Sisters of Compassion) in 1892. Suzanne Aubert was a friend and advocate for Māori, children, the poor and the sick, with the Sisters continuing her work to this day. Among her many achievements Meri Hōhepa founded the Compassion Soup Kitchen in Wellington, which is still run by the Sisters. The Sisters are considering their next step in Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert's path to sainthood, which has been delayed by a Vatican committee ruling that a possible miracle attributed to her could be explained by medical science.

Source: Sisters of Compassion Group



Deacon Rebecca Packer, newly appointed Tumu Whakarāe | co-Chief Executive, with Deacon Danny Karatea-Goddard, Māori Tumu Whakarāe | co-Chief Executive of the Sisters of Compassion Group.

Photo: Supplied

Royal Commission report due

Te Rōpū Tautoko is the group coordinating Catholic engagement with the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care. Tautoko recently reported the commission is due to present its final report to the Governor-General by 28 March 2024. If that date is met, the report will likely be available to the public in early to mid-April.

After the report has been presented to the Governor General, the Governor General releases it to the Government and the responsible Minister decides on when to table it in Parliament. Only when this occurs does the report become public and the Inquiry can publish it on their website. As soon as the report is available to the public Tautoko will add it to its website.

Based on the hearings and process the Inquiry has undertaken, Tautoko assumes the report will respond closely to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference and sections, such as: looking back at the context of care; factors that contributed and contribute to abuse; impacts of abuse and failure to act; case studies; findings; recommendations.

Church leaders are supportive of the Inquiry and the need for it. Hearing survivors share their experiences and having their voices heard has been a crucial element of the Royal Commission's work. In 2018 when the Inquiry was established, the terms of reference only included State care. Many people asked the Inquiry to broaden the terms of reference, including Catholic bishops and congregational leaders. This occurred and the subsequent five years of work will result in the final report. The Catholic Church in New Zealand is ready to review the commission's final report and consider the recommendations that arise from it during the Inquiry.

For further information visit tautoko.catholic.org.nz

Safeguarding implementation culture: assessment

GCPS Consulting were appointed late last year to undertake an assessment of the 'Implementation of Safeguarding Culture Standards of the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand'. Their assessment began in November 2023 and it will conclude with a summary assessment report to be presented to Te Rōpū Tautoko, by June 2024.

GCPS is an international consulting firm that specialises in helping organisations ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults or 'at risk' groups.

The assessors have been meeting with various stakeholders online, and they were in New Zealand during February. Their report will be considered by the Mixed Commission and the National Safeguarding and Professional Standards Committee. A summary of the final assessment report will be published on the Tautoko website.

The assessment terms of reference are on Tautoko website: tautoko.catholic.org.nz

Church Life Survey results

The findings from a New Zealand Church Life Survey (CLS), carried out in 2023, have been analysed and distributed to the Catholic community.

Fr Merv Duffy sm, Dean of Te Kupenga, has produced the document Observations on the Church Life Survey – Nov 2023, which analyses the Catholic data captured by the inter-denominational survey.

Participation in the survey was almost exclusively North Island-based. Findings from the survey are being shared with priests, diocesan teams, parish pastoral councils and administrators.

It is hoped data collected will provide parishes with a snapshot of who they are, informing priorities and helping with decision-making.

The survey is complementary to the synodal process, contributing to understanding of who we are as a parish, diocese, and at national level.

The CLS covered topics such as demographics, growth in faith, commitment to each parish's vision and community, and relationship to society, reaching out to others, caring for young people, and attitudes towards leadership.

A total of 8,694 Catholics participated in the survey.

The 2023 Church Life Survey NZ was administered by the Christian Research Association of New Zealand, in partnership with the Wilberforce Foundation and Auckland Church Network. The aim is to strengthen and support the Christian Church across New Zealand by equipping leaders with high-quality research and data.



**St Patrick's College
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2025 Enrolments

The Open Day tours for those interested in enrolling their son at St Patrick's College for 2025 will be held on Tuesday 28 May between 10.00am and 11.30am, and from 12.30pm to 2.00pm, and again on Thursday 30 May at the same times. From 12 April you will be able to book a tour via a Google document on the College website: www.stpats.school.nz

Sectare Fidem – Hold firm to the Faith

2023 a very busy year for the Vinnies

Michael Fitzsimons

The St Vincent de Paul Society in New Zealand is in good heart with more than 100 active Conferences operating throughout the country.

According to its latest Annual Report, there are 22 Area Councils, 106 Conferences and 58 Vinnies Shops actively engaged in New Zealand.

The Report says that 2023 was a very challenging year for New Zealanders. A succession of natural disasters, culminating in Cyclone Gabrielle, devastated regions, communities and families. The Society launched a National Cyclone Appeal which raised \$328,972 for affected communities. Local Vinnies Conferences have supported families and communities affected by floods and



The vitality of the St Vincent de Paul Society was very evident in 2023.

Photo: Supplied

cyclones over the long haul.

In addition to natural disasters, a sharp rise in the cost of living and

an economy still recovering from Covid-19 put immense pressure on vulnerable families. The result has

been a marked increase in demand for Vinnies' services in 2023, says the Report.

'Our Conferences have been at the forefront of immediate relief efforts following the floods and cyclones. They have also been on hand to support struggling families with meals, food parcels, clothing, household goods and funds for health services and educational expenses when required. Providing companionship through home visits to the sick and elderly remains a regular St Vincent de Paul activity.'

The Society has 1,129 members and nearly 6,000 volunteers actively involved in its work.

Gerry Stevens, St Vincent de Paul Society President, said the Society is very well supported by people and communities at the local level.

'I would like to thank all those people and businesses who donate so much food, goods, services and time to our work in local communities around New Zealand. Without them there would be much more need and sadness.'

Over the years the work of the Society has extended into new areas in response to the needs of the community. The Annual Report says current Strategic Initiatives include 'working with like-minded organisations to extend our influence, providing community mental-health support, providing housing assistance and employment support, advocating for environmental care and sustainable living, and providing on-the-ground support for refugees, migrants and prisoners after their release.'

Napier St Vincent de Paul branch reaches out to Wairoa

The Napier branch of the St Vincent de Paul Society is committed to providing ongoing support for the people of Wairoa who are still suffering the devastating effects of Cyclone Gabrielle one year later.

Fr Karaitangi Kingi, who lives in Wairoa, met with Fr John Craddock, the SVdP spiritual adviser in Napier, and described the hardships still being experienced by the Wairoa community. The Society visited Wairoa and determined that despite the generous funding made to date by various organisations, an incredible amount of work still needed to be financed and carried out.

Over several months the Society has assisted in a number of ways. Funds were distributed to buy Christmas hampers for 320 families. Because local businesses were badly affected by the Cyclone, hampers were purchased from these stores where possible.

Funds were allocated to help with ongoing repair and restoration,

such as for digger fuel, oil and fluids, tools, building materials, vehicle repairs and maintenance. Funds were also used to meet electrician and plumbing costs and to pay for work which was not able to be carried out by volunteers. The Society assisted with the stripping of 25 homes, using silt crews to help.

'Our Napier Area Council has been pleased to support the Wairoa community with funds towards the help they so badly need,' says Area President Christine Tong. 'Our ongoing involvement includes regular visits to Wairoa to view progress and assess what else may need our help.'

'Our Napier Conference has been helping others affected by Cyclone Gabrielle. We were extremely grateful for the funds from the Cyclone Gabrielle Appeal which our National Office launched last year, and for the generosity shown by so many during this extremely difficult time.'



Wairoa families were delighted to receive SVdP Napier Area Council's Christmas hampers from Wairoa Volunteers.

Photos: Supplied



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LOOKING FORWARD TO WHAT IS TO COME

For us in the southern hemisphere, Easter is an Autumn festival when leaves fall and life seems to close down. Yet, even in this "dying" we glimpse signs of new life as nature stores her reserves in anticipation of Spring. This is exactly the Christian approach to death: a folding up of what has been, with thanksgiving; a looking forward to what is to come, with undying hope.

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Pope pleads for ceasefire in Gaza

Pope Francis has called for Israel and Hamas to reach an agreement for 'an immediate ceasefire in Gaza', repeating 'Enough!' and 'Stop!' from the window of the apostolic palace.

Delivering his Angelus address in St Peter's Square, 3 March 2024, the Pope made an emotional plea for a deal that would both free the Israeli hostages immediately and grant humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza.

'I carry daily in my heart, with sorrow, the suffering of the peoples in Palestine and Israel due to the ongoing hostilities,' Pope Francis said.

'The thousands of dead, the wounded, the displaced, the immense destruction, causes pain, and this with tremendous consequences on the little ones and the defenceless who see

their future compromised.

'I wonder: do you really think you are going to build a better world this way? Do you really think you are going to achieve peace? Enough, please! Let us all say: Stop! Please stop!'

The Pope made his appeal as negotiations continue for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

Pope Francis said: 'I encourage the continuation of negotiations for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and throughout the region, so that hostages can be freed immediately and return to their anxiously awaiting loved ones, and the civilian population can have safe access to due and urgent humanitarian aid.'

Source: *The Tablet*



Buildings in central Gaza in ruins.

Photo: OSV News/Amir Cohen, Reuters



Young people pray at the closing Mass for World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, 6 August, 2023.

Photo: CNS/Lola Gomez

Three-quarters of youth believe in God – survey

Nearly three-quarters of youth questioned in an international survey believe in God.

About 73 per cent of those surveyed said they believe in God, while a further eight per cent were 'searching to believe in God.' The survey canvassed the views of young people in eight countries about religious beliefs, prayer and social issues.

The survey found that believers and non-believers were very likely to agree about the severity of environmental problems and the danger of political corruption in the world.

Religious belief did play a role in attitudes on several other social issues, the survey said. For example, atheists tended to support the legalisation of prostitution and surrogacy, while Catholics were more likely to reject the death penalty and the justification of war compared to people of other religions and atheists.

Results of the survey, titled *Young People: Expectations, Ideals, Beliefs*, were released in

February by the Footprints Research Group of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, together with seven other universities around the world.

The group said it wanted to look at young people from an international point of view since the vast majority of research on young people usually takes place at a national level.

The survey was conducted in Argentina, Brazil, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, the Philippines, Spain and the UK from 16 November to 11 December, 2023. It sampled at least 600 young people from each of the eight countries.

At least three-quarters of those surveyed believe sin exists and that parents should pass religion on to their children.

Source OSV News

Coptic Orthodox suspend dialogue with Vatican

The Coptic Orthodox Church has suspended its two-decade-long doctrinal dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church over the Vatican's approval of same-sex blessings.

The Patriarchate of Alexandria and Coptic officials have labelled same-sex blessings as heresy. The Holy Synod of the ancient Coptic Orthodox Church, based in Egypt, announced the suspension on 7 March.

'After consulting with the sister churches of the Eastern Orthodox family' they wrote, 'it was decided to suspend the theological dialogue with the Catholic Church, re-evaluate the results achieved by the dialogue from its beginning 20 years ago, and establish

new standards and mechanisms for the dialogue to proceed in the future.'

The Vatican's publication of *Fiducia supplicans* was the catalyst for this decision. The document addressed blessings for couples in 'irregular situations', including same-sex relationships.

'We cannot recognise that two people of the same sex form a couple', an aide to the Orthodox Coptic Church's Pope Tawadros II told *La Croix*.

'The text is unacceptable, as is the explanation later provided by the Vatican. Pope Francis wanted to please Europeans but, for us, it is a huge heresy', the aide



Pope Francis and Coptic Orthodox Pope Tawadros II read speeches in St Peter's Square at the Vatican, 10 May, 2023.

Photo: Vatican Media

pointed out.

'The Bible in both Testaments condemns, warns against, and prohibits sexual practices between two people of the same sex', asserted the Orthodox Coptic bishops.

The suspension of dialogue is considered a severe setback in relations between Rome and Alexandria. It follows a historic public audience between Pope Tawadros II and Pope Francis less than a year ago.

Source: *La Croix International*

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Texas sues ministries serving migrants and refugees

The Texas Attorney-General is suing a network of Church-related ministries to migrants and refugees after one of them – Annunciation House in El Paso, Texas – refused to surrender records about the people it serves.

Attorney-General Ken Paxton sought records that included information that would identify clients of Annunciation House's ministry, any referrals the non-profit had made to legal services as well as any applications for federal funding.

The lawsuit seeks to revoke the ministries' tax-exempt status, which would effectively force them to close.

'The Office of the Attorney-General reviewed significant public-record information strongly suggesting Annunciation House is engaged in legal violations such as facilitating illegal entry to the United States, alien harbouring, human smuggling, and operating a stash house,' the office said in a statement on 20 February 2024.

Annunciation House issued its own statement, saying the attorney general 'has stated that it considers it a crime for a Catholic organisation to provide shelter to refugees'. It



Ruben Garcia, founder of Annunciation House, attends a rally in support of migrants and refugees in Texas in January. Photo: OSV News/Paul Ratje, Reuters

called the lawsuit 'illegal, immoral, and anti-faith'.

Annunciation House was founded in 1976 by Ruben Garcia after a visit from Mother Teresa of Kolkata.

The lawsuit tallies with the Republican Party's nationwide effort, led by former president Donald Trump, to make the influx of undocumented refugees a political issue – even while Mr

Trump has urged Congress not to pass bipartisan legislation that sought to address the migration problem.

Catholic leaders rushed to defend the work of Annunciation House. 'Our Church, our city and our country owe Annunciation House a deep debt of gratitude,' Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso said.

Source: *The Tablet*

Legal right to IVF 'deeply troubling' – US Bishops

In a recent letter to Senators, four US Bishops' Conference chairmen argue that there isn't a scenario where in vitro fertilisation (IVF) is a morally acceptable means of pregnancy, and therefore legislation to establish a federal right to the treatment shouldn't be passed.

The 28 February letter was the

bishops' response to the proposed Access to Family Building Act, which would establish a federal right to the treatment.

How IVF works is that mature eggs are collected from ovaries and fertilised by sperm in a lab. Then a procedure is done to place one or more of the fertilised eggs in the

woman's uterus. Generally, a full IVF cycle takes about two to three weeks.

In the letter, the USCCB chairmen acknowledged the challenges families face with infertility, but emphasised that families shouldn't turn to IVF as a solution.

'As pastors, we grieve with many couples bearing this cross and seek to be a part of a community that accompanies them in a way that helps them to flourish in love,' the bishops wrote.

'The solution, however, can never be a medical process that involves the creation of countless preborn children and results in most of them being frozen or discarded and destroyed,' they added. 'For this and other deeply troubling problems with the bill, we strongly oppose the Access to Family Building Act.'

The letter was signed by Archbishop Borys Gudziak, Bishop Michael Burbidge of Arlington, Bishop Robert Baron of Winona-Rochester and Bishop Kevin Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend.



An embryologist uses a microscope to view an embryo.

Photo: Richard Drew/AP

Source: *Cruxnow*

Church fund 'not enough' to right slavery wrongs

The £100 million earmarked by the Church of England for a new investment fund to help repair damage caused by its historic links to slavery is 'not enough', a report says. It comes after an investigation last year found the Church had invested large amounts of money into a company that transported tens of thousands of slaves. The Church welcomed the report by the Church Commissioners charity and accepted its recommendations but would not commit to raising the fund to the report's £1 billion (AUD \$1.9b) target.

Australian bishop faces charges

Former Bishop of Broome Christopher Saunders has indicated he will plead not guilty to alleged historical child sex offences. The bishop was arrested and appeared in court in February charged with 19 criminal offences. He was released on bail and will appear in court in June. Bishop Saunders was appointed Bishop of Broome in 1996. He has spent almost 50 years in the Kimberley, being based in both Broome and serving stints at several remote Aboriginal community parishes.

Desperate plight of South Sudanese

A South Sudanese bishop says his people are living in deplorable conditions and are starving, amid challenges caused by violent conflicts and Covid-19. In a letter addressed to the head of Caritas network, people of goodwill, and the international community, Bishop Eduardo Hiiboro Kussala said his people are in urgent need of external support. He said the number of internally displaced persons had increased tremendously across the country.

Youth ministry at Bondi beach

A Sydney youth ministry has taken itself to where a line-up of enthusiastic young people can be guaranteed – Bondi Beach. Offering surfboards rather than hymn books, Bondi's Catholic youth ministry teaches new surfies to ride the waves and tells them about the Catholic faith.



Photo: Giovanni Portelli Photography © 2024

A recent weekend in March saw over 25 Sydneysiders at St Patrick and St Anne's Bondi Catholic parishes' first sunrise surf session. The youth ministry supplied a couple of surfboards, each sporting its Virgin Mary and Christ Child logo, along with four other boards. After sharing breakfast and watching the sunrise, they began guided group surf lessons. The idea was born with the motto *Duc in Altum*, Latin for 'put out into the deep' from Peter's first meeting with Jesus on the water. The Saturday surf sessions will be held every second Saturday each month at sunrise at Bondi Beach.

Euthanasia numbers increase

More than 3,400 Belgians were euthanised in 2023 – a 15% increase over 2022. Latest statistics reveal that there were 3,423 officially reported deaths – 3.1% of all deaths in Belgium. However, the European Institute of Bioethics noted that 'scientific studies estimate that about 25 to 35% of unreported cases of euthanasia should be added' to this figure. About 71% of patients were over 70 and 42% were over 80. The number of cases of euthanasia in patients younger than 40 years was about 1%. There was one euthanasia of a minor – a 16-year-old girl with a brain tumour who donated her organs after her death.

Call to remove Christian symbols in India

An extremist Hindu group has called for the removal of Christian symbols from schools run by the Catholic Church, and for Catholic Religious not to wear emblems. The Hindu group of the state of Assam, in the northeast of India, has given an ultimatum to Christian schools, as well as to priests and women religious, to remove Christian signs from schools. The Bharatiya Party of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Hindu nationalist, governs the state of Assam and wants all Christian symbols to disappear, including the habits and soutanes of Religious.

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Two parishioners finalists in 'Welly' 2023 awards

Two archdiocesan parishioners have been nominated as finalists in The Post 2023 Wellingtonian of the Year Awards.

Jane Kelly of Sacred Heart Cathedral Parish and project architect for the Cathedral restoration programme is a finalist in the Heritage category, and Academic Dr Cherie Chu-Fuluifaga of Our Lady of Kāpiti Parish is a finalist in the Education category of the 2023 Wellingtonian

of the Year Awards.

The Wellingtonian of the Year Awards – also known as 'The Wellys' – were started in 1989 to celebrate achievements and contributions across all sectors of the greater Wellington community, awarding those who make the

Wellington region 'an exciting and vibrant place'.

The awards night, Wednesday 27 March 2024, celebrates these people across 10 categories, with one overall Welly Recipient recognised as the supreme winner – The Post 2023 Wellingtonian of

the Year.

The 10 categories are Arts, Business, Community, Service, Education, Environment, Heritage, Public Service, Science and Technology, Sport, Youth.

Public nominations opened last December and closed in January.

The 2023 finalists were announced on 26 February in *The Post*.

The 2023 Welly Awards Night will be held on Wednesday 27 March, 2024, at The Embassy Theatre, Kent Terrace.

We wish Cherie and Jane every success.

Jane Kelly is Chair and Principal of TEAM Architects New Zealand, a group of nine independent architect companies. She has led the restoration of Sacred Heart Cathedral in Wellington, expected to reopen in June 2024.

Jane received a nomination for the Heritage category for individuals who have shown a commitment and dedication to the conservation, preservation and protection of heritage places and stories so that others can appreciate them today and in the future.

Jane has been a Sacred Heart parishioner for over 20 years, and this has helped her through the long process of over five years in her professional role as project architect for the Cathedral restoration project.



Jane Kelly, finalist in the Heritage category. Photo: Supplied

Jane's speciality is in the restoration of heritage housing.

Dr Cherie Maria Chu-Fuluifaga is a distinguished academic who, at Victoria University of Wellington, developed the Pacific education leadership cluster that has grown from five students in 2005 to more than 200 students.

Dr Cherie, who was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit for her services to education earlier this year, works hard to create space for people who are often invisible in the education system.

She is a renowned Māori and Pasifika Senior Lecturer at Victoria University of Wellington and is well known among the Academic Education Tertiary faculty throughout universities in Aotearoa and overseas. Dr Cherie is a founder and mentor

for leadership Pacific. She has written many publications and designed cultural training and research projects with Ministry of Education, AKO Aotearoa, TEC, and Tertiary institutes with Pasifika cultural connections. For over 20 years, Dr Cherie has provided leadership training to Pasifika students and various communities at Victoria University of Wellington, designing cultural training and education programmes for a wide range of professions including judges, lawyers, doctors, educators, youth workers, academics, and students.

Dr Cherie is on the Te Kupenga Academic Advisory Board and Pasifika Advisory Team.



Dr Cherie Chu-Fuluifaga, finalist in the Education category.

Photo: Robert Cross/VUW

Closure and sale of Murchison church property

Annette Scullion

The Catholic Parish of Buller and Inangahua have decided to sell their St Peter Chanel church, hall and land in Murchison.

Parish priest Fr David Gruschow and the parish Pastoral Council have considered the matter carefully, together with parishioners from Murchison, and they have now asked Archbishop Paul Martin SM to relegate the church to secular use. Archbishop Paul has sought the advice of the Council of Priests, who recommended that he take this step which is necessary before a church can be sold.

The main reasons the parish has requested the relegation of the church and its sale include the cost of upgrading the building to current earthquake standards; the small and mainly elderly congregation who look after the building and land, finding it challenging; and the existence of viable alternative places of worship.

There is currently Mass each 3rd Sunday of the month at 4pm for a congregation of around five to seven people, and for which Fr David Gruschow travels over an

hour from Westport to celebrate, across a distance of 97kms.

Fr David said the Murchison congregation has been assured that, if at all possible, the provision of Masses and pastoral care will be unaffected by the sale. Fr David intends to continue with the monthly Mass after the church is sold. Informal approaches have been made to the Anglican congregation in Murchison, he said, and 'they seem very open to us celebrating our monthly Mass in their church'. Otherwise the home of one of the parishioners may be used.

Murchison was included in Reefton Parish in 1874. The original white pine log church from c. 1880, was moved to the current site c. 1889 but deteriorated and was declared unsafe. Masses were held in the hall for some years. Fr Augustin Galerne SM decided to rebuild the church in concrete at an estimated cost of 250 pounds. The walls were poured but construction was delayed by WWI. The church was completed by Arcus Brother in 1922 under Fr Herring SM.

From 1922 until 1965 Murchison was a Mass centre in Reefton Parish. From 1965 until 1974 it was a Mass



St Peter Chanel church, hall and land in Murchison.

Photo: Annette Scullion

centre in Richmond Parish because of roadworks in the Buller Gorge. It was transferred to Westport by Archbishop Delargy in 1974/75, but around the mid-1990s it began to be serviced by Reefton priests. It was formally moved by decree into Reefton parish in 1999.

In 2023, two of the oldest parishes in the archdiocese, Sacred Heart

(founded 1874) based in Reefton and St Canice (founded 1867) based in Westport, became the Catholic Parish of Buller and Inangahua. The new parish became an umbrella for five West Coast local faith communities: Holy Family church community based in Karamea; St Canice's church community in Westport; Sacred Heart church

community, including Sacred Heart school, based in Reefton; St Patrick, on a southern boundary of the archdiocese, in Ikamatua; and St Peter Chanel in Murchison.

» Sacred Heart Church, Reefton 150 celebrations, 17-19 May this year, p 19.

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Pope Francis' Prayer Intention

During the month of April 2024 Pope Francis' intention is:
for the role of women.

We pray that the dignity and immense value of women be recognised in every culture, and for the end of discrimination that they experience in different parts of the world.

Suzanne Aubert Rongoā Garden of native plants

A re-opening ceremony of the Suzanne Aubert Rongoā Garden at the Callaghan Innovation | Te Pokapū Auaha site in Gracefield, Lower Hutt, was held on 25 January this year.

Srs Margaret Anne Mills, Sue Cosgrove, Josephine Gorman, Veronica Hurrings, along with other Compassion whānau members attended the official ceremony.

The Suzanne Aubert Native Plant Garden is located inside Callaghan Innovation's restricted-access site at Gracefield.

The garden contains a collection of native plant specimens used by Suzanne Aubert and the Māori healers and herbalists who assisted her.

The original garden was planted on 7 June 2000 through a project led by the Sisters of Compassion, Ngāti Ruaka, Ngāti Kotahi, and the then Industrial (IRI) Research Ltd. IRI was a Crown Institute that was merged to become Callaghan Innovation in 2013.

Recently, the Gracefield Innovation Quarter (GIQ)

Programme Team has been managing a project to restore and rejuvenate the Rongoā garden. This has involved significant maintenance and pruning within the garden as well as re-planting a number of plants found in the original garden.

The team has researched the native plants and their Rongoā properties, and developed new signage to provide information about each of the plants within the garden. The re-planting and signage are now complete.

A garden sign reads: 'This collection contains specimens of native plants known to have been used by Suzanne Aubert and the Māori healers and herbalists who assisted her. It recognises the collaborative scientific studies of Suzanne Aubert's herbal remedies.'

The re-opening morning ceremony began with a karanga offered by Compassion Whānau Kaihautū Māori Maru Karatea-Goddard, followed by karakia offered by Te Āti Awa kaumātua Kura Moeahu and the Compassion Whānau Tumu Whakarae Deacon

Danny Karatea-Goddard. This was followed by a cup of tea and refreshments to lift the 'tapu' of the occasion.

The garden's project design manager Mr Dan Alexander expressed his gratitude to those who had attended and encouraged an ongoing relationship between the Callaghan Research Centre and the Sisters of Compassion.

Rongoā refers to the traditional Māori healing system based on Te Whare Tapa Whā (the four pillars) of health: wairua (spiritual), tinana (physical), hinengaro (psychological) and whānau (family). Rongoā rākau (plant remedies) form an integral part of Rongoā Māori, with a wide variety of plants used to treat numerous conditions, and Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert was an important believer and steward of the Rongoā Māori in the late 19th century. Hence, the plants in this garden predominantly contain Rongoā properties.

Source: Deacon Danny Goddard, Co-CEO, Home of Compassion



Compassion whānau members at the reopening ceremony of the Suzanne Aubert Rongoā Gardens included Sr Sue Cosgrove, Sr Margaret Anne Mills, Sr Veronica Hurrings, and Felicity Giltrap.

Photos: Supplied



Plimmerton tragedy recalled at 75th anniversary

Shirley Duthie

On 1 March, 1949, children and staff from Ss Peter and Paul Primary School travelled by train from Waterloo Station in Lower Hutt into Wellington and then on to Plimmerton Beach on Wellington's West coast for a twice weather-cancelled school picnic. For the children it was an exciting adventure and the site of the picnic had been carefully chosen for its safety record.

The younger children were playing on the sand and in the shallows and some of the 50 swimmers recall the water as warm and shallow with the older girls well out from the shore seeking sufficient depth to swim. At about 1.10pm, at mid-tide, a rip seems to have quickly developed between some of the girls and Fr John Summers who was supervising them in the water. The day turned to disaster as Fr Summers and the stronger swimmers helped bring girls ashore with many telling how they dog-paddled to safety.

Tragically, two 12-year-old girls, Josephine Voltz and Maria Burke, could not be revived despite 'two hours of artificial respiration and oxygen after the ambulance arrived', as described in the Coroner's statements.

Seventy-five years later, on 2 March 2024, those who were lost,



Gathered at the Garden of Remembrance at Ss Peter and Paul School, were many who recalled and were touched by the Plimmerton Beach tragedy in 1949.



Two 12-year-old girls, Josephine Voltz and Maria Burke, sadly died at the Plimmerton Beach tragedy in 1949.

those who suffered and all those who were touched by the tragedy were recalled at a poignant Day of Remembrance at Ss Peter and Paul School, Lower Hutt. Many mentioned the pain the survivors and grieving family members have lived with. The psychological understanding of grief in 1949 meant they were denied any chance to talk of their experience.

Survivors spoke of the terrible toll

the experience had on their Sisters of the Mission teachers, especially the principal Sr Mary Luthgarde and Fr John Summers. Survivors also drew attention to the bravery of several 12-year-old girls – for example, Beryl Knox and Elaine Whittaker – who saved lives through their strong swimming ability.

If Beryl and Elaine are available to make contact, or have family members who recall the incident, it would be appreciated if they would get in touch with the writer of this article at sjmduthie@gmail.com.

Those at the memorial day were most grateful for the hospitality and empathy from the staff of Ss Peter and Paul School and for the beautiful Garden of Remembrance in which Maria and Josephine, along with other staff and students who have died while associated with the school, were remembered.

Ecology Justice and Peace Commissioning

The Ecology Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Wellington gathered on Saturday 9 March at St Joseph's Church, Mt Victoria, Wellington, for a Commissioning Mass celebrated by Archbishop Paul Martin sm. With six new members bringing the Commission membership to 19, the EJP is ready to respond to issues of justice and peace inspired and informed by Catholic Social Teaching. The EJP Commission has

three committees, which focus on themes of poverty, integral ecology and bicultural relationships. The mahi (work) involves action and advocacy along with building awareness and networks with faith communities in the archdiocese. If you are interested in connecting with the Commission or becoming a member, contact Deirdre Meskill, Community Facilitator at d.meskill@wn.catholic.org.nz



Photo: Supplied



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World Day of Prayer for Vocations and National Vocations Awareness Week

Vocation Sunday is a worldwide day of prayer for vocations to the priesthood and religious life. It falls on the 4th Sunday of Easter – Good Shepherd Sunday – and a day on which there is a seminary collection. There is usually a message from the Pope for the day. Pope Francis' 2024 message was released on 19 March. This year's theme is: 'Called to sow seeds of hope and to build peace'.

Vocations Awareness Week is a national initiative that focuses on vocations in general. It is on the New Zealand Bishops' national calendar, and starts on Vocation Sunday each year on the 4th Sunday in Easter Time.

Pope Francis' 2024 for Vocation Sunday message is outlined below, along with stories of vocational journeys from people in the Archdiocese of Wellington and the Diocese of Palmerston North.

Pope Francis' Vocations Day message: 'Be pilgrims of hope, builders of peace'

Though the global situation risks plunging people into pessimism, Christians are called to pursue their vocation of becoming 'men and women of hope', Pope Francis said in his message for World Day of Prayer for Vocations, 21 April 2024.

'As individuals and as communities, amid the variety of charisms and ministries, all of us are called to embody and communicate the Gospel message of hope in a world marked by epochal challenges,' the Pope wrote in his message for the day.

Global challenges such as war, migration, rising poverty rates and climate change, in addition to personal difficulties encountered daily, 'risk plunging us into resignation or defeatism,' the Pope wrote in his message released on 19 March. He encouraged Christians

to instead 'cultivate a gaze full of hope and work fruitfully in response to the vocation we have received, in service to God's kingdom of love, justice and peace.'

To be 'pilgrims of hope and builders of peace' means 'to base our lives on the rock of Christ's resurrection, knowing that every effort made in the vocation that we have embraced and seek to live out will never be in vain,' the Pope wrote.

Pursuing a vocation, he explained, is not an imposed duty but rather 'the surest way for us to fulfil our deepest desire for happiness.'

The Holy Father noted all Christians are called to welcome our God-given vocation to serve Him in the world, whether it be through the consecrated life, the priesthood, marriage, or as a single person.

'Our life finds fulfilment when

we discover who we are, what our gifts are, where we can make them bear fruit, and what path we can follow in order to become signs and instruments of love, generous acceptance, beauty and peace wherever we find ourselves.'

The Pope expressed his gratitude for the 'hidden efforts' of those who consistently respond to their calls in life, namely parents, workers, consecrated men and women and priests, and he urged young people to make room for Jesus in their lives to discover their vocation.

'Let Jesus draw you to himself; bring him your important questions by reading the Gospels; let him challenge you by his presence, which always provokes in us a healthy crisis,' he told young people.

The pope also highlighted the 'synodal character' of the World Day



Pope Francis blesses seminarians at the Vatican.

Photo: Dicastery for the Clergy, Vatican

of Prayer for Vocations, noting how 'amid the variety of our charisms, we are called to listen to one another and to journey together in order to acknowledge them and to discern where the Spirit is leading us for the benefit of all.'

Prayer, he added, 'is more about listening to God than about talking to him.'

The Pope called on Christians

to 'open the doors of the prison in which we so often enclose ourselves, so that each of us can discover his or her proper vocation in the Church and in the world.'

'Let us be passionate about life and commit ourselves to caring lovingly for those around us in every place where we live,' he wrote.

Sources: OSV News; Vatican News

Feeling at home in the Diocese of Palmerston North

Peter Hung Nguyen and **John Lam Nguyen** from Vietnam are living in Palmerston North while they study English in preparation for entering the seminary next year.

Hung Nguyen

I am Peter Hung Nguyen, and I come from the Diocese of Vinh in Nghe An province, Vietnam. There are many splendid and magnificent churches, as well as a large Catholic community in Vinh diocese. I am the youngest of three. I am truly grateful to have been born into a family filled with love from my parents and siblings. Additionally, we have wonderful neighbours in my village who are always ready to help others. I am even more fortunate to live in a parish with gentle and kind people. This is a driving force that motivates me to want to serve.

My vocation journey started quite late. After finishing university, I went to live with a parish priest in a poor parish in Vinh Diocese. At first, I felt quite lonely because everything was unfamiliar, and I didn't really like it. However, the

parish priest taught me how to pray, helping different things in the parish, and reaching out to the poor. Through many interactions and conversations with poor people, I developed a deep appreciation for them, which gradually motivated me to do something to help them and others. Moreover, I had the opportunity to be closer to God's Eucharist every day while living in the parish.

During that time, I often asked myself, 'Do I want to become a disciple of God? Do I have the courage to follow that path?' I found the answer, and now I am living in the beautiful country of New Zealand. I believe it was not my choice but God who led me to this country according to His purpose, where everything is different, from culture to language and people. Initially, I felt very strange, but now I feel very familiar because the people here are wonderful. They give me words of encouragement and I know that I cannot be here without the prayers of many people.

Many times, I knelt before the Lord's Eucharist and asked myself, 'Do I love God enough to follow Him?' I truly desire to become a priest for God and for people. For young people, please remember



Peter Hung Nguyen (l) and John Lam Nguyen (r).

Photo: Hung Nguyen

that do not be afraid to response to God's call to be priest, it is not an easy journey but the grace of God will help you to overcome all the difficulties you face on your journey.

Lam Nguyen

My name is John Lam Nguyen. I was born in Hoi Yen Parish, Vinh Diocese, in North Vietnam. I was raised in a big Catholic family with seven children. I am the second child and have two brothers and four sisters. My parents work in agriculture.

During my time in college, I joined the monastic vocations group of my home diocese. Here, my vocation seemed to take a new direction, as I learned and practiced virtues under the guidance of the

father in charge. From then on, my love for Christ grew stronger and urged me to follow Him. Faced with distinctions about things such as love between men and women, love between husband and wife, material wealth or fame, and position compared to the love of Christ and the love of service, those things cannot be compared.

Through my prayer life, I firmly believe God will give all the necessary grace to those He chooses. As St Paul affirmed: 'I consider everything a loss compared with the wonderful gain of knowing Christ my Lord. For His sake, I have lost all things and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ' (Philippians 3:8). That is also my choice, for the love of God

and the salvation of souls.

About two years ago, I received a call from Fr Trung Nguyen, a Vietnamese priest belonging to the Diocese of Palmerston North. He asked me, 'Do you want to become a priest in New Zealand?' Personally, I truly wished to become disciple of Jesus, but New Zealand was never on my mind because I didn't have any foreign language skills, especially English. When I received that call, I took the time to think and asked my relatives for their opinions, and they advised me to follow my heart's will. That decision brought me to New Zealand.

Right now, I am just learning English for the IELTS exam. The biggest challenge for me now is the language barrier. The next step in my vocation is to pass the exam and enter the seminary next year.

Youth is the time to stand at a crossroads and choose a direction. It's a time for making decisions. Both choices are difficult and involve asking many questions. As a young Catholic, vocation is not just about a career, future, or status. Amidst these appearances, God's invitation may confuse young people's thinking. May we, as young people, dare to generously listen, discern, and live out the calling that Jesus has for us.

Please pray for our Wellington seminarians



Deacon Matthew White
Currently serving as Deacon in the Catholic Parish of the Wairarapa
From Te Ngāhau Tapu Parish, Porirua



Kinh Nguyen
Sixth year seminarian
Originally from Vietnam



Emilio Capin
Fifth year seminarian
Currently on Pastoral placement in Our Lady of the Bays Parish, Tasman
Originally from the Philippines



Gerson Badayos
Fourth year seminarian
Originally from the Philippines

Seminary Collection, 21 April 2024

Renewal Week, 21-27 April 2024

Monastic life with the Cistercians

Jonathan Craven

Southern Star Abbey is a Cistercian monastery located in Kopua, between Takapau and Norsewood, Central Hawke's Bay, within the Diocese of Palmerston North. The monastery supports itself by operating a dairy farm.



Jonathan Craven in the library at Southern Star Monastery, Kopua.

In the year 1098, the first Cistercian monks broke away from the existing Order of St Benedict to get closer to God. For them, this meant having no parishes or schools, which were often run by monks. These were becoming enough of a distraction where the monks would, out of kindness, and their own shortcomings, become more involved in other people's journeys than their own.

The brothers had a sense that this wasn't what God wanted for them, and that they would improve the quality of their spiritual life and ministry without them. They reduced the liturgy and time they were spending in church, creating more time for God in their work, private prayer, *lectio divina*, and study. They had the saying *amor ipse notitia est*, and *amor ipse intellectus est* – love is knowledge, love is understanding. By living in this way, the monastery became a magnet of love, attracting many talented men and women.

Part of the attraction was they had reduced their physical comforts and simplified their architecture giving them a greater solidarity with the poor and ongoing lessons in humility. By making these sacrifices for the wellbeing of the poor, the monks were a greater witness to their plight, and their life of voluntary poverty emphasised that the kingdom of God is within us.

Many men and women have thrived spiritually in these conditions of adversity and hardship, becoming more compassionate for the world, reaching a much greater understanding of God and themselves. They have influenced the world for the better through their prayer life, hospitality and

witness to the Gospel.

In 1954 six monks came from Mount Mellerey Abbey, in County Waterford, Ireland, to Kopua, to help make it possible for New Zealanders to have the advantage and privilege of being able to live the Cistercian Way of life and serve the Church in this way. They faced the hardships and challenges of founding a new monastery. People from all over the country joined up and things slowly developed to what they are today. Kopua monastery aims to be a place of equality, atonement, inner freedom and humility and is often referred to as a school of love.

I was humbled to spend four years as a junior monk in the monastery. The Cistercian Order is dealing with many challenges these days and vocations are one of them. Of the vocations who enter monasteries, most of them leave about the same time I did, with a few staying on for longer. I was hopeful I could navigate the current difficulties, but the Lord had other plans for me. I'm very grateful for this time and the many things I learned.

Kopua currently has two monks in formation; a novice whose in Australia for a year and a postulant who arrived on Christmas Day, making ten monks in total.

Jonathan Craven is not currently at the monastery while he is officially having a break for a year to discern his vocation.



Kopua Monastery guesthouse.

Photos: Jonathan Craven

Max Copley

First year seminarian
From Holy Trinity Parish, Wellington East



Called to serve
wellingtonpriests.org

Teresa Rayner

Teresa Rayner was one of the Archdiocese of Wellington's first Tuākana Youth Ministers. Teresa has now joined a religious order in Australia. She shares her vocation story.

I grew up in Tawa, the oldest of eight kids. I went to St Francis Xavier School in Tawa and later to Bishop Viard College in Porirua, and I was always involved in my parish. In my teens I joined our youth group and attended Jesus4Real and Life Teen camps.

After college I joined the Christchurch Mission Team for two years. We ran high school retreats, and the experience sparked in me a desire to actively share my faith with young people. I returned to Wellington, and in 2020 became a Tuākana Youth Minister at St Catherine's College in Kilbirnie. This new part-time role gave me an opportunity to journey with high school students in their walk of faith. I was there for two years and enjoyed accompanying students as



Teresa Rayner

they wrestled with questions of life and faith.

Throughout this time, the seed of vocation continued to grow. In 2022 I left St Catherine's to actively discern religious life. My desire



Teresa Rayner, far right, with fellow Tuākana Youth Ministers, Wellington, 2021.

Photos: Supplied

My vocation journey

Fr Ravi Kumar Voliganti
Catholic Parish of Wellington South

I come from Andhra Pradesh in India. I was born in a Catholic family and had three uncles who were priests. My vocation journey has had many twists and turns.

I was sent to boarding school at the very young age of six and studied with the Don Bosco Fathers. When I was 18, after finishing college, I was on my way home with friends on a train when we were drugged and robbed. I woke up three days later in a hospital in a strange place, all my belongings gone. People had recognised we were college students and helped us to get back to our homes. This incident made me think that God had a plan for my life. At my priest's suggestion I joined a new society started by a Jesuit. Formation for priesthood in India takes 13 years, and after nine years in the seminary I decided to leave and try something else. I finished my BEd and Masters and went to work in Bangalore while I prepared for competitive exams for a government job.

One night, while being driven home with nine workmates, our van collided with an oil tanker. It was a terrible accident, and seven

of my workmates died. I walked out with virtually no injuries. This was my second clear vocation moment. Surviving the accident unharmed convinced me that God had other plans for my life. I decided to return to the seminary, I finished my formation and was ordained.

I served as a parish priest in Calcutta, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra and Punjab, then spent several years working in schools, first as vice principal and later as principal. When my society was dissolved by the Vatican, I was incardinated into the diocese of Asansol. It is common in my diocese for priests to be sent to serve in different countries. My bishop decided to send me to New Zealand. Archbishop Paul Martin sm invited me to Christchurch just before Covid-19 hit. When he became Archbishop of Wellington, and the borders reopened, he invited me to Wellington.

I arrived in New Zealand in August last year and am serving at the Catholic Parish of Wellington South. It has been a huge culture shock for me – I've had to adjust and still have much to learn.

Coming from a Hindu country where Catholics are persecuted, I was expecting that in New Zealand the churches would be full as there is freedom of religion here. I didn't realise how secular New Zealand is

to help young people encounter the love of God led me to the Missionaries of God's Love, whom I had met at Hearts Aflame. I visited them in Australia and felt at home with them.

Back home, I wanted to share my discernment journey with others. I spent five months touring around New Zealand in a campervan and visiting congregations of Religious Sisters. This experience solidified my own attraction to religious life. I discovered their varied spiritualities and charisms and documented the experience on a website for others to discover (vocationvacationz.squarespace.com).

As a teenager I had a profound encounter with a God who loves me and wants to have a relationship with me. This encounter changed my life, and I want others to experience the same. For me, religious life is a way of entering into that relationship of love with Christ and responding by giving my whole life to share His love with others.

I entered the pre-novitiate with the MGLs a year ago and professed my promises on 18 February 2024. This is an initial commitment, after which I will then enter the novitiate. It will be an eight-year journey to perpetual vows, and I appreciate the prayerful support of family, friends, and my home parish in Tawa.



Fr Ravi Kumar Voliganti

Photo: Supplied

until I got here. My biggest challenge here is how to attract young people and those who are away from the Church.

But the people here have been very friendly and helpful, and I am happy to serve in this archdiocese. God's plans are different from our own. I never dreamt or thought that God would bring me to other side of the world. I strongly believe it is all God's plan for me.

Young Catholics

New chair for Council for Young People

Nick Wilson of Palmerston North is the new chair of the Council for Young People of the Catholic bishops of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Nick is the Diocesan Young Catholics Team Leader for the Diocese of Palmerston North. He has had a career in education in New Zealand and overseas. He works as the Manawātū Catholic Tertiary Chaplain and is on the Diocesan Leadership Team.

Nick looks forward to implementing elements of *Christus Vivit* – Christ is Alive (Pope Francis' 2019 apostolic exhortation to young people); as well as updating Hikoi Tahi (the safeguarding and health and safety framework for young church ministry); and overseeing the coordination of the national pilgrimage to the 2027 World Youth

Day in Seoul, South Korea.

Nick, who hails from Nelson and was formed in the Archdiocese of Wellington, also has a strong interest in ngā rangatahi Māori Katorika (young Catholic Māori).

Bishop of Palmerston North John Adams, the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference liaison bishop with the Council for Young People, welcomed Nick's appointment.

'I am very happy Nick Wilson will be able to further apply his considerable experience and leadership skills to his new role on the Council for Young People,' said Bishop Adams. 'I look forward to working with him as the council seeks to foster among young Catholics a greater love for the Church and her mission.'

The bishops created the seven-member council in 2017 to work with the Church, young people and those who minister with them. It works with the dioceses and faith communities on national projects and a national vision for Catholic ministry with young people.

Nick takes over the chair from Alex Bailey of Hamilton, who in 2019 became the second holder of the position, after David Mullin, who became chair when the council was established.

One of Nick's first assignments in his capacity as the Chair of the Bishops Council for Young People is to attend the International Youth Congress in Rome, 22–26 May 2024. The Vatican Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life is hosting the congress and has asked the bishops

conferences of the world to each send two delegates to this meeting.

'The New Zealand bishops have also invited Jessica Jackman, the new Director of Hearts Aflame, to attend the meeting in Rome,' says Nick. 'Jessica is a teacher from Christchurch with a long involvement in ministry.'

The meeting will include planning for World Youth Day 2027, the fifth-year anniversary of *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis' document to young people, as well as other agenda items.

'Please pray for Jessica and me as we represent the young Catholic people of Aotearoa New Zealand at this international young Church event,' says Nick.

Source: NZCBC



Nick Wilson is the new chair of the Council for Young People of the Catholic bishops of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Photo: Supplied

Three decades of outstanding service

Jennifer Ioannou
Principal | Tumuaki

St Brigid's School, Johnsonville, acknowledges and celebrates Deputy Principal Fiona Kearns on her remarkable 30-year tenure at our school – an impressive milestone!

Fiona began her teaching journey at St Brigid's in February 1994 as a beginning teacher. She has held various roles in the school over the past three decades, from classroom teacher, team leader, Director of Religious Studies, Deputy Principal and Acting Principal.

Fiona has seen the school change and develop over the years, from staff and students starting and departing, new buildings added onto the Phillip St site or refurbished, and the school growing in size from a few classrooms catering for 180 students to 14 classrooms for 330 students as the school is today.

Fiona has brought a myriad of skills and talents to St Brigid's, and has worked incredibly hard to ensure



St Brigid's Jennifer Ioannou (l) and Fiona Kearns (r).

Photo: Supplied

it is a school of choice and is highly regarded in Wellington's northern suburbs' community. She upholds our school values of whakapono (faith), māia (courage), aroha (love) and kotahitanga (inclusiveness), and seeks ways to promote these every day, demonstrating our school's vision, 'Learning together with strength of character and gentleness of heart'.

Fiona's dedication and positive interactions with students, staff, whānau and our parish community,

demonstrate her commitment to Catholic Education and to St Brigid's School. She has made lasting and positive impacts on the hundreds of students she has taught, her colleagues, and the entire school community.

The St Brigid's Board of Trustees celebrates, acknowledges and thanks Fiona on behalf of the school community for her three decades of dedicated outstanding service and leadership at St Brigid's School.

Corrections

In WelCom's March issue, the feature on the 2023 student award recipients and the 2024 student leaders inadvertently omitted the name and photo of St Patrick's College Silverstream's 2024 headboy,

Kobe Betham and the Cullinane College 2024 student leaders' photo caption was incomplete. These are republished correctly below. Sacred Heart College Napier's 2023 Dux is Amelia Murphy.

WelCom's Catholic college student feature and a full pdf can be downloaded from our website at this link: [tinymce.com/2023-24-student-awards-leaders](https://www.welcom.org.nz/tinymce.com/2023-24-student-awards-leaders)

St Patrick's
College,
Silverstream



Kobe Betham,
Head Boy 2024

Cullinane College, Whanganui



Tuakana and Leaders 2024 (l-r): **Heemi Ihaka-Candy; Joanna Petras; Ezekiel Moran; Amelia Couper; Riwaka Maniapoto; Chantilli-Rose Metekingi-Waitokia; Patrick Daignault; Awatea Kaua,** Head Girl; **Angus Hadfield,** Head Boy; **Nia Edwards; Olly Jones,** Deputy Head Boy; **Te Reo Mareikura; Kendra Taylor; Elena Solomon,** Deputy Head Girl.

'Keep our free school lunches' Bishop Viard College students say

Students at Bishop Viard College Porirua have posted a video on YouTube in which they discuss the benefits of the free school lunch programme – Ka Ora, Ka Ko. The Government proposes to review the programme ahead of Budget 2024 in May, and Associate Education Minister and ACT leader David Seymour has said he wants to cut the programme by up to 50 per cent. Students Emelia Gualofa-Wright and Henry Tanuvasa front the video. They say they not only love their school lunches but know the value it is giving to students and whānau.

Rather than leaving it up to those in Parliament to decide on the future of the programme, most of whom, the students say, 'don't have experience of living in communities where food and social security and its many flow-on implications are experienced,' they made the short video message to share their lived experiences of the positive benefits of the healthy school lunches programme ahead of stats and data.

Students and teachers are interviewed about the programme benefits for students and whānau and other students across Aotearoa are challenged to give their perspectives about whether their schools provide healthy school lunches. Students around the country are invited to let their local MPs know, as well as Mr Seymour, their views through social media or to 'go retro' and write them a letter.

Bishop Viard College students say the lunches are 'very nice, restaurant quality even,' that 'some kids struggling financially might not be able to afford,' and that 'free lunches make it easier for families.'

The young people say they would be disappointed if the lunches were taken away because a lot of them rely on the lunches and removal would add to the cost-of-living stress.

'Having free lunches helps in class because some of us don't eat breakfast in the morning, and eating lunches gives us energy throughout the day.'

The programme is a really important social justice initiative. 'It's important for all of the students at the school to be fed. It's a basic necessity to be able to learn. It has to continue or kids simply won't come to school. The incentive to come to school is that they know they are going to be fed. They love it.'

Director of Religious Studies,



Emelia Gualofa-Wright, one of Bishop Viard College's head students leading the activation.

Photo: Supplied

Peter Setefano, says, 'Our school is rich in diversity and culture but not so rich in resources. I have no doubt having school lunches is providing the benefits our students need for their learning, their nutrition, their hauora, their social wellbeing, and it's nothing but positivity. If it doesn't reflect in the stats it definitely reflects on the ground level. Our kids are happier, especially after lunch, they're settled, not so disruptive, so keep the school lunches please.'

The video concludes with an invitation to Mr Seymour to come out to the school to have a free lunch with the students to consult with their expertise, and to talk to them about decisions that affect them.

The YouTube video can be viewed via: [tinymce.com/Viard-College-Lunches](https://www.tinymce.com/Viard-College-Lunches)

Rangatahi Katorika

National Syro-Malabar Youth conference: Unite 2024

Ann Gibu Joseph

The Syro-Malabar Youth Movement (SMYM) hosted its much-anticipated conference, Unite 2024, at El Rancho, Waikanae Beach, 2–5 February.

The largest national youth conference in New Zealand for teens (15–17), youth (18–24) and young family couples (under 40 years), had some 230 participants and 30 volunteers attending from over 15 cities around the country.

Bishop Mar John Panamthothail and Archbishop Paul Martin sm inaugurated the conference, which began with a Holy Qurbana in the Syro-Malabar rite (English), presided over by Bishop Mar John Panamthothail.

SMYM Wellington led a Margamkali cultural performance and Archbishop Paul Martin spoke about the future of our church, saying: 'You are the Now of the God.'

The three-day convention included plenary sessions, inspirational talks and workshops, with prominent speakers and leaders from the Syro-Malabar Church, as well as Catholic clergy from around New Zealand.

Speakers included Rev Fr Daniel Poovannathil, Mar John Panamthothail, Archbishop Paul Martin, Mr Brendan Malone, Rev Fr Philip Suelzer, Mr Sojin Sebastian and Rev Fr Joseph VJ CSSR.

Sessions ranged from spirituality, faith and personal development to addressing our Catholic viewpoint on topics such as abortion, pro-life and digital sanctity.

SMYM members from Auckland, Hamilton, Hastings, Palmerston



Unite 2024 participants at El Rancho Waikanae: 'Oh Youth, You can truly celebrate your life in the church,' St Pope John Paul II.

Photos: Supplied

North, Whangārei, Wellington and Christchurch presented cultural performances ranging from dance and drama to short films, giving fellowship and insights into the SMYM units around New Zealand.

Unite 2024 was not just a gathering, it was a rediscovery and reawakening into our spiritual life, while meeting new people called together who share the same faith experiences. The conversations, connections and smiles created positivity throughout the conference.

It was a resounding success bringing together young Syro-Malabar Catholics in a spirit of unity, faith, and celebration. Unite 2024 not only strengthened bonds of fellowship but also inspired participants to live out their faith more fully in their daily lives.

The months of preparation, organisation, prayer and hard work paid off with great success due to the fellowship and commitment of the SMYM national team, Bishop Bosco Puthur, Bishop John Panamthothail,

Syro-Malabar mission chaplains and the volunteers.

Along the way we sought the patronage and intercession of Syro-Malabar saints, Our Father and Mothers – St Alphonsa of the Immaculate Conception, St Mariam Theresa, St Kuriakose Chavara and St Euphrasia of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for Unite 2024.

Abridged



Archbishop Paul Martin and Bishop Mar John Panamthothail inaugurated Unite 2024, which began with a Holy Syro-Malabar Qurbana.



Margamkali, a traditional Christian dance form from Kerala, India, is accompanied by traditional Christian songs and is a vibrant expression of joy and celebration.

The Syro-Malabar Church is one of the 23 Eastern Catholic Churches, with over five million faithful around the globe. It traces its origins to the evangelisation efforts of St Thomas the Apostle in India. The Syro-Malabar Catholics who derived their faith from St Thomas are known as Mar Thoma Nazranis. The church follows the East Syrian liturgical tradition and has its hierarchy headed by the Major Archbishop Raphael Thattil in communion with the Pope. Syro-Malabar Catholics are predominantly in the state of Kerala in India, but due to migration, communities are in many other parts of India and around the world, including New Zealand. SMYM is the official youth movement of the Syro Malabar Catholic Church with more than 1.6 million Catholic youth all over the world.



Speaker at Unite 2024, Rev Fr Daniel Poovannathil, is a prominent preacher and director at Mount Carmel Retreat Centre, Trivandrum, Kerala, India.

Commissioning Mass for educators

St Mary's of the Angels Church was packed on 12 February for the celebration and Commissioning Mass for Catholic educators in the archdiocese's lower North Island area. It followed the upper South Island Commissioning Mass at St Mary's Church in Nelson on 9 February.

At each Mass, teachers and staff were blessed for their Catholic education ministries for the year ahead. The Masses also recognised over 90 recipients who have taken up additional study and professional development in Catholic education.

'We were delighted to have so many join us at the first shared Mass of the year for those in Catholic primary and secondary schools the archdiocese,' said Maria Fouhy, Secondary Religious Education Adviser for the archdiocese.

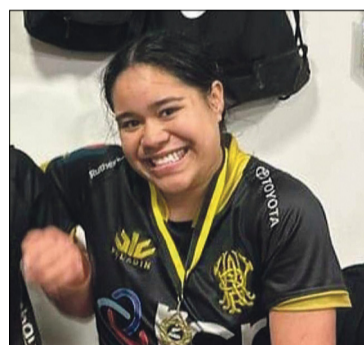
'We thank Archbishop Paul Martin sm and his fellow priests who celebrated the Masses, the organisers, readers and musicians, and everyone who came and whose presence enriched our celebrations. May this year ahead be prayer filled and blessed for all.'



St Mary's of the Angels Church was packed for the Commissioning Mass in February for Catholic educators in the archdiocese. Photo: Supplied

Tuākana 2024 - walking beside young people

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



Sabrina Brown, St Catherine's College

Talofa Lava, the Tuakana role was introduced to me by my former RE teacher at St Mary's College. In my spare time I enjoy time with my family and I love to play sports. I'm really looking forward to getting to know the girls and the staff and working alongside them making 2024 an enjoyable and fun year. My goal is to help form stronger relationships between the students and teachers and to build the sisterhood at St Catherine's.

They are Sabrina Brown and Alysse Saipani, at St Catherine's College, Kilbirnie; and Sarah Beamish at Sacred Heart College, Lower Hutt.

They join Nick Meli who is at



Alysse Saipani, St Catherine's College

Talofa and Kia Ora. I am excited to build bonds with the students and be a support person who the students are able to talk to and find a guiding light through their spirituality and faith. My hopes for this year are to create a place of comfort and peace for the students to grow and either start or continue their journey in finding themselves. I can't wait to work alongside the students at St Catherine's college and see where this path will take us. Fa'afetai lava and God bless.

Bishop Viard College, Porirua and Timothy Ale at Chanel College, Masterton. Nick and Timothy are continuing their roles from last year.



Sarah Beamish, Sacred Heart College

I really enjoy working in the youth ministry space and I'm excited to start this role. This will be a great opportunity for me to lead the students closer to Jesus and hopefully play my part in sending them out into the community with Catholic values and a love for Jesus and others.

Journeying Together - Hiko Ngātahi

As the universal Church continues its synodal journey towards the second and final session in Rome in October this year, here is a recap of the Synod on Synodality steps so far.

For a synodal Church; communion, participation, mission

Pope Francis has called upon the Church to rejuvenate her synodal roots, to pray, listen, and discern together what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church today – all for the sake of the Church's evangelising mission.

In 2021 Pope Francis opened the synodal process, which he hopes will reframe and renew our common journey forward. He called on Catholics around the world to reflect on the theme of 'Communion, Participation, and Mission' in the context of the life of the Catholic Church.

The Synod on Synodality began as a two-year process of spiritual discernment consisting of listening and dialogue throughout



The square in front of St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican is dominated by curving rows of columns, which represent the maternal arms of the Church reaching out to embrace all the faithful.

Photo: Unsplash

the Universal Church, with an invitation for all the baptised to participate. In October 2022, Pope Francis announced there will be two sessions of the Assembly: October 2023 and October 2024.

The Synod has provided an opportunity for serious reflection and action to deepen an understanding of the role of all the members of the Church. The process began in the local Church at the diocesan stage and then moved to national and continental stages, before moving to the Universal Church with the first global assembly in Rome in October 2023.

The work of the Synod on Synodality is now continuing towards the Second Session of the

Synodal Assembly in October 2024. In December 2023, the General Secretariat of the Synod released a new papal document, 'Towards October 2024', about steps to be taken between December 2023 and the Second Session in Rome in October this year. Churches worldwide have been called to reflect on the Synthesis Report, published October 2023, to promote further consultation and to prepare contributions to be sent to Rome by 15 May, for this year's assembly, to advise the Pope on the topic 'For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission'.

Ultimately, Pope Francis will offer a Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation based on what is presented to him throughout the process.

Towards October 2024: How can we be a Synodical Church in Mission?

Following the First General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2023, dioceses around the world have been asked to carry out a further consultation, albeit within a short timeframe and with specific groups within the particular diocese. This consultation has been guided by the question: 'How can we be a Synodical Church in Mission?' Local churches have been asked to identify concrete actions that enable individuals and groups to make their unique contribution to the Church's mission. After the contributions of the dioceses are collected, national summaries will be drawn up, at not more than eight pages each, to be sent to the General Secretariat of the Synod by 15 May 2024.

In December 2023 the Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod, released a statement about steps to be taken in the months between December 2023 and the Second Session of the Synodal Assembly, October 2024, for the whole Church to continue the journey 'For a Synodal Church, Communication, Participation, Mission'.

The new papal document 'Towards October 2024', published on December 11, 2023, emphasised that the next session would focus on how to live synodality at all levels in the Church.

The document clarifies some of the most significant themes that emerged from listening to the Churches will require a substantial amount of time for theological,

canonical, and pastoral reflection.

In the document Churches have been asked to promote further consultation and to prepare contributions for the assembly in October, with the focus on 'how to be a synodal Church in mission?'

The document directs that this guiding question be addressed at two levels with the Synthesis Report at its reference point.

At a local level the question is: 'How can we enhance the differentiated co-responsibility in the mission of all members of the People of God?'

At the second level involving relations between Churches and the Bishop of Rome, the question is: 'How can these relations be creatively articulated in order to find a dynamic balance between the dimension of the Church as a whole and its local roots?'

The aim is to identify the paths to follow and the tools to adopt to



Participants in the 2023 Synod of Bishops on synodality in the Paul VI Hall, October 2023.

Photo: Vatican News

'enhance the unique contribution of each baptised person and of each Church in the one mission of proclaiming the Risen Lord and his Gospel to the world today.'

With all this in mind, the Secretariat of the Synod has invited each local Church to carry out a further consultation.

However, the document explains, this stage of the work will not start from scratch and, therefore, will not involve repeating the process of listening and consultation undertaken during the first 2021-2023 stage.

After the contributions of the dioceses are collected, national summaries will be drawn up to be sent to the General Secretariat of the Synod by 15 May 2024. This material will contribute to the drafting of the *instrumentum laboris*, the Synod's working document for the second session.

In January this year, the

New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference co-ordinated with the six dioceses to set out the method and timeline for this process; and will be collating the fruits of the diocesan consultations and writing a summary document to be sent to Rome by 15 May.

Dioceses and groups in New Zealand have been having sessions and workshops to provide an opportunity for groups to participate in this phase of the consultation.

Keeping the synodal dynamism alive

Local churches have also been invited to go through the entire Synthesis Report and collect specific requests that reflect their specific situation. This will allow them to promote the most appropriate initiatives to involve the entire People of God (for example, formation activities, theological in-depth studies, celebrations in a synodal style, grassroots consultations, listening to minority peoples and groups living in poverty and on the margins creating spaces for controversial issues etc).

Bishops' conferences have also been invited to continue to encourage initiatives that promote the synodal and missionary dimensions of the Church, to collect the testimonies and good practices presented by the dioceses, and send them to the General Secretariat of the Synod by 15 May 2024.

Source: Vatican News

Synod on Synodality organisers invite 300 parish priests to a listening session in Rome that will include papal audience

The Vatican announced on 3 February 2024 that Synod on Synodality organisers are inviting 300 parish priests to come to Rome for a meeting of 'listening, prayer and discernment' that will help shape the next synod assembly discussions.

The international meeting of priests will take place from 28 April to 2 May, with the goal of 'listening to and valuing the experience of parish priests' and providing them with 'an opportunity to experience the dynamism of synodal work at a universal level'.

The General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops said the meeting is being organised in response to the first synod assembly's synthesis report, which identified a need to 'develop ways for a more active involvement of deacons, priests and bishops in the synodal process during the coming year.'

During the five-day meeting, the priests will participate in roundtable discussions, liturgical celebrations, workshops on pastoral proposals, and 'dialogue with experts', according to the press release by the synod organisers.

The priests will also have the chance to speak with Pope Francis in an audience on 2 May.

The meeting is being co-organised by the General Secretariat of the Synod and the Dicastery for the Clergy.

The results of the priests' meeting are expected to be taken into account by the drafters of the *instrumentum laboris*, the working document for the second synod assembly in October 2024.

Source: NCR

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Synod on Synodality - a summary of the journey so far...

The 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

7 March 2020: Pope Francis announces theme of XVI Synod of Bishops 'For a synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission.'

23 August 2021: Preparatory documents published.

10 October 2021: Pope Francis officially begins process of XVI Synod of Bishops.

October 2021 – August 2022: Diocesan phase.

- Diocesan submissions received (in New Zealand).
- Diocesan Synthesis Te Reo o Hewa, Our Dreams and Aspirations prepared.

7 July 2022: The National Hui held in Wellington. National Synthesis document prepared.

16 October 2022: Pope Francis announces two sessions of the Assembly.

5–9 February 2023: Oceania Assembly held in Suva, Fiji. Continental Synthesis prepared.

26 April 2023: Pope Francis announces 70 non-Bishop members to be included as full voting members of Assembly.

30 September 2023: Ecumenical Prayer Vigil held in Rome to pray for Synod.

1 October 2023: Opening Mass of Assembly.

1–3 October 2023: Retreat for Assembly participants.

4–29 October 2023: XVI Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

29 October 2023: Closing Mass.

October 2023: First Session of Synod ended with publication of Synthesis Report titled, 'A Synodal Church on Mission' – for ongoing discernment.

5 December 2023: Ordinary Council of Synod of Bishops adopted a document for the work to be engaged by the Catholic Church until the Second Session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (October 2024).

11 December 2023: General Secretariat of the Synod releases new papal document 'Towards October 2024', about steps to be taken between December 2023 and the Second Session of the Synodal Assembly, October 2024, for whole Church to continue the Synodal journey. Churches asked to promote further consultation and prepare contributions for the Assembly in October, with focus on 'how to be a synodal Church in mission?'

3 February 2024: Vatican announced Synod on Synodality organisers inviting 300 parish priests to listening session in Rome, 28 April to 2 May, which will help shape next Synod Assembly discussions, and will include papal audience.

March 2024: Diocesan reports collated into national reports to be sent to Rome by 15 May 2024; will contribute to drafting of *instrumentum laboris*, Synod's working document for second session.

Towards October 2024: 'Not an end but a new beginning'

Lucienne Hansel

From the start, the Synod on Synodality has been full of surprises – from Pope Francis' first announcement of a global synod to women and lay delegates with voting rights and unexpected additional phases of consultation. We are currently between two Synod Assemblies, the final one scheduled for this October. In the meantime, Pope Francis has set up 10 working groups to study various themes that have emerged from the Synod so far. These studies are expected to continue beyond October 2024.

Late last year, bishops were asked to conduct a further brief consultation with specific groups within dioceses, the fruits of which would feed into the *instrumentum laboris* for the 2024 Assembly. The recent Synthesis Report, 'A Synodal Church in Mission' was to be the reference text for this phase. The question for reflection: *How can we be a Synodal Church in Mission?* gave a particular emphasis on the 'how' with a focus on 'mission'.

Mission is what Synodality is about: the People of God walking together in communion with Christ, each in their own vocation,



Lucienne Hansel Photo: Supplied

"Mission is what Synodality is about: the People of God walking together in communion with Christ, each in their own vocation, sharing in the one mission to proclaim Christ's Gospel of love and compassion to all of humanity."



sharing in the one mission to proclaim Christ's Gospel of love and compassion to all of humanity.

How do we enable all the baptised to understand and embrace this responsibility for mission? What needs to change or be put in place to encourage this sense of shared responsibility? These are the reflections the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference will be collating in a national document to be sent to Rome by 15 May 2024.

As Francis reminds us, this Synod is not about hot-button topics but about learning to be more synodal in our ways and missionary in our focus. This final phase is not

the end, but the beginning of a new way of being Church – where everyone has a place at the table and shares in the mission according to their gifts and responsibilities; where 'reciprocal listening, dialogue, prayerful communal discernment and creation of consensus' (Synod Synthesis, 2023) become a visible sign that Christ dwells among us.

2024 consultation in the Archdiocese of Wellington In February and March 2024, various groups within the Archdiocese of Wellington participated in the final diocesan synod consultation, which concluded 15 March. The consultation involved diocesan bodies such as the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, the Council of Priests and the Ecology Justice and Peace Commission, as well as parish Pastoral Councils, Catholic School principals, young adults and youth ministers, men's and women's groups, and lay and religious communities. The feedback from this consultation was sent directly to the NZCBC for inclusion in their national synod document, which will be sent to Rome by 15 May 2024.

Next steps in the Synod on Synodality in Palmerston North

Nick Wilson

The people of the Diocese of Palmerston North have been encouraged to continue in the Synod on Synodality. The Diocesan online media communications Tūmanako, which has wide distribution across the Catholic entities in the diocese, has advised how to participate in this next stage of the synod.

This stage is discernment on the focus question: 'How can we be a synodal church in mission?'

As Catholic people, we are clearly mission orientated. While this is core to who we profess to be,

articulating this can be challenging. Therefore, discernment to this kaupapa is essential.

Moreover, the wisdom of the Holy Father is quite clear in *Amoris Laetitia*, where he states: 'I dream of a 'missionary option', that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today's world rather than for her self-preservation.'

The kingdom mission of the Diocese of Palmerston North was consecrated to the Holy Spirit, and therefore we are particularly

cognisant of the need to seek the guidance and wisdom of the Spirit to direct the path that we should go. To not engage in the process of synodality might suggest we exercise the sin of pride, where we think we know what we are doing and the direction of the Spirit is secondary to that.

Therefore, we have encouraged and continue to encourage the people of the Diocese of Palmerston North to seek the counsel of the Spirit so we can be sure that what comes from the discernment is the direction we will confidently dare to go.



Nick Wilson Photo: Supplied

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The joy of the Resurrection - the grace of Easter believed

Sue Jones

In the Old Testament reading for the Thursday after Ash Wednesday, Moses speaks to God's people. He speaks about being good, of loving God and of keeping his commandments. If God's people do this he says, 'the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to make your own.' In the Gospel Jesus speaks of the hardship of being his follower.

"At last, the waiting is over and the explosion of the Resurrection is there before us."

Lent has been a time of entering into the spiritual 'land' which is God's domain. This place where we meet God can be somewhat strange to lay life. Special effort is required during prayer to enter this 'land' and become more a part of it, making it our own in a way that pleases God.

A background of personal prayer in which get to know God and to allow God to get to know us is a helpful thing to have on board when entering the Easter liturgies. Although these are familiar to us, they have at their centre a very strange event.

It is an event which will always be strange to us, an event which is hard to believe. It is *the* event of

our Catholic lives and if we count ourselves as followers of Jesus Christ, we must allow his suffering death and Resurrection to shatter our thinking about how we are living as Catholics.

During Eastertime we need to make good use of the feminine virtues of trust and humility. These help us to become one with Christ who during his passion and death always sought his Father's will. Again, personal prayer, time spent reflecting on God's Word, will help

us to contemplate the events taking place around us.

We move through the ceremonies we know so well and love so much more reflectively. We think more deeply about them seeking new knowledge of the actual events revealed in the Gospels. We sigh. We suffer. We slump. And we wait, wondering what on earth God is doing in that oh, so quiet, strange time between Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

But at last, the waiting is over and the explosion of the Resurrection is there before us. God makes what seems impossible, possible. When Jesus Christ rises from the dead are we there with him? Are we there in the midst of this time, feeling the

confusion, the excitement, the hope and thrill of Easter morning? Are we open to receiving the movement of God's Easter grace within us?

If we are with Jesus the accounts of his appearances, though familiar to us, will bring to us that Easter touch of strangeness so necessary in Catholic lay life. They will move our souls because they are moving stories. John and Peter running to the tomb having heard from the women that the tomb is empty. Jesus walking to Emmaus with those who do not at first recognise him, those who need evangelising. Mary Magdalene's more contemplative story of recognising her Lord.

The total joy of the Resurrection comes from a strange, holy 'land' outside of ourselves. When we occupy this 'land' with God, and in God, joy bubbles up gloriously within us, bursting out of us into the liturgy, onto the altar, into the lives of those around us bringing hope and humour to the world. This is the movement of God's Holy Spirit at work in us. It is the grace of Easter believed.

Sue Jones is a member of the Catholic Parish of Napier. She worships at Thomas More Church. She has written many published articles and scripture reflections for the New Zealand Catholic newspaper and the former Marist Messenger magazine.



Resurrection of Jesus, 'San Francesco al Prato Resurrection' by Italian Renaissance painter Pietro Perugino, c 1499. Housed in the Pinacoteca, Vatican Museums. Image: Public Domain/Wikipedia

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The Eighth Day – a new beginning

An Easter reflection

Fr James Lyons

'In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were... Jesus came and stood among them... Eight days later, the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them.' [See John 20:19-31]

This scripture passage is read on the second Sunday of Easter, also known as Divine Mercy Sunday. The Risen Jesus confirms the faith of the disciples with the gift of the Holy Spirit and the commission, *As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.*

For me, the significance is in the number eight.

With the first day of the week being Sunday, the eighth day is the following Sunday. But, it can be understood as an extra, an add-on, or – we might also recognise it as an 'out-of-time' day, signalling a new beginning.

"We are sent, as Jesus himself was sent, to bring light into life's dark places, to encourage, to forgive and to love."

The disciples were certainly at the beginning of something entirely new. The resurrection of Jesus had brought them to face the reality of who Jesus was. His claim to be from God was suddenly obvious and their failure to stand with him at Calvary was their great shame.

But Jesus comes among them on this eighth day with no reprimand, only peace – and a gift that would change their cowardice to bravery and their guilt to strong, faithful witnesses, even to death.

They had already heard Jesus announce his 'new commandment' to love as he had loved them, and 'loving one another' would now become their identity badge. With the gift of



the Holy Spirit transforming their lives they were ready for mission. A new age was set in motion.

In the light of this, I like to think of the *Eighth Day* as something totally unexpected, completely out of the ordinary.

Following the death of Jesus, his disciples had survived a time of intense disappointment and self-blame, only to then find themselves coping with reports that Jesus was alive. They were lost, confused, very much out of their depth.

Peter even decided to go back to his fishing and the others joined him [John 21:3].

Out of this state of near despair, their faith crumbling, a light dawned, opening a new day unlike anything they had ever known – the Eighth Day!

This 'Day' ushered the disciples into a new way of seeing and a new way of being. As the followers of Jesus formed themselves into a faith community, the witness of their lives became known as *The Way*. Filled with the Holy Spirit they suddenly knew Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life.

The Eighth Day turned doubt into unshakeable hope.

This is the Easter promise for all who follow Jesus, no matter the time or season. We are sent, as Jesus himself was sent, to bring light into life's dark places, to encourage, to forgive and to love.

We are people of the Eighth Day, a day filled with the wonder of newness and immense joy. It is the day outside the concerns of every ordinary seven-day week; a day when Jesus opens minds and hearts, stands with us and invites us to follow him. Who would not enter this day and cling to its promise?

Resurrection of Christ, stained-glass window, detail, St Julie Billiart Catholic Church, Hamilton, Ohio, USA.

Image: Creative Commons, Wikimedia



Day of Prayer for Family Life

The Day of Prayer for Family Life is celebrated on the Feast of the Annunciation, which usually takes place on 25 March, nine months before Christmas. When it falls during Holy Week, it is usually moved, as in 2024, with an observance on 8 April.

'Let us make this journey as families, let us keep walking together. What we have been promised is greater than we can imagine. May we never lose heart because of our limitations, or ever stop seeking that fullness of love and communion which God holds out before us.'
– Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (On Love in the Family), 325.



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Gospel Reading: Sunday 31 March 2024

EASTER SUNDAY, THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD - JOHN 20:1-9

¹On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb.

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and told them, 'They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where

they put him.'

³So Peter and the other disciple set out to go to the tomb.

⁴They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and reached the tomb first;

⁵he bent down and saw the burial cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in.

⁶When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and

saw the linen burial cloths on the ground, ⁷and also the cloth that had covered his head; this was not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place.

⁸Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first, also went in; and he saw and believed.

⁹Until this moment, they had still not understood the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

Easter Sunday 2024

Acts 10:34-43; Col 3:1-4; John 20:1-18

Br Kevin Dobbyn fms

The readings could not be more appropriate as we continue the journey towards the 2nd Synod in Rome in October this year. From both *Acts* and *John* there is a clear message about the kind of Church we are to become; the one St Pope John XXIII launched and, with the energy of renewed urgency, the same one where Pope Francis leads us into the ever-deeper waters of the Spirit who speaks the silent language of God.

It is worth reading chapters 10 and 11 in *Acts* in one sitting. We read there a process very close to the synodal method we see in the participants seated at round tables. Round tables present us with the Gospel approach which recognises each of us as baptised disciples and equals, whatever our vocation, role or ministry. Noteworthy in the story

is that Peter does not speak from a synagogue, nor from Jerusalem, but from the home of Cornelius, a non-Jew living in Caesarea. What might that say about the future synods of a more ecumenically focused Church?

As Peter wrestles with the meaning of his dream | vision, he cannot work it out by himself (10:17). He needs the community, the church – not to be confused with hierarchy – to help in the discernment, even from those sent by the Spirit who come from outside the familiar. What might that say about inclusion or mission, when so much is made of the trappings of Catholicism's yesteryears, denying the growth of Vatican II's local churches who continue the struggle to bring the Gospel to this change-of-era's cultural realities?

John has that wonderful story of Mary of Magdala's encounter with

the Risen Jesus whom she does not first recognise. It is the kind of experience that underpins Peter's openness to the movement of the Spirit in the depths of his soul. How little our Institutional history recognises the wisdom of women! That Mary loved Jesus and knew that he loved her enabled her to encounter him. Such love simply overflowed in her telling the other disciples that God made flesh in Jesus the Christ is alive! and loves each of us; the One-Who-Is has overcome every blockage to that Love, even those flaws we may not yet be aware of.

In this kind of love we can recognise the Christ-life hidden within us (Col 3:3). The more we become aware of that Truth within, that Reality, our love will find its best expression in the joy, the delight we have in others, and in all creation.

Hope for Christian unity in a festival of new life

Fr James Lyons

What does Christianity look like to those who are not Christian?

For much of the last 500 hundred years the Church of Jesus Christ has looked and acted as very divided, with Christians fighting among themselves, their differences highlighted by large numbers of sects and denominations.

The prayer of Jesus that his followers might 'all be one' (John 17:11) is far from realised.

But, over the last century, a desire to heal and restore relationships between the various Christian 'churches' has become very apparent and there is now a tangible sense that we are on a journey towards unity.

In New Zealand our bishops have formalised 'Dialogues' with Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists and Lutherans and have strong links with inter-faith and ecumenical programmes.

The approach today is to explore and celebrate what we have in common rather than focus on what divides us.

An initiative from our Dialogue with the Lutheran community is a 'Festival of New Life' on the Sixth Sunday of Easter which, this year, is **Sunday 5 May**.

This occasion invites parishes to appreciate the gift of faith through baptism. We have all been *baptised in Christ* and, realising this, provides a starting point for the seeds of unity to take root.

As the first disciples grasped the meaning and power of the resurrection of Jesus, they recalled his words urging them to remain in his love (Gospel reading 5 May). This urging was emphasised in the shape of his commandment for them: *Love one another as I have loved you.* (See John 15).

No Christian community has consistently lived that commandment, but in our own time we are witnessing hearts changing, prejudices disappearing and goodwill coming to the fore.

By designating the Sixth Sunday of Easter as a *Festival of New Life*, our bishops signal both hope and confidence in the movement towards Christian unity.

Baptism is the sacrament that

unites Christians in the Body of Christ, the People of God.

The baptised become 'new creations', grafted into the life of the Trinity, forever linked to the Risen Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, our Helper and Guide.

Whether or not there is a parish celebration, we can each make the Sixth Sunday a personal 'Festival', giving thanks for the amazing gift of faith and sincerely praying for all who share faith with us.

This year is the first time a Catholic | Lutheran initiative is offered to all New Zealand parishes. Just as every new life signals a new beginning, may this *Festival of New Life* become a sure stepping stone on our journey to unity.

Membership of New Zealand Roman Catholic | Lutheran Dialogue includes Sr Kathleen Rushton rsm, Fr Tom Rouse ssc, Fr James Lyons, Rev Mark Whitfield, Mr Petrus Simons, Mr Jim McAloon.

The RC | Lutheran Dialogue group will be providing homily notes and prayer of the faithful ideas through each diocese for the new Festival of Life ecumenical event on Sunday 5 May.

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"Love one another as I have loved you."
- John 15:12

Photo: Annette Scullion

New book calls for fresh approach to overcome divisions

A new book titled *On the Brink* has been recently released by Wellington author, Roger Ellis.

On the Brink discusses creating conditions to foster the reconnecting of communities in an age of division says Roger Ellis. 'Over the last three decades we have witnessed a growing centralisation of economic and political power, the erosion of communities, and growing polarisation. The book identifies the underlying causes and suggests some solutions to help local and regional communities regain their place in decision-making and participation in a renewal of flax roots democracy,' he said at the book's launch in Wellington in February.

'We need to give power back to local communities and regions so that people can make decisions over matters that directly impact them. That means rediscovering shared values that have worked for us in the past – such as respect for human dignity, a sense of community, seeking the common good, and subsidiarity,' said Mr Ellis.

The book covers a wide range of issues including climate change, technological advances, industrial democracy, economic and political reforms – all aimed at empowering individuals, families, local communities and regions.

Roger Ellis has 30 years professional experience in New Zealand government, business and community sectors



Roger Ellis

having held a wide variety of management and governance roles in addition to community leadership positions. The book is based on reflections Roger's discussions with a wide range of New Zealand and international leaders from business, government, indigenous and community groups.

On the Brink is available through Amazon bookstores in paperback and kindle e-book editions and can be ordered from www.amazon.com.au at www.amazon.com.au/dp/B0CV5W4VLV



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.

Sunday 31 March
Easter Sunday – Resurrection of the Lord

Monday 8 April
Annunciation of the Lord, Solemnity

Tuesday 9 April
Te Kupenga – Catholic Leadership Institute is starting a new webinar series, 'A Taste of Theology', Tuesdays 5.30pm, via Zoom. One-off cost \$60. CTC lecturers cover range of topics. Visit tekupenga.ac.nz/tasteoftheology to register or contact office@ctc.ac.nz or ph (09) 361 1053 for more information.

Friday 12 April
Sacred Heart Cathedral fundraising gala dinner, debate and auction, 6.30pm, St Pat's Wellington Hall, Kilbirnie. Tickets \$120 plus gst pp, or group bookings by table. Contact Bob Houston at bobhouston@xtra.co.nz or ph 0274 898017 for tickets and enquiries. Visit cathedralcampaign.org.nz for more information.

Monday 22-Saturday 27 April
Set Free + Heaven Come – events for teenagers and young adults, organised the Catholic Diocese of Hamilton, venue St Peter's College, Cambridge. Register via Hamilton Diocese youth office: cdh-youth.squarespace.com/set-free (years 10-13) and cdh-youth.squarespace.com/heaven-come (years 18+).

Saturday 27, Sunday 28 April
Natural Fertility Management – Billings Ovulation Method training seminar, Christchurch. Go to www.billingslife.org.nz/training-seminar for information and to register.

Friday 29 April
St Peter Chanel – Patron Saint of Oceania

Sunday 5 May 2024
Seek: Explore and Discern – archdiocesan Vocations and Young Church event, 12.30pm, St Anne's Newtown. Contact youth@wn.catholic.org.nz for more information.

Wednesday, 19-Friday 21 June
NZ Catholic Education Office Convention 2024 – TSB Arena. Wellington. Early bird registrations until 5 May. Theme: Tūhono Whakaponu – Together, one faith community. Visit cathedconvention.co.nz for information.

Sunday 9 and Sunday 16 June
Love is a Decision – archdiocesan marriage preparation course for engaged couples, 10am-4pm. Go online to wn.catholic.org.nz/about/church-mission/marriage-ministries to register.

15, 16, 17 November
Sacred Heart and Redwood College Nelson reunion for past pupils and staff. Register at: redwoodsacredheart.com or contact Bernadette King-Turner at: SHReunion2024@gmail.com for information.

Sacred Heart Reefton 150 years

Parishioners, ex-parishioners and friends of the former Sacred Heart Parish of Reefton are invited to our 150-year celebrations on the weekend of 17, 18, 19 May.

The programme includes a Meet and Greet, visits to the church to share stories of the parish through 150 years; Sacred Heart School; Reefton Cemetery and grounds with stories of the early settlers. Plus lunch, celebration Saturday evening Mass, Dinner at Dawsons, and Sunday morning tea and goodbyes.

If you have photographs of the churches in Reefton, Ikamatua, Murchison, Inangahua, Waiuta, and Cronadun, plus the old assembly Hall, Convent, old school, presbytery, people, gatherings etc... bring them along.

There will be a parish update booklet to 2023 when Sacred Heart Parish and St Canice's Parish amalgamated to form the Parish of Buller and Inangahua.

Register your interest by 26 April with: Tony Fortune tonyfortune52@xtra.co.nz ph (03) 732 8639; or Bernadette Snowden berna.cat.snowden@xtra.co.nz ph (03) 732 8915; or Margaret Prince margaret@reefton.nz ph 027 6311093.



Sacred Heart Church, Reefton.

Photo: WelCom



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Anzac Day 25 April 2024 National Day of Remembrance

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Fr Brian Fennessy ED
Former Army Chaplain;
Parish Priest of Our Lady of
the Plains, Selwyn Parish,
Lincoln

King George V's comment, as he visited the Commonwealth war cemeteries in Flanders during 1922, is a powerful statement of remembrance and upholding peace:

'We can truly say that the whole circuit of the earth is girdled with the graves of our dead...and, in the course of my pilgrimage, I have many times asked myself whether there can be more potent advocates of peace upon earth through the years to come, than this massed multitude of silent witnesses to the desolation of war.'

Our grateful appreciation and response to the Fallen, expressed in the King's comment, is shown in observing Anzac Day and by our endeavour to pass on the fruits of the soldiers' legacy to uphold justice and achieve peace.

Peace is a desire of humanity, yet it requires commitment to achieve.

Every year, since 1968, successive popes have written a Message on Peace for New Year's Day. In addition, on 8 January this year, in his annual 'State of the World' address to members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, Pope Francis reflected on the conflicts and divisions ravaging the world and highlighted the responsibility of individuals and nations to foster peace. The Pope spoke on the need of peace in our broken world and how we are all responsible for achieving it. He

called for a greater effort to defend and implement humanitarian law to ensure human dignity.

In a world suffering from conflicts, Pope Francis continues to give exhortations on peace; they are worth searching and reading (search on 'Google').

To achieve peace is a decision. We have to work at the process. The foundation stones to achieving peace is justice, trust, and respect.

The Prophet Isaiah (2:4) reminds us of the decision and effort to work for peace when he wrote that people, under the sovereignty of God:

'...will hammer their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into sickles. Nation will

not lift sword against nation, there will be no more training for war.'

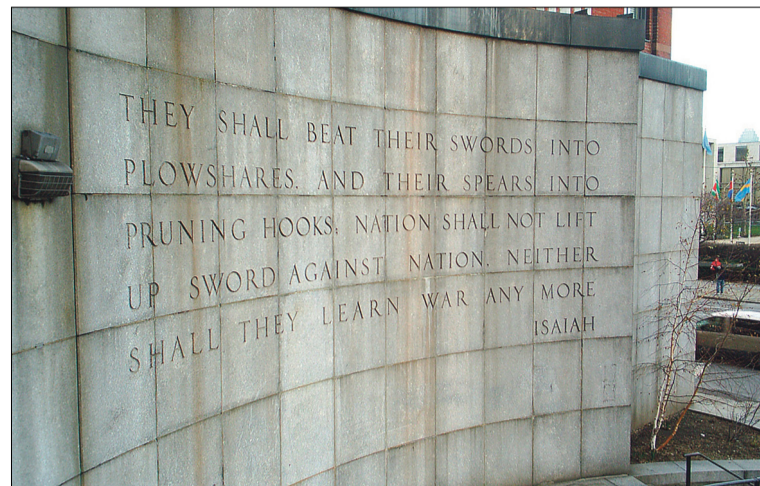
Perhaps surprisingly, the Soviet Union donated a bronze sculpture, during 1959, to the United Nations Building in New York, depicting the figure of a man, holding a hammer aloft in one hand and a sword in the other hand, hammering a sword into a ploughshare, a tool to till land for crops. This action symbolises humanity's desire to put an end to war and transform tools of destruction into tools to benefit mankind. However, this desire has to be actuated.

The biblical quote from Isaiah 2:4 is also inscribed on a wall opposite the UN building in New York.



A bronze statue in the UN garden, New York, called 'Let us Beat Swords into Ploughshares', representing the figure of a man hammering a sword into the shape of a ploughshare.

Photo: United Nations



"They shall beat their swords into ploughshares. And their spears into pruning hooks. Nations shall not lift up sword against nation. Neither shall they learn war any more." - Isaiah 2:4

Image: Wikimedia Commons

After WWII, it was hoped the United Nations would ameliorate the prospect of war. The UN Charter states:

'All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.'

This is the aspiration of countries who sign the UN Charter. Sadly, the spirit of the Charter and the message of the Soviet gift are not always adhered to.

Anzac Day grew out of the grief of New Zealanders and Australians. After the Great War, as the War Memorials were constructed, New Zealanders were given an opportunity to publicly gather to express sacrifice and loss. Without the ability to visit graves on the other side of the world, the names of the Fallen on various Memorials allowed families and veterans to gather to remember and to support one another.

The observance of Anzac Day also provided a forum for New Zealanders to express their pride in New Zealand fulfilling its duty,

at great cost, to achieve peace and wellbeing for people throughout the world.

During the Vietnam War Era, some protestors to the Vietnam War used Anzac Day as a forum to protest. They were protesting for peace, but in a controversial manner. With the value of hindsight, the RSA and Police could have handled the protestors' action in a more constructive way.

Despite the occasional interference as a focus of political protest, Anzac Day has a powerful contribution in remembering the Fallen, but also uniting New Zealanders as it did for families and local communities 100 years ago.

As Christians, we are also conscious that Anzac Day always falls within the Easter Season; the Season to celebrate God's pledge that we are his people and that evil and death have been overcome. The Risen Lord's greeting to the disciples is 'Peace be with you'.

Easter and Anzac Day dovetail in proclaim a message of sacrifice, love, hope, peace, and life.

Lest we forget.

The Ode of Remembrance

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,

We will remember them.

We will remember them.

E kore rātou e kaumātuatia

Pēnei i a tātou kua mahue nei

E kore hoki rātou e ngoikore

Ahakoia pehea i ngā āhuatanga o te wā

I te hekenga atu o te rā

Tae noa ki te aranga mai i te ata

Ka maumahara tonu tātou ki a rātou

Ka maumahara tonu tātou ki a rātou

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