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Schools' backing sought for campaign for living wage for lowest-paid school workers

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

The Living Wage Movement Aotearoa has launched a campaign aimed at having directly employed and contracted school cleaners, caretakers, canteen staff and groundskeepers being paid a living wage.

According to items in the first *Kotui* e-newsletter for 2024 from the New Zealand Catholic Education Office, such workers are the lowest paid in schools,



Dr Kevin Shore

with most paid the minimum wage or close to it. Effective from April 1, 2024, the minimum wage in Aotearoa New Zealand is \$23.15 an hour.

Such wages leave these workers unable to cover basic costs or to live with dignity, a *Kotui* item stated. This is despite these people playing an indispensable role in 2500 schools in this country.

The Living Wage Movement Aotearoa has set the level of a living wage in this country as \$26.00 an hour as of September last year.

The campaign, titled "Living Wage Schools Campaign and Pledge", is seeking pledges of support from school boards.

But it is not expecting schools to bear the financial burden of the increased wages for these workers.

The campaign "aims to bring together faith, workers, and school communities, to urge the central Government to provide fresh funding for these workers to finally receive a living wage", according to an item in *Kotui*.

"The key objective of the campaign is to galvanise broad support across the school community for the living wage for [these] workers. This will demonstrate to the Government that schools and school communities support this campaign, and want funding to pay these staff a living wage."

NZCEO chief executive Dr Kevin Shore stated in a *Kotui* editorial that he met with Finn Caldwell and John Kennedy-Good on behalf of Living Wage Movement Aotearoa late last year, and the campaign was discussed.

Dr Shore noted in his editorial that achieving the goal of the campaign would require "further Government support".

He added that "it is certainly worth considering supporting this campaign".

According to the campaign website, "Any funding estimates we have made, have been insignificant compared to the Education budget, and the amount

allocated to operational funding. Furthermore, in the past, the central Government has made living wage adjustments for directly employed staff, and in such circumstances has prepared financial contingencies for the scenario that all contracted staff in schools be shifted to being directly employed. Therefore, this is likely a matter of reallocating existing funding, rather than imposing additional financial obligations on the Ministry of Education".

A *Kotui* item noted that "the concept of a just wage has been ingrained in Catholic social teaching for at least 100 years. Wages must be sufficiently high to adequately provide for families and children, enabling working people to live with dignity and actively participate in society. Pope Francis emphasised in 2013: 'Not paying a just wage, not providing work, focusing exclusively on the balance books, on financial statements, only looking at making personal profit. That goes against God!'"

For more information, go to www.livingwageschools.org



“Not paying a just wage, not providing work, focusing exclusively on the balance books, on financial statements, only looking at making personal profit. That goes against God!”
— Pope Francis

On the front cover: Bishop Stephen Lowe blesses a new classroom at St Ignatius of Loyola Catholic College, assisted by Matthew Grevatt, director of religious studies. (Photo: Ben Campbell/BC Photography)

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Pompallier Diocesan Centre, 30 New Street, Ponsonby, Auckland. P.O. Box 147-000, Ponsonby, Auckland 1144.
Phone: (09) 360-3067 or (09) 378-4380.
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Compassion Soup Kitchen launches appeal to fund increase in demand

On the frontline of supporting people facing hardship, Compassion Soup Kitchen in Wellington launched its appeal, Support People in Your Community, on February 26, to raise funds to help those in need in Wellington.

Over the past few months, Compassion Soup Kitchen has experienced a significant increase in service demand, providing around 2500 more meals than in previous months.

According to Sam Johnson, kitchen manager at the Compassion Soup Kitchen, "Our resources

are stretched to the limit right now. With high food prices and higher demand than ever before, we are struggling just to feed the many hungry whānau who come to our door, let alone provide any 'extras'".

The support provided through this appeal will allow, not only to continue providing nutritious meals for the whānau who arrive each day, but also to assist them with the daily problems they face, such as access to hygiene items, for which high cost is a barrier for many people.

Mr Johnson added, "Basic personal hygiene plays a pivotal role in maintaining a sense of dignity, and preserving overall health and well-being. For this reason, I would love to have hygiene packs available for all our whānau to access".

"Supporting the appeal will allow you to provide a warm meal or a hygiene pack to someone in your community who needs it, and make a tangible difference in someone's life."

Donate at www.soupkitchen.org.nz

St Dominic's Catholic College
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Catholic School For Girls Years 7-13

- College theme for 2024:
Let all that you do be done in Love
I o mahi katoa mahia I roto I te Aroha
(1 Corinthians 16:14)
- 2024 special character student leaders:
Elizabeth Finau and **Jazel Nicolas**.
- Recipients of the Hine Toa Bluelight Camp Scholarship: **Seni Mataele** (Yr 11) and **Georgia Jones** (Yr 10).

www.stdoms.ac.nz

Pounamu taonga for National Shrine on Waitangi Day

by MARTIN de JONG

The blessing of a pounamu (greenstone) as a sign of Mary's protection was a feature of the Waitangi Day Mass at St Mary of the Angels church in Wellington on February 6.

The pounamu was personally gifted by Tā (Sir) Mark Solomon of Christchurch, in recognition of the church being the National Shrine of Aotearoa New Zealand (a status given after installation of the Hāta Maria artwork in August, 2022). The pounamu, resting at the feet of Mary, was unveiled and blessed in a special ceremony at the beginning of Mass by Archbishop Paul Martin, SM, of Wellington, and Mana Whenua representative Te Whatanui Winiata (Te Atiawa). It symbolises Our Lady's protection of all people in Aotearoa under the national patronal title of Mary, Mother of God, Assumed into Heaven. People are invited to touch the pounamu as they enter or leave the church, to express their trust in Mary as intercessor and protector.

More than 200 people attended the service, a feature of Catholic commemoration of Waitangi Day in Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington) for more than 20 years. Singing was led by a combined choir from the parishes of St Mary of the Angels and Te Ngakau Tapu — a parish for Māori, based in Porirua, north of Wellington City. Hymns and parts of the Mass were sung in Te Reo, English and Latin.

In his homily, Archbishop Martin said that Waitangi Day was a day "to reflect on our past, to give thanks for what has been, to ponder where we are at in our present age, and to look with hope for the future".

He compared the people of Aotearoa New Zealand today to the ancient Israelites, "a motley crew who were not overly successful or consistent in their living of this relationship with God, but God never gave up on them".

While the intention at the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi was to form a nation at peace where people could live together, he said, "there were times of great distrust and even war", and, in recent times, we have been trying to address the mistakes of the past and the bad decisions.

The Church community had been part of the Treaty relationship from the beginning. "We see this day, not as a political commemoration, but one of [a] covenant between peoples . . . It is why we want to work in our present day to ensure that there is justice for all, that the wrongs of the past are made right, that the spirit of the Treaty of Waitangi and all that lies behind it is not abandoned or watered down or talked away."

In welcoming the gift of the pounamu, he said,



Te Whatanui Winiata, chairman of the Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust (Te Atiawa – Mana Whenua in Wellington), blesses the pounamu after its unveiling. He carried out the unveiling.



Archbishop Paul Martin, SM, prays over the pounamu before it is unveiled. With Archbishop Martin, left to right: Msgr Gerard Burns, Fr Alfred Tong, and, to Archbishop's right: Fr Patrick Bridgeman.

"we are reminded that we are of this earth, as well as of heaven above. We are linked through this land to one another, and we call upon the Mother of God, Mary, to pray and be with us in our land . . . We ask her intercession for us that this country of ours will be a place of harmony and justice and fairness for all who live here, and at this time that those who have the roles of leadership in our country will have open hearts and minds and ears, so that they may help us all to understand who we are, and what we are called to be".

He reminded the congregation that, in the Opening Prayer, they had prayed "that we would fulfil the destiny of our lives, that the plan of God for each one of us will be fulfilled in this land, making this a holy land", and that it would be a good prayer to pray each day of this year.

Speaking for the Kaitiaki Committee for the Hāta Maria Artwork, Caii Michelle-Baker said that the idea for honouring Mary with a pounamu came through St Mary's parish priest Pā Kevin Mowbray, SM. Once tikanga and protocol were in place, the artwork and encasement work began. This included a coloured glass panel above Hāta Maria acknowledging Mana Whenua for the area, Te Atiawa. The panel had been created by Len Hetet, Pokau Te Ahuru and Manukorihi Winiata. The casing for the raw greenstone itself was engineered by Anthony Fabricon.

The artwork Ko Hāta Maria, te Matua Wahine o te Atua (Holy Mary, Mother of God) was created by Damien Walker of the Studio of St Philomena, Rangiora, and journeyed through the country's six dioceses in 2021-2022, led by Korty Wilson, before being installed at St Mary of the Angels.



Caii Michelle-Baker sings "Ave Maria" after Communion

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St Ignatius of Loyola Catholic College opens

by MICHAEL OTTO

After more than two decades of hope, dreams and hard work, St Ignatius of Loyola Catholic College in Drury, South Auckland, has finally opened its doors and received its first students.

A powhiri took place at the campus in Burt Road in Drury on the morning of February 7, and Auckland Bishop Stephen Lowe officially opened and blessed the college, which aims to provide a Catholic education in the spirit of St Ignatius and in the tradition of Jesuit education.

Two members of the Society of Jesus are working at the school — Fr Michael Smith, SJ, and Fr Eka Tanaya, SJ. The latter is deputy principal for religious identity and mission at the college.

“We come today to pray God’s blessings on this place,” Bishop Lowe said, “but more importantly, on you, the young people who will learn here, who will be shaped here, we pray God’s blessing on the staff, who have been entrusted with journeying with you on the great adventure of education . . .”

The college starts with a roll of 340, and with students in years 7-9. According to the college’s website, the roll will grow to 900 by 2029, and there will be students in years 7-13 eventually.

In addressing students, staff and guests, Bishop Lowe stressed that Catholic education has always had a lot to offer in this country.

He said that a proper Catholic education means that “young people like you might not just have an education that sets you up for life, but for eternal life”.

“Because we can get seduced, sucked into this life we are living now and think, this is what it is all about. People, we look much further. We look to what is our destiny. That destiny of being united with God forever, in the glory in heaven.”

Bishop Lowe told the students to be close to Christ, and to be inspired by the Lord, just as St Ignatius of Loyola had been.

“Our hope and prayer is when you leave this college,” Bishop Lowe said to the students, “that you will be amazing young men and women; young men and women who will go out into the world and make a difference, because you have been inspired by Christ.”

In formally blessing the college, Bishop Lowe prayed, “. . . May it be a place where students and teachers, imbued with the words of truth, search for the wisdom that guides the Christian life, and strive wholeheartedly to stand by Christ as their teacher”.

Bishop Lowe also blessed crucifixes that were taken by senior students to rooms in the college. The bishop also blessed a statue of St Ignatius of Loyola, and later blessed each room.

■ Principal

In his address, Tumuaki/principal Dean Wearmouth mentioned the story of the college in connection with the creation and the Incarnation, and St Ignatius of Loyola, who formed “the Society of Jesus, and began the Jesuit mission of reconciliation with God, to accompany others, finding God in all things”.

Mr Wearmouth paid tribute to all who had worked



Bishop Stephen Lowe prays words of blessing over St Ignatius of Loyola Catholic College, assisted by Msgr Bernard Kiely (holding folder) and Jesuits Fr Michael Smith, SJ, and Fr Eka Tanaya, SJ

to see the college move from dream to reality for more than two decades. He noted the inspiration of “a group of families in this area [who] decided to commit to work towards a Catholic college”.

According to the college website, in 1997 a group of parishioners from the Pukekohe Parish and parents from St Joseph’s Primary School met and discussed the possibility of a Catholic college. A steering committee was formed. The following year, a decision was made to have an Ignatian charism. Support was received from the Society of Jesus in Australia. Auckland diocese bought the 62-acre college site in 1999. The name of the school was accepted by Bishop Patrick Dunn and the Jesuits in 2012. In 2020, the college was approved by the then-Minister of Education.

Mr Wearmouth, who was wearing a korowai (cloak) gifted to the college by other Auckland Catholic college principals, acknowledged the place of Mana Whenua with regard to the site.

“As a kura on this whenua, our intention is for Te Ao Māori to be part of the everyday school culture. We will honour the tikanga of local iwi, so that it becomes our tikanga. And we will honour Te Reo Māori, and grow the language to become part of our everyday communication. We commit to the principles of Te Tiriti O Waitangi. We commit to partnership. We commit to protection, and we commit to participation.”

Mr Wearmouth noted that, during “the conversion of St Ignatius of Loyola, he committed his heart and his life to the kingdom of God by laying down his sword to Our Lady of Montserrat. Through our Catholic faith, and through the strength of our heavenly mother, may we too open our hearts to accompany one another in a journey to find God — to find God in ourselves, to find God in one another,

and to find God in our common home”.

Auckland diocese general manager James van Schie thanked by name many people who had contributed to making the dream of the college into a reality.

“It is important to hear some of these names and groups, not because we want to honour them as individuals, but because we need to recognise the faith that has knitted this gathering together, and made this a possibility,” Mr van Schie said.

Among the names mentioned was the late Harold Plumley, who left a significant bequest to the diocese.

“To the late Harold Plumley, who we remember today, who sought not fame and recognition in life, and in death will give the gift of education to generations — we remember him with gratitude,” Mr van Schie said.

According to media reports, the building of the college is funded from a mix of the Harold Plumley Endowment, donations, land sales, and debt. The eventual cost is expected to be in the range of \$70-\$80 million.

Port Waikato MP and Minister of Commerce and Consumer Affairs Andrew Bayly described the college as a “wonderful achievement”.

“It has been too long in the making,” Mr Bayly said.

“I know that the bishop has had too many trials and tribulations to get to this point. But with the good people of Pukekohe alongside you, we have made it.

To the students, Mr Bayly said, “This is a wonderful place to learn, to grow, and to achieve lots in your future life. This is your foundation, alongside what your parents do with you. Take the opportunity, seize it.”



The front of the college as seen from Burt Rd, Drury



Students enter the college at the start of the day. Photo: Ben Campbell/BC Photography

Inaugural Mass celebrated at new college in Drury

by MICHAEL OTTO

Six days after St Ignatius of Loyola Catholic College in Drury, South Auckland, was officially blessed and dedicated, an inaugural Mass was celebrated on the college site.

The principal celebrant at the Mass on February 13 was Auckland Bishop Stephen Lowe. Concelebrating bishops were Wellington Archbishop Paul Martin, SM, Palmerston North Bishop John Adams, Bishop Emeritus of Auckland, Bishop Patrick Dunn, and Bishop Emeritus of Port Pirie in Australia, Bishop Gregory O’Kelly, SJ.

Among the concelebrating priests were the provincial of the Australian Jesuits Fr Quyen Vu, SJ, and socius to the provincial Fr Paul Mullins, SJ.

In his homily, Bishop Lowe asked student Ignatius Noue to join him in front of the altar. Telling Ignatius that he had a great name, Bishop Lowe observed that the student had been one of those who had taken a blessed crucifix to a classroom six days previously.

“I am glad we have an Ignatius/Ignatius in this college, and I hope you will be the first of many Ignatiuses in this college,” Bishop Lowe said.

“I hope you students, coming away from this college, will really recognise what a gift you have been given here, and in years to come, you will think about calling some of your children

Ignatius as well, because Ignatius, who your college is named after, is an amazing person, and he offers you that opportunity to follow in his footsteps.”

Referencing the Gospel reading from Matthew, Bishop Lowe reflected on the passage that mentioned that, after the Resurrection, some disciples had doubts.

The bishop told the congregation that there are “good doubts and bad doubts”.

“Good doubts are when we want to know someone more deeply. When we think we have God worked out, we know we are in the wrong place, because there is always more. And if you ask your parents, do they really know each other, I think if they are honest, they will still say that they are still discovering more about each other.

“I think for you in this school, part of your journey is to doubt, but just don’t end there, because good doubt always seeks deeper understanding.

“That is the challenge for [students] to be like St Ignatius who wanted to search out or to discern deeper God working in his life. . . . Allow Jesus to stir up your hearts and minds.”

At the start of the Mass, college tumuaki/principal Dean Wearmouth acknowledged the hard work done by students to learn songs for the Mass. “Well done. And remember, by



Bishop Stephen Lowe preaches with student Ignatius Noue next to him (Photo: Ben Campbell/BC Photography)

being your best, you are honouring yourself, you are honouring your families, and most importantly, you are honouring the Lord our God and becoming the people who you were created and called to be.”

He noted that, during the Offertory procession, three glass jars would be presented by students.

“These contain the gifts that our students believe they are bringing to the college, and are being presented up to God,” Mr Wearmouth said.

“On this momentous day, we gather together in communion for the first time as a school community. Let us be truly grateful for the inspiration of our saviour Jesus Christ, and of St Ignatius of Loyola, that this college has become a reality. All honour and glory to our loving God,” he added.

Mr Wearmouth also paid tribute to workers who were still active in completing various aspects of the college while the Mass was taking place.

During the Mass, the first school candle was blessed and lit. From it, the different house candles were also lit. The house names at the college are Romero, Barbier, Aubert, Xavier, Acutis, Magdelene, Faber and Marian. Also blessed were foundation badges for all the students. The staff and students were also formally commissioned.

Speaking after Communion on behalf of the staff, the head of the Faculty of Arts, Stacey Harrison, said that, for the last two decades, she had

been working in a state school.

“Each day was a journey, filled with challenges, triumphs, and countless moments of growth. However, 2024 marks a new chapter in my journey — one that fills me with immense appreciation and humility,” she said.

“I am deeply grateful to now find myself a part of this wonderful community, within a Catholic school in the Ignatian tradition. I feel incredibly blessed to be able to share my Catholic faith in this environment, where it is not just welcomed but celebrated.

“The transition from a state school to a Catholic one has deepened my appreciation for the transformative power of faith in education. It reminds me that our work extends far beyond the confines of a classroom. It touches hearts, inspires minds, and instils values that endure for a lifetime.

“As St Ignatius of Loyola once said, go forth and set the world on fire. As staff, it is our hope to carry that spirit into our classroom, igniting a passion for learning, and a deep sense of faith in all akonga (students).”

Also after Communion, Auckland diocese vicar for education Catherine Ryan offered a prayer by Joy Cowley for all the students of St Ignatius of Loyola Catholic College, present and future.

“Stretch high, reach wide, feel deep, give big, think love, love life, stay open, see beauty, see God.”



A view of the inaugural Mass and buildings (Photo: Ben Campbell/BC Photography)

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

The collapse of moral reasoning

Recently, the presidents of three Ivy League universities — Harvard, MIT, and Penn — appeared before the US Congress to address the issue of anti-Semitism on their campuses, in the wake of the conflict between Hamas and the state of Israel. In their formal statements, as well as in the conversation with the congressional committee members, they acknowledged the tension between free speech and the legitimate regulation of certain types of provocative rhetoric. But as the dialogue unfolded, Rep. Elise Stefanik, a Republican from New York, became increasingly impatient with what she took to be the presidents' diffidence regarding extreme forms of anti-Semitic speech at their universities. She finally pressed each one of them: "Would calling for the genocide of Jews constitute a violation of the code of conduct at your school, yes or no?" Astonishingly, each of them balked, insisting that it depended upon the context.

All three women have justifiably faced massive

Robert Barron

blowback and calls for their resignations, due to the baffling lack of moral clarity in their statements. [*The president of Harvard has since resigned. There was another controversy involving alleged plagiarism — Editor*].

I should like to explore, however briefly, what has made this kind of moral opaqueness and muddle-headedness possible. First, in the minds of far too many people today, the category of the intrinsically evil act has disappeared. In classical moral philosophy, an intrinsically evil act is one that is, by its very nature, so disordered that it could never be justified or permitted. Good examples of this include slavery, rape, the direct killing of the innocent, and acts of terrorism. Nothing in the circumstances surrounding such acts, or in the intentionality of the one performing them, could ever turn them into something morally praiseworthy. When we lose a sensitivity to the intrinsically

evil, we fall, automatically, into a moral relativism, whereby even the most egregiously wicked act can be justified or explained away. To give just one obvious example, abortion, which involves the direct killing of the innocent, is justified by millions today on account of its purported positive effects.

The great Catholic moral philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe was formed in the highly relativistic ethical thinking that was fashionable in the early twentieth century. Her professors blithely taught that moral statements had no real objective referent; they were rather simply expressive of the feelings of those who uttered them. But when she saw the newsreel films of the liberated Nazi death camps, which showed piles and piles of corpses, she knew that she was seeing something intrinsically evil, something objectively wicked. And consequently, she abandoned the philosophy in which she had been trained. Sadly, the very relativism and moral indifference that Anscombe rebelled against are back with a vengeance. Just how far our own culture has embraced this very bad philosophy was revealed last week in Congress. For in a way, Rep. Stefanik was asking the ultimate softball question: Do you think that inciting people to genocide, the wanton and indiscriminate killing of an entire race of people, is wrong? To be met with the answer, "Well, it depends upon the context" signalled to her, quite correctly, that her interlocutors had moved into complete and dangerous moral incoherence.

Another reason for the inanity on display at the Congressional hearing is the tendency, so typical in woke circles, to divide the world into the simplistic categories of oppressor and oppressed. The roots of this are in Marx and Nietzsche in the nineteenth century, as well as in Michel Foucault and the Frankfurt School theorists in the twentieth century, but it has spilled onto the streets largely through the ministrations of the contemporary professoriate in so many of our universities. On

this reading, there are simply good guy oppressed people and bad guy oppressors, and once we have sorted everyone into one or the other category, our moral reflection is essentially done. So, whites, Westerners, men, straight people, and Christians, are under suspicion, while people of colour, those from the global East or global South, women, gays, and non-Christians are lionised. The motives of the first group are routinely questioned, while those of the second group are routinely praised; the first contingent is given the benefit of no doubt, and the

second is given the benefit of every doubt. Nuance, careful distinctions, subtle moral reasoning — who needs them, once we've decided who is oppressor and who is oppressed? So why not accept a sweeping condemnation of the bad groups?

Might I suggest that the great tradition of Catholic social and moral thought would be a very healthy corrective to the errant speculations evidenced last week in Congress? Let us apply it to the recent conflict in the Middle East. Was Hamas' attack on Israel intrinsically evil? Yes. Does Israel have a right to defend itself? Yes. Can Israel, in the undertaking of its legitimate self-defence, do so disproportionately and indiscriminately? No. Those responses are, appropriately, both definitive and sufficiently nuanced. If I might put it this way, the answers given by the Ivy League presidents last week were nuanced when they shouldn't have been, and definitive when they shouldn't have been.

And may I observe that we should not miss this moment? That appalling Congressional testimony served to blow the lid off of an increasingly dysfunctional culture on the campuses of our universities, which have become, sadly, not places where truth is sought, but hotbeds of woke ideology.

Bishop Robert Barron is Bishop of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester in Minnesota, US. This is an abridged version of an article first published on www.wordonfire.org in December last year. It is republished here with permission.

“... In the minds of far too many people today, the category of the intrinsically evil act has disappeared.”

Ronald Rolheiser

Breaking faith with each other

Is this new, or are we just more aware of it? Hatred and contempt are everywhere. They are in our government houses, in our communities, in our churches, and in our families. We are struggling, mostly without success, to be civil with each other, let alone to respect each other. Why? Why is this happening and intensifying?

Moreover, on both sides, we are often justifying this hatred on moral grounds, even biblical grounds, claiming that the Gospel itself gives us grounds for our disrespect — “My truth is so right, and you are so wrong, that I can disrespect you, and I have biblical grounds to hate you!”

Well, even a cursory look at Scripture should be enough to enable us to see this for what it is; rationalisation, self-interest, and the farthest thing from Jesus.

Let's begin with something already taught long before Jesus. In the Jewish Scriptures, we already find this text: “I have made you contemptible and base before all the people, since you do not keep my ways, but show partiality in your decisions. Have we not all the one Father? Has not the one God created us? Why do we break faith with one another?” (Malachi 2:8-10) Long before Jesus, Jewish spirituality already demanded that we be fair and never show partiality. However, it still gave us permission to hate our enemies, and to take revenge when we have been wronged — “an eye for an eye”.

Jesus turns this on its head. Everywhere in his person and in his teaching, most explicitly in the Sermon on the Mount, he challenges us in a radically new way, telling us that, if we want to go to heaven, our virtue needs to go deeper than that of the Scribes and the Pharisees. What was their

virtue?

The Scribes and Pharisees of his time were very much like the church-going Christians of our time. They were sincere, essentially honest, basically good people, who kept the commandments and practiced strict justice. But, according to Jesus, that isn't enough. Why? If you are a sincere person who is honest, keeps the commandments, and is fair to everyone, what's still missing? What's still missing lies at the very heart of Jesus' moral teaching, namely, the practice of a love and forgiveness that goes beyond hatred and grievance. What exactly is this?

In justice and fairness, you are still entitled to hate someone who hates you, and to extract an appropriate vengeance on someone who has wronged you. However, Jesus asks something else of us: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. . . . If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:43-48)

This is the very essence of Christian morality. Can you love someone who hates you? Can you do good to someone who wishes you evil? Can you forgive someone who has wronged you? Can you forgive a murderer? It's this, and not some particular issue in moral theology, which is the litmus test for who is a Christian and who isn't. Can you love someone who hates you? Can you forgive someone who has hurt you? Can you move beyond

your natural proclivity for vengeance?

Sadly, today we are failing that test on both sides of the ideological and religious spectrum. We see this everywhere — from the highest levels of government, from high levels in our churches, and in public and private discourse everywhere, that is, people openly espousing disrespect, division, hatred, and vengeance — and trying to claim the moral high ground in doing this. Major politicians speak openly and explicitly about hating others, and about exacting revenge on those who oppose them. Worse still, churches and church leaders of every kind are lining up behind them and giving them “Gospel” support for their espousal of hatred and vengeance.

This needs to be named and challenged: Anyone who is advocating division, disrespect, hatred, or revenge, is antithetical to Jesus and the Gospels. As well, anyone supporting such a person by an appeal to Jesus, the Gospels, or authentic morality, is also antithetical to Jesus and the Gospels.

God is love. Jesus is love enfleshed. Disrespect, hatred, division, and revenge may never be preached in God's or Jesus' name, no matter the cause, no matter the anger, no matter the wrong. This doesn't mean that we cannot have disagreements, spirited discussions, and bitter debates. But disrespect, hatred, division, and revenge (no matter how deeply they may in fact be felt inside us) may not be advocated in the name of goodness and Jesus. Division, disrespect, hatred, and vengeance are the Anti-Christ.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author. He can be contacted through his website www.ronrolheiser.com. Facebook www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser

Faith/science dialogue

Editorial

As students, staff and visitors walked into the new St Ignatius of Loyola College in Drury, south of Auckland, they walked beneath words on a building stating "Finding God in All Things".

The phrase is very much part of Ignatian spirituality. Speaking at the blessing of the school, Bishop Stephen Lowe noted the officially secular nature of state education in Aotearoa New Zealand, but observed that Catholic education had a lot to offer.

In the first issue of 2024 of the New Zealand Catholic Education Office's e-newsletter Kōtui, NZCEO chief executive Dr Kevin Shore wrote that he and a manager from his organisation had been at an international gathering of Catholic University staff and system leaders, held in Western Australia.

Dr Shore observed that religious schools in many western nations are working in very secular environments, and that the wider societies put an emphasis on scientific rationalism over faith and spiritual beliefs. Dr Shore wrote about the integration of faith and intellect being a significant aspect of Catholic education — and a key ingredient in its success.

The relationship between faith and science is an interesting one. There is an autonomy that is proper to science. The "God of the gaps" should not be an explanation for its findings. But that does not mean that science and faith should not be in dialogue — far from it.

As Bishop Robert Barron pointed out a few years ago, as soon as the view is propounded that all knowledge is reducible to the scientific form of knowledge, otherwise known as "scientism", then warning bells should sound. (It should be noted that many scientists would not dream of proposing such a reductionist view.) The claim of "scientism" in this regard is self-refuting. It cannot be proven using the scientific method.

In fact, a better case can be made that two aspects of Judaeo/Christian belief — that the world is not God, and that the world is intelligible — made the sciences possible, as Bishop Barron pointed out.

As C.S. Lewis put it in his book *Miracles*: "Men became scientific because they expected law in nature, and they expected law in nature because they believed in a lawgiver."

In his Regensburg lecture in 2006, Pope Benedict XVI sounded a warning over scientism, which relies on a constricted view of reason, so that questions of religion and ethics no longer concern it.

"Attempts to construct an ethic from the rules of evolution or from psychology and sociology, end up being simply inadequate," Benedict warned.

Another way to explore faith and science is to consider men and women of faith, who have also been eminent scientists. Fr Georges Lemaître, who first proposed the Big Bang Theory for the origin of the universe, and Anglican priest and physicist Rev. John Polkinghorne are two prominent examples.

Fr Lemaître was opposed to mixing faith and science, but did not believe that the two were in conflict.

Many scientists speak of a sense of wonder at their discoveries, and maybe this is not too far removed from the reaction of people to great art and poetry. There is a hint of religious experience there.

Writing on the Word on Fire website in 2021, Matthew Nelson stated that "faith involves the assent of intellect and will to that which cannot, either by circumstance or in principle, be directly proven. Quantum physicists assume an attitude similar to the posture of faith. At the deepest level of known physical reality, complete descriptions are unobtainable. Our best descriptions are always incomplete and must be inferred or calculated indirectly from what we do know. This is how the existence of certain fundamental particles is determined".

"Since all facts of reality — physical and metaphysical — are grounded in one necessary and divine source, the eternal Logos, truth itself is one. The Grand Unified Theory sought by his scientific colleagues was, [John] Polkinghorne knew, a person."

The Habit



Letters

Blessings 1

The last sentence in your editorial entitled "Battle over Blessings" (NZ Catholic, February 11), nails it. The great blessing from God is Jesus Christ, with whom the Father blessed us "while we were still sinners" (Romans 5:8).

As you underscored, that means all of us. Mercy is messy but, as a receiver of it, I thank God for it.

I am well aware that the blessing I receive at every Mass is not endorsing my sinfulness, but is giving God's favour and protection to my humanity as a child of God.

Mike Baird,
Hamilton.

Elections

We in New Zealand have just a few months ago gone through a general election. As a pro-lifer, I am very interested, but not surprised, by the lack of attention on abortion and euthanasia. Both these subjects are major contributors to our serious mental health problems, family breakdown, economic woes, and general social problems.

So, with this general lack of concern for the sanctity of life in New Zealand, I am absolutely and abruptly brought to

attention by the upcoming elections in the United States of America. Yes, our apathetic response in New Zealand stands in stark contrast to such news items as "Abortion and euthanasia will form the two major policy areas on which the upcoming USA elections will be fought". Candidates from the White House down will be selected on attitudes based on the sanctity of life.

The country is roughly divided in half, with 26 states pro-life and 26 states anti-life. Abortion is seen as the arbiter of choice and freedom by all citizens, genders, colours and creeds.

What does this say about us in New Zealand?
John Farrell,
Pukekohe.

Lord's prayer

Pope Francis reportedly approved changes to the wording of the Lord's Prayer, also known as the Our Father.

Instead of saying, "Lead us not into temptation", Catholics will say, "Do not let us fall into temptation".

The Pope said that he thought the English translation of the prayer was not correct.

"It is not a good translation because it speaks of a God who induces temptation", he told Italy's

TV2000 channel in 2017, per *The Guardian*.

"I am the one who falls. It's not him pushing me into temptation to then see how I have fallen."

"A father doesn't do that; a father helps you to get up immediately. It's Satan who leads us into temptation, that's his department."

The Lord's Prayer comes from the Gospels in which Jesus taught his disciples this prayer. It is among the most sacred prayers in both Catholicism and Christianity overall, though there are other translations across denominations.

Annette Arundel,
Waihi.

Blessings 2

The declaration *Fiducia Supplicans* issued by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome on December 18 is a cause of concern for many faithful Catholics.

It has been the teaching of the Catholic Church for more than 2,000 years that: "The Church does not have, and cannot have, the power to bless unions of the same sex." (Cardinal Luis Ladaria of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith signed the response on March 15, 2021.)

The Catholic Church does not have the power to

bless same-sex unions, the Vatican office responsible for doctrine has said. It is "impossible" for God to "bless sin", the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) said.

Cardinal Sarah has condemned the declaration claiming that it is heretical, "a heresy that gravely undermines the Church, the Body of Christ, because it is contrary to the Catholic faith and tradition".

It is noted that the Catholic bishops' conferences in eight countries including the Eastern Rite churches have rejected the demands of the declaration *Fiducia Supplicans*.

Cardinal Victor Fernandez, head of the Dicastery for Life, issued an explanatory document on January 4. The explanation stated that bishops were banned from "total or definitive denial of *Fiducia Supplicans*". These are challenging times, and we need to pray for the teaching of sound doctrine.

Ken Orr,
Christchurch.

■ *Fiducia Supplicans* made a distinction between formal, possibly liturgical, blessings, and informal blessings. This distinction was not made in the earlier CDF document. — Editor.

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Understanding antisemitism and its resurgence

Since the Hamas invasion and killings in Israel, many people have noticed and deplored the antisemitism of the Hamas invasion and also in Australian society. They are right to have done so. In Western societies, antisemitism is particularly noxious. To be understood, however, it needs to be precisely defined, and set in the broader context of antipathy on racial, religious and other grounds.

Prejudice and discrimination against Jews have been deeply rooted in Western cultures. Jews have been caricatured, resented, forced to live in ghettos, and subject to mob violence and expulsion in many nations. This prejudice, and the violence that it provokes, have been stirred and fed by interpretations of the Christian Scriptures that have also had a central place in Western culture.

The appalling history of the attempted genocide of Jewish people under Hitler, and its effect on people of Jewish descent in Australia too, make doubly abhorrent the manifestations of antisemitism in Australia.

Even after recognising these grounds for regarding antisemitism as uniquely vicious, however, we must also acknowledge what it has in common with other forms of prejudice. This involves defining closely what distinguishes racial and other prejudice, from legitimate criticism of the attitudes or actions of particular representatives of racial or religious groups.

We should treat with contempt the claim that Jews are greedy, for example, while judging embezzlement by a financier who happens to be Jewish by the same criteria we would use for any other financier. Similarly, the actions of the Israeli forces in Gaza are open to judgement.

Antisemitism, anti-Muslimism and anti-Catholicism are pejorative terms because they involve an a priori negative judgement about persons who are Jewish, Muslim or Catholic. It is not antisemitic, however, to criticise the government of Israel, or anti-American to criticise the government of the United States, for actions they have taken on behalf of their nation, provided that such criticism is based on ethical judgement of the action, and not on a pre-formed negative judgement of the people

in the nation.

This important distinction between people and the governments that represent them, becomes eroded, even swamped, in times of war. The fear, anxiety, grief, hatred and disruption engendered by war, encourage prejudice against people for their religion or race, which is not based on reflection on their actions. It is not surprising that throughout the world since the Gaza war, both antisemitic and anti-Muslim prejudice and its destructive acting-out have increased. People stand with one side or the other, and demand that others also take their side.

Andrew Hamilton

Prejudice itself becomes one of the vices they attribute to their enemy, and use as a weapon to stifle criticism of the actions of governments and their armed forces. This is understandable, but it exacerbates the evil of war.

Antisemitism and other forms of prejudice are also fed by hard times. People naturally look for someone or something to blame. Many place blame on minorities or impersonal forces. In times of economic hardship, we can blame the hardship we suffer on banks, on government ministers, on immigrants, or on refugees. Politicians then deflect or fuel anger by vilifying small identifiable groups in society.

When explaining the rise in antisemitism and other prejudices around the world today, we therefore need to take account of economic pressures, particularly those borne unequally in society.

History offers many examples of the complex strands that are woven into antisemitism. In a fine personal tribute to Paul Kurz, an extraordinary Jewish man who escaped from Vienna to England and then to Australia, Tim McNamara outlines the ways in which economic, cultural and social change affected the place of Jews, and public attitudes to them in Vienna.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, a liberal Government of the Austro-Hungarian Empire

granted civil rights to Jews, and presided over industrialisation. The economic growth drew a huge number of immigrants from other parts of the Empire, including German-speaking Jews, to the city. Later Jews from Eastern Europe, distinctive by their traditional dress and customs, also came.

Modernisation was also accompanied by shortage of housing, the concentration of immigrants into ghettos, high inflation, and rising social resentment. People whose traditional crafts and livelihood had been affected by economic change particularly blamed Jewish immigrants for their plight.

The expansion of the right to vote also focused resentment against Jews for political gain. It was embodied in Karl Lueger, the mayor of Vienna. He was a devout Catholic, an ally of Pope Leo XIII in his call for a more just society, counted many Jewish people as friends, and was unbridled in his vituperative anti-Jewish rhetoric directed at winning the votes of small businesspeople.

This toxic mixture of hostility to Jews, fuelled by religious and racial prejudice, economic inequality, social change and hardship, grew even more poisonous after the loss of the war, the effects of inflation, and the Depression.

Antisemitism contributed largely to popular support for Hitler's annexation of Austria. It was embodied in the crowds who gathered to jeer at truckloads of Jews, including relatives of Paul Kurz, as they were taken away to the death camps.

This sketchy account of the growth of antisemitism in Vienna demonstrates how seriously we should take its appearance, and that of other forms of racial and religious prejudice, in our society. It also warns us of the potentially corrosive effects of gross economic inequality, rampant inflation, high immigration, unemployment, and political dog-whistling against minority groups.

These factors contributed to the explosion of antisemitism and xenophobia in Vienna and Europe. Their presence in Australia is a warning.

Andrew Hamilton, SJ, is consulting editor of *Eureka Street*, and writer at Jesuit Social Services in Melbourne. This article was first published at www.eurekastreet.com.au It is republished here with permission.

Lent — the passageway to Easter

The liturgical season is moving us along quite quickly. It feels like only yesterday that we were celebrating Christmas, and here we are in Lent.

The contrasts couldn't be more startling.

Christmas being so delightful with a cute newborn baby boy, animals, angels, stares, and visitors with gifts. Ash Wednesday saw us imprinted on our foreheads in ash with the sign of the cross. It doesn't get any more blunt having been told simultaneously either: — "remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return" or "turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel".

And we replied — "Amen!" This is not morbid at all, given that Lent is about life and death! We're

Sue Seconi

agreeing that, yes, the earth isn't our permanent home, and we will die. Our bodies will be placed back into the earth to turn to dust, and our souls will be spirited into God's full sight forever. To replace this certainty with the ever more popular idioms of "passed" or "passed over" only serves to skip the depth of this beautiful redeeming fact.

I'm forever grateful for my Catholic upbringing because I wonder who or how I might have found the fullness of faith. As a little girl, these 40 days forged lifelong memorable experiences. Positioning my five siblings' dolls and soft toys to mark the sign of the cross, knowing if I had used ash, all hell would have broken loose in my household!

Lining up six clear glass jars along the kitchen bench shelf for lollies to be saved, never quite figuring out how my jar was all but empty come Easter

Sunday!

The Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter liturgies provide more contrasts as we re-enter into the life, death, and rising of Jesus.

The sanctuary being stripped; the altar bare and the tabernacle door opened wide and emptied; the Gospel retelling how Jesus was sold out by Judas, and Peter distancing himself from all involvement. Jesus being executed without a fair trial, most of the disciples taking off, while some women stayed close. Watching the Easter fire burn, entering the dark church holding flickering candles, listening to the Egyptians meeting their watery deaths, rejoicing during the 8-minute Exultate, and wanting to give the devil the thumbs down at the baptismal promises. Death didn't have the final say. We now have God's own life within us. It's all an unearned gift. Jesus came that we may have more than just a slice of life but "have it to the full" (John 10:10). Now that's worth getting excited about.

Lent, with its appeal to personal conversion, is the ability to pick up the mirror and honestly look at ourselves, and be reconciled to God. This fits in with the summer days giving way to autumn's cooler temperatures, being a dying sort of season anyway.

But I'm distracted by this fractured world caused by sin. It's hard to escape the escalating conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine, and powerlessly watch on TV news ordinary people being forced from their homes and villages. Do they need reminding its Lent?

“It's time to own our 'stuff', to say we're sorry, and to seek God's forgiving friendship again, which is a constantly open-ended gift.”

Do those Christians seriously maltreated in North Korea especially need reminding that it is Lent?

So, how are your Lenten plans panning out? Will I get back on track should my plans turn to custard, or should I flag trying altogether? Why bother when I see hot cross buns and Easter eggs in the supermarkets already?

We can all identify with St Paul, when he struggled with himself. "I cannot understand my own behaviour." He says "I fail to carry out the things I want to do, and I find myself doing the very things I hate" (Romans 7:15). And, St Paul should know, since he had a history of hunting down Christians with lethal consequences before his life-changing conversion.

Pope Francis said in 2023: Lent is a time of truth, a time to drop the masks we put on each day, to appear perfect in the eyes of the world. Reject lies and hypocrisy. Not the lies and hypocrisy of others, but our own.

Lent is an opportunity to treat ourselves to a fresh start. To stop struggling with ourselves, hiding behind excuses, pinning blame on another, or regretting those situations that we could have handled more maturely.

It's time to own our "stuff", to say we're sorry, and to seek God's forgiving friendship again, which is a constantly open-ended gift.

"Go in peace, your sins are forgiven", is music to one's ears.

Sue Seconi is a parishioner at The Catholic Parish of Whanganui — Te Parihi Katorika Ki Whanganui.

Caritas Chile mobilises in face of devastating fires

(OSV News) — Teams from Caritas Chile have mobilised to assist the victims of ferocious wild fires, which have claimed at least 131 lives, destroyed more than 15,000 homes, and wiped out entire communities. Caritas teams have delivered basics such as water, batteries and food to affected communities, while also donating a refrigerator for medicines such as insulin.

“We need everyone’s contribution, regardless how small it may be,” Lorenzo Figueroa, director of Caritas Chile, said in a statement. “Every contribution is essential. It’s a major tragedy that requires a shared effort to move forward together in the face of so much suffering and pain,” he added, explaining that Caritas chapters located along the length of Chile had established collection centres.

Chile’s Catholic leaders have urged generosity, while also offering prayers,

and accompanying the affected populations.

“The situation is really tragic. It’s a catastrophe,” Archbishop Fernando Chomalí Garib of Santiago told Agencia Fides.

The archbishop put the death toll at 150 people, Agencia Fides reported on February 6, adding, “There are many injured and disappeared. The affected persons have lost almost everything, many homes, entire buildings, and various schools have been destroyed”.

During his Sunday Angelus on February 4, Pope Francis offered prayers “for those killed and injured in the devastating fires that have broken out in the centre of Chile”.

Bishop Jorge Vega Velasco of Valparaíso — whose diocese in Central Chile has been hit especially hard by the fires — led a chain of prayer over the weekend.

More than 90 fires were burning



A man searches through the remains of his burned house on February 4, 2024, in the coastal city of Viña del Mar in Chile’s Valparaíso region (OSV News photo/Sofia Yanjari, Reuters)

across Chile, Interior Minister Carolina Tohá Morales said on February 4, with the unusually high temperatures fuelling the spread.

PROMOTION

Supporting vulnerable communities when disaster strikes

Did you know that Caritas is the world’s second largest humanitarian organisation?

In recent years, there have been several devastating natural disasters and emergencies across the world. Deadly earthquakes have been felt in Turkey, Syria, Afghanistan, and Morocco, and have caused widespread damage and heart-breaking loss of thousands of lives. In Pakistan, during recent monsoon seasons, larger than normal rainfall caused massive flooding throughout the country and left villages and crops below water. Thousands of lives were lost as it happened so quickly.

Ongoing conflict in the Holy Land, Ukraine and many other places have devastated communities around the world. Cities and villages have been bombed, with thousands losing their homes and livelihoods. Loss and fear have been felt by all. In Poland, and other countries neighbouring Ukraine, Caritas staff and volunteers have been supporting the millions of refugees arriving in need of shelter, food, and future direction.

With more than 160 Caritas

agencies working in partnership across the world, dedicated to social justice and caring for those in need, there have been united efforts to save lives, reduce suffering and uphold human dignity in the wake of international disasters and emergencies.

In Turkey, Syria, Afghanistan and Morocco, Caritas staff worked tirelessly to help find survivors and distribute food, water, mattresses, and other vital supplies.

In Pakistan, Caritas provided support for those who had lost their homes — especially temporary housing supplies like tarpaulins and tents.

Poonam and her three children (pictured below) lost their home during the 2023 monsoon floods in Pakistan. They were very thankful to have the support of Caritas when they were in desperate need. Initially they slept in a tent on the side of the road for temporary shelter from the elements. Caritas continues to work with the family to construct a stronger, more resilient home, made of brick, to ensure Poonam and her whānau feel safe and are much happier knowing they

have a secure home.

Your continued support makes this, and all of our work possible. A special gift this Lent will ensure that vulnerable communities are supported in the wake of international disasters

and emergencies. Your generosity enables us to respond immediately, working to save lives, reduce suffering and uphold human dignity.

For more information, or to donate, visit our website Caritas.org.nz.



Poonam and her three children lost their home during the 2023 monsoon floods in Pakistan

Bishops' Lent Appeal 2024

The Time is Now!
Ko Tēnei tonu te Wā!

The time is now to empower vulnerable families to thrive.
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The Catholic Agency for Justice, Peace & Development

Czech theologian asks where do we meet Jesus today?

by MICHAEL OTTO

Czech public intellectual, priest, academic and writer Msgr Tomáš Halík believes that a major challenge for ecclesial Christianity today is how to turn from religion to spirituality.

This thesis, and related ideas about faith, secularism and spirituality, were explored in a “conversation” between Msgr Halík and Te Kupenga Catholic Theological College dean Fr Mervyn Duffy, SM, at the St Columba Centre in Ponsonby, Auckland on February 5.

Fr Duffy read passages from Msgr Halík’s 2022 book “The Afternoon of Christianity: The Courage to Change”, and invited the Professor of Sociology at Charles University in Prague to “expand” on these thoughts.

Msgr Halík, who is parish priest of an “academic parish”, open to staff and students at the university at which he works, has posited that modernity has seen a hunger for spirituality, and the Churches were not ready to respond.

“These signs of the time, this language of God — We must be a people who listen in seeking to understand, and to be a little humble in this.”

Evangelisation, sowing the seed of the Gospel, therefore must be about more than engaging the rational and emotional component of the human personality.

“Evangelisation — the central task of the Church — will never be sufficiently ‘new’ and effective unless it penetrates the deep dimension of human life and human culture, which is the habitat of spirituality,” Fr Duffy quoted Msgr Halík as writing.

Msgr Halík distinguished between faith and belief, stating that faith is something much deeper.

Faith is much more than the assent of reason to articles of faith presented by ecclesiastical authority, he wrote.

In Auckland, he referred to an existential faith deep in people, even non-believers, which can be the soil for evangelisation.

“On the conscious level, people can be ‘atheist’ because of the culture

in which they have grown up, but in the heart, there is an openness to the absolute, to God,” he said.

“Some people might not confess Christian belief — but they are still seekers. They might have problems with the Church.”

In his 2022 book, Msgr Halík who, under communism, worked as a psychologist with drug addicts and alcoholics, wrote about faith being rooted psychologically deep within the unconscious. He also wrote of the unconscious — what the Bible, mystics, and spiritual writers describe using the metaphor of the heart — being more capable of “understanding” God than rationality. Therefore, to do God’s will in “borderline” situations, requires constant cultivation of conscience, creativity, courage and personal responsibility. And humanity can be said to be in a “borderline” situation today.

At the St Columba Centre, he noted that, for some people who call themselves atheist and for believers, there is an internal dialogue between faith and doubt. No one should suppress their questioning, he added.

Faith without thinking and questioning can lead to fundamentalism, he warned. But doubt without a faith dimension can lead to bitterness and cynicism. “I think they need each other.”

In this context, there is also the experience of the hidden God. “It is an important part of the way of faith. Mystics and saints talk of the dark night of the soul. Some who have long experience of this speak of purification, and a way to a deeper spirituality.”

He also warned against thinking that we have understood matters of faith — “in a sense it is beyond our understanding”. He cited St Augustine, “If you understood him, it would not be God”.

But Msgr Halík told his Auckland audience not to worry when complete answers cannot be given. “Only Jesus can say, I am the truth. The Holy Spirit will lead into the fullness of truth.”

Seek God all the time, and God is always greater than we think, he added. “Don’t be afraid of the new.”

Msgr Halík set this in the context of the Resurrection and creation.

“Resurrection is transformation,” he said. Referencing Luke 24:5, Msgr Halík said, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” Rather, go to



Msgr Tomáš Halík (left) in conversation with Fr Mervyn Duffy, SM

Galilee and you will meet him. “I think that is our task.”

“The Galilee of today, where [do] we meet the living Jesus? The Resurrection is a very special event, but it is continuing. God is creating the world now — and the Resurrection is going on now. The living Christ is coming into our lives, and the Risen Christ lives in the faith of people.”

But, in an age of increasing secularisation, the Church and its members must be open to seeing and understanding the “signs of the times”.

In his 2022 book, Msgr Halík wrote that “it is culture that makes history truly a human society. That is why culture is where we must look above all for the signs of the times”.

In Auckland, he spoke of “religio”, the integrating force of society, not disappearing, but rather this role no longer being played by the Church. Other scientific, economic and cultural phenomena have assumed this role.

But Msgr Halík set out another meaning for “religio”, being “to read again” — to read again our lives, to read again events in society, to go a little deeper.

“God speaks to us in our lives and history. We need to go deeper, to meditate, to take a contemplative approach,” he said.

“These signs of the time, this lan-

guage of God — We must be a people who listen in seeking to understand, and to be a little humble in this.”

He noted that an important part of synodality is to listen, and he supported the approach taken in the synod sessions last year of sitting together, silence, listening, and people being allowed to speak.

“It would be good for some Parliaments!!” he said.

In the Church, there has been an emphasis on orthodoxy, with some importance being given to orthopraxis, but there is also the need to attend to and cultivate “ortho-pathos”. In other words, to attend to the “heart”.

“We should develop a real, living, deep, rich spirituality, which must be connected also with our ethics and with our living in the world. The thinking is that spirituality must be private, but it must be connected also to action.”

Msgr Halík spoke of four “ecumenisms” which are needed today in the Church. There must be ecumenical engagement with those from other denominations, with those from other faiths, and with those human seekers outside of religion, and a fourth ecumenism relating to the climate, the earth and the planet.

“Are we ready to answer this call at this time, at even the local level?” Msgr Halík asked.

Standing on threshold of Christianity’s afternoon

From its beginning until the threshold of modernity, the history of Christianity can be seen as a morning, a long time in which the Church built up its institutional and doctrinal structures. Then came the noonday crisis — with its epicentre in Central and Western Europe — which shook these very structures. It lasted with varying degrees of intensity in a number of countries from the late Middle Ages through the modern period, from the Renaissance and the Reformation, the schism within Western Christianity and the ensuing wars the challenged the credibil-

ity of the various denominations, through the Enlightenment, the period of criticism of religion and the rise of atheism, to the period of atheism’s slow development into the subsequent phase of apathy — religious indifference.

I am convinced that today we stand on the threshold of the afternoon of Christianity; at the end of a long period of crisis, some features of a new, perhaps deeper and more mature form of Christianity are already shining through. But the afternoon form of Christianity — like its earlier forms — will not be engendered and

brought about by some impersonal and irreversible logic of historical development. It comes as a possibility, as Kairos — an opportunity that will arrive and present itself at some point, but will only be fulfilled when people understand and accept it. Much depends on finding, at a particular moment in history, a sufficient number of those who, like the “wise virgins” of Jesus’ parable, will be alert and ready for the Kairos — the time when action is required.

— from Msgr Tomáš Halík, “The Afternoon of Christianity: The Courage to Change” (2022)



Msgr Tomáš Halík (Photo: Wikipedia)

Through the desert God leads us to freedom

Dear brothers and sisters!

When our God reveals himself, his message is always one of freedom: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Exodus 20:2). These are the first words of the Decalogue given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Those who heard them were quite familiar with the exodus of which God spoke: the experience of their bondage still weighed heavily upon them. In the desert, they received the “Ten Words” as a thoroughfare to freedom. We call them “commandments”, in order to emphasise the strength of the love by which God shapes his people. The call to freedom is a demanding one. It is not answered straight away; it has to mature as part of a journey. Just as Israel in the desert still clung to Egypt — often longing for the past and grumbling against the Lord and Moses — today too, God’s people can cling to an oppressive bondage that it is called to leave behind. We realise how true this is at those moments when we feel hopeless, wandering through life like a desert and lacking a promised land as our destination. Lent is the season of grace in which the desert can become once more — in the words of the prophet Hosea — the place of our first love (cf. Hosea 2:16-17). God shapes his people, he enables us to leave our slavery behind and experience a Passover from death to life. Like a bridegroom, the Lord draws us once more to himself, whispering words of love to our hearts.

The exodus from slavery to freedom is no abstract journey. If our celebration of Lent is to be concrete, the first step is to desire to open our eyes to reality. When the Lord calls out to Moses from the burning bush, he immediately shows that he is a God who sees and, above all, hears: “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:7-8). Today too, the cry of so many of our oppressed brothers and sisters rises to heaven. Let us ask ourselves: Do we hear that cry? Does it trouble us? Does it move us? All too many things keep us apart from each other, denying the fraternity that, from the beginning, binds us to one another.

During my visit to Lampedusa, as a way of countering the globalisation of indifference, I asked two questions, which have become more and more pressing: “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9) and “Where is your brother?” (Genesis 4:9). Our Lenten journey will be concrete if, by listening once more to those two questions, we realise that even today we remain under the rule of Pharaoh. A rule that makes us weary and indifferent. A model of growth that divides and robs us of a future. Earth, air and water are polluted, but so are our souls. True, Baptism has begun our process of liberation, yet there remains in us an inexplicable longing for slavery. A kind of attraction to the security of familiar things, to the detriment of our freedom.

■ Deficit of hope

In the Exodus account, there is a significant detail: it is God who sees, is moved and brings freedom; Israel does not ask for this. Pharaoh stifles dreams, blocks the view of heaven, makes it appear that this world, in which human dignity is trampled upon and authentic bonds are denied, can never change. He put everything in bondage to himself. Let us ask: Do I want a new world? Am I ready to leave behind my compromises with the old? The witness of many of my brother bishops and a great number of those who work for peace and justice has increasingly convinced me that we need to combat a deficit of hope that stifles dreams and the silent cry that reaches to heaven and moves the heart of God. This “deficit of hope” is not unlike the nostalgia for slavery that paralysed Israel in the desert, and prevented it from moving forward. An exodus can be interrupted: how else can we explain the fact that humanity has arrived at the threshold of universal fraternity and at levels of scientific, technical, cultural, and juridical development capable of

Papal Message for Lent 2024

guaranteeing dignity to all, yet gropes about in the darkness of inequality and conflict.

God has not grown weary of us. Let us welcome Lent as the great season in which he reminds us: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Exodus 20:2). Lent is a season of conversion, a time of freedom. Jesus himself, as we recall each year on the first Sunday of Lent, was driven into the desert by the Spirit in order to be tempted in freedom. For forty days, he will stand before us and with us: the incarnate Son. Unlike Pharaoh, God does not want subjects, but sons and daughters. The desert is the place where our freedom can mature in a personal decision not to fall back into slavery. In Lent, we find new criteria of justice and a community with which we can press forward on a road not yet taken.

This, however, entails a struggle, as the Book of Exodus and the temptations of Jesus in the desert make clear to us. The voice of God, who says, “You are my Son, the Beloved” (Mark 1:11), and “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3) is opposed by the enemy and his lies. Even more to be feared than Pharaoh are the idols that we set up for ourselves; we can consider them as his voice speaking within us. To be all-powerful, to be looked up to by all, to domineer over others: every human being is aware of how deeply seductive that lie can be. It is a road well-travelled. We can become attached to money, to certain projects, ideas or goals, to our position, to a tradition, even to certain individuals. Instead of making us move forward, they paralyse us. Instead of encounter, they create conflict. Yet there is also a new humanity, a people of the little ones and of the humble who have not yielded to the allure of the lie. Whereas those who serve idols become like them, mute, blind, deaf and immobile (cf. Psalm 114:4), the poor of spirit are open and ready: a silent force of good that heals and sustains the world.

■ Pause

It is time to act, and in Lent, to act also means to pause. To pause in prayer, in order to receive the Word of God, to pause like the Samaritan in the presence of a wounded brother or sister. Love of God and love of neighbour are one love. Not to have other gods is to pause in the presence of God beside the flesh of our neighbour. For this reason, prayer, almsgiving and fasting are not three unrelated acts, but a single movement of openness and self-emptying, in which we cast out the idols that weigh us down, the attachments that imprison us. Then the atrophied and isolated heart will revive. Slow down, then, and pause! The contemplative dimension of life that Lent helps us to rediscover will release new energies. In the presence of God, we become brothers and sisters, more sensitive to one another: in place of threats and enemies, we discover companions and fellow travellers. This is God’s dream, the promised land to which we journey once we have left our slavery behind.

The Church’s synodal form, which in these years we are rediscovering and cultivating, suggests that Lent is also a time of communitarian decisions, of decisions, small and large, that are countercurrent. Decisions capable of altering the daily lives of individuals and entire neighbourhoods, such as the ways we acquire goods, care for creation, and strive to include those who go unseen or are looked down upon. I invite every Christian community to do just this: to offer its members moments set aside to rethink their lifestyles, times to examine their presence in society and the contribution they make to its betterment. Woe to us if our Christian penance were to resemble the kind of penance that so dismayed Jesus. To us too, he says: “Whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting” (Matthew 6:16). Instead, let others see joyful faces, catch the scent of freedom and experience the love that makes all things new,



A visitor places his head on Pope Francis’ hand for a blessing at the end of his weekly general audience in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican on February 7, 2024. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

beginning with the smallest and those nearest to us. This can happen in every one of our Christian communities.

To the extent that this Lent becomes a time of conversion, an anxious humanity will notice a burst of creativity, a flash of new hope. Allow me to repeat what I told the young people whom I met in Lisbon last summer: “Keep seeking and be ready to take risks. At this moment in time, we face enormous risks; we hear the painful plea of so many people. Indeed, we are experiencing a third world war fought piecemeal. Yet let us find the courage to see our world, not as being in its death throes, but in a process of giving birth, not at the end but at the beginning of a great new chapter of history. We need courage to think like this” (Address to University Students, August 3, 2023). Such is the courage of conversion, born of coming up from slavery. For faith and charity take hope, this small child, by the hand. They teach her to walk, and at the same time, she leads them forward.

I bless all of you and your Lenten journey.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, December 3, 2023, First Sunday of Advent.

— Francis



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300 parish priests to participate in Vatican synod gathering, meet with Pope

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Three hundred parish priests from all over the world will come to Rome and make their contribution to the ongoing Synod of Bishops on synodality, by sharing their experiences of parish life, the Vatican said.

The priests, selected by bishops' conferences and Eastern Catholic churches, also will have the chance to dialogue with Pope Francis during the April 28-May 2 meeting.

A statement released on February 3 by the General Secretariat of the Synod, said that the initiative responds to the outcomes from the first assembly of the Synod of Bishops on synodality held at the Vatican last October, which highlighted in its

synthesis report the need to “develop ways for a more active involvement of deacons, priests and bishops in the synodal process during the coming year”.

Pope Francis launched the synod process in October, 2021, seeking input from all baptised Catholics on building a listening Church. After the local, national and continental phases of the synod, more than 400 people participated in its universal phase, at the first synod assembly held at the Vatican in October 2023; 370 participants were eligible to vote in synod proceedings, of which 70 were non-bishops. The second synod assembly will take place in October, 2024.

The Vatican statement said that the 300 priests selected for the meeting will be involved in “roundtables for the sharing of best practices, workshops around pastoral proposals, dialogue with experts, and liturgical celebrations”.

The results of the meeting will then be incorporated into the working document drafted ahead of the second synod assembly.

The meeting is also an opportunity for parish priests to “experience the dynamism of synodal work at a universal level”, the Vatican statement added.

Participants will gather at a retreat centre in Sacrofano, near Rome, where synod assembly members also

had a spiritual retreat prior to the opening of the first synod assembly.

The number of priests participating from each country or Eastern church will correspond to the size of the bishops' conference or Eastern church they are representing, the Vatican said.

The conferences and churches were asked to select priests who have “significant experience in the perspective of a synodal church”, and represent a diversity of pastoral realities, such as ministering in rural, urban, or specific social and cultural contexts.

The names of selected priests are to be communicated to the Vatican by March 15.

Cardinal Nichols offers ‘steadfast prayers’ for King’s recovery

LONDON (OSV News) — Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster has offered “steadfast prayers” on behalf of Catholics, after it was announced that Britain’s King Charles III is undergoing treatment for cancer.

Buckingham Palace, the headquarters of Britain’s royal family, announced on February 5 that the 75-year-old monarch has begun regular treatment for cancer, and has postponed all public engagements.

The palace confirmed the disease, which is not prostate cancer, was discovered while he was being treated in hospital for an enlarged prostate.

King Charles has started a schedule of regular treatments, but has been advised “to postpone his public-facing duties”. The palace declined to confirm the type of cancer.

In a post on social media site X, formerly Twitter, Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster — president of the bishops' conference of England and Wales — expressed prayerful good wishes on behalf of Catholics.

“I am saddened to learn that King Charles is now facing a time of treatment for cancer,” he wrote. “On behalf of the entire Catholic community in England and Wales, I offer His Majesty our warmest wishes, and assurance of steadfast prayers for his full and speedy recovery.”

“God bless the King,” the cardinal concluded.

Northern Ireland has Catholic leading its government for the first time



Michelle O'Neill speaks during a meeting of the legislative assembly in Belfast on February 3 (OSV News photo/Kelvin Boyes, Pool via Reuters)

DUBLIN (OSV News) — Ireland’s most-senior churchman has hailed an agreement that sees a Catholic take the top political job in Northern Ireland for the first time in its history, as an “opportunity for a fresh start and a new beginning”. Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh, president of the Irish bishops' conference, made the comments as a power-sharing government was restored on February 3, after two years of deadlock.

The executive branch is a key plank of a 1998 peace agreement that ended 30 years of bloody sectarian violence, but has struggled to take root, with sporadic boycotts from political parties. Michelle O'Neill of the Sinn Féin party is the first Catholic to head the region’s government. Her title is “First Minister”.

“The days of second-class citizenship are long gone, and today confirms that they will never come back,” O'Neill, 47, told the legislative assembly upon her election on February 3. “This is an assembly for all: Catholic, Protestant and dissenter . . . the public rightly demand that we work and deliver together, and also that we build trust and confidence in our ability to collectively do that.” Archbishop Martin told *The Irish Catholic* newspaper that he felt that there was a “sense of relief” from citizens “who are so anxious that we can have appropriate representation to deal with the very pressing problems that we have in the North at this time”.

Pope Francis and cardinals discuss women in Church with women, including female Anglican bishop

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — With the help of a woman Anglican bishop, a Salesian sister and a consecrated virgin, Pope Francis and his international Council of Cardinals devoted the first morning of their February meeting “to deepening their reflection, begun last December, on the role of women in the Church”, the Vatican press office said.

Matteo Bruni, director of the Vatican press office, said on February 5 that the Pope and cardinals heard from Bishop Jo Bailey Wells, deputy secretary-general of the Anglican Communion; Salesian Sister Linda Pocher, a professor of Christology and Mariology at Rome’s Pontifical Faculty of Educational Sciences “Auxilium”, and Giuliva Di Berardino, a consecrated virgin and liturgist from the Diocese of Verona, Italy.

The Vatican did not share details about the discussion on the role of women in the Church, and did not release the texts of presentations made at the meeting.

However, Sister Pocher and the two other theologians, who made presentations at the council’s December meeting, published their papers in Italian in a book with a foreword by Pope Francis, “Smaschilizzare La Chiesa?” (“De-masculinise the Church?”).

Pope Francis said that he had asked the speakers in December to start with Swiss theologian Father Hans Urs von Balthasar’s reflection on “the Marian and Petrine principles in the Church”, notions which Pope Francis himself has used to explain why only men are priests, but women, like Mary, have a “more important” role.

In their papers for the December meeting, Sister Pocher, Lucia Vantini, a professor of theology and philosophy at the Higher Institute of Religious Sciences in Verona, Italy, and Father Luca Castiglioni, a professor of fundamental theology at the seminary of the Archdiocese of Milan, argued that Father von Balthasar’s idea was never meant to explain or defend different ministerial and hierarchical roles for men and women in the Church.

Father Castiglioni warned of the danger of “banalising” the idea that Mary is “more important” than the other disciples, when she, in fact, is the perfect model of a disciple, and one that all Christians are called to imitate in their acceptance of God’s will.

Still, in an interview scheduled for publication on February 8 in the Italian

magazine *Credere*, Pope Francis continued to refer to the Petrine and Marian principles when asked about women in the Church.

“The Church is woman, she is bride. Peter is not woman, he is not bride. The Church-bride is more important than Peter-minister”, he said, before insisting that it is important to have more women in leadership in the Roman Curia, because they “help the ministry”.

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Use creative power well Pope tells academy

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Scientific and technological abilities, which are the product of human creativity, are accelerating at such a rapid pace that people must decide how to use their creativity responsibly, Pope Francis said.

“In other words, how can we invest the talents we have received while preventing the disfigurement of what is human and the cancellation of the constitutive differences that give order to the cosmos,” he told members of the Pontifical Academy for Life.

The Pope met with the members at the Vatican on February 12 as they were celebrating the academy’s 30th anniversary. They were holding their general assembly in Rome, focused on the meaning of being human.

Understanding what is distinctive about the human being is a question of “utmost importance”, the Pope said. While it is also an age-old question,

today’s technologies are challenging people to reflect on this question in increasingly more complex ways.

“The increased capabilities of science and technology can lead human beings to see themselves as engaged in a creative act akin to that of God, producing an image and likeness of human life, including the capacity for language with which ‘talking machines’ appear to be endowed,” he said.

The temptation to “infuse” some kind of spirit into inanimate matter “is insidious”, he said. “What is being asked of us is to discern how the creativity entrusted to human beings can be exercised responsibly.”

It is not a question of being “for” or “against” tools and technologies, he said. “What is needed, instead, is to situate scientific and technological knowledge within a broader horizon of meaning”, that is, an anthropological and cultural

approach.

“We are challenged to develop a culture that, by integrating the resources of science and technology, is capable of acknowledging and promoting the human being in his or her irreducible specificity,” the pope said.

Jim Al-Khalili, a quantum physicist at the University of Surrey’s school of mathematics and physics in the United Kingdom, said technological advancements have “made our life easier . . . and we adapt to them very quickly . . . so quickly that we quickly forget what the world was like before them.”

“None of them have made us any less ‘human,’ however. They’ve changed us, yes — and we might argue not always for the better — but they have not altered our essence: what it means to be human,” he said. He said his talk to the academy would be on the role of AI in affecting what it means to be human.

There are “existential threats”, however, he said. People should be prepared for the day when “machines might develop true intelligence” and even consciousness “just as we should prepare for the day when we may discover life beyond Earth. None of this should give us an identity crisis, however”, he said.

He said he does not believe AI will ever think or feel like a human. “What makes us human is more than the neural connections in our brains. It is more than our intelligence, our intuition, our creativity, all of which will likely one day be replicated in AIs.”

“What makes us uniquely human, I believe, is also about our behaviour, our interaction with our physical surroundings, our relationships with each other within complex collective structures and societies, it is our shared cultures and beliefs, our histories, our memories. AI should not be seen as a threat,” he said.



Catholic mother of 2 killed in Chiefs’ Super Bowl parade mass shooting

Lisa Lopez-Galvan, second from right, a parishioner of Sacred Heart-Guadalupe Parish in Kansas City, Missouri, was killed February 14, 2024, Ash Wednesday, during a mass shooting following the Kansas City Chiefs’ Super Bowl victory parade. Father Luis Suárez, parochial administrator of Sacred Heart-Guadalupe Parish, remembered Lopez-Galvan in his homily at the Ash Wednesday evening Mass and encouraged the community to unite in prayer amid the tragedy. (OSV News screenshot/Facebook)

Virgin Mary statue vandalised at the American national shrine in Washington, DC

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — The statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the north lawn of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC, grounds was discovered on February 15 to have been vandalised.

The Blessed Mother’s face appears to have been deliberately struck with a hammer, and the surrounding light fixtures were shattered.

According to a statement by Msgr Walter Rossi, the basilica’s rector, this act of vandalism seems to have occurred shortly before its discovery, given the routine checks performed by

security staff.

The statue “Mary, Protector of the Faith” by sculptor Jon-Joseph Russo, depicts the Virgin Mary cradling the child Jesus. According to the basilica’s website, it was erected in 2000.

“While this act of vandalism is very unfortunate, I am more concerned about the individuals who perpetrate such activity and pray for their healing,” said Msgr Rossi.

The shrine’s security team is working closely with the Metropolitan Police Department to investigate this act of vandalism, which, sources said, is being investigated as a hate crime.

Israeli embassy objects to cardinal’s remarks on Gaza death toll

ROME (CNS) — The Israeli Embassy to the Holy See has defined as “regrettable” remarks by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, saying that Israel’s attacks on Gaza have been excessive.

Cardinal Parolin, speaking to reporters on February 13, said that the Vatican continues its “clear and unreserved condemnation of what happened on October 7”, when Hamas militants entered Israel, massacred civilians and took more than 200 hostages.

The Vatican also continues its “clear and unreserved condemnation of all forms of antisemitism”, the cardinal told reporters after a meeting with top Italian government officials.

At the same time, the cardinal said, the Vatican also “requests that the right to defend itself that Israel has invoked to justify this operation be proportionate,

and certainly with 30,000 dead it is not”.

An unsigned statement on February 14 from the Israeli Embassy to the Holy See said, “This is a regrettable statement. Judging the legitimacy of a war without taking into account all relevant circumstances and data inevitably leads to erroneous conclusions.”

For example, the statement said, “Gaza has been transformed by Hamas into the largest terrorist base ever seen. There is hardly any civilian infrastructure that has not been used by Hamas for its criminal plans, including hospitals, schools, places of worship and many others”.

The embassy also claimed that “the construction of this unprecedented terrorist infrastructure was actively supported by the local civilian population”, and that civilians also were involved

in the “unprovoked invasion of Israeli territory, killing, raping and taking civilians hostage. All of these acts are defined as war crimes”.

And while the embassy said that “all civilian casualties are to be mourned”, it also said that “available data” show that three civilians have died for every Hamas member killed.

“In past wars and operations by NATO or Western forces in Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan, the ratio was nine or 10 civilians for every terrorist,” so the Israeli Defence Forces’ efforts “to avoid civilian deaths” is evident “despite the fact that the battlefield in Gaza is much more complicated”, the statement said.

“On this basis,” it said, “any objective observer cannot help but come to the conclusion that the responsibility for the death and destruction in Gaza lies with Hamas and Hamas alone.”

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Ash Wednesday reminder that Anglicans and Catholics have made real progress

by MINA AMSO

Do people make Lent a little bit too much about themselves? This was a question asked by the Anglican Bishop of Auckland, Bishop Ross Bay, at a combined Ash Wednesday service at St Patrick's Cathedral in Auckland on February 14.

"What will I give up, will I be able to last the 40 days, and at our worst, 'will other people notice what I am doing?', Bishop Bay asked.

He said that, if people don't approach Lent well, they run the risk of "drawing further to the self-absorption" that is too often "a mark of our society today".

"It's about me. How I am feeling, the fulfilment that I seek to bring to my life. While Lent is about what I might give up or what I might take up, actually, at its best, it's not about me at all."

A combined Ash Wednesday service, alternating between the Anglican and Catholic cathedrals in Auckland, is a longstanding tradition for the two parishes.

"Lent is an opportunity to focus again on the call which Jesus has placed on me, on us together, to follow his disciples," Bishop Bay said.

"To discover the ways in which our lives can get changed. To become more like Christ. And in walking more closely with Christ, to become a more effective witness to the reconciling love of God. A more effective servant of others in the work of the Gospel. Then it's actually about others, it's not about me."

He said that change is central to the Lenten season.

"Change of mind, a change of attitude, a change of direction, a turning around and facing a different direction. As a result a change comes in behaviour, and in the quality of the relationships that we share with other people."

Bishop Bay said that change can be difficult for many people. Some can become frustrated at the lack of change in the Church, he added.

"But I want to encourage us tonight about the life of our churches together, and the progress which we have actually made."

He recalled the meeting in 1966, when then-Archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsey and St Paul VI

met in Rome for the first official time since the English Reformation, more than 400 years previously.

Pope Paul offered Archbishop Ramsey his episcopal ring, said Bishop Bay.

"He took it from his finger and placed it on the finger of the Archbishop. As an archbishop . . . Michael Ramsey carried a symbol of common mission."

"When Archbishop Justin Welby visits Rome, he always wears a Pope Paul the Sixth ring. [He] continues to wear it, as a sign, a symbol of the affection that is between our churches, and of the relationship that we share of our respective commitment to ecumenical work."

Bishop Bay said that people often take for granted opportunities like gathering of the Catholics and Anglicans on Ash Wednesday.

"[When they] are in fact an enormous shift from where we were not quite 60 years ago. Let's not fail to see the significance of that and the progress that we've made, just when we think change is slow and seems not to happen."

For 470 years, the Catholic and Anglican traditions carried on their own liturgical practices, but in the last 60 years, an "incredible" closeness between the two churches began to emerge.

"Change is possible, even at this scale, between our church traditions. We've achieved it on a scale that none of us could have imagined all those years ago, and when you look back at our history, which has . . . often been horrible between us, we can now speak genuinely of the way in which this reconciling love of God has been at work among us."

He said that it speaks to the power of Christ at work in the two denominations.

"I believe that, without a commitment to relationship, without a commitment to walking together and growing together, we will gain nothing."

He thanked Bishop Lowe for the invitation to preach, and welcomed the warmth of the Catholic Church and its hospitality.

Bishop Bay was in Rome a few weeks ago with Christchurch Bishop Michael Gielen, for a summit of Anglican and Catholic bishops from around the world. They were part of an initiative labelled as The International Anglican Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission.



Bishop Lowe (right) receives the ashes from Bishop Bay

This group has only met once before, in 2016.

"It was a really great gathering, an incredible spirit amongst us as we came together, more than 50 bishops, pairs from 27 regions around the world."

Pope Francis and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby were there leading a commissioning service for the 50 bishops.

"We returned to the regions we came from to foster this work of being together, growing together as we seek to do the work of the Gospel."

Bishop Bay brought home the theme of reconciliation between the churches relating to Ash Wednesday's significance.

"The ash symbol is a humbling sign, a reminder of mankind's mortality, an expression of the need for God's grace and mercy, and a recognition that people are far from perfect, and continue to do harm to one another and to the planet."

"But [they are] a symbol of our commitment to follow more closely with Christ. That we may become effective witnesses to God's love, and so be good ambassadors to the reconciling work of Christ which our world so needs."

Family Matters

Helen Luxford



Preparing for Lent

As I write this, next Wednesday is Ash Wednesday. It seems to have come up really fast, which always happens when Ash Wednesday is in mid-February! We have only just got back into school and work routines, and it is easy to have it sneak up on you. Lent is a reflective season, 40 days leading up to Easter, the pinnacle of the Church year. It's a time for spiritual renewal, repentance, and deepening our faith as individuals, as well as healing our relationship with God and with others. Ash Wednesday, as the beginning of Lent, is a day for introspection and penance. We want to be prepared to use Lent for spiritual growth, starting with self-examination.

Lent offers an opportunity to emulate Jesus' journey, to confront personal weaknesses, and to grow closer to God through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Ash Wednesday, with the distribution of ashes on the forehead in the shape of a cross, serves as a stark reminder of human mortality and the need for repentance. The journey towards Lent begins with self-examination and repentance. It's a time to reflect on one's spiritual journey, to identify areas of weakness or sin, and to seek a restored relationship with God and others through the sacrament of reconciliation. This introspective process sets the stage for meaningful growth and transformation during the Lenten season. We can support each other by attending confession, and taking our children who have

had their first reconciliation to the sacrament, as part of the Lenten journey.

At the head of preparing for Lent is cultivating a deeper prayer life. Think about committing to daily prayer, attending Mass more frequently, or incorporating spiritual reading and meditation into one's routine. Prayer provides a foundation for spiritual growth, fostering a deeper connection with God, and guiding individuals through challenges. It helps us to avoid the temptations of Lent.

Fasting and abstinence are key pillars of Lenten observance. They represent a symbolic sacrifice in imitation of Jesus's fasting in the desert. It has always been the tradition in our house to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and Fridays, fasting from food or certain indulgences on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, or adopting other forms of self-denial throughout the season. Common things to "give up" include chocolate or alcohol or, more relevant today, is to get off social media. Any type of fasting improves discipline and strengthens our spirit.

Another vital aspect of preparing for Lent is embracing the spirit of almsgiving and charity. This entails sharing one's time, talents, and resources with those in need, whether through acts of service, donations to charitable organisations, or volunteering in the community. Almsgiving is an expression of love and compassion, embodying the Christian

call to care for the least among us, and to work towards justice and solidarity.

As Lent approaches, it's helpful to take time to reflect, and to set spiritual goals and intentions for the season. This may involve identifying areas for personal growth, such as deepening one's prayer life, overcoming particular vices, or cultivating virtues like patience, humility, and gratitude. Setting concrete goals provides focus and direction, guiding individuals towards a more meaningful and transformative Lenten experience. Then, over the course of Lent, you can monitor how you are doing and continue to improve.

While Lent is a deeply personal journey, it's also a communal experience within the Catholic Church. Helping to guide children through Lent will deepen their faith, and will help your family to grow together in faith. This is an important part of growing in faith — learning the value of fasting, sacrifice and charity will stand children in good stead.

Matthew 6:17-18; "When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that it does not appear to men that you are fasting, but to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly."

Helen Luxford is a trained physician, living in Auckland, and attending St Patrick's Cathedral parish. Together with her husband Michael, they are raising their children in the Catholic Faith, and reflecting on the challenges and joys that brings.

Tribute to a maestro

by NEVIL GIBSON

When it comes to movie themes that are more memorable than their story or the stars, it's hard to go past Italian composer Ennio Morricone.

He composed more than 500 soundtracks, which narrows the odds when you hear a movie theme long after you've seen it — that you were hearing one of his. As he started composing film music in 1961, that amounts to a phenomenal 8 a year.

Moreover, Morricone was not just associated with one genre or even a country, though you would be hard-placed during some decades to find an Italian movie without his name on it.

Ennio (SkyGo) is a lengthy and tune-filled documentary that combines talking head interviews with a couple of dozen directors, musicians, producers, and actors, with a first-person account from the man himself. The ringmaster is director Giuseppe Tornatore, whose *Cinema Paradiso* has one of Morricone's best-known scores.

Morricone recounts a dispute with Tornatore over one of their collaborations, which becomes a repeated refrain with other directors as well. In most cases, Morricone wins the argument; Brian De Palma, Roland Joffe and Sergio Leone, whose westerns made Morricone famous, are just a few.

An exception was Oliver Stone, who collaborated with Morricone on *U-Turn* before things turned sour. A missed opportunity was working with Stanley Kubrick on *A Clockwork Orange*.

Morricone's method was to view the script or some scenes, and dig out tunes from his extensive repertoire. Italian director Elio Petrie rejected the score for his Oscar-winning *Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion* in 1971 but, without Morricone's knowledge, used another of his



A section of the poster for *Ennio* (Photo: Wikipedia)

Movie Review

compositions.

The incident is recalled with regret by Morricone after Petrie's profound apologies. But such disagreements are rare, with Morricone coming out on top whenever his genius is questioned.

Morricone was the son of a trumpeter, and his musical career began during World War II when he worked with his father, and wrote dance tunes to supplement the family income. He went on to a classical education in composition at Rome's Santa Cecilia Conservatory under Goffredo Petrassi.

The money from movie composition proved a powerful distraction from a career as a serious composer. He often promised to give up: "I told my wife in the 1960s that I would quit film in 1970; I told her in the 1970s that I would quit film

in 1980; I told her in the 1980s that I would quit film in 1990; now I say nothing," he recalls.

Maria, his wife of 40 years, was a constant sounding board and occasional lyricist. She is given due recognition, while some of Morricone's serious works are demonstrated in live concerts that he conducts himself.

Morricone's failure to win an Oscar during the peak of his career is noted. An unsuccessful nomination was *The Mission* (1986), praised as one of the best combinations of Spanish classical and indigenous themes.

An honorary Oscar was awarded in 2007, but one for an original score came eight years later for Quentin Tarantino's *The Hateful Eight*, and five years before his death in 2020, aged 91.

Rating: Mature audiences. 150 minutes.

CLIPS

Will/Wil (Netflix)

Netflix's first major European release this year is set in Antwerp during the early period of the Nazi occupation. The titular character, Wilfried Wils (Stef Aerts), is one of two new recruits to the local auxiliary police. They witness an attempt by a German officer to arrest a Jewish family. The incident results in the German's death, putting Wil and his companion cop, a Jew, in immediate trouble. The action swings between Wil's infiltration of an antisemitic organisation and his harbouring of Jews, including his companion's sister (Annelore Crollet), with whom he falls in love. Questions of trust and how far a person will go to survive are tested to the limit, as are scenes of brutality and torture. Director Tim Mielants (*Peaky Blinders*) adapted the screenplay from a novel by Jeroen Olyslaegers. Rating: R16. 114 minutes.

Suncoast (Disney+/Searchlight/20thCentury)

Terminal illness is one of several serious topics that are common in young adult fare. First shown at Sundance this year, writer-director Laura Chinn's semi-autobiographical story casts two big names. Laura Linney plays a hassled, but headstrong, single mother coping with a dying son and a teenage daughter, Doris (Nico Parker), who is straining under the pressure at home and at school. She is the plot's centrepiece, torn between her mother's burdens and a desire to be a normal teenager among her peer group at school. Doris is befriended by the other big-name actor, Woody Harrelson, playing an activist in the real-life case of Terri Schiavo, who is at the same hospice as Doris's brother. Schiavo was the subject of a seven-year legal dispute that went all the way to the Supreme Court and President George W. Bush. This is a heavy load for any drama that leaves the viewer wanting to know more of Linney as a mum of mixed-race children. Rating: Mature audiences. 109 minutes.

American Underdog (Sony/Netflix)

The American National Football League's Superbowl final in 2000 was notable for the performance of St Louis Rams quarterback Kurt Warner, considered to be the code's greatest undrafted player. His rise to fame outside of a contract that is standard for outstanding talent was unusual, as was his age (28) when he stepped up for the first major match of his career. By then, Warner (Zachary Levi) was in a relationship with his future wife Brenda (Anna Paquin), an abandoned mother of a blind, brain damaged son (also of mixed race). The leads are convincing, if too old for their parts, and the narrative is unrelentingly upbeat. It differs from typical sports movies in making the action on the field (which is excellently done) subsidiary to the positive family-based themes of virtue, commitment, and faith. These are the hallmarks of writer-directors Andrew and John Erwin, who aim their productions at the Christian market. Their adaptation of Warner's autobiography contains details that could only have happened in real life, and the result is the better for it. Rating: Parental guidance advised. 112 minutes.

A thoughtful Catholic response to racism

BUILDING A CIVILISATION OF LOVE: A Catholic Response to Racism, by Harold Burke-Sivers, Ignatius Press (2023), 236 pp, US\$18.95. Reviewed by CECILIA CICONE (OSV News)

In his latest book, "Building a Civilization of Love: A Catholic Response to Racism", Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers methodically breaks apart the concept of racism, in order to present a way that Catholics should respond to this fundamental injustice.

Deacon Burke-Sivers, who is an African-American, begins the book with helpful definitions of common terms like "racism", "prejudice" and "systemic racism", before going on to explore what Scripture says about racism. Importantly, Deacon Burke-Sivers distinguishes between different types of slavery, including chattel slavery, in which individuals are owned forever and can be bought and sold, a kind of slavery that is never permitted in Scripture, unlike indentured servitude to pay off debts.

Next, he examines Church history, with the premise that the institutional Church is not systemically racist be-

cause Christ the just judge is at her head. Instead, Deacon Burke-Sivers says, individuals in the Church can be racist, perpetuating sins against people of colour in the name of Jesus.

While a relatively short part of the book overall, this chapter on Church history and racism provides an important opportunity to confront readers with the reality of injustice existing even within the Church. Far from being exempt from sin, there were religious orders and Catholic laity who participated in chattel slavery in the United States. As Catholics, it is just as important to acknowledge this part of our history, as it is to know the lives of the saints — it reminds us that no one is exempt from the possibility of perpetuating great evil, and so reliance on God is absolutely necessary.

The greatest gift of "Building a Civilization of Love", however, are the chapters in which Deacon Burke-Sivers directly addresses three of the most controversial topics related to anti-racism movements: critical race theory, liberation theology and Black Lives Matter. He systematically walks

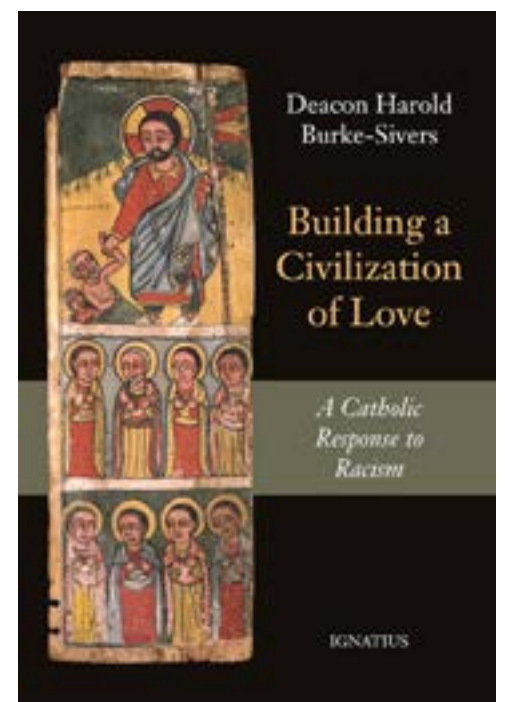
Book Review

through the core principles of each of these topics, testing them up against Gospel values to see what remains.

It would be a mistake to think that Deacon Burke-Sivers is presenting the only way to respond to racism, yet his courage in laying out one type of response to the evil of racism is much needed.

Discussions around racism can easily descend into political arguments with ad-hominem attacks. What Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers offers in these pages, in an easy-to-read fashion, is another way, a third way, to engage in conversations about racism with logic, rather than leading with emotion, in order to better understand the impact of the concepts and organisations that claim to be inscrutable because they exist in order to correct an evil.

Cecilia Cicone is an author and communicator who works in diocesan ministry in Northwest Indiana.



We are here ▼ Second Sunday of Lent

THE CHURCH YEAR

Advent

Christmas

Ordinary Time

Lent

Eastertime

Ordinary Time

Becoming spiritually equipped to fulfil our Lenten journey

Scripture

by Fr Kevin Waldie SM

The readings this Sunday propose that we adopt a very particular focus for reflecting on the current liturgical season, and the spiritual path we are being called to take. God's revealed words in these texts therefore guide our thoughts and actions.

The Genesis scene allows us to listen in to God's instructions to Abraham about obedience, and the blessing that accompanies it. When Abraham puts his trust in God's bizarre request that he sacrifice his only son, it seems that the divine plan has taken a very strange turn. However, as Abraham obediently does what was asked of him, he is stopped in his tracks. In that moment, the

Lord assures him of the future for himself, his family and, in fact, for all the earth's nations. This is the beginning of immense blessing worldwide.

Paul's neatly expressed text also speaks of a son through whom God chooses to reveal a source of great blessing. Putting Christ Jesus at the centre of God's saving plan, Paul is priming us for our annual commemoration of the Lord's passion, death and Resurrection. Looking ahead in that way reminds us once again that we are being called to perform a ritual of profound significance.

The transfiguration scene in Mark anticipates

February 25: Second Sunday of Lent. **Readings:** 1. Genesis 22:1-2,9-13,15-18; **Psalm:** 116; 2. Romans 8:31-34; **Gospel:** Mark 9:2-10.

his Gospel story's ending. Declared the Son of God, Jesus is set on a path that will lead to the cross and his victory over death, signalled by his Resurrection from the dead. Unpleasant as it is, the Son's death is necessary because of what it will achieve. This is the mystery Mark wills his Gospel to proclaim.

As reflective moments, these readings draw attention to the long story of a divine plan in which we are immersed, becoming spiritually equipped to fulfil our Lenten duty. Thus we annually prepare ourselves for the coming Easter festivities.

Gaining an insight into the wonder of our God

The Lenten readings constantly cause us to reflect on what we believe, and how we live in light of our faith. Today's texts aid our reflection by bringing to our attention the core elements of the faith handed down to us in the Bible.

The Exodus text is that familiar Old Testament passage that we fondly call the Ten Commandments. In essence, these statements guide us in the matter of duly honouring God, and thoughtfully respecting our neighbour.

The examples within the various commandments illustrate how the divine and human realms are interwoven with each other. What they direct us to do ensures that we consciously put into practice everything that might immediately

testify to God's goodness, and care for another's well-being.

As expected, Paul's words to the Corinthians are utterly Christ-centred. His message for Jew and Gentile alike is founded on knowing the crucified Christ to be both the power of God and the wisdom of God. That is quite some statement. But for Paul, and us with faith, it is a call to receive this astounding claim as a word that is perceived to be life-changing.

John also builds his verses upon that faith foundation, which stretches back to the early days when God began shaping Israel as his chosen people. In the temple setting, John's Jesus speaks of his own body as a temple that, seemingly de-

March 3: Third Sunday of Lent. **Readings:** 1. Exodus 20:1-17; **Psalm:** 19; 2. 1 Corinthians 1:22-25; **Gospel:** John 2:13-25.

stroyed in its earthly form, is truly capable of a new resurrected life. So in Jesus we are shown the way into a life that transcends the physical, worldly experience that we know.

Looking closely at these biblical passages, we cannot fail to see in them the revealing hand of God. For through their wording, we are helped to gain an insight into the wonder of our God, and the desired harmony among human beings.

SAINTED GLASS

The Gospel on Saturday, March 2, features the parable of the Prodigal Son.

The parable has many levels, but to me as a father, the point is about forgiveness and welcome – there is nothing I like more than to hug my daughters when they come home, whether or not they have anything to ask forgiveness for.

That's why this partial window from St Mary of the Angels, Wellington, calls to me so much – I can respond both as the prodigal son and the father. How about you?

– Glen McCullough



Biblical study should have pastoral impact, Pope tells Jerusalem students

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — For Catholics, studying Scripture and archaeology in the land of Jesus' life, death and Resurrection must be more than a scholarly exercise, Pope Francis said; it should have the pastoral dimension of helping others know and live the Gospel.

"In this time, in which the Lord asks us to listen and know better his Word, to make it resonate in the world in an ever more comprehensible way, your discreet and impassioned work is more valuable than ever," the Pope told students and staff of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, a Jerusalem-based graduate school of Scripture and archaeology studies.

Pope Francis met the group at the Vatican on January 15, in a special audience celebrating the 100th anniversary of the institute founded and run by the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land. Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, and Franciscan Father Massimo Fusarelli, minister general of the order, joined the group.

The institute has been involved in the archaeological excavation of sites featured prominently in the New Testament, including Bethany, Bethlehem, Cana, Capernaum, Emmaus, Magdala, Nazareth, Mt Nebo, Tabgha and Mt Tabor, according to the institute's website.

Pope Francis noted how, since the Israeli-Hamas conflict began in October, "we cannot go there easily because the war zone

Bible News

prevents it".

"The current situation of the Holy Land and of the peoples who inhabit it concerns and pains us. It is very grave from every point of view. It is very grave," the Pope said. "We must pray and act tirelessly so that this tragedy may end."

Pope Francis thanked the Franciscans for their continued presence and work in the Holy Land, urging them to "go forward with courage".

And he urged the students and staff to approach the Scriptures like St Francis of Assisi taught. For the saint, the Pope said, "knowledge of the Word of God, and its study, are not simply matters of erudition, but experiences of a sapiential (wisdom) nature, whose purpose, in faith, is to help people to live the Gospel better, and to make them good."

"Let the rigorous and scientific study of biblical sources, enriched by the most updated methods and disciplines, always be united with contact with the life of the holy people of God, and aimed at their pastoral service," the Pope told them.

"Outside the body of the Church, these studies serve nothing. What counts is the heart of the Church, of the Holy Mother Church."



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Chch Catholic women encouraged to form 'little communities'

by MINA AMSO

Christchurch Bishop Michael Gielen has met with dozens of women from throughout the diocese, at an event aiming at connecting, inspiring and also sharing some laughs and banter.

Women often times feel as if they're alone, isolated, or that they are the only ones feeling challenged, said Jacinta Stopforth, organiser of the event, which took place at the Lamb of God Centre in Mairehau on February 9.

"When you go to something and you go home thinking 'I am not the only one in the diocese of faith. I've got other sisters around me. I've got other people who are passionate', it is re-energising to actually move forward again."

She said that women must remember to "know who you are, and whose you are".

The night began with a bit of ice breakers, trivia, small group banter, then three women sharing their testimonies. They talked about their struggles, challenges and faith journeys, mixing it up with some laughs and humour.

Catherine Shaw shared her story of how she lost her first husband and two friends in a car accident two years after her marriage. "My whole life had changed."

She was constantly reminded of scripture to keep her strong and focused on God, like Proverbs 3:5,6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight".

Or Isaiah 55:8-9: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways".

And 1 Corinthians 2:9: "For as it is written, Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has the human heart imagined what God has prepared for those who love him."

Ms Shaw found love again and got remarried, and she was "blessed" with four children. But her second marriage ended with her husband, Paul, being diagnosed with cancer. Shaw found herself a widow again a few years later.

"Once again you're faced with these huge questions like, why have you done this to me God? But you just have to have faith that 'My ways are not your ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts'."

"You've got to trust in the Lord, no matter where you are and what's happening. I've had some tragedy in my life, but had so many blessings."

She focused on the blessings, and on the fact that God had a good plan for her life. She said that she trusted, even though it was difficult.

"You're on the journey, you just have to take each day at a time, and trust that the Lord is with you. Have faith, like there are so many times where I felt like giving up, but I just had to have that faith and say 'I am going to go to Mass, or I am going to do that prayer hour, or I am going to get up and just pray a simple prayer and have the faith'."

Good things happened for Ms Shaw, and she waved her engagement ring to the crowd with a smile.

"Just a proposal on top of the Eiffel Tower six months ago, so you know God is good, and he has a plan for our life."

Christchurch North parishioner Samantha Lee-Bryce was glad that she came to hear this testimony and others, thanks to a friend who invited her to the event.



Women listen to one of the talks

"It's been a good opportunity to connect with friends that I haven't seen in a while, and meet new people, to be inspired by other women that've been through a whole lot more than I have, and to learn from that and to be reminded of how important faith is," she said.

The ladies also heard from Bishop Gielen, who touched on how the women in his life challenged him and helped him become the man he is today. He spoke of his early childhood years, being raised on a farm, surrounded by his dad, brother and sisters. He talked about how, as a young boy, he enjoyed the company of his brother and father more. But soon enough his mother was having girls.

"Those girls brought so much joy in my life. Some of my 'bestest' memories of my life are my little sisters."

"They have made me into the man I am. Grown me into the man I am. I love my brother and I love my father, but my sisters made me become who they knew God was calling me to be. They've challenged me and forced me and battled with me for me to become that man. So I want to honour them."

"I want to honour you as mothers, I want to honour you as wives, I want to honour you as sisters. You don't know the joy you brought your husbands and your brothers and your fathers."

But there was one more important woman in Bishop Gielen's life — Mary, Jesus' mother.

"If you go to my house, it's covered in Marian images, because I love all her different faces."

"You don't choose Mary, she chooses you. She chose me at a young age. I've always felt her profound presence and courage. Today, not by chance but by providence, we officially opened Marian school. I reflected on that young relatively unknown [woman], most [likely] poorly educated, definitely not set aside for any great role of leadership, and yet she's shown some of the greatest courage that the world has ever seen."

"Because she answered God's call [in] her life."

Bishop Gielen challenged all women to a deeper relationship with Mary, and to devote themselves

to her.

"She's the reason, she's the one who's given me the strength and the courage to keep saying 'yes', whatever the Lord wants in my life."

"I know our world is going into a deeper and deeper crisis of loneliness. I know it. I know we're becoming more isolated, we're individualistic, and you've heard me say it before, I believe it's only getting worse. I know it because I sense it in myself, and I see it in others."

He reminded women to make an effort to form little communities.

"You have to help me fight against that [individualism]. We have to find ways of doing this [women's events] because in the past we did it so naturally. We had to, we couldn't do it alone. Somehow now we have found ways of doing it alone. So I honour you for coming tonight."

Women from far and wide attended, including Carly Mulqueen from St Peter Chanel Parish in Waimakariri [Rangiora, some 25km north of Christchurch]. She said that the testimonies touched her heart.

"I loved how three women, at completely different ages and stages, shared about loss and tragedy, and God's goodness. He was there and carried the women through their hard times."

Ms Mulqueen was diagnosed with breast cancer a year ago. She's been under chemotherapy treatment, and says it was uplifting to be there, and fitting to hear the testimony of a woman whose brother is experiencing cancer treatment right now.

"I feel that now too. I love being able to talk to her about that afterwards too; you can make connective reconnections with people."

Lourdes Mones-Cazan, from the Hurunui Parish [North Canterbury] drove some 50 minutes to get to the event, because she wanted to meet other women who are journeying in their faith as she is.

"To be encouraged by them and see what the bishop challenges us to do next. To love our Lady with all our hearts as a real mother that she is to us."

Diocesan special projects assistant and event co-organiser Grace Challies said that the event was fully booked in a span of four weeks.

"There has been so much interest, we only started advertising on the 20th of December, and were at full capacity a month later (19th January). The event was asked for [by] women within the diocese, in response to the Men's Breakfast event in May of 2023."

The event was planned by a team of eight women who came from the central parishes in Christchurch city.

"Ultimately, we wanted women to have the opportunity to connect and be inspired. We also found that many of the parishes were striving to bring together women in their parish. And we thought that, by having this style of event, we might be able to attract more women who might not go to a parish level event, but also encourage those who come to keep connecting, and get involved with this style of event at their parish level," Ms Challies said.

She added that they hope to run another, bigger event for women, later in the year.



Bishop Michael Gielen addresses the women at the gathering

Does watching a televised Mass provide spiritual nourishment?

by JENNA MARIE COOPER (OSV News)

Q: In the past few weeks, due to extreme weather, I've missed Mass a couple of times. My parish has a Facebook channel, so I watched the services there instead. I wasn't able to receive Communion. In talking to the priest, though, he said that, in such situations, a person can receive invisibly or symbolically, and either way still be fed. Could you comment? (Southern Indiana)

A: Watching a livestream or pre-recorded Mass is not the same as attending Mass in person and receiving Communion. But given the circumstances you describe, it sounds like watching Mass online was still a good way to be spiritually nourished in that particular instance.

Most Catholics are aware of our "Sunday obligation", that is, the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays, and certain major feast days that might fall on other days of the week. As Canon 1247 of the *Code of Canon Law* states: "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are obliged to participate in the Mass." Sometimes this word "participate" is translated from the original Latin "participandi" as "assist at Mass", which underscores the idea that the lay faithful are meant to have a "full, conscious and active participation" in liturgical celebrations (See "Sacrosanctum Concilium", No. 14).

A true full, conscious, and active participation in the Mass is understood

to require our literal, physical presence at the liturgy. Because of this, watching Mass on a screen would not fulfil the Sunday obligation.

That being said, the Church intends for all of our obligations to be rooted in common sense, and a foundational principle of the law in general is that nobody can be bound to do what is impossible. Therefore, if you are truly unable to attend Mass in person — whether that be due to inclement weather, illness, being at a great geographical distance from a Catholic church, etc. — then you are not bound by the Sunday obligation as long as these circumstances persist.

Yet even if you are unable, and thus not required, to attend Mass, the commandment to "keep holy the Sabbath day" still applies, and in that case we should still do what we can to keep Sunday as an especially restful and prayerful day. In fact, Canon 1248, Paragraph 2 tells us: "If participation in the eucharistic celebration becomes impossible because of the absence of a sacred minister or for another grave cause, it is strongly recommended that the faithful take part in a liturgy of the Word . . . or that they devote themselves to prayer for a suitable time alone, as a family, or, as the occasion permits, in groups of families".

My own thought is that attentively watching a broadcast Mass, and devoutly following the readings and prayers, would be very much in line with the personal prayer time that Canon 1248 recommends for circum-

Our Faith Q&A



stances where in-person Mass attendance is not possible. Similarly, the graces attached to receiving the real presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in Holy Communion is not something that can be replaced by an online broadcast. But there are many beautiful prayers in our Catholic tradition for a "spiritual communion", where we express our longing to receive Jesus at least spiritually, even if we cannot receive him physically in the Eucharist.

It should also be noted that Catholics are, strictly speaking, only technically required to receive Holy Communion once per year during the

Easter season (See Canon 920). It is perfectly legitimate to attend Mass and refrain from receiving Communion. And there are some circumstances when a Catholic should attend Mass to fulfil the Sunday obligation but not partake in the Eucharist, such as when they have committed a serious sin, but have not yet received absolution in the sacrament of penance, or when they have not kept the required one-hour fast before Communion.

Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News.

Papal Prayer

The Pope's universal prayer intention for February: For the Terminally Ill
The Holy Father encourages prayers "so that terminally ill patients and their families always receive necessary medical and human care and support."

40 YEARS AGO

IMAGE MUST BE WIDENED

The Hibernian Society must present itself, not only as a Catholic organisation dedicated to social communication between Catholics, but also as one which has the added advantage of certain membership benefits, according to Mr Patrick Michael O'Rourke, who has resigned after 23 years as its secretary.

Its benefits should be presented as a total package, and not "marketed" individually.

All benefits, together with the ethic of friendship and kindness, should be presented as a practical, overall philosophy for meeting the demands of modern living.

Mr O'Rourke said the potential for increased membership lies largely within the families of existing society members, and this is where the thrust of recruiting should be.

The membership field is wide open, and limited only by the number of people available to "sell" the Hibernian Society.

Mr O'Rourke's comments come at the end of a term which has seen the society's assets grow from \$406,000 when he joined, to more than \$7million, when taken together with those of the Hibernian Permanent Building Society.

Other milestones since he joined the society in 1953 include: The society getting its own building in Wellington in 1958, only to lose it in a disastrous fire 23 years later; The establishment 21 years ago of the Hibernian Credit Union, "a benchmark of the society's fortunes"; 1968 saw the appointment of three part-time representatives in Auckland, a move followed a year later by the confirmation of Bede Brittenden as full-time representative in the Queen City.

— *Zealandia*, February 19, 1984.

CAPTION CONTEST



Write the best caption for this photo and win a \$30 Countdown voucher. Email your ideas by Friday, March 8 to design@nzcatholic.org.nz Subject 'Caption Contest 679'. Or post to NZ Catholic, PO Box 147000, Ponsonby, Auckland 1144. Please include your postal address.

The winner of the Caption Contest from issue 677 (right) was **Trev 'Ofamo'oni Auckland**.

Other suggestions were:

"2 surviving feet are better than one."
— **Miss Margaret-Theresa Anderson, Upper Hutt.**

"Feet first!" — **Linda Jennings, Auckland.**

"It's hard to see eye to eye with someone inverted and 2 feet high."
— **John Lewis, Hamilton.**

"Phew! I 'ended up' only two feet from the race-track!" — **Ellen Fowles, Palmerston North.**



Sole Trader

"It is time to put my feet up." — **Russell Watt, Remuera.**

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Invercargill facility inspired by Dutch dementia care²

by PETER OWENS

Hawthorndale CARE Retirement Village in Invercargill will be ready for occupancy in June next year.

It has cost over \$37 million to develop, but thanks to the generosity of local people and businesses, it has been able to be built and operated.

Calvary Hospital in Invercargill has been an integral part of the health system in that city ever since it was instituted by the Little Company of Mary in 1968. At that time, the people of Invercargill and the wider southern region supported the institution of the new hospital. While the hospital is no longer staffed by nuns, it is still owned by the Little Company of Mary.

The hospital, which now includes not only a general hospital, but also a rest home for elderly people, is administered by a trust board, which for some time has been aware of the problems associated with the rising tide of dementia among people in this country, not all of whom are elderly. It decided that this was something that could not be ignored. It set up a working committee in October, 2019. Its aim was to support sufferers from dementia in the South — but in a practical and acceptable way.

It was decided to set up a village

with a difference for dementia sufferers. Having acquired the site of the former Hawthorndale School on Tay Street in Invercargill, the trust board decided to set up a Care Village on the site. The Hawthorndale Care Village project is an aged care facility inspired by the world-leading Dutch dementia village, De Hogeweyk. It is closely modelled on the only other such existing village in New Zealand, which is situated in Rotorua. This village has proved to be very successful in its care and treatment of dementia sufferers.

The design of the village and the delivery of care remove the institutional/hospital feel, and replace it with residents living in small groups in houses, where the rhythm of everyday living is tailored to each individual resident. The village will have managed and pleasant homes, just like a suburban neighbourhood.

It is designed to allow people to live in homes built with dementia design principles, rather than a hospital environment.

There are 13 houses catering for 6-7 residents per home, providing the full spectrum of rest home, dementia and hospital care. In addition, 10 independent living villas will be available for those not requiring a rest home level of care. There is scope for 30 further independent living villas and apartments onsite.

Work on the Hawthorndale Care Village is pushing ahead, with construction of the main centre, 13 care homes and 10 retirement villas well under way, on a 2.5 hectare site fronting Tay St.

Run by its board on a not-for-profit basis, it aims to provide the most normal life possible in a comfortable and secure village for the residents, including people with dementia and people who need rest home care. Care village project manager Helen Robinson says that three companies are building the village, and work is one month ahead of schedule, with the opening date expected to be June



The village under construction



Helen Robinson

2025.

There would be just one entrance into and out of the village, ensuring it would be safe and secure for the dementia residents without the need for segregation in the village.

The main centre would include a coffee shop, dairy, arts and library centre, hairdresser, chapel, playground, hangi pit, gym and theatre. The village does not have a segregated hospital wing for dementia patients. Instead, the residents would live in the 13 care homes, which are six and seven bedrooms each, with meals cooked for them and nurses available to help them out.

The aim was to give the residents purpose in their lives and encourage independence. Ms Robinson says that residents with dementia would be fitted with sewn-in tracking tags, “to let staff know if they are getting close to the main entrance”. This would allow staff to ensure they are safe, but in a humane way.

The community would be welcome into the village without having to visit the residents, Ms Robinson says. She also confirms that residents of Calvary Hospital will be transferred to the 86-bed village when it is opened, leaving space for about 12 more in the care homes.

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EVENTS

AUCKLAND

Divine Mercy Feast Sunday 7th April 5:30pm at St Benedict's Parish, 1 St Benedict's Street, Eden Terrace. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Blessing of Images, Benediction, Holy Mass, Veneration of St Faustina's relic. You are warmly invited to attend this Feast Day Celebration. Bring your Divine Mercy images & artefacts to be blessed. Jesus told St Faustina "My Heart rejoices on this Feast Day". Free Parking at Wilson carpark and street parking is also free on Sunday.

WIT'S END

Some interesting questions:

Can you cry underwater?

If money doesn't grow on trees, why do banks have branches?

Since bread is square, why is sandwich meat round?

Why do you have to "put your two cents in", but it's only "a penny for your thoughts"? Where did that extra penny go?

What did the cured ham actually have?

Why are you IN a movie, but you are ON TV?

Why is it that people say they "slept like a baby", when babies wake up every two hours?

There's healing from isolation and sickness

by MINA AMSO

An increasing number of people are experiencing what can be described as a metaphorical leprosy, a type of internal sickness and self-isolation, in a world heavily connected by devices and technology, said Christchurch Bishop Michael Gielen.

His comments came during a homily given at a healing Mass that was held for the sick, on February 11 at St Mary's Pro Cathedral in Christchurch.

"As we know, loneliness and isolation is growing in our society, especially amongst the elderly. It seems that technology is isolating us more and more from each other."

Bishop Gielen talked about personal choices that lead to self-isolation.

"That's what we find in the decisions we've made, the weaknesses that we have, the sins that we commit. These isolate us more and more. Isolate us from God, isolate us from each other, isolate even from our selves when we start to dislike ourselves, as we know an emotional consequence that comes with that."

The Mass was organised by the Catholic Health Professionals group and the Diocese of Christchurch to mark the World Day of the Sick, to pray for healing and for Catholic Health Professionals working today.

Co-organiser and registered nurse Debra Pawson said that a few people had organised a similar Mass in 2019, but Covid-19 came along and derailed future plans.

"Katie Gould and I touched base with Mike [Stopforth — director of the Bishop's Pastoral Office] to set up a Catholic Health Professionals' group in Christchurch [following the pandemic] and wanted to have permission from the bishop.

Mr Stopforth suggested a Mass, as it had been done in the past.

"Also, that it is 32nd World Day of The Sick on February 11, and a good day to have a Mass. It is a way for

people to come together and share in, not only the practice of their faith, but their work life. At times, being a Catholic health professional can feel like you are the only one, as it is something we don't share with each other."

Miss Pawson said that it is important that Catholic Health Professionals come together often.

"It's important, I think, to have the bishop say the Mass, and know that the Church celebrates the World Day of the Sick every year, and the Pope has a message to health professionals each year. It shows the importance that the Church has for our industry."

Miss Pawson said that the message that it's okay to be Catholic and a health professional needs to be put out there.

"Fingers crossed that people can see others that they know in the industry, and have a support system for . . . prayer and, when there are issues that come up for them in practice, that they can talk to someone who understands and not feel alone."

In a letter published in January — addressed for February 11 — Pope Francis called on people to have compassion and mercy on those sick, old and marginalised. He encouraged people suffering from illness not to give in.

"To those of you who experience illness, whether temporary or chronic, I would say this: Do not be ashamed of your longing for closeness and tenderness! Do not conceal it, and never think that you are a burden on others. The condition of the sick urges all of us to step back from the hectic pace of our lives in order to rediscover ourselves."

Pope Francis honed in on the power of relationship. He said that having a healthy relationship with God, with others and with oneself, is a way of healing and restoration.

"Even in countries that enjoy peace and greater resources, old age and sickness are frequently experienced in solitude and, at times, even in abandonment.



People mingle after the Mass

"This grim reality is mainly a consequence of the culture of individualism that exalts productivity at all costs, cultivates the myth of efficiency, and proves indifferent, even callous, when individuals no longer have the strength needed to keep pace.

"It then becomes a throwaway culture, in which 'persons are no longer seen as a paramount value to be cared for and respected, especially when they are poor or disabled, 'not yet useful' — like the unborn, or 'no longer needed' — like the elderly'."

Bishop Gielen touched on the appropriateness of the readings. Luke 17:12-24 describes the moment when ten men with leprosy came and met Jesus asking for healing, which Jesus provided.

"Not only was there physical consequences for their illness, there's almost nothing worse, is there, than being taken away from their families, but also they were considered to have been cursed."

He said that the curse of having

leprosy was believed to be due to something those men had done, a sin they'd committed, therefore they were deserving of this. In this light, Jesus enters the picture and breaks that curse and cultural misconception, answering the men, "yes I want to heal you".

There may not be as many cases of leprosy today, but people still find themselves isolated, said Bishop Gielen, echoing what Pope Francis wrote in his letter.

He said that Christ would want people to respond to that.

"He would want us to serve in this area more than ever. To work towards community and to encourage community more than ever."

He thanked all the health care professionals for their dedication and self-sacrifice during and after the pandemic.

"Thank you for being his hands. Thank you for being Mother Teresa. To those who find themselves isolated, those in need of hope and a healing touch."

Religious leaders discuss modern issues and solutions

by BEATE MATTHIES

On December 5, some 30 religious leaders from throughout the country gathered at St John's Theological College, Auckland, for a meeting organised by the Religious Diversity Centre (RDC).

The Catholic Church was represented by Sr Sian Owen, RSJ, (on behalf of Wellington Archbishop Paul Martin, SM) and Bishop Michael Dooley (Bishop of Dunedin and member of NZCBCIR — New Zealand Catholic Bishops Committee for Interfaith Relations).

The 2023 meeting provided the opportunity for several discussions in small groups. These were about critical issues which religious leaders were currently facing, and identifying potential solutions for these issues.

Among other burning issues identified were a new crisis of identity, and the long-lasting impacts of the Covid pandemic.

The challenges of diversity could lead to a crisis of identity and sometimes even to anxieties — this was seen as a particular concern for young people.

Among the observations that arose from the group discussions was that Covid-19 has caused a seismic shift, world-wide, and there has been a shift in the social and political areas, and the imbalances have contributed to protests, insurrections, and other forms of unrest.

However, it was noted that the theological crisis is more subtle: What is good and what is bad — what is true and what is not true?

In the groups, the idea was expressed that today's media are often controlled by politicians, favouring the politicians' interests, rather than producing researched material and reporting facts.

The religious leaders were aware of their important roles in today's society — especially if leaders of diverse religions were able to speak in one voice. Then, people of faith would feel that they are being heard.

It was noted that one of the main values that is shared among all religions is respect — genuine appreciation of one another. Rather than debating for a personal or political advantage, religious leaders could contribute to re-introducing robust conversations held with respect, which would be the first step for the force of love that unites.

The groups also noted that Government officials are often unaware of the challenges that their policies cause to religious communities. Consulting religious leaders would need to be more than lip-service. As their roles within their communities vary, consultations can only be serious if the religious leaders are able to prepare themselves and potentially consult with others of their faith community. The religious leaders know the processes and structures in their communities. They are the go-to persons for consulting, but also later for implementing changes.

Another conclusion from the groups was that, instead of rejecting and banning hate speech and hate crime, hate could be addressed and trans-



Sr Sian Owen, RSJ, and Bishop Michael Dooley

formed into love and understanding. Religious leaders are important links to the communities. They can teach people and build up trust.



Fr Eka Tanaya, SJ, lights individual house candles from the first college candle of St Ignatius of Loyola Catholic College during the inaugural Mass on February 13 (Photos: Ben Campbell/BC Photography)

First Mass at Catholic college



Tumuaki/Principal Dean Wearmouth welcomes people to the Mass.



A sculpture of St Ignatius of Loyola at the college. According to information supplied by the college, “the original artist was an Australian woman, Brooke Robertson, who completed the project in 1986. She was commissioned by Fr. Greg O’Kelly SJ, the then principal of St Ignatius’ College, Riverview (Sydney). There have been six statues using the cast and moulding erected across the globe (two in Australia, two in the USA, one in the UK, one in continental Europe). The new Jesuit companion school, St Ignatius of Loyola Catholic College, Drury, is the proud owner of the seventh in the world. The global license for the 31 pieces of cast and moulding models is now in the hands of a Kiwi, John Mills, who has generously been involved with the planning and the establishment of the new school for over two decades”.