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Kiwi Catholic and Anglican bishops in Rome and UK

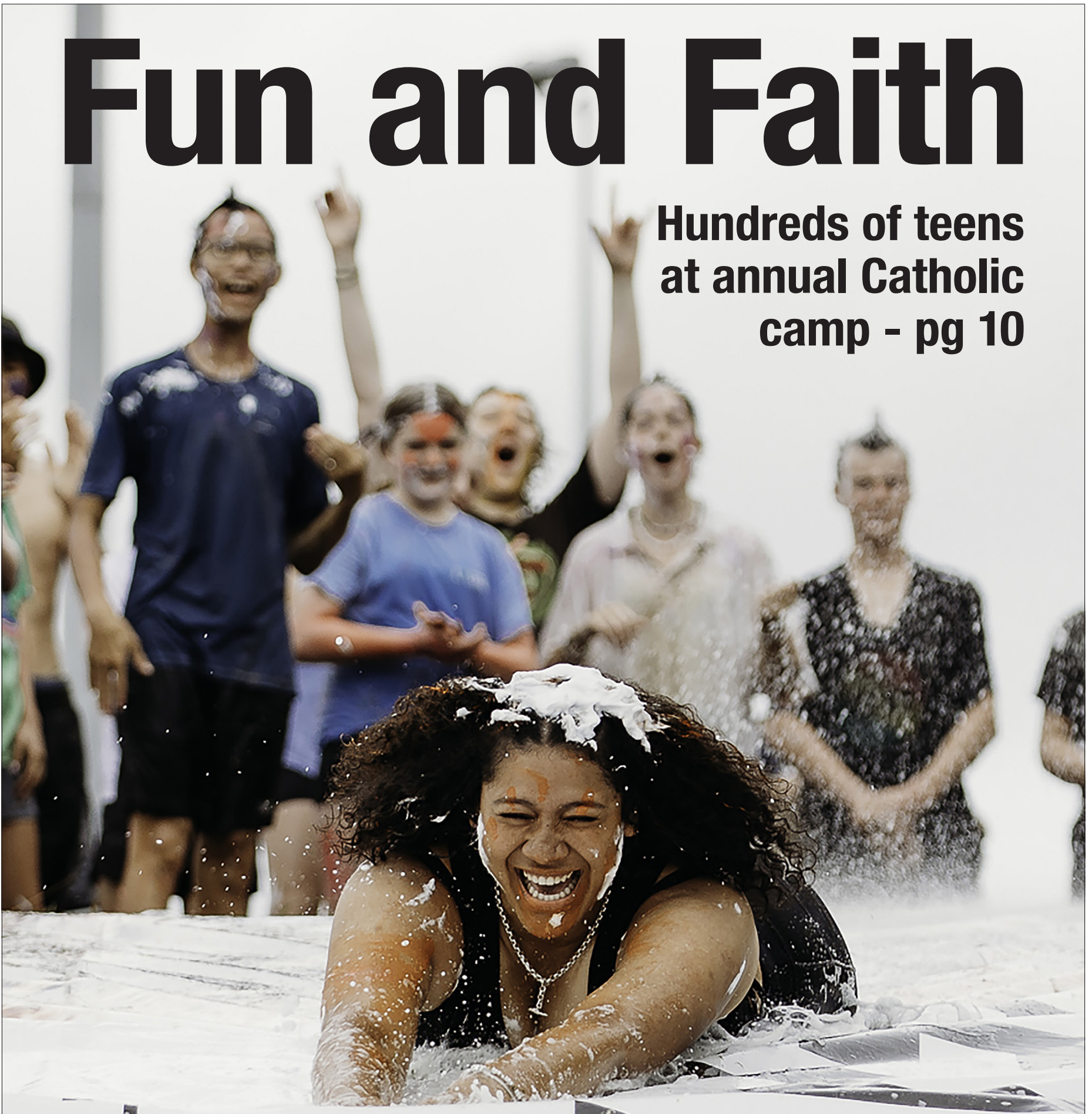
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Six times judged Australasia's leading Catholic newspaper

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On the front cover: A participant enjoys the water slide event at the annual Life Teen Summer Camp in Cambridge.

NZCatholic

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St Dominic's Catholic College

Founded by the Dominican Sisters
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



A displaced Palestinian man who fled his home due to Israeli airstrikes shown on January 5, 2024, as he takes shelter in a tent camp in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas (OSV News photo/Saleh Salem, Reuters)

Kiwi brother sees hope amid chaos

by ROWENA OREJANA

Former Bethlehem University vice-chancellor Br Peter Bray, FSC, said that he saw God's Spirit at work at the university, even though the birthplace of the Prince of Peace "is far from a place of peace at the moment".

In his last Christmas message as vice-chancellor, dated December 22, 2023, Br Peter said that the engagement with Palestinians at the university showed him that what they were doing there is "worthwhile" and a "source of hope". Br Peter stepped down on December 31, 2023, after 15 years in the role. (The message was posted on the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference facebook page.)

"In the midst of the anxiety and fear, I see God's Spirit at work. In the resistance among the people holed up in Gaza, I see God's Spirit at work. In the determination of people here to carry out our mission to serve the young people entrusted to us, I see God's Spirit at work," Br Peter said.

"We are seeking to respond to that Spirit, and create here an environment where people can move towards living life to the full, despite the occupation, the oppression, the restrictions, and the challenges they face."

Br Peter said that the university's calendar year had been a disrupted one. The attacks on the

Palestinians in the West Bank, as well as strikes in protest against those attacks, meant going weeks without a full week in class.

He said that the war in Gaza put further pressure on their operation, with "the slaughter of almost 20,000 Palestinians there (as of the end of 2023), 70 per cent of whom were women and children, and over 51,000 injured". Those death and injury figures have since increased.

He said that this was a traumatic time, as many in the university had friends and relatives in Gaza.

He added that the Israelis closed all the checkpoints around Bethlehem, which meant that the students from Jerusalem and Hebron, as well as from the surrounding villages, could not come to school.

"The tragedy of the situation here is that the first casualty of war is the truth! It is very difficult to find out what is actually happening in detail, and the means of finding out is severely restricted," he said.

Br Peter said that what they know is that there are almost two million internally-displaced people in the middle and southern sections of Gaza.

He said that there were around 600 people sheltering in the Catholic Holy Family parish church and school in Gaza.

On December 16, a Christian mother and daughter, Nahida and Samar Anton, were killed by snipers.

Br Peter said that an Israeli tank also fired a rocket at the Convent of the Sisters of Mother Teresa, severely damaging the building, and displacing 54 disabled people who were living there.

He said that the health authorities reported around 360,000 cases of infectious diseases in the shelters.

"The focus of attention is on Gaza, but it needs to be remembered that the military and settlers are taking advantage of that focus to expand their control of the West Bank. Since the beginning of the war in Gaza on October 7, there have been almost 280 Palestinians killed, including some 70 children, who have been killed on the West Bank, while almost 3500 Palestinians have been injured by Israeli forces and settlers," Br Peter said.

He said that the Christmas observance had been very subdued. Instead of the lighting of the Christmas tree, there was a sombre remembrance of the children killed in Gaza.

"There is a pervading uncertainty about what the future holds for Palestinians in the West Bank as well as Gaza, because it is impossible to go back to how things were on October 6," he said. "What the alternative will be is far from clear."



Br Peter Bray, FSC, in Auckland in February last year

Anglican, Catholic bishops travel, pray, work together

ROME (CNS) — Acknowledging that many of the bishops present live in situations of poverty and strife, the spiritual leader of the worldwide Anglican Communion told Catholic and Anglican bishops that they had a responsibility to work together to preach the Gospel, and to bring hope and healing to the world.

“We must look outward. We cannot continue, as the Church, to be those who are obsessed with what is going on amongst us,” said Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury, during his homily on January 25 at an Anglican Eucharist celebrated in the Catholic Church of St Bartholomew on Tiber Island in Rome.

Coming directly from a private meeting with Pope Francis, the archbishop began the liturgy by thanking the Pope for allowing him to celebrate the Anglican service in a Catholic church.

The archbishop was speaking directly to pairs of Catholic and Anglican bishops from 27 nations who were in Rome for the first half of “Growing Together”, a weeklong summit for ecumenical discussion and pilgrimage. The bishops were in Rome from January 22-25, and then were scheduled to travel to Canterbury, England, from January 26-29.

Closing the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity with an evening prayer service on January 25 at Rome’s Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls, Pope Francis was joined by Anglican Archbishop Welby and, at the end of the service, the two commissioned the pairs of Anglican and Catholic bishops to “bear witness together to the hope that does not deceive, and to the unity for which our Saviour prayed”.

Members of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, who were meeting in Rome, also participated, along with representatives of Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican communities in Italy.

In his homily, Pope Francis reflected on the theme for the 2024 celebration of the week of prayer: “You shall love the Lord your God . . . and your neighbour as yourself” from Luke 10:27.

The passage comes from a Gospel story in which a scholar of the law asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. After Jesus affirms the need to love God and one’s neighbour, the scholar asks, “And who is my neighbour?”

“This question attempts to divide, to separate people into those we should love and those we should shun,” Pope Francis said. “This kind of division is never from God; it is from the devil.”

“Only a love that becomes gratuitous service, only the love that Jesus taught and embodied, will bring separated Christians closer to one another,” he said. “Only that love, which does not appeal to the past in order to remain aloof or to point a finger, only that love which in God’s name puts our brothers and sisters before the ironclad defence of our own religious structures, will unite us.”

Although it was not foreseen, Archbishop Welby also offered a reflection at the service, explaining that Pope Francis invited him to do so.

Christians, he said, as individuals and as churches, can choose to be angry or to love. “Anger imprisons us; our rivalry or dislike of our brothers and sisters cuts us off from the freedom that God offers his church.”

But, the archbishop said, “a church caught up in the fire of the love of God through the Holy Spirit will be a church of reconciliation, a church of hope, a church of healing,” it will be a church that can “care for the millions, the billions who are by the road in pain, lost and suffering”.

The summit was organised by the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM), a body established in 2001 to promote common prayer and joint projects, to demonstrate concretely how the theological agreements the churches have made also have practical



Pope Francis and other ecumenical leaders pray before the tomb of St. Paul, before an evening prayer service concluding the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity at Rome’s Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls, on January 25. From the left are: Anglican Archbishop Ian Ernest, Archbishop Diego Giovanni Ravelli, Orthodox Metropolitan Polykarpos of Italy, Cardinal Kurt Koch, and Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

implications in witnessing together to the Christian faith.

■ Aotearoa New Zealand

Among the pairs of Catholic and Anglican bishops were Christchurch Catholic Bishop Michael Gielen and the Anglican Bishop of Auckland, Bishop Ross Bay.

Bishop Gielen said that it is a great privilege to be representing New Zealand’s Catholic bishops at this major Anglican-Roman Catholic gathering.

Bishop Gielen said he has been inspired by the rich history of IARCCUM during the gathering.

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

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

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

The 27 pairs of bishops also included two women: Bishop Marinez Bassotto of the Amazon, primate of the Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil, and Bishop Sally Sue Hernández García of Mexico.

Bishop Bassotto told CNS that she believes her presence at the summit was “prophetic,” especially for the Catholic bishops who are not used to working with women bishops. But in her diocese, she said, “we have many, many projects together regarding defending, protecting and promoting the indigenous and territorial rights in the Amazon region”.

Her Catholic counterpart, Bishop Teodoro Mendes Tavares of Ponta de Pedras, said, “I work in a region in the Amazon where women are very proactive, they have a special role and very active role, particularly leading communities, so I believe the presence here of Bishop Marinez is very meaningful; it helps foster more connections toward what we do together, our mission together.”

The summit, he said, is focused on valuing the fact that Catholics and Anglicans “are brothers and sisters in Christ because of baptism. This is fundamental. We are equal in dignity”.

And, the bishop said, because they are brothers and sisters, “we are called to journey together, to grow together”.

The pairs of bishops attending the Rome summit included Hong Kong Anglican Bishop Matthias Tze-Wo Der and Cardinal Stephen Chow Sau-yan, whose dioceses have cooperated in running schools and providing social services for years.

Often finishing each other’s sentences, the two told Catholic News Service that they also have be-



Bishop Michael Gielen (left) and Anglican Bishop Ross Bay inside St Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican (Photo: NZCBC)

gun a tradition of sharing a Passover seder during Lent — with 100 Anglicans and 100 Catholics — an annual retreat for priests of both churches, and an annual retreat for Catholic and Anglican young adults focused on care for creation.

“The work that the Roman Catholics and Anglicans have done in Hong Kong is much appreciated by the general population, as well as the government,” Bishop Der said.

As well as the service at the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls, the pairs of bishops also reportedly visited several holy sites, including the tombs of Saints Peter and Paul, Augustine of Canterbury and Thomas à Becket.

Correction:

Concerning from the article on clergy appointments (NZ Catholic, January 28) for Wellington archdiocese: Msgr Gerard Burns is parish priest at St Francis of Assisi Ohariu Parish, with Fr Alfred Tong as the assistant priest, and pre-seminarian John Quang in residence. Msgr Burns is also administrator at Te Ngakau Tapu parish with Fr Tong assistant parish priest at Te Ngakau Tapu parish.

ST. PETER’S COLLEGE EPSOM, AUCKLAND A CATHOLIC SCHOOL FOR BOYS

- Congratulations **Isikeli Brown** and **Patrick Borich** who were selected for New Zealand Schools U16 Football Team to play Australia Schools U16 in April.
- Open Day - Tuesday 20th February 2024: 9.30am or 1pm.

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Feedback sought about Chch cathedral location

by MINA AMSO

The Catholic Diocese of Christchurch has released a survey, seeking feedback which will be used to help decide the future location of the new Catholic cathedral in the city.

In a booklet setting out his thinking and the process for consultation and consideration of options, the Bishop of Christchurch, Bishop Michael Gielen, invited people in his diocese to look at the options presented, so that what will be built will be a cathedral that is a "timeless landmark and a worthy tribute to God".

"It must bear witness to our faith, and enable our diocese to continue the exceptional mission we undertake, through our faith communities, schools and social services.

"That translates to a need, not just to build a timeless and worthy cathedral, but to build a precinct that is necessary to grow our future."

An envisaged cathedral precinct would include a function facility, perpetual adoration chapel (24/7), functional working office spaces, cultural and community spaces, easy and accessible car parking, a link to schools, and appropriate housing in order to accommodate priests.

Bishop Gielen said that the survey will form one of the elements that he will consider before making a final decision.

"Other elements will include in-person parish group feedback sessions, technical information, financial considerations, the feedback I have received from key stakeholders, and the guidance of my advisory bodies [the College of Consultors and the Diocesan Finance Council]."

Bishop Gielen was installed as Bishop of Christchurch 18 months ago. He said late last year that one of the most important things on his agenda is to provide clarity on the future destination of the Christchurch cathedral.

He has already sought feedback from priests, religious, parish leadership, Catholic Māori and diocesan representatives, as well as from various experts, to evaluate each site proposed, and whether it would support an 800-seat cathedral, a function facility, presbytery, car parking, and offices for parish and diocesan services.

The experts were asked to assess the cost to establish the precinct on each site, the land values, and the capacity to expand and adapt St Mary's Pro-Cathedral [and geotechnical assessments].

In a pastoral letter read in Christchurch diocese parishes in December, Bishop Gielen said that the assessment also looked at the possibility of selling land at Barbadoes Street and Armagh Street, and how that would impact the project budget. Selling the Manchester Street site was not considered, the letter stated.

"The world has changed since the decision in 2019 to build a cathedral in Armagh Street. Covid-19 forced us to consider what is truly important. The Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry shone a light on our responsibility to those who suffered abuse while in our care; and the increase in both the cost of living and construction costs has highlighted the need for financial prudence."

■ Sites

There are three proposed sites: Barbadoes Street (where the former Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament was located), the land at Armagh Street, and Manchester Street (with the renovation of St Mary's Pro-Cathedral).

At 14,828 square metres, the Barbadoes St site is about two and a half times larger than the two other sites. The land could handle a cathedral, and a number of facilities alongside a pre-primary school, primary school, high school, parish centre, presbytery, offices and car parking. Bishop Gielen said that it could be developed in stages, with areas under construction being cordoned off while other facilities are in use.

The Barbadoes St site sits better financially, according to analysts. "It would cost the least to build there, and the deficit from the project will be the lowest compared with the two other options [\$30 million less to spend if the cathedral was built



The former Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament as it was before the earthquakes.

on Barbadoes St]", said Simon Thompson, diocesan general manager.

"This is due to selling the high value land in Armagh Street to fund the project, whereas the land value in Barbadoes Street is much lower."

The Manchester Street site [upon which St Mary's Pro-Cathedral is situated] would require a temporary building to be found for Mass while the project takes place. The St Mary's School land would have to be purchased to allow for more room for infrastructure. This purchase and relocating of the school would add significant cost to the project.

"Refurbishing and extending St Mary's Pro-Cathedral to 100 per cent NBS seismic strength, is similar in cost to building a new cathedral," the booklet stated.

Everything required would fit on the Armagh Street site, but this is constrained for future growth as the diocese would need to sell excess land to fund the project. In addition, a car park building would need to be developed, which would add to cost as against the other sites.

Bishop Gielen said that he would faithfully consider the decision following prayer, dialogue, discernment, and final resolution. In his letter, he said that each site had been picked with a lot in mind, including historical and spiritual significance, and

the capacity to accommodate the necessary infrastructure to support the diocese.

"We also considered potential for future growth, accessibility and parking, and ultimately the financial commitment to all parishes in the diocese, and the important responsibility to support those who have suffered while in Church care," Bishop Gielen said.

The preferred option for Bishop Gielen is the Barbadoes Street site, a place to return to the humble and historical roots of the Catholic faith.

"For 166 years, this land has been central to our story of faith. Living on this land for the past 18 months, I too have sensed its mana and future potential. It blesses us with a rich spiritual history, significant size — many times larger than the other sites — financial viability and accessibility."

He explained the sacredness of the site to Catholic Māori, the Carmelite sisters, and the many migrants "who have invested their lives and savings into this land".

"It is a site steeped in history, with many identifying it as an anchor for their faith in Christchurch."

He invited people to dedicate a whole week for prayer, placing the intention of the "cathedral location" before God, and to take time to fill in a survey seeking specific feedback.

"In this time of our history, we have the greatest privilege and responsibility of building an inspiring cathedral to be a mother church of our diocese," he said.

Among the survey data sought was the level of agreement or otherwise with the bishop's vision for the future cathedral precinct. This was divided into seven areas — being mission-focused for intergenerational and cultural outreach; being a visible place of worship and welcome; connecting with Catholic tradition and history; enabling strong links with schools; being financially prudent so that the diocese can meet other commitments; ease of access with free parking and being close to public transport; having room for future growth. People were then asked to rate their overall alignment with the bishop's vision, and for their first and second preferences for the cathedral site.

Feedback will be open until the end of March. Feedback will be collated, and there will be a period of discernment in April/May. Bishop Gielen will announce his final decision in mid-2024.

New national director for MissioNZ

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

Father Michael Pui — the parish priest of Good Shepherd Parish, Hurunui, in North Canterbury — has been appointed national director of MissioNZ, the local face of the Pontifical Mission Societies.

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

The Pontifical Mission Societies are a group of four missionary bodies, under the jurisdiction of the Pope via the Vatican's Dicastery for Evangelisation. On December 2, 2022, Pope Francis appointed Italian Archbishop Emilio Nappa as adjunct secretary of the new Dicastery for Evangelisation, with the office of president of the Pontifical Mission Societies.

The societies connect local churches to the Catholic Church's missionary work around the world. They are perhaps best known to most people for overseeing the World Missions Sunday collection on the third Sunday of October each year, in all Catholic parishes around the world.

Fr Pui was ordained in Christ-

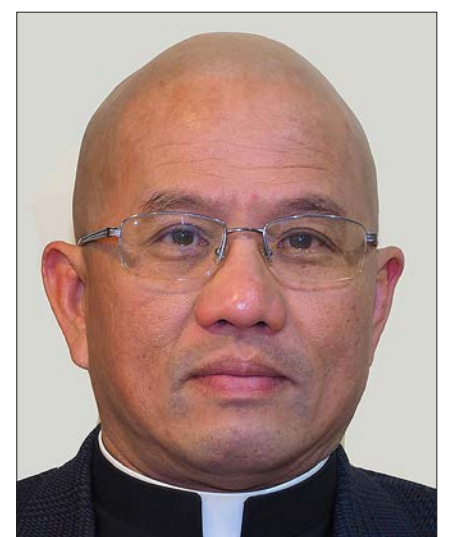
church in 2000 by Bishop John Cunneen, after a secular career as an engineer with the former Electricorp, and Foundation for Research, Science and Technology. He has served as parish priest in several Christchurch diocese parishes, most recently at Good Shepherd, Hurunui, since 2020.

"I am taking up the position with some trepidation, and also with some sadness at the thought that I will no longer be a parish priest among my flock," Fr Pui said.

"The role of the national director is far more than dealing only with the collection of Mission Sunday, or generating a revenue to fund mission work in the world."

It includes promoting a missionary sense within local parishes, religious institutions and schools, with particular attention to World Mission Sunday, and establishing a stable and good relationship with the bishop who liaises with MissioNZ within the NZ Catholic Bishops Conference, currently Bishop Michael Gielen, Bishop of Christchurch.

"I think in time I will be visit-



Fr Michael Pui

ing all the parishes in New Zealand, on weekends!" Fr Pui said.

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

www.missio.nz

Thousands attend Santo Niño celebrations in Auckland

by MINA AMSO

Thirty years after the first Santo Niño celebrations in New Zealand, the Filipino community has come together again, but this time on a much larger scale with a bigger vision.

Celebration organiser Dame Miriam Batucan said that some 8000 people were present at Eventfinda Stadium on Auckland's North Shore on January 21 to mark this significant milestone, and to offer thanks and devotion to the Child Jesus.

"During this 30th anniversary, it's thanksgiving — that people have hung on to the faith for that long despite all that has happened during the global pandemic, or the difficulties and the challenges. And yet here they are coming together once again.

"We reminisce [about] the times when the Holy Child was brought to our place [country], and we started the 500 plus years of our faith being passed on from generations to generations."

The event was restricted to only a few dozen attendants in 2021 and 2022 at the cathedral — due to Covid-19 restrictions. However, it has now bounced back to pre-pandemic levels, packing out the stadium.

The day began with a procession, liturgical dancing, and family picnic with Filipino cuisine, and Mass, celebrated by Bishop Steve Lowe.

In his homily, Bishop Lowe reflected on the significance of the Child Jesus leading us to the Father with his kindness, gentleness and mercy. In the time of Christ's boyhood on earth, there were no devices, no designer clothes, no gyms in which to work out. Bishop Lowe joked about there being no Filipino food around then too.

"I think of children [affected by] pornography. I think of the children in Gaza and the Ukraine that experience the violence of war, and other children in the homes who experience the same violence."

He said that, with the image of a child, the innocence should not be taken away, and warned that electronic devices are making "adults" of children. He asked Filipino parents to pay attention to what their children are being exposed to.



Devotees with statues of Santo Niño de Cebú

There's a significant number of Filipinos in New Zealand, with just over 72,000 in this country, according to the 2018 New Zealand census. About half of the Filipino population live in Auckland [30,237] and 67 per cent of them identify with the Catholic faith, making up a significant percentage of Catholic church attendees.

The third Sunday of January is set aside in the Philippines to celebrate the "Santo Niño" (or Holy Child Jesus), a symbol of the birth of Catholicism in the Philippines more than 500 years ago. Its popularity grew steadily in New Zealand as more traditional Catholic Filipinos began migrating to the country, and continue to do so.

The Santo Niño de Cebú is a religious image of the Christ Child, widely venerated as miraculous by Filipino Catholics. It is the oldest Christian artifact in the Philippines, originally a gift from the Spanish Conquistador Ferdinand Magellan to the first king of Filipinos Rajah Humabon (baptised as Carlos) and his wife and chief consort, Hara Humamay (baptised

as Juana) on account of their Christian baptism in 1521. The image is the only canonically crowned image of Jesus Christ in the Philippines.

The arrival of the statue was the mark of the first Catholic conversions on the island, and the subsequent conversions of local people — who worshipped pagan idols at the time.

"But after baptism they realised that this is the real God that we can worship too," Dame Miriam said.

The love and devotion to the Holy Child grew steadily, with reports of sick people being healed following intercession. The statue is now secured in the Basílica Menor del Santo Niño in Cebú.

Oscar and Miriam Batucan, founders and organisers of the NZ Filipino Devotees of the Senyor Sto. Niño, were made a knight and dame of the Pontifical Equestrian Order of Saint Sylvester Pope and Martyr by Pope Francis in 2020, in recognition of their active participation in the life of the Church in Auckland.



Devotees at Eventfinda Stadium



Bishop Stephen Lowe and some priests at the Santo Niño event

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

The worst kind of liars

(This is a homily preached by Fr Peter Janssen, SM, at the Mass for Life in Wellington on December 1. It is published here with permission. The Mass was a votive Mass of the Holy Innocents, and the Gospel reading was Matthew 2:13-18)

They say that all it takes for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing. That's true, but it may take a long time. The triumph of evil may be accelerated greatly if truly evil people are able to get good people to do evil things by convincing them, misleading them, or forcing them.

By anyone's reckoning, King Herod was a very evil man. His response to any real, perceived or potential threat from anyone was to kill them. His own eldest son and heir as well as many other family members were not spared. If this is how he dealt with his own flesh and blood, little wonder that he didn't hesitate to kill all the baby boys in Bethlehem because within their number there should be the one who might replace him. What is the fundamental human right to life when earthly goods are at stake?

Death becomes not just one solution, or even the best one, but the only solution. Beware when death is presented as the only solution to a problem. Those who do this are the worst kind of liars.

What war represents to men, abortion does to women. Killing, especially of the innocent, has always been seen as a grave evil. So, people need to be convinced or forced to accept it. In order to justify war, the country's leaders must convince the population, often through jingoism and propaganda, that killing people in war is the only option. In order to justify abortion they must convince the populace that killing the innocent in the womb is the only realistic option. In order to further this, all who argue against it must be silenced or sidelined. For Herod the lives of the innocent counted for nothing against his possession of the kingdom. In the same way, what is the weight of an innocent life in the womb against the right to an education, a job, the chance of meeting Mr Right, or just to

continue having fun.

What right to life has a person nearing the end of his/hers, one who is past making any further economic contribution, and is but a burden to those still active?

An accompanying lie is that nothing worse could befall a young woman than to suffer an unplanned pregnancy. For euthanasia the lie is that our rights do not flow from our humanity, but that they have to be earned through our usefulness.

Despite efforts to suppress true scientific in-

Fr Peter Janssen, SM

formation, and keep at a distance those who might help them find pro-life solutions to practical and psychological problems, despite the fallacious counselling that twists premeditated killing into meaning being compassionate, despite all the deceptions of the abortion industry, every mother who procures an abortion is a Rachel who cannot be consoled, weeping inwardly for her child who is no more. More than a Rachel, because it was not a corrupt king and his brutal soldiery who did this, but she herself, and members of a corrupt and perverted medical establishment breaking their professional hippocratic oath.

Heavily culpable are also legislators who rob medical practitioners of their freedom of conscience, and force them to participate in acts that they find morally abhorrent.

Nevertheless, many in our society have bought into the lie that a person's worth depends on their perceived usefulness, so that those who promote a culture of death are already proposing that Aotearoa/New Zealand follow the lead of Canada, Oregon, Belgium, The Netherlands and Switzerland, where the criteria for obtaining physician assisted suicide or euthanasia are constantly being enlarged under their own momentum, and the force of a logic that comes out of false premises. In Canada

the so-called progressive legislators promised that this kind of killing would only take place in cases of unbearable physical pain. Very soon, however, psychological pain was deemed just as debilitating as physical pain, and in Belgium the psychological discomfort of the parents, not even that of their child, can justify euthanising the child. In Canada and Oregon implied guilt over financial pain is now brought to bear on patients by a medical establishment that thinks it is more important to buy the very latest medical machinery and equipment, rather than waste money on offering ordinary personal medical care to elderly patients. As regards at least Oregon, all this has caused a deep distrust of the medical profession, such that family members feel obliged to bring a tablet computer into the ward of sick elderly family members, to check what medications are being administered, what their purpose is, and what the recommended dose is.

Let us right here, right now, affirm our appreciation of the gift of human life; our own and every person's. This is an inalienable gift from God. No one has ever earned the right to life, nor should they ever be required to do so. To reject this first and greatest divine gift was always seen as the supreme act of ingratitude. Just so, no one, not even a mother, does or should have any role in denying this right to anyone — no matter what a nuisance that life may be or appear to be.

Let us pray for our legislators and those who administer our laws, that they see through the lies of the abortion industry, and that those who practically decide and control who lives and who dies may refrain from forcing people to choose their own deaths by how they present the situation and options for those physically or mentally ill.

Let us pray for women in New Zealand and around the world who, through misinformation, ideological propaganda and insufficient information, have allowed themselves to be inveigled into having their child killed. From moral theology we know that nature never forgives, human beings sometimes, but God is always ready to forgive those who truly repent and seek his mercy.

Ronald Rolheiser

Piety and humour

Piety is the enemy of humour, at least whenever something less than piety is masquerading as piety. Here's an example: I once lived in community with an overly serious man who, after someone would tell a colourful joke, would bring us back to earth with the question, "Would you tell a joke like that in front of the Blessed Sacrament?" That not only deflated the joke and its teller, but it also took the oxygen out of the room.

There's a response I would have liked to have given to his question, namely, a joke my Oblate Novice Master used to tell, one whose irony exposes false piety. The joke runs this way: A young woman was getting married and her family could not afford a venue for a reception for the wedding. The parish priest generously offered them the foyer at the entrance of the church, telling them they could bring in a cake and have a reception there. The father of the bride asked whether they might also bring in some liquor. "Absolutely not," the priest replied, "you can't drink liquor in a church!" "But," protested the bride's father, "Jesus drank wine at the wedding feast of Cana." "But not in front of the Blessed Sacrament!" replied the priest.

Admittedly, humour can be impious, crass, offensive, dirty, but whenever that's the case, the fault normally lies more in the aesthetics than in the content of the joke. A joke isn't offensive because it is about sex or religion or any other area we surround with sacredness. Humour is offensive when it crosses a line in terms of respect, taste, and aesthetics. Humour is offensive when it is bad art. Bad art crosses a line in terms of respect, either vis-à-vis its audience or its subject matter. What can make a joke offensive or dirty is when it is told, or how it is told, or to whom it is told, or the tone in which it is told, or lack of sensitivity to what is being

told, or the colour of the language as it is being told. Whether or not it can be told before the blessed sacrament isn't a criterion. If a joke shouldn't be told in front of the Blessed Sacrament, it shouldn't be told in front of anyone. There aren't two standards of offensiveness.

Still, bad piety is the enemy of humour. It's also the enemy of robust, earthy living. But that is only the case for bad piety, not genuine piety.

Genuine piety is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and is a healthy reverence before all of life. But it's a reverence that, while healthily respectful, is not offended by humour (even robust, earthy humour) providing the humour isn't aesthetically offensive — akin to nudity which is healthy in art, but offensive in pornography.

False sensitivity that masks itself as piety also strips all spirituality of humour, save for the most pious kind. In doing that, in effect, it makes Jesus, Mary, and the saints humourless, and thus less than fully human and healthy. One of our mentors at our Oblate novitiate told us, young novices, that there is not a single incident reported in Scripture of Jesus ever laughing. He told us this to dampen our natural, youthful, rambunctious energy, as if this was somehow a hindrance to being religious.

Humorous energy is not a hindrance to being religious. To the contrary. Jesus is the paragon of all that is healthily human, and he, no doubt, was a fully healthy, robust, delightful human person, and none of those words (healthy, robust, delightful) would apply to him if he hadn't had a healthy,

indeed earthy, sense of humour.

For fifteen years, I taught a course entitled The Theology of God to seminarians and others preparing for ministry. I would try to cover all the required bases asked for in the curriculum — biblical revelation, patristic insights, normative Church teachings, and speculative views from contemporary theologians. But, inside all of this, like a recurring theme in an opera, I would tell the students this: In all your preaching and teaching and pastoral practices, whatever else, try not to make God look stupid. Try not to make God look unintelligent, tribal, petty, rigid, nationalistic, angry, or fearful. Every homily, every theological teaching, every ecclesial practice, and every pastoral practice, ultimately reflects an image of God whether we want it to or not. And if there is something less than healthy in our preaching or pastoral practices, the God who underwrites it will also appear as unhealthy. A healthy God does not undergird an unhealthy theology, ecclesiology, or anthropology.

Hence, if we teach a Jesus who is humourless, who takes offence at the earthiness of life, who is uncomfortable hearing the word "sex", who flinches at colorful language, and who is afraid to smile and chuckle at irony, wit, and humor, we make Jesus appear as rigid and uptight, a prude, and not the person you want to be beside at table.

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



Photo: Unsplash

Battle over blessings

Editorial

The publication in December by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith of the declaration *Fiducia Supplicans* on the pastoral meaning of blessings has certainly stirred up a hornet's nest.

This document outlined the circumstances under which informal blessings could be given by an ordained minister, to couples living in irregular situations or in same-sex relationships. Such blessings cannot be given in a liturgical setting, and cannot officially validate the status of the couple.

But the document explains that such blessings are given informally, in order to help people experience something of the healing power of God's love.

This is very much in keeping with the pastoral approach of Pope Francis. After publication of Francis' post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* on the family, controversy erupted, specifically concerning one footnote.

In *Amoris Laetitia*, Francis wrote — "Because of forms of conditioning and mitigating factors, it is possible that, in an objective situation of sin — which may not be subjectively culpable, or fully such — a person can be living in God's grace, can love and can also grow in the life of grace and charity, while receiving the Church's help to this end. Discernment must help to find possible ways of responding to God, and growing in the midst of limits." (AL305)

A controversial footnote added: "In certain cases, this can include the help of the sacraments."

All hell broke loose. But Pope Francis explained his thinking in a subsequent book "Let Us Dream. The Path to a Better Future", stating "Because of the immense variety of situations and circumstances that people found themselves in, Aquinas's teaching that no general rule could apply in every situation allowed the synod to agree on the need for a case-by-case discernment."

While *Fiducia Supplicans* warns against expecting "the same moral conditions for a simple blessing that are called for in the reception of the sacraments", it observes something similar to the Pope's reasoning above by stating that "... pastoral charity requires us not to treat simply as 'sinners' those whose guilt or responsibility may be attenuated by various factors affecting subjective imputability" (FS26). The declaration mentions "the prudent and fatherly discernment of ordained ministers" (FS41) in connection with imparting informal blessings in the circumstances mentioned. Pope Francis told an Italian newspaper last month that it is important that the people requesting these informal blessings are doing so with "good will", and that they are given "precise instructions about the Christian life", including an explanation that the Church is blessing them and not their union.

Speaking this year to members of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, Pope Francis mentioned the need for ministers to take into account the context, the sensitivities, the places where people live and the most appropriate ways to confer such blessings.

Since *Amoris Laetitia*, there have been very few cases specifically reported in media of couples in irregular situations receiving the sacraments after such a discernment process.

It is highly likely that *Fiducia Supplicans* will produce the same result — the declaration envisages such requests for blessings to come at a shrine, a meeting with a priest, a prayer recited in a group, or during a pilgrimage.

Dominican Father Thomas Petri, president of the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, told CNS that he expects that situations in which such spontaneous requests are made will be few and far between. He also suspects that "American advocates for the recognition of same-sex relationships with the Church will not find this new guidance satisfactory". There have already been moves in Germany to progress formalised blessings of same-sex couples. So the issue itself will continue to prompt debate.

But in all the controversy, a fundamental point made by Pope Francis should not be forgotten — that the great blessing of God is Jesus Christ, with whom the Father blessed us "while we were still sinners" (Romans 5:8). That means all of us.

The Habit



Letters

Treaty

A call to Christian leaders and congregations regarding the Treaty of Waitangi.

Let us remember that: The Christian community has a particular role of guardianship with regard to Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi.

Christian missionaries actively promoted the Treaty of Waitangi as a covenant between the British Crown and Māori: as an agreement that would benefit Māori, and lay foundations for peace between settlers and Māori.

Since 1840, there have been Christians who have challenged the British Crown and the Crown in New Zealand (the NZ Government) about actions that dishonour the Treaty.

In recent decades, many Christian churches have made commitments to honour the Treaty of Waitangi, and have spoken publicly about its importance to our nation.

In this time when Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi is being put under question — let us affirm to our Christian congregations and to all in our country that:

The Treaty of Waitangi that was signed in 1840 is binding on our nation.

Māori are the Indigenous people of our country.

Through Te Tiriti o

Waitangi, Māori allowed a place for other people to live in their land.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi is a solemn promise of enduring care and respect between Māori and the Crown (which today is the NZ Government).

We acknowledge that the Treaty has been dishonoured by the Crown — and this is acknowledged by the Crown when it accepts and acts on the recommendations of the Waitangi Tribunal.

As a result of actions taken by the Crown, Māori communities have suffered huge losses of land, language and other resources; experienced disproportionate levels of ill health; and had their rightful authority (rangatiranga) undermined.

There is still much to be done by way of reconciliation and the restitution of Māori mana.

We welcome the steps that have been taken to encourage Māori enterprise in many fields of endeavour; to promote the use of te reo (the Māori language); to advance self-determination for Māori; and to develop respectful working relationships with Māori communities. We pray that this trajectory of restitution and healing prospers and grows ever stronger.

We recognise local Hapū and Iwi as the long guardians of the lands, seas, riv-

ers and mountains where we live, and seek to work with them for the good of our natural environment.

We reject the notion that the Treaty is about race and individual self-interest. The Treaty is about building community to community relationships: and especially between Tangata Whenua (the indigenous people of the land) and Tangata Tiriti (the people who are here because of the treaty).

We believe that the Treaty of Waitangi is the foundation for true justice and peace in our country.

This call to our Christian congregations comes from a group of predominantly Pākehā Christians.

Dr Susan Healy,
(Catholic Church)
and Rev. Barry Jones,
(Methodist Church)

Gaza

A reader bemoans Albanese addressing the EJP, yet she spoke eminently about what is required for peace in Israel and Palestine (NZ Catholic, December 3). At that stage, 12,000 people had died, and she warned that it was apocalyptic, and that ethnic cleansing would happen if Israel was not stopped. With more than 26,000 now dead, buildings carpet-bombed to rubble, 1.7million displaced, Gaza made uninhabitable, more than 6000 imprisoned in the West Bank, the initial finding of the ICJ that grounds for genocide are plausible, confirms her

warnings.

In 1946 Palestinians had 90 per cent of the land, but they now have less than 10 per cent, with that under threat from unrelenting illegal settlements. And they have lived under a harsh Israeli occupation since 1967. The brutality of October 7 has provided the right-wing Israeli government with the excuse to drive Palestinians off the little land they have and make it uninhabitable, all under the guise of eliminating Hamas. Israel either knew they could not eliminate Hamas as they have bombed Gaza knowing the hostages were safe with them, or they didn't care about their hostages. It is disappointing that the West has been silent amid all this carnage, and that the US has supplied Israel with weapons for maintaining this war and condones her atrocities (for example, the shooting of journalist Abu Akleh, the bombing of hospitals, and the ongoing settler violence displacing Palestinians in the West Bank).

Gaza is a stain on our humanity. When will we learn that war causes more hatred, that restraint and dialogue are the only ways to solve conflicts? If Netanyahu rejects a two-state solution, but insists that Israel is a Jewish state, where must the 7 million Palestinians live? Who will pay for the Gaza rebuild? Who will defend the Palestinians?

Steve Lincoln,
Auckland.

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When getting out is the only way to go on

by PHILIPPA MARTYR
(THE CATHOLIC WEEKLY)

Elaine,* a stay-at-home mother, recently left her spouse after years of single-handedly trying to repair their marriage.

Her husband Rick* was a successful businessman and an acolyte in their parish. But at home he was very controlling and harshly critical, and belittled Elaine's efforts to be a better wife and mother.

Over the years, Elaine reached out to her Catholic friends for help. They encouraged her to try marriage counselling, offer up her sufferings, change her own behaviour, and pray for her "difficult" husband.

She did this — but Rick's behaviour became more violent. He refused to go to marriage counselling, and told Elaine that he was planning to leave her when the children were older.

Elaine became more frightened. She knew she could not survive with her children on her part-time income. Rick knew this too, which is why he cut off her access to their joint bank account.

But Elaine was able to document his behaviour and get a family violence restraining order. Rick had to leave the family home, and he and Elaine are now divorced.

■ In our communities

Family violence, including coercive control, is a real issue in our Catholic communities.

However, it's kept secret by spouses and families who are too ashamed or frightened to ask for help.

Its effects on a family — and especially on children — are devastating. Research shows that children who have grown up in a home where there is coercive controlling family violence are much more likely to have short and long-term mental health problems.

This includes depression, anxiety, and self-harm like cutting, or abuse of drugs and alcohol. Family violence also impacts children who watch the victim — usually their mother — struggle with her day-to-day functioning.

Mothers in this situation cannot parent as well as they want to. They are constantly on edge, exhausted and frightened, and cannot always give their children the attention they need.

Sydney couples and family therapist Bernadette Devine has worked closely with Catholics who have been either victims or perpetrators of fam-

ily violence.

"Being on staff at a Catholic agency, many of my clients were people of faith who valued their marriage vows, and tried everything that they could to placate their violent, coercive spouse, often leading to a significant deterioration in their own mental health over time," she said.

Devine says that, while some men are victims of coercive control from their wives, research shows that it is mostly women who are victimised by their husbands. Stay-at-home mothers can be at greater risk because they depend totally on their husband's income.

The decision to leave an abusive marriage is difficult and painful — and not one that is made in a hurry.

"My experience of these women is that they often experienced great spiritual turmoil about the decision to live separately from their spouse, and so they only did so when they discerned that there was no other alternative," Devine said.

Canon law allows for separation "if either of the spouses causes grave mental or physical danger to the other spouse or the offspring, or otherwise renders common life too difficult" (canon 1153, 1).

In Australia, separation is usually followed by a legal divorce, to ensure that both spouses and any minor children are provided for financially.

But it's often difficult for a local church community to believe that family violence was taking place, or that separation and divorce is sometimes the safest solution for everyone.

Devine says that many of her clients "reported feeling judged by their family and friends, and sometimes members of their local church communities, for making the decision to live separately from their spouse".

"In my clinical experience, perpetrators are often preoccupied with their image in the community and work hard to look virtuous.

"To others in their family and community, they can appear friendly and helpful, whilst behaving like tyrants to their wife and children behind closed doors."

Many Catholic women have also been told that saints like St Rita and St Monica remained in difficult marriages and did good there. But because of the times they lived in, these saints had no other options.

Today we know that staying in a coercive controlling relationship "for the sake of the children" will usually



Photo: Pixabay

harm both spouses and the children further.

■ Leaving

Catholic counsellor Lucy O'Connell, who works at Rough Patch Counselling in Leichhardt, points out that, "Divorce after abuse is not a rejection of the church's teaching about marriage, but of the abuser's teaching about marriage".

"The Church teaches that the wife is the one woman that the man should die to protect.

"The abuser teaches that the wife is the one woman you can hurt as much as you like, with no consequences."

"But the survivor sees a difference between being faithful to her marriage, and being faithful to a false public image of her husband."

Gina*, a Catholic woman who left a coercive and abusive marriage six years ago, agrees. "I knew that, by leaving, I stopped my husband abusing me — but it also made him face real consequences of his behaviour," she said.

"He can now decide whether he wants to be a better man or not. And it also saved our children, so they have a chance to grow up differently."

What helped Gina greatly was finding a priest who understood what she was going through.

"I went to confession, and he told me that I had good grounds for separating from my husband. I was so grateful," she said.

For clergy, it's often hard to tell the difference between a marriage that's simply struggling, and a marriage where coercive control is taking place.

The Catholic Weekly spoke to a priest of the Sydney archdiocese who has ministered extensively in this area, but who wished to remain anonymous because of ongoing cases.

"The first that a priest usually knows is when someone — usually a woman — comes to him in desperation for help," he said.

"Some crisis point has often triggered it. Something serious has to have gone wrong for them to say, 'I really need to deal with this.'"

The husband is also the priest's pastoral responsibility, which can be challenging.

"They're often in other respects highly successful men, well thought of in the community, get on well with others, even appear devout," he said.

"And yet they have got the most

basic lesson of our religion completely wrong: they don't understand what love is, at all."

In his experience, husbands who abuse their wives in this way have a distorted idea of family leadership.

"I think they see it as 'I'm in charge, I'm the head of the family — for the good of the family I need to rule the roost,' and it's all for the family's good."

"I've learnt to try to support the woman to understand that she needs to get out of the situation, and she needs to access the help that will get her out of it."

But what about praying for the abusive spouse so that they will be converted? Prayer is always good, but Devine has a warning.

"The most damaging thing reported to me by clients was when they were chided by well-meaning Catholic friends or members of their prayer groups, for failing to pray and sacrifice enough to bring about a miraculous change in their coercive, controlling spouse," she said.

"We know from research that perpetrators are highly resistant to treatment, and when change does occur, it is often minimal or superficial.

"Many women reported finding great support and care from their local church communities, and from the services available to them through the church's welfare agencies, such as women's refuges and St Vincent De Paul," she added.

When separation happens, it impacts children's schooling. Devine says, "Many mothers spoke about how helpful their children's Catholic school had been in taking into account the changed financial circumstances of the family, and doing all they could to retain the children's placement in their school, while also providing additional pastoral care to the children."

"This eased the burden of the decision to leave the marriage for those mothers, and made them feel that they were still part of the school community."

*Names have been changed, and individuals represent case histories of several different persons.

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Letters

Continued from page 7

New document on pastoral meaning of blessings

The most succinct comment I have seen on the recent declaration on blessing "irregular couples", a document written by the man charged with defending the purity of Catholic doctrine, comes from American lay theologian Larry Chapp, writing in *Catholic World Report*: "Cardinal Fernandez in *Fiducia Supplicans* justifies his novel development of the notion of completely non-sacramental sacramentals, wherein priestly blessings for homosexual couples who aren't being blessed as couples, but merely as individuals presenting themselves as a couple, are now allowed."

Moral theologies "from below" (where pastoral practice trumps moral doctrine), inevitably degenerate into experiments in

incrementalism, Chapp says, and are not really up to the task of evangelising the modern world.

The 5000-word document is a sorry example of how impossibly tangled and illogical theology becomes when you place pastoral feelings over reason, and are in the habit of effecting . . . changes in a spirit that you but hope is the Holy Spirit, while ignoring what Scripture says.

[Where is] the Catholic position of blessing truly repentant individuals striving to overcome a disorder in their lives? . . .

Tony Molloy,
Morrinsville.

■ Abridged — Editor.

Jamboree Masses celebrate faith and fellowship

by EDMUND Le GRELLE

Over New Year, the 23rd New Zealand Scout Jamboree was held at Mystery Creek near Hamilton. The Fieldays site was again the venue, at which about 4000 scouts and leaders camped for nine days. Scouts also took part in activities in and around the Waikato region, such as water sports at Lake Karapiro.

Like every town in New Zealand with a population of a few thousand people, one can probably expect there to be a Sunday Mass. The Jamboree village at Mystery Creek was no different, and the tradition continued, dating back to the 1950s, of Mass being held at scout jamborees.

The first Mass took place on the Feast of the Holy Family. Fr Isaac Fransen was the main celebrant at this Mass. His homily touched on scouts being aligned with faith, nature and intelligence.

The new Bishop of Hamilton, Bishop Richard Laurenson, celebrated the Vigil Mass on the second weekend of the jamboree. Bishop Laurenson had been both a scout and an adult leader at St Mary's Scout Group in Hamilton. He also attended five jamborees in his time in the scout movement. (Incidentally, four of New Zealand's bishops have been cubs or scouts.) In his homily on the Feast of the

Epiphany, Bishop Laurenson preached that the first reference in the Bible of Christians being different was when the Three Wise Men went home by another way. About 100-120 attended both Masses.

Reflecting the international nature of both Scouting and the Catholic Church, scouts from overseas attended the Jamboree in good numbers, including the Masses, especially from Australia, Cook Islands, New Caledonia and Tahiti. Assisting the local priests at both Masses was Fr Pierre Ngo Quang Quy, who serves as a priest in New Caledonia, where he is also the Catholic chaplain for scouting. At the second Mass, one of the readings was read in French. Fr Pierre furthered the bilingual nature of the Jamboree Mass by translating both homilies into French for the large number of scouts present from French Polynesia.

Although Scouting encourages the 'spiritual development' of young people, the Catholic Church was the only faith which organised a religious service at the jamboree. Christians of other denominations also attended the Masses at the jamboree. These proved to be good opportunities for evangelisation.

Maybe another reason that some scouts had for attending a Mass was to receive a specially-made badge.



Bishop Richard Laurenson and Fr Pierre Ngo Quang Quy at Mass at the Jamboree. Left: The Catholic Mass badge at NZ Scout Jamboree 2024

Scout Groups affiliated with Catholic parishes in New Zealand and Australia wear a badge sewn onto the apex of their scout scarf. The design from that badge was incorporated into the Jamboree Mass badge. The large gold circle represents the eternal God, and the small gold circle represents man. Central to the design is the cross, as it is at the centre of Christian lives. The three colours represent the original three sections of the Scout Movement: yellow for Cubs, green for Scouts and red for Rovers. The Southern Cross constellation identifies New Zealand in the Southern Hemisphere. The logo from the 2024 NZ Jamboree was a green koru, and this symbol sits neatly in the background.

At the end of both Jamboree Masses, discussion took place on the development of criteria for a "Duty to God" badge, which both youth and adults can earn through doing different tasks and service projects with their church. This badge can be adapted for use by those from other denominations and faiths, and will be made available to all at no cost due to sponsorship from a local business.

The next New Zealand Jamboree will probably be held over New Year 2026/2027. Catholic scouts can again expect Mass to take place at this national event.

Edmund le Grelle is group leader at St George's Scout Group, which is sponsored by Christchurch North Parish.

Stow, synodality and the ministry of the foyer

by NICOLE van HEERDEN

Travelling through the Cotswolds in England late last year, I attended Sunday Mass in Stow-on-the-Wold, a small and beautiful village famous for its bloody Civil War history, and for the yew-arched doors at the back of St Edward's Anglican church, which supposedly inspired Tolkien's "Doors of Moria" in *The Lord of the Rings*.

The Catholic church was tucked away on the edge of the village, on a street literally called "Back Walls", across the road from the cemetery. But by the time Mass began, the pews were packed, and the congregation launched into the opening hymn with such unexpected energy that I actually jumped in fright. The priest gave a compelling homily on the synod in Rome (beginning that week), providing much food for thought about each person's involvement and responsibility in building up the Church as a whole.

It was a beautiful thing to discover this vibrant Catholic community in the heart of England, but our impressions were tainted a bit as we left; my dad went back to fetch his hat, and although the church was full of parishioners having tea and coffee (the parish hall was having its carpets replaced) no-one smiled at him, greeted him, invited him to partake of the tea and coffee, or otherwise made him feel welcome. It was probably entirely unintentional. But the lack of an active intention to welcome him put a damper on our experience there, and unfortunately that small thing looms large in our memories of the parish.

Reflecting on the topic of the priest's homily as against our experience following the Mass, I'm led to consider the vast importance of hospitality immediately outside the doors of the church, and how it relates directly to mission. After last year's synod, a Vatican news article described "synodality" as "indicat(ing) a way of living the Church, valuing differences and developing the active involvement of all". Perhaps the space immediately outside the doors of a church is the first place in which this ideal of synodality can begin to live, the

first place to begin "living the Church", by using it as an opportunity to actively encounter others.

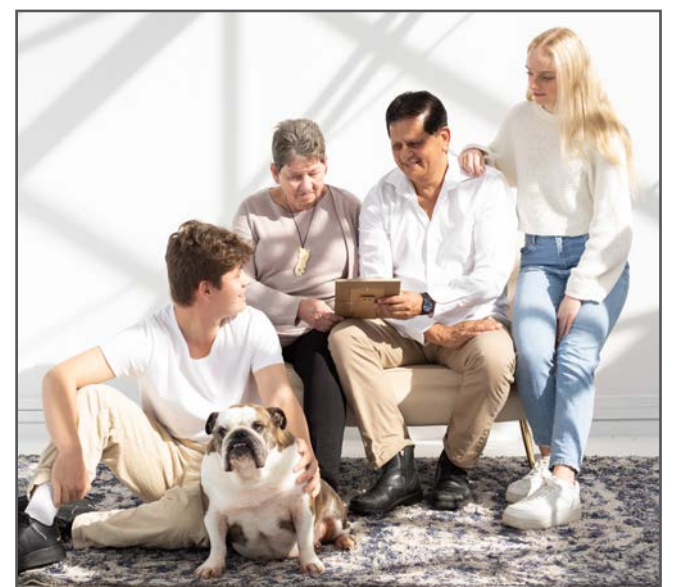
At St Mark's Catholic Mission Parish in Pakuranga, we used to have a drive-thru between the church and the parish centre. It was subsequently enclosed and converted into a broad indoor foyer area. It went from being a place of passing through, to a space of gathering, and the evangelical possibilities of this area inspired our parish priest to develop what we now call the "Ministry of the Foyer".

The Ministry of the Foyer is partly inspired by the function of a Spanish Plaza, the large courtyard that forms a natural social centre of gathering outside the sacred space of the church. It's a place to meet, hang out, catch up on work or read; it's like a gravitational centre in a town. In the same way, we've tried to make the foyer at St Mark's a space that you'd want to hang out, where people can feel at home as soon as they step into the parish. There are couches, bookshelves, pot plants, and an unlimited supply of tea and coffee, creating a warm and welcoming environment with many places to sit.

Equally important is the active side of the ministry; the greeters who welcome people coming into the church and hand out newsletters, and the team running the tea and coffee trolley at the end of Masses. It's become a natural space for gathering after Mass, and as such it's a space where connections are made — "oh, you need this? Have you met this person over here?" and so forth. And as people meet, community grows. Outside of Mass times, the foyer is a quiet space to reflect, read, have a cup of tea, or meet others outside the sanctity of the church itself, but near enough to feel its influence.

Most important of all, the Ministry of the Foyer has a spiritual function, in creating a place that is conducive to mentally recollect oneself before stepping into the sacred space of the church itself. It is a liminal space; a transitory space; a space where the good intentions formed in the Mass are still fresh, and may begin to seep out into the "real" world; a place where we might immediately begin to live what we have brought out of the sacred space with us.

Our little parish publications team meets in the foyer now, in one of the alcoves of comfy sofas, with cups of tea, and we don't need to book a room or check with anyone first — we can arrange to meet there as if it were our own home. As if it were a Spanish plaza, a place of meeting and of building community. And where two or three are gathered, we know that Our Lord will be present also.



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Life Teen Summer Camp re-ignites teens' spiritual sparks with the real presence of Christ

by MINA AMSO

Hundreds of teenagers from throughout New Zealand enjoyed Life Teen Summer Camp last month, with a memorable theme to reflect upon — “the real presence”.

Activities co-ordinator Thomas Dravitzki said that the planning team was “delighted” with the turnout this year, with nearly 200 youngsters turning up.

“We had 197 teenagers, 40 chaperones, and 63 summer missionaries/volunteers attend, for a total of 300 participants.”

Life Teen Summer Camp began in 2015 with around 19 campers. Mr Dravitzki says that the numbers have increased year on year.

International Catholic speaker Maggie Craig flew from California (USA) to speak to the young people, and explore the theme further.

“She’s an internationally acclaimed full-time Catholic speaker. She brought with her a deep love of Jesus, a passion for seeing young people transformed by the gospel, and a great sense of humour,” Mr Dravitzki said.

“The response from the teenagers was excellent. They brought an energy and enthusiasm to camp that meant they were highly engaged, had lots of fun, and most importantly were able to grow in their Catholic faith and relationship with Jesus.”

Mr Dravitzki said that the theme this year was awesome, and was all about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, in oneself, other people and the community.

“The teenagers engaged with this theme to not only learn that God is real, but also deeply present, as seen in the sacraments, people around us, and especially the Eucharist.”

Teenagers enjoyed messy games (always a favourite, said Mr Dravitzki), low ropes, resistance games, sensory prayer exercises, daily Mass, reconciliation, adoration, chapel times, parish korero, praise and worship, workshops and our main teaching sessions.

Eighteen-year-old Victoria Arrowsmith from Whanganui got a lot out of the camp, including knowing and trusting in the presence of God.

“Before I came to camp, I sometimes struggled to feel the presence of God, but I now realise that we don’t have to feel it to know he’s there. The presence of God isn’t limited to only Mass, but everywhere in the simple things in everyday life; like the wind and the faces of those around us.”

Another camper, 15-year-old Mavicle Auva’a from St Mary’s in Papakura, said that she enjoyed last year’s camp, and wanted to catch up with the people she met at the last gathering.

“To be honest I just wanted to see the people



Scenes from Life Teen Summer Camp 2024 (Photos: Life Teen Aotearoa).

from last year, and [I attended] for spiritual reasons. I have really enjoyed getting to know Jesus more and deepening my faith. A highlight was adoration, I really loved sitting there in the presence of Jesus, I really felt the Holy Spirit.

“I will take home a love for Jesus. I was a bit spiritually weak coming into camp, but coming out after adoration and praise and worship has really helped strengthen my bond with Jesus.”

The camp was traditionally held in Forrest Lakes Christian Camp in Ōtaki, north of Wellington. However, the camp was cancelled in 2021 and 2022 due to Covid-19. The planning team decided to move the camp to the Hamilton region thereafter.

“We brought it back for the first time last year in 2023 at St Peter’s [in Cambridge] and we held it again at St Peter’s this year.”

Mr Dravitzki said that the site suited the needs of the camp.

“It made a lot of sense from a health and safety and logistics perspective, because we’ve been

able to have a site unlike Festival One [4-day Christian-music festival] last year that got rained [out] during Cyclone Gabrielle. But on our site we’ve got functioning toilets, we’ve got all of the facilities and security and surveillance, and all those sorts of things.”

The camp ran from January 16-20, and was organised by the Catholic youth offices of Auckland and Hamilton dioceses.



New director for Hearts Aflame summer school

by MINA AMSO

The thirty-first Hearts Aflame Catholic Summer School wrapped up this year, marking a significant milestone and an end of an era for its long-serving director, Jemma Brunton.

“For me, handing over Hearts had always been about the Lord’s timing and him providing the right person. I had always said I wouldn’t step down until the right person was there to take over. When [my replacement] Jess said ‘yes’, I admit there was a deep peace, some excitement that the next phase of Hearts was going to be in strong hands, and a little relief — God had once again been faithful, and in his perfect timing he had provided an answer to who I could hand over to.”

Ms Brunton served as director for nine years, and spent 13 years on the planning team. She made the decision to step down at the end of the 2024 School. She first attended the 2004/05 school. She has made significant contributions to Hearts Aflame, steering the school through some tough years when registration numbers were low, to the point where it is flourishing today with high demand for registration spots.

Ms Brunton also had to raise \$17,000 in six weeks one year to cover a shortfall needed to run the school. The school fundraises \$20,000 — \$30,000 each year to cover the costs of accommodation for the planning team, religious, priests and speakers, travel costs for speakers, and many incidental costs such as candles for the chapel, registration packs, and tech equipment to record lectures.

“We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Jemma Brunton who has served Hearts Aflame faithfully, tirelessly and through great personal sacrifice for more than a decade,” said Jessica Jackman, incoming director for Hearts Aflame Summer School.

“Jemma is an outstanding example of a humble and compassionate woman in leadership in the Church. God has truly used her trust in him to bless Hearts Aflame and countless young Catholics in New Zealand,” Miss Jackman said.

Miss Jackman will be stepping into the director’s role for the 2025 school. Originally from Hamilton, Miss Jackman has a background in missionary work in both France and the Philippines, and is now a teacher at a Catholic primary school in Christchurch. She has served on the planning team since 2020.

“It was very overwhelming to be asked! Hearts has been going for 30 years — almost my whole life, and there is a whole generation of Catholics

who have been formed through Hearts, so taking it on seemed a bit crazy. But when I prayed about it there was a real peace,” Miss Jackman said. Hearts Aflame played a crucial role in Miss Jackman’s own discernment and spiritual growth as a young adult, she said.

Demand for Hearts Aflame is on the rise, she added. Registrations for this year’s school were sold out within a week of advertising. Some 125 young adults gathered from across the country at Ngā Tawa Diocesan School, Marton, for 10 days of prayer, formation, and the experience of a community of faith.

■ 2024 Summer School

The theme for 2024 was “behold I make all things new” (Revelations 21:5), which was broken open by Fr Justin Lee, CSJ, through his talks over the opening retreat weekend. The school then welcomed in the New Year with a small group competition and quiz, followed by 11pm Mass and, for some, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament overnight.

Monday morning marked the start of lectures, covering a wide variety of topics including the theology of money, spiritual warfare, being a Catholic doctor, and the virtue of prudence. Participants had the privilege to learn from knowledgeable priests, religious and lay people from around New Zealand and Australia.

There were some 20 priests (some diocesan and some from religious orders) and seven sisters from various religious orders. Among the religious orders and communities present this year were Marists, Community of St John, Beatitudes Community, and several overseas communities.

“Their presence was greatly appreciated by participants. For some, it was the first time they got to spend time with a priest or a sister, so it’s an incredible witness to their vocations, and the joy of giving your life to God,” said Miss Jackman.

The school is entirely run by lay volunteers, and it relies significantly on donations to run the programme and keep prices accessible for young adults.

“[The volunteers have a passion for] helping young adults to develop and foster an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ and his holy Catholic Church, through participation in the sacraments, prayer, formation, lived-out and experienced in a short-term community environment.” Hearts Aflame has been running since 1992, and a significant number of vocations to the priesthood, religious life or marriages were fostered through the school, said Miss Jackman.

“It was particularly moving this year to have Bishop John Adams with us — as he shared in his homily. Bishop John’s vocation to the priesthood was born at a Hearts Aflame school. He attended it as a young adult, then a seminarian, a deacon, priest and now as a bishop. We were also blessed by the presence of Bishop Michael Gielen, who has a long history of involvement with Hearts Aflame, as well as numerous young priests whose vocations were fostered through Hearts. There were also a few participants whose parents attended Hearts Aflame 18 years ago,” Miss Jackman said.

Participants got a taste for daily Mass, adoration, a candle-lit rosary procession, praise and worship, a half-day of grand silence, reconciliation, prayer ministry, and sung morning, evening and night prayer.

Miss Jackman said that the school was privileged to have so many priests present, who were constantly busy with the sacra-



Jessica Jackman (left) and Jemma Brunton

ment of reconciliation, giving spiritual guidance, and just being with the participants. She said that the school had left an impact on people in many ways.

“[There are] those moments of joy when you notice someone who began the school looking like they were down and struggling with life, now meeting your gaze radiant with joy towards the end of the week, because the Lord has been healing them and they have opened their hearts to his love,” said Miss Jackman.

■ Scholarship awarded

This year, the inaugural Bishop Basil Meeking Scholarship Awards took place at the school. These scholarships funded the registration fees for two participants (one of whom was making a contribution to Catholic Education). Bishop Basil Meeking was a great supporter of Hearts Aflame, and this scholarship has been funded by a generous bequest he made to the summer school.



Some of the young people at Hearts Aflame Summer School 2024

Safeguarding the legacy of summer school

While Hearts Aflame has been a registered charity for a number of years, over the past couple of years, thought has been given as to how to best safeguard the summer school’s legacy. Thought has also been given as to how to better manage the large amount of paperwork required of a charity! A solution is to have Officers of the Charity

for Hearts Aflame.

The role of the Officers of the Charity (the board) is to safeguard the spirit of Hearts Aflame and manage any assets (such as tech gear, bequests). They are not involved with the decisions of the day-to-day running of the school, which is managed by the director and the planning team. This is an exciting new

step for Hearts, as it frees up the planning team to focus on the school and the participants, while giving them a safety-net to guide their decisions and provide advice. It’s a sign of the growing maturity of the school: by God’s Grace may it continue to be a channel of grace for the Church in New Zealand for many generations to come.

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Vatican lays out procedure, protections for whistleblowers

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Any Vatican employee, contractor or consultant to the Holy See will have a designated path for reporting suspicious spending, including a dedicated email address to send information to, the Vatican has decreed.

In a document published on January 24, the Vatican expanded on the procedure for reporting “anomalous activities” provided in the statutes for the Office of the Auditor General published in 2019.

The new document stated that reports may be sent to the auditor general’s office regarding “anomalies in the use or allocation of financial or material resources, irregularities in the awarding of contracts, or the conduct of transactions or disposals, and acts of corruption or fraud”.

It added that whistleblowers may report “improper conduct that poses a threat or harm to the common good”, such as “accounting irregularities, false statements; as well as conduct aimed at obstructing the submission of reports, violating related obligations of official secrecy, or discriminating against the reporter”.

However, reports “should not relate to grievances of a personal nature” or “claims that fall under the discipline of the employment relationship”.

The document specified that reports may be sent to a dedicated email address (sengalazionianomalie@urg.va) or via private letter to the Office of the Auditor General.

The Office of the Auditor General was established by Pope Francis in

2014.

Although whistleblowers are required to provide their name and other identifying information in their report, the document specifies that “the Auditor General shall guard the confidentiality, integrity and security of reports, and shall especially ensure the confidentiality of the identity of the reporting person”.

The identity of a whistleblower may only be revealed to a Vatican judge, when it is decided that knowledge of the identity is necessary for an investigation or judicial activity.

“All those who participate in any capacity in the analysis of reports received are bound by official secrecy,” the document said, including secrecy about details of a report that could

lead to the indirect identification of the whistleblower.

Any reports of anomalous activity made in good faith would not constitute a violation of a whistleblower’s obligation to professional secrecy, it said.

The document said that, upon examining whistleblower reports, the auditor general presents a report to the prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy and, “if he deems it necessary, also to the cardinal coordinator of the Council for the Economy”, who is currently German Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Munich and Freising.

The Office of the Auditor General will then notify the whistleblower of decisions within three months of acknowledging their receipt of the report.

Pope Francis recalls ‘the primary reason’ for the new edition of YouCat

VATICAN CITY (CNA) — “Love is the primary reason for the existence of the Church,” Pope Francis begins the letter accompanying the new edition of *YouCat*, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* written for adolescents and young people.

The full text was published on January 22 by the Italian newspaper *La Stampa*, and is titled “The Password for Joy”.

The Pope explains that this “love” of which he speaks is primarily the love that God the Father revealed to the world through Jesus.

However, he also points out that there is another love that comes from each person: the love that believers, in turn, profess for Jesus Christ.

“He is the centre of our heart. How, in fact, can we not have feelings of true affection toward him who has made us partakers of a love, that of the Father, a love about which it is impossible to imagine a greater one?” the Pope wrote in his letter. “The believer is, therefore, always in love with Jesus.”

The Pontiff also noted that it is the duty of “adults in faith” to make Jesus Christ known to those who have not yet had the opportunity.

“This beautiful book that you now have in your hands has its origin precisely in such a love: the love for Jesus that we believers hold within us,” he said.

Regarding the importance of the

catechism for young people, Pope Francis recalled his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, who wrote in the preface to the first edition of *YouCat*: “This book is compelling because it speaks to us of our very destiny, and therefore concerns each of us intimately. Because of this I ask you: Study the catechism with passion and perseverance!”

Pope Francis referenced these words, and also recommended that young people frequently read the Gospel and pray daily, to “transfer” the attitudes of Jesus from the mind to the heart.

“Here is the password for a truly lively and joyful life,” the Pope said, “to look at and judge what happens to us and the decisions we are called to make with the same eyes, with the same feelings, with the same attitude that embodied Jesus.”



A copy of the “YouCat” in 2011 (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Vatican says papal trip to Papua New Guinea is ‘under study’

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The foreign minister of Papua New Guinea said his government has received an “official note” that Pope Francis intends to visit the country for three days in August, but the director of the Vatican press office said plans for a trip are in the “very preliminary” stages.

Justin Tkatchenko, the foreign minister, said on January 25 that a local planning committee had been set up and would be working with the apostolic nuncio to Papua New Guinea to plan the trip, which would include the capital, Port Moresby, and perhaps another city.

In an Italian television interview

on January 14, Pope Francis said, “In August I have to make a trip to Polynesia”.

Matteo Bruni, director of the Vatican press office, told reporters on January 25 that an August trip is “under study”, but it was too early to say if the trip would go ahead and which countries would be included.

Priests’ faculties removed for denigrating post-Vatican II Mass

COVINGTON, Ky. (OSV News) — The Bishop of Covington has rescinded permission for two priests to minister in his diocese after they publicly dismissed the contemporary celebration of Mass in the Roman rite as “irrelevant”.

Bishop John Iffert on January 16 requested the resignation of Father Shannon Collins as pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Park Hills, a Covington suburb. Father Sean Kopczynski also has been removed as the parish’s parochial vicar. The bishop also removed the priests’ faculties to teach, preach or celebrate sacraments.

While they are not permitted to celebrate the Mass publicly, the priests may celebrate Mass privately for themselves, immediate family members and members of the Missionaries of St John the Baptist, a fledgling religious community in Covington that

they founded.

The Missionaries of St. John the Baptist is a public association of the faithful dedicated to the celebration of the liturgy and sacraments according to the 1962 Roman Missal. Bishop Roger Foys of Covington, who retired in 2021, formally erected the community as a public association of the faithful in 2019, although the priests have been serving in the diocese since at least 2011. The priests were working toward eventual recognition of the Missionaries of St John the Baptist as an institute of diocesan right within the Diocese of Covington.

Bishop Iffert, who has led the Covington Diocese since 2021, said in a January 17 letter to members of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, that he removed the priests’ faculties after learning that Father Collins “had preached in the parish that the Holy

Sacrifice of the Mass, as celebrated in the current Roman Catholic liturgy, is ‘irrelevant,’ preserves ‘literally nothing of the old’, and that the reform of the liturgy was motivated by hatred towards traditional Catholics and the ancient liturgies of Rome”.

According to the letter, “Both Father Collins and Father Kopczynski maintain these errors and refuse the opportunity to renounce them. This disqualifies them from being granted permission to publicly celebrate the Sacraments using the 1962 *Missale Romanum*, and from leading a personal parish like Our Lady of Lourdes”.

Our Lady of Lourdes was founded in 2016 to serve Catholics who wished to worship in Latin according to the 1962 Roman Missal, the last edition prior to the Second Vatican Council’s liturgical reforms.

In his letter, Bishop Iffert wrote, “I

did not take this action lightly”, and said that he consulted with the diocese’s vicar-general, deans, judicial vicar and other bishops, as he determined how to handle the situation.

“For some time now, I have had serious concerns about the parish’s pastoral leadership,” he wrote. “I attempted to resolve those concerns in conversation and fraternal correction with these priests, who are brothers and sons to me. Regretfully I have been unable to do so.”

In a January 19 letter to Our Lady of Lourdes parishioners, Bishop Iffert said that nearby St Ann Mission in Covington would share its church building with their parish, and Father Matthew Cushing, pastor of All Saints in Walton, Kentucky, would celebrate the Mass according to the 1962 missal twice each Sunday, beginning on January 21.

Changing words in sacraments can make them invalid, dicastery warns

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith said it continues to receive reports of Catholics, including priests, finding out all the sacraments they have received are invalid because they were baptised years earlier with a formula that was not approved.

When a priest or other minister changes the words, gestures or material prescribed for the celebration of the sacraments, he can “rob” the faithful of what they deserve and make the sacrament invalid, the dicastery said in a note published on February 3.

The note, “Gestis Verbisque” (“Gestures and Words”), passed unanimously by members of the dicastery during their plenary assembly January 25 and was approved by Pope Francis on January 31, said that the document, which was signed by Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández, dicastery prefect, and Msgr. Armando Matteo, secretary of the dicastery’s doctrinal section.

Presenting the document, Cardinal Fernández wrote that in 2022 the cardinals and bishops who are members of the dicastery already had “expressed their concern for the multiplication of situations in which they were forced to acknowledge the invalidity of sacraments celebrated”.

As an example, the cardinal cited baptism ceremonies where, instead of saying, “I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”, the minister will say, “I baptize you in the name of the Creator. . .” or “In the name of dad and mom, we baptise you”.

In 2020, the then-doctrinal congregation issued a note saying baptisms celebrated with the formula, “We

baptise you . . .” also were invalid, setting off a large-scale effort in several dioceses, including in the United States, to trace people who were invalidly baptised.

The sacraments they subsequently received, including first Communion, confirmation and even ordination also were invalid since only a baptised Catholic can validly receive the other sacraments.

Cardinal Fernández said the situation is particularly painful for priests who not only find out their ordinations were invalid, but so were all the sacraments they subsequently celebrated for others.

“Modifying the form of a sacrament or its matter is always a gravely illicit act and deserves exemplary punishment, precisely because such arbitrary acts are capable of producing serious harm to the faithful People of God,” the cardinal wrote.

While the document did not specify a punishment, it explained the importance of using the prescribed words, exact matter — such as water, wine or oil — and gestures like anointing, laying on of hands and the sign of the cross.

“While in other areas of the Church’s pastoral action there is ample room for creativity,” the cardinal wrote in the foreword, “such inventiveness in the area of the celebration of the sacraments becomes a ‘manipulative will’ and cannot be invoked.”

“Because of their rootedness in Scripture and Tradition, the matter and form never depend nor can they depend on the desire of the individual or of the particular community,” the document said.

“Instituted by Christ, the sacra-



The main door at the headquarters of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith is seen at the Vatican in this 2022 file photo (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

ments are actions that realise, by means of sensible signs, the living experience of the mystery of salvation, making possible the participation of human beings in the divine life,” the document said. “They are the ‘masterpieces of God’ in the New and Eternal Covenant, forces that come forth from the body of Christ, actions of the Spirit working in his body which is the Church.”

“This is why the Church in the Liturgy celebrates with faithful love and veneration the sacraments that Christ himself has entrusted to her so that she may preserve them as a precious inheritance and source of her life and her mission,” the document said.

A priest celebrates the sacraments not only “in persona Christi” - in the person of Christ — but also in “nominis Ecclesiae” — in the name of the Church, it said, which is why he must follow exactly the Church’s approved liturgical texts, which indicate when and where local adaptations or variations are permitted.

The doctrinal note said that it applies to the entire Church, although it asked the Eastern Catholic Churches to draft their own versions of the document, using their particular theological language “where it differs from that used in the text”, and to submit it for approval to the dicastery before publication.

Pope, in letter to Jews in Israel, condemns antisemitism as a sin

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — In a letter addressed to “my Jewish brothers and sisters in Israel”, Pope Francis expressed his heartbreak at the violence unleashed by the Hamas attack on Israel in October, and he repeated the Catholic Church’s condemnation of all forms of antisemitism and anti-Judaism.

“The path that the Church has walked with you, the ancient people of the covenant, rejects every form of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, unequivocally condemning manifestations of hatred toward Jews and Judaism as a sin against God,” said the letter dated February 2, and released by the Vatican the next day.

Pope Francis had met privately on February 2 with Raphael Schut, Israel’s ambassador to the Holy See. His letter did not mention the meeting, but spoke of “the numerous communications that have been sent to me by various friends and Jewish organisations from all over the world”, and “your own letter, which I greatly appreciate”.

“Together with you,” he said, “we Catholics are very concerned about the terrible increase in attacks against Jews around the world. We had hoped that ‘never again’ would be a refrain heard by the new generations, yet now we see that the path ahead requires ever closer collaboration to eradicate these phenomena.”

Pope Francis said that his “heart is torn” at the “unprecedented violence”

engulfing the Holy Land since the Hamas attack and “the power of so much division and so much hatred”.

As he has done repeatedly since October, Pope Francis called on Hamas to release the hostages they still hold, and he expressed sympathy for all those feeling overcome by “anguish, pain, fear and even anger”.

“Together with you,” the Pope wrote, “we mourn the dead, the wounded, the traumatised, begging God the Father to intervene and put an end to war and hatred, to these incessant cycles that endanger the entire world.”

Still, he said, people must not give up hope for peace, and “we must do everything possible to promote it, rejecting every form of defeatism and mistrust”.

“We must look to God, the only source of certain hope,” Pope Francis wrote.

In his letter, he quoted from the remarks he had made June 8, 2014, when he hosted Israeli President Shimon Peres, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople in the Vatican Gardens for an unprecedented gathering to pray for peace in the Holy Land.

“We do not renounce our responsibilities,” he said then, “but we do call upon God in an act of supreme responsibility before our consciences and before our peoples.

“We have heard a summons, and we must respond. It is the summons to break the spiral of hatred and violence, and to break it by one word alone: the word ‘brother.’”

Pope Francis said that he knew many people “have great difficulty seeing a future horizon where light replaces darkness, in which friendship replaces hatred, in which cooperation replaces war”, but the current relation-

ship between Catholics and Jews after centuries of oppression and mistrust shows it is possible.

“We must act, starting first and foremost from the Holy Land, where together we want to work for peace and justice, doing everything possible to create relationships capable of opening new horizons of light for everyone, Israelis and Palestinians,” the Pope said.

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Dating apps and St Valentine's Day 2024

by MINA AMSO

It's a week to go until Valentine's Day, you're single and keen to meet someone. But you don't know where to turn. If you'd asked where to find a date 20 years ago, or even 10 years ago, you'd have been told to get out there and meet someone IRL, aka in real life (for folks not familiar with new terminology) — the pub, the hiking club, social club, or church, for example.

That advice remains valid. But over the past 10 years, more and more people have embraced technology as a means to find a date and build a relationship, with mobile dating apps of sorts.

Many apps have emerged over the last decade promising love-hungry singles that they can help them find everlasting happiness. The first ever dating app, Match.com, was launched in 1995, then the most popular, Tinder, came 12 years ago, and then Bumble and Hinge 10 years ago. Another two that are more Catholic/Christian focused, are CatholicMatch.com and ChristianConnection.com.

Millions and millions of Internet users (around 360 million) actively use these platforms as of 2022. Many swapped IRL experiences for dating apps. Being lured by the promise of a fun, interactive, easy way to meet more people than ever, many started ditching organic/traditional ways of meeting people.

What do Catholics say about dating apps in 2024?

Meet Jeanette Hancock, a 42-year-old Catholic woman who's never had a boyfriend. She noticed a massive change in the dating arena in the past ten years. She sees online dating as a useful tool to meet people, especially in a small country like New Zealand, but she's not fond of the "swipe culture".

"Once upon a time, if you went on a dating site, you'd find well-written profiles, lots of photos, dudes who had real hopes and dreams and knew what they wanted. Now you have those disgusting dehumanising swipe apps, or profiles with 'don't know what [I] want, just looking for now' level of interaction."

Meanwhile, a young Catholic man, "IR", who chose not to be named, said that there are benefits of using a dating app to meet more people, especially those outside his immediate circle of friends.

"However, this is the only real benefit that I see from using dating apps. I'm personally not a fan of them, and prefer to meet someone as organically as possible. That can also include being set up by mutual friends."

He said that apps help Catholics find other Catholics, who may not have otherwise met.

"However, in the secular sphere, I certainly think they're making things worse, such as by normalising hookup culture."

It could go both ways, said Dominic Malgeri, father, husband and nurse. Malgeri never used a dating app to meet his wife; he met her during a mission trip in London. "Well, there's lots of reasons that everyone is aware of: 'catfishing', commoditising ourselves, and possibly reducing ourselves ultimately to our physical attributes."

However, the negative view could be debated, and none of them are "the hill he would die on" so to speak.

"The worst thing, in my opinion, is what is wrong with almost all information technology, which is it removes us from the reality of the world that God created, and in this instance the reality of human interaction, which is essential in building character, and finding someone to date and eventually marry."



Photo: Pixabay

When Tinder was being created, its founders invented the swipe. The swipe was kind of like Tinder's secret sauce — it seems apparent now, but a decade ago, swiping transformed mobile dating by turning it into a game, almost.

Some people say that Tinder has the same gaming qualities as casino gaming machines, and users fall into the same kind of endless gaming loops that they observed in Las Vegas gamblers.

It's either that the swiping is leading to love, or to app addiction.

Dr Peter Holmes, theology professor and expert in the areas of masculinity and sexuality, who works at Notre Dame University in Australia, says that the best way to find people who are faithful is not so much on an app, but in action in the real world.

"Look for the place where faith is being practised, where people are actually living self-sacrificing love, the best way is to engage yourself in this

ministry yourself, and you will find yourself in the company of like-minded people.

"It is easy for someone to project an ideal image of themselves in an app, or online. If you see someone in action, you get a sense of what they stand for, and how they live their faith."

Dating apps have changed the landscape of modern dating. They were supposed to help you find a date, create a meaningful connection, and perhaps marriage — hopefully. They're supposed to be a non-confusing, straightforward way to connect with others. In fact, the rise in dating apps has helped thousands of Catholics interact and meet — with some fruitful and fulfilling marriages. But that's only around 13 per cent of all users.

What if we woke up one day and found out that all dating apps were gone, where would we turn to next? Maybe St Raphael could help.

Family Matters

Helen Luxford



Choosing a parish

Growing up, the concept of "choosing a parish" wasn't really apparent to me. We just went to the local Catholic primary school and the local Catholic church. Our family became involved, and I remember that there was a family group system, and we had a lovely group of families with which we would share fellowship on a regular basis. Parish priests moved around, as per their allocation from the diocese, but we never moved parishes, we just stayed put.

Today there seems to be more of a sense of "choosing your parish", and people travel across suburbs to go where they feel at home. For me, St Patrick's Cathedral in the CBD feels like my home parish. I used to go to youth Masses there regularly, and attended youth Bible/faith sessions. I guess that the draw of the city made it all the more fun for a younger person. With the roadworks and the tunnel project and parking issues, going to Mass in the inner city has been unachievable. But more latterly, it feels as if it has become more accessible again. But going to the city as a family has been quite confronting — there are a number of homeless people and, even early on a Sunday morning, we have come across drunk and disorderly behaviour, and been unsettled as a result. We will keep persisting, but we feel we need to have

our guard up going into the CBD now.

I think that we all want a parish that is welcoming. When we arrive at the door, we feel greeted and welcomed to the Mass. I've noticed that I prefer churches with more natural light. A range of Mass times and styles is helpful, and the presence of a children's liturgy is appealing to families. I used to love the Masses with lots of singing and music. But now I prefer a quieter Mass, with some singing but not too much. For me, going to a weekday Mass is a really special treat. The family even managed to get to one while away over January, which was a nice change.

I think a range of activities, such as rosaries, playgroups and Bible studies, are really important to ensure that involvement in a parish isn't just limited to attendance at Sunday Mass. Feeding back to parishes as to what we want to have, and what we are prepared to get involved with and run and support, is vital to grow the body and the community of the parish. There are many ways to get involved in a parish, and we have been more involved at different times, depending on ages and stages of the children. I think now we could look to get more involved again. Covid really put a damper on many parts of our lives, including gathering in faith, so now that we are all moving on, we want to en-

courage engagement, and lively parishes.

The parish priest is really key in the life of the parish, and one parish which we attended recently had a system of booking a dinner with the parish priest, which I thought was a beautiful way of bringing the parish together. I know some people can become so attached to their parish priest that they move parishes, if possible, when the priest moves! Certainly, different priests will bring a different flavour to a parish, and this should be embraced. While away at one stage last year, I was reminded about how different homilies can be from different priests. We all have our different personalities, and hearing from different priests helps enhance our faith and grow our perspective.

We can all support our parish and our priest in different ways. If you're not currently actively involved in your parish, have a look and see if you can find something to be a part of, if not consider starting a group if you see a gap!

Matthew 18:20 — "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

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.

The more-familiar Oscars

by NEVIL GIBSON

An unusual feature of this year's 10 contenders for the best picture Oscar is that most of them are already familiar to moviegoers.

In the past, Oscar potential films were often held back for release until the last month of the year, presumably so that they would be fresh to those qualified to vote in the Academy Awards.

In New Zealand, where critically praised movies often take months and even years to be seen if they are not guaranteed to do well at the box office, Oscar-nominated movies were shown after the awards were presented.

But changes to the awards, such as expanding the best-picture Oscar nominees from five to 10, and widening the voting base to nearly 100 countries, means the more previous exposure the better, rather than the opposite.

This is why the most nominated film, *Oppenheimer*, was no longer handicapped by its mid-year release, along with *Barbie*, which had nearly as many nominations, but not for best picture.

The other strongest contender, *Killers of the Flower Moon*, was released in October, and is already on Apple's streaming service. *Maestro* is streaming on Amazon Prime Video, while *The Holdovers* and *Poor Things* are recent arrivals.

Two arthouse movies, *Anatomy of a Fall* and *Past Lives*, enjoyed good cinema runs, leaving just two that were unreleased at the time of writing, *American Fiction* and *The Zone of Interest*.

Poor Things (Disney/20th Century/Searchlight) is by far the most unconventional of the 10 Oscar contenders. Its director, Greek-born Yorgos Lanthimos, has form in winning both awards and dividing his audiences. Two of the best known, *The Favourite*



Emma Stone stars as Bella in *Poor Things*

Movie Review

and *The Lobster*, had scenes of genius, as well as ones that were repellent or just plain boring.

His earlier *Dogtooth*, set in Greece, was not one you could recommend to anyone but the most hardened filmgoer. Lanthimos has since become more accessible, as none of the afternoon audience was shocked at the North Shore screening I attended.

In fact, as the lengthy running time diminished, they thoroughly enjoyed the show, after a slow start. Like those unfamiliar with Scottish writer and artist Alasdair Gray's books that mix fantasy, realism, and science fiction, I was not prepared for what unfolded.

The setting is the late 19th century, full of steampunk devices, experimental medicine and flying taxis, in an artificial environment of numerous artistic periods. These range from the Renaissance and the baroque, to

the modernist studios and lighting of Germany's Weimar period, that produced *Metropolis* and the original movies of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*.

The screenplay, by Australia's Tony McNamara (*The Favourite*), is equally inventive, with language that is Shakespearean in depth of meaning and vocabulary, mixing the profane with the profound.

The cast rises to the occasion: The surgically quilt-faced Willem Dafoe as the mad scientist Godwin Baxter, his child-woman creation Bella (Emma Stone) who anchors the story, her lawyer-playboy-suitor Duncan (Mark Ruffalo), and the narrator (Ramy Youssef), are all excellent.

Though much has been written about *Poor Things*, this is a movie experience in which only the briefest prior knowledge is recommended.

Rating: R18. 141 minutes.

CLIPS

Force of Nature: The Dry 2 (Roadshow)

In 2021, *The Dry*, a police procedural set in the Australian outback, was a box office champion that helped cinemas survive during the pandemic lockdowns. Its sequel is likely to bring similar success, as the laconic detective hero (Eric Bana) returns in a new setting – the impenetrable forests of Victoria – with another murder to solve. It's also based on a thriller by Jane Harper, with the same screenwriter-director, Robert Connolly. It uses the familiar formula of withholding key information from the audience, while slowly putting the pieces together without making the solution obvious. An added attraction is the presence of acting heavyweight Anna Torv (*Mindhunter*, *The Last of Us*) as the only one of five women who get lost on a corporate team-building trek, but doesn't return. In a plot already high in coincidences, a lost-in-the-bush backstory involving the detective as a boy, and the exploits of a serial killer, are woven into an already dense tapestry. The location filming is impressive, and compensates for lapses in the acting and script. Rating: Mature audiences. 112 minutes.

Anyone But You (Sony-Columbia)

Also from Australia, this reworking of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, set at a wedding among Sydney's nouveau riche, ticks most of the boxes for an adult rom-com. It doesn't offend modern sensibilities, while playing loose with language and innuendo. The female couple to be married, their parents and guests, are upstaged by two American visitors. They are previously known to each other, but not in a good way. One is a bride's sister (Sydney Sweeney in her first starring role), while the other, a hunky Wall Streeter (Glen Powell), is the flatmate in New York of the other bride's brother. The couple pretend not to know each other, so as not to disrupt the wedding, which of course is what happens in a plot that fits in as many tourist spots of Sydney that are decent, without becoming a travelogue. Rating: R13. 103 minutes.

Fair Play (Netflix)

Financial thrillers that mix money-making mayhem with personal indiscretions are irresistible if done well. Phoebe Dynevor (*Bridgerton*, *Bank of Dave*) is the sharpest blade in Eddie Marsan's hedge fund team, who are regularly culled if a deal goes wrong. She is secretly engaged to a co-worker (Alden Ehrenreich), a diligent and ambitious analyst. Their relationship goes sour when she is promoted over him, and before their connection is exposed. Debut writer-director Chloe Domont's gamble on young and attractive leads doesn't pay off; Dynevor will be familiar to an audience unlikely to view an urban thriller. She is also less likely than an older woman to carry the gender and greed message that Domont intended, based on her own experiences as a female in TV production (*Suits*, *Billions*). While the action takes place in a Wall Street-style setting, the actual filming was done in Serbia. Rating: R16. 115 minutes.

A true story of mutiny and human horror, with grace notes

THE WAGER: A Tale of Shipwreck, Mutiny, and Murder, David Grann, Doubleday (2023), 352 pp, US\$30. Reviewed by CECILIA CICONE (OSV News)

Stories of human triumph and resilience are attractive — a narrator's sure thing.

In fact, this may be what draws us into the stories of the saints, whose holiness carries with it a supernatural strength to endure trials, from the martyrs of ancient Rome to St Maximilian Kolbe at Auschwitz.

In "The Wager: A Tale of Shipwreck, Mutiny, and Murder", David Grann recounts a true story that could have been a beautiful tale of survival under the leadership of a competent commander, but that too often reminds us of "Lord of the Flies".

In May of 1741, under the leadership of Captain David Cheap, the HMS Wager was shipwrecked on an island off the south coast of Chile. The captain lost control of his crew almost immediately, as some members began stealing provisions, while the rest of the crew was starving, leading to a deep mistrust among the men.

Cheap was the captain of a ship but, without being on the sea, he had no idea how to organise and command his men on a journey of survival.

Confidence in Captain Cheap's leadership quickly waned — what ensued was absolute mutiny.

The crew devised a plan to escape the island and head toward Brazil, guided by the ship's gunner, John Bulkley.

Reading "The Wager" through a Catholic lens gives readers a harrowing true story that tells of God's providence amid scarce resources. From finding mussels to eat and reusing parts of other boats to attempt to leave the island — and even through the unexpected help of a group of indigenous people who had been taught to fear Europeans — the ways that God provided for the men of the Wager were creative, and more than suggested divine intervention. Even some crew members explicitly declare that God is with them and sustaining them; they named one of the ports in the story the "Port of God's Mercy".

Juxtaposed with God's merciful

Book Review

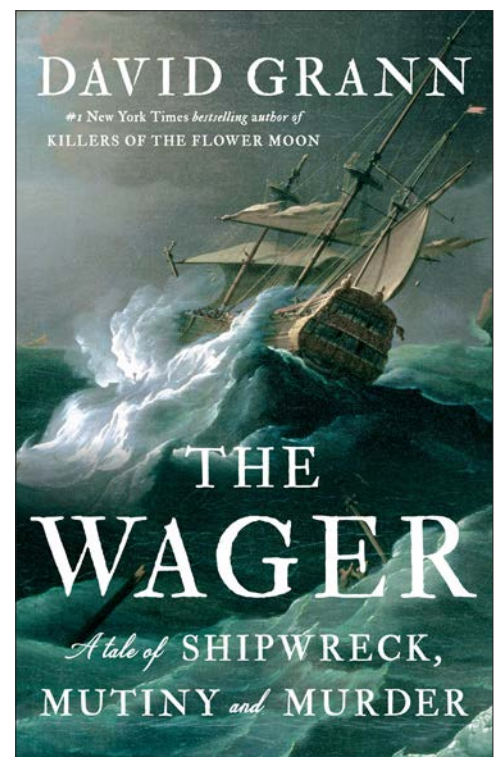
providence, though, is the reality of human depravity — our tendency towards selfishness that quite literally leads to death.

The HMS Wager's men are focused entirely on survival, but, without an effective leader to unite them for a common cause, they can only perceive each other as the enemy.

Instead of understanding how shared rations are key to making it off the island alive, they see them to be the source of their starvation. When conflicts arise, the only solution they can imagine is to kill their fellow crew members in order to survive.

In the end, this is an engaging story that accidentally witnesses to God as our loving Father, who rescues us, not only from shipwrecks, but from our own sins that are deserving of death, offering us the freedom of eternal life.

Cecilia Cicone is an author and communicator who works in diocesan ministry in Northwest Indiana (OSV News).



We are here ▼ Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time

THE CHURCH YEAR

Advent Christmas Ordinary Time Lent **Eastertime** Ordinary Time

Replacing a negative state of being with a positive one

Scripture

by Fr Kevin Waldie SM

In these readings, it is important to grasp the purpose of each author's focus. For each has in view a specific point of connection with the holy and the divine. Upon first hearing or reading the texts, that might not seem the case. And because of that, a closer look at the words themselves is necessary.

If we are to properly understand these verses from Leviticus, we should perhaps replace the notion of leprosy with a more generic translation, something like skin disease. In that way, our focus turns to the emphatic word of the text, that is, unclean.

We then catch a true sense of the well-being

deemed to be part of the normal relationship between God and his people. In essence, this means replacing a negative state of being with a positive one.

Paul's advice to the Corinthians states that their life and actions should in reality reflect their belonging to a body of people called the Church of God.

It is therefore the duty of each member to be actively engaged with God's saving plan. So just as Paul has made Christ his model of enduring behaviour, his Corinthian disciples should imitate Paul himself.

In Mark today, Jesus' encounter with a man

February 11: Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time. **Readings:** 1. Leviticus 13:1-2,44-46; **Psalm:** 32; 2. 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1; **Gospel:** Mark 1:40-45.

afflicted by a skin disease clearly highlights the man's desire to be cleansed of a sickness that has deprived him of normal, everyday, social interaction. And notably, when confronted with the man's condition, Jesus automatically responds with compassion, immediately uttering words of cleansing. As a result of this dramatic change in health, the man unhesitatingly starts spreading the word about Jesus' amazing power.

Through these readings, we come to see how God wills us to be freed from any harm to our spiritual wellbeing. And that demands that we respond with our gratitude and commitment.

Gearing up to revisit the foundations of our Christian faith

At the start of Lent, we find ourselves gearing up to revisit the foundations of our Christian faith. The path that we travel down is therefore one of self-reflection and musing on the Word of God.

The Genesis passage, about Noah and the covenant, is a fitting lens through which to view the Lenten journey ahead. Noah and his sons are what we might call foundational characters in the biblical story. And these verses make an emphatic, universal statement about God's enduring relationship with the human race.

This is a new beginning that causes us to once again contemplate the sacred covenantal bond that God revealed as the path to holiness for a

chosen people.

In 1 Peter, we also hear a message that is a fundamental statement about the divinely-revealed path that we ourselves are pursuing because it is willed by God. And, importantly, it is further illuminated by the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This long story of the saving hand of God at work amidst humanity takes us back to the days of Noah, and the promise of future blessedness that was decreed there.

The Jesus event, the cornerstone of our Christian faith, finds its particular beginning in today's verses from Mark. After a period in the wilderness readying himself for his mission, Jesus is all-of-a-sudden in the world, announcing the Good News

February 18: First Sunday of Lent. **Readings:** 1. Genesis 9:8-15; **Psalm:** 25; 2. 1 Peter 3:18-22; **Gospel:** Mark 1:12-15.

that marks the fulfilment of all the Scriptures. The way forward is a journey to the cross. And so Mark's Jesus sets about calling people to be his followers, so that they may become highly visible witnesses to belief in the reality of God's kingdom.

The Scripture passages for this first Sunday of Lent simply, but evocatively, summon us to be mindful of our faith heritage, and the liturgical journey that we make each year.

SAINTED GLASS



Lent is upon us, and the Gospel on the First Sunday in Lent features Jesus undergoing temptation. Mark's version of the event is very brief – Satan tempted Jesus, and the Lord was looked after by angels. This dramatic depiction in St Barnabas Anglican Church, Roseneath, Wellington, shows Jesus resisting temptation. To my mind, he is sending Satan back to hell where he belongs. Satan tempts me, too, and without Jesus' help I find it very hard to resist. So, Jesus, please give me your strength when I face temptation. – Glen McCullough

Amid a 'barrage' of words, listen to God's Word, Pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — God's word cuts through the sea of chatter spoken aloud and uttered online, to touch the hearts of Christians and inspire them to share the Gospel, Pope Francis said.

"While society and social media reflect the violence of words, let us draw closer to, and cultivate, the quiet word that brings salvation, that is meek, that doesn't make noise, that enters into the heart," the Pope said during his homily at Mass for the Church's celebration of Sunday of the Word of God in St Peter's Basilica on January 21.

Although Christians today are "barraged by words about the Church", he encouraged them to "rediscover the word of life that resounds in the Church".

"If not, we end up talking more about ourselves" than about Jesus, "and concentrate on our own thoughts and problems rather than on Christ and his Word," the Pope told the approximately 5000 people gathered for Mass in the basilica.

In 2019, the Pope decreed that the third Sunday of Ordinary Time be devoted to the "celebration, study and dissemination of the Word of God", and celebrated Mass to mark the first Sunday of the Word of God in January, 2020.

In his homily, the Pope recalled the many saints who were deeply touched by the word of God — St Anthony, St Thérèse of Lisieux, St Francis of Assisi — and who were moved to lead lives of holiness.

"Their lives were changed by the word of life, but I ask, how is it that for many of us the same thing does not happen?" Pope Francis asked. "So often

Bible News

we listen to God's Word (and) it goes in one ear and out the other."

"We need to stop being 'deaf' to God's Word," he said. "This is a risk for all of us: overwhelmed by a barrage of words, we let the Word of God glide by us. We hear it, yet we fail to listen to it; we listen to it, yet we don't keep it; we keep it, yet we don't let it provoke us to change."

Copies of St Mark's Gospel in Italian were placed on seats throughout the basilica, for Mass participants to take with them.



Pope Francis gives his homily during Mass for Sunday of the Word of God in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, on January 21 (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

End of an era for The Square Gift Store owner Sandra Barden

by MINA AMSO

For more than a decade, Sandra Barden ran her Catholic Square Gift Store in central Auckland on most days including Sunday, but now comes the time that she passes on the baton to someone else.

Comments flooded in after Mrs Barden posted on Facebook late last year announcing that she is stepping down as owner. Within a couple of hours, people from all over New Zealand sent dozens of notes and messages of love and appreciation, she said.

"I think it's wonderful. I could not believe the outcry of the public when I wrote and said I was going to give it up."

When Mrs Barden stepped into the shop in 2011, she knew that she had a lot of work to do to bring in a new vision and a new look. And she did, despite having no training or skills on running a Catholic gift store.

"I've done this for 12 years. I've given up every Sunday for 12 years, you don't get extra credit for that."

Life's changed since. Her family grew in number [14 grandchildren], and one of her nearest and dearest needed more of her time.

"I have a husband in aged residential care and his mind is still very active, but his body is completely broken with Parkinson's and a shattered hip which they couldn't fix.

"I just haven't got the capacity. I don't feel I've got the energy that it needs. It needs new energy. Also, it is just to give myself some time [to do other things] while I still have the energy, because so many people retire and then they just fall apart. So I just want to be able to pursue other interests."

■ Challenges

The store offered a huge range of books, bibles, beads, journals, candles and other resources. It hasn't been a breezy walk in the park trading a Catholic gift store, especially the last four years, said Mrs Barden, with challenges slamming her left, right and centre.

"Covid-19 was difficult during the end, when you were allowed to go to supermarkets . . . and weren't allowed to go to church. Consequently, we never got trade, we never got foot traffic and, with offices closed again, no foot traffic.

"When the roading [works] was going on, the foot traffic was limited but we still did a reasonable turnover. And then we couldn't get products. The world changed, shipping changed, manufacturing changed, supplies of Bibles just were difficult to get."

■ Mission over business

The Square Gift Store is often the first place that many people encounter before going back to Church or joining the Catholic faith, or in some cases a Christian faith, said Mrs Barden.

For years, she had the privilege of meeting people from all walks of life; the breadth and depth of it was so rewarding, she said. There was one story, though, that really left the former store owner in awe. It was a story of a young man who needed rosary beads one day.

"One morning, a youngish good-looking man, very strong physically, came into the shop, saying he was pushed for time: 'My mother told me that I must ask to see Sandra Barden, and I need to purchase some wooden rosary beads'. He told me that he was on his way to court, for a third offence for the same crime."

The man was about to face a jail sentence. Mrs Barden told the man that court officials might take the rosary beads off him, mainly because of his size and stature.

"So I sold him an olive wood rosary bracelet. I also asked him why, such a good looking man like himself, was in this position. I told him how fortunate he was to have a mother who prayed for him."

When the judge asked the young man to have three reasons why he should not go to jail, he named two, but his final one was that he knew Sandra Barden.



Sandra Barden (right) and Maria Segarra outside The Square Gift Store in St Patrick's Square, Auckland

"The judge laughed and said, I know her as well."

At first, the man was sentenced to weekly visits to the court for a period of six weeks, and he was also asked to visit the Catholic store and see Mrs Barden, or whoever was working at the time.

"The judge needed some evidence that the young man had been here, [and to prove that] he either [had to] buy a small holy card or a stamp

[as proof].

"We just loved this man calling in; his special disposition helped us realise how lucky we were that we did not suffer with the same afflictions. We grew to really to love this man. He would always go and light a candle in the cathedral on his way home.

"We encouraged him to stand tall and be proud of himself as he faced his demons. With the help of his devotion to the Divine Mercy, St Michael the Archangel and Our Lady, wearing his rosary beads, he is doing wonderful work [now] with young people who are in the footsteps as he was.

"He has become an outstanding role model for them. He would purchase rosary beads, medals, small prayer books, holy prayer cards, and end up giving them away to the young folks who were in similar situations to that he was in.

"These are the people I will miss, really miss," said Mrs Barden.

■ Fresh Vision

New owners Maria and Nephthalie [June] Segarra hail from the Philippines. The couple and their two adult children have been brought up in the Catholic faith.

Mrs Segarra dreamed that one day she'd get a job and own a store like The Square Gift Store. The dream has now come true, she said.

"This is the greatest ever dream of my life. My dear Sandra, she really put trust on me, and it feels overwhelming in my heart; that's why she said 'you will be the best fit for this'. I couldn't say no."

Her vision is to serve the community, she said, and to be there for people in need of guidance and direction in their faith. This is why she looks at this new opportunity, not only as a business, but to provide what people are looking for.

"Please support us, welcome. Please defend your own religion. People have got to defend their Catholicity and how we stand and what we stand for. They've got to defend that, and promote praying as a good option for our young people," said Mrs Barden.

Although the 75-year-old is handing over ownership, it doesn't mean retiring completely, she said. Mrs Barden is finding new hobbies, including gardening, sewing, and years of photographs that she plans to organise.

Auckland's Sacred Heart College wins premier water polo title

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

Auckland's Sacred Heart College has won Australasia's premier inter-school water polo competition.

According to a post on the New Zealand Water Polo facebook page, teams are invited from schools throughout Australia and New Zealand, in order to provide the highest level of inter-school competition possible.

The Trans-Tasman Schoolboys' Cup was first held in 2004 by the Church of England Boys Grammar School in Brisbane, as an invitational event in response to the cancellation of the Southern Skies water polo tournament, the post stated.

"Following that first event a group of schools met and established the official Trans-Tasman Schoolboys' Cup — with the intention of rotating it around Auckland, Queensland and Sydney or Melbourne. These orig-



The winning Sacred Heart College water polo team

inal schools included Sacred Heart College Auckland, Auckland Grammar School, Brisbane Boys' Grammar, Church Grammar, Westlake Boys' High School and Rangitoto College. Melbourne High School, New-

ington College and St Aloysius joined this group, and have also become regular participants in the tournament."

Sacred Heart's Toby Grace was MVP for the 2023 tournament.

Why so much incense at Mass, and isn't devotion better than obedience?

by JENNA MARIE COOPER (OSV News)

Q: Our daughter has totally given up going to church because of the relentless use of incense at each Mass. It doesn't bother me, but I do notice a lot of people in the congregation that obviously have problems with it. Since it causes breathing difficulties for many people, is it really appropriate to use at Mass when it excludes attendance by many?

A: In principle, incense is indeed appropriate for Mass. The smoke that rises from the burning of incense has for millennia been understood by the Christian community as a symbol of the prayers of the faithful rising up to God.

Even beyond this, Catholicism in

general, and Catholic worship in particular, has a strong "incarnational" dimension. Among other things, this means that the Church understands that we are both body and soul, and that the engagement of our five senses — including our sense of smell — can help us enter more deeply into prayer.

I can understand how the overuse of incense might be a health issue for some people, and it's unfortunate that your daughter is struggling with this. If you sincerely believe that the parish's use of incense is excessive, perhaps it would be worth having a respectful conversation with the pastor.

Also, most parishes do have at least one Sunday Mass that is celebrated in a less elaborate fashion, so perhaps your daughter could inquire as to whether there may be at least one incense-free Mass per week. If worse really comes to worst, it would also be legitimate for your daughter to opt to attend Mass at another nearby parish, which might not use as much incense.

Q: I was very disappointed in your Q&A about why someone can't just attend Mass on Sunday, and "count" it for both Christmas and the 4th Sunday of Advent. There seems to be a genuine question of why we go to Mass in the first place. There is a real person, Jesus, who waits for us and wishes to hear all about our day, our dreams, our frustrations. How many Catholics are happy to give just the bare



Photo: Unsplash

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

NFP WANTS TO HELP MORE

The New Zealand Association of Natural Family Planning has a well-developed national system of training and service delivery, but it has yet to find appropriate ways of NFP being available to Māori and Pacific Island people, says the national co-ordinator, Mrs Maureen Ball.

Returning to her Auckland base at the Mater Hospital after attending an international conference on family planning in Hong Kong in November, Mrs Ball said that she hoped to get some ideas there on meeting the needs of Māori and Pacific Island people.

"But, in fact, looking at other people's models didn't help much. For one thing, our Pacific Island people are displaced from their own culture; they're not in their own setting.

"Māori too are displaced by the way the helping professions have been geared to middle-class Pākehā people."

At present, NFP has one Māori tutor working — very successfully — in a North Island town, and no Pacific Island tutors teaching.

"We've got to look at different ways of serving these different groups, and I really want to hear from them what they want, rather than impose the model that we've developed," says Mrs Ball.

Over 60 countries were represented at the Hong Kong conference of the International Federation for Family Life Promotion (IFFLP). Most of the member organisations are Catholic, or other Christian agencies.

— *Zealandia*, February 12, 1984

Our Faith Q&A

minimum? Unfortunately, there is a trend in the Catholic Church to become theologians at the expense of a relationship with our Lord.

A: First of all, I do agree with you in principle — as Catholics, we should genuinely want a vibrant prayer life, and ideally we should all look forward to going to Mass, understanding it as a privilege and a joy, and not a chore to check off our list.

But like so many things in Catholicism, this isn't a matter of "either/or", but of "both/and". That is, we can attend Mass out of a sincere love for God, while at the same time also taking care to understand the extent of our actual obligation.

Logically, it would be silly for the Church to articulate laws and obligations if paying attention to such laws was meant to be discouraged. One of the main reasons why the Church spells out obligations in the first place is to help us to better love

and serve our Lord. So even if we as Catholics just do "the bare minimum" required of us by our state in life, this should be enough to help us grow in holiness if we fulfil these obligations with the correct disposition.

A healthy spiritual life is marked by a sense of balance and serenity. For those who struggle with any level of scrupulosity, stated obligations can be helpful insofar as they allow for objective knowledge of when one has actually fulfilled God's expectations.

If the only guidance available on how often to attend Mass was something along the lines of: "Let your love for Jesus determine how often you go", this could set many Catholics up for a vain chasing of an impossible standard.

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

TOP SCHOLARS 2023

Marcellin College, Auckland



Dux
Elijah Malaitai



Proxime Accessit
Alex Ve

CAPTION CONTEST



Write the best caption for this photo and win a \$30 Countdown voucher. Email your ideas by Friday, Feb. 23 to design@nzcatholic.org.nz Subject 'Caption Contest 678'. Or post to NZ Catholic, PO Box 147000, Ponsonby, Auckland 1144. Please include your postal address.

St Andrew's, Tuakau, a country parish – celebration of St Andrew's Feast Day

by CARMEL STEWART

Tuakau was established as a small farming town in North Waikato, with the first Catholic church being built in 1869 under the guidance of Rev. Dr James McDonald.

The original position of the church was on the corner of Alexandra Redoubt Road closest to the river. Building of the new church commenced under the direction of Father Keogh and, in May 1912, the foundation stone was laid by Archdeacon Brodie, with the assistance of Father Holbrook (of Auckland) and Father Keogh, who assisted the archdeacon.

The church site of 1.5 acres was given by C. Dromgool, snr. The new church was built from rough cast concrete at a cost of 1100 pounds, which included furnishings. The new church was officially opened at a ceremony held in 1913, with parishioners travelling from as far away as Mercer, Pukekawa, Onewhero and Auckland. The Mass was celebrated by Fr Edge, from Ponsonby, in the presence of the Bishop (the Right Rev. Dr Cleary). A lunch followed the Mass. The parish of St Andrew's is a strong faith community which has seen substantial growth in recent years.

New subdivisions within Tuakau township, and in nearby Pokeno, Onewhero, and general population growth in the surrounding area, has resulted in a greater number of parishioners who attend the weekly Masses, which are celebrated on Wednesday and Friday at 11.00 am, and a vigil Mass on Saturday at 5pm. The resident priest lives in Waiuku, and trips are made over to Tuakau to celebrate the Mass – the journey takes approximately 40 minutes each way.

Saint Andrew, who was the first-called apostle of Jesus, is the patron saint of Scotland, Romania, Ukraine, and several other countries. He was crucified on a cross that was turned sideways which looked like a "X", as he did not feel worthy enough to be crucified in the same way that Jesus was crucified. Saint Andrew's flag is the official flag of Scotland, where many people wear a thistle in honour of him on St Andrew's feast day, which is November 30.

The people of St Andrew's parish, Tuakau, decided to celebrate the Feast of Saint Andrew by organising a dinner in memory of him on November 25, 2023 (being the nearest Saturday to St Andrew's feast day). Prior to the 5pm vigil Mass, there was reconciliation and adoration, followed by the Mass



Those at the Mass at St Andrew's church in Tuakau



A friendly gathering at the shared meal

before the celebratory meal. The shared meal, held in the Tuakau Town Hall's Supper Room, was well attended by approximately 110 people. Parish members were encouraged to bring along family and friends, which many of them chose to do. The local Kiribati community presented a number of

dances performed to recorded music. As the parish community is very multicultural, there was a wide selection of food, including a main meal and a dessert, followed by tea and coffee. The Supper Room was decorated, and a laminated novena and prayer card to commemorate St Andrew were given to all, as a memento of a well-celebrated evening.

It is hoped that this will become an annual event, as everyone really enjoyed getting together, and the initiative gave people the opportunity to get to know one another better. The parish would like to thank Fr Mathew Vadakkevettuvazhiyil for his enthusiasm and guidance, without which the event could not have taken place.

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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.

Carmelite Nuns
Auckland

www.carmelites.org.nz

The Carmelite Nuns' website is available for you to email your prayer requests

cn431

Cathedral angels regain their wings



Rangiora artist Damian Walker with one of the fully restored angels

by JEFF DILLON

Joy was definitely in the air on Gaudete Sunday (December 17) in Advent at St Joseph's Cathedral, Dunedin, at the 10.30 am Mass, and it wasn't just in anticipation of the lighting of the pink candle.

As the congregation began to assemble, people's attention focused on the sanctuary area, and comments were whispered and nods exchanged. The focus of attention and admiration were the two recently re-installed sanctuary angels. They had grown wings overnight.

One whispered explanation was that the sanctuary angels had celebrated their release from storage in a room in the cathedral's tower, and their subsequent restoration by having a bit of a party overnight. During the celebration, they had imbibed a well-advertised drink that has the desired effect.

However, a more mundane explanation came to light upon checking the composition of the congregation which was gathering. In one of the front pews sat what could be described as three wise men from the north — up Rangiora way, to be exact. One of them was clearly Damian Walker, the artist who had restored the angel figures at his Studio of St Philomena. He was accompanied by his brother, Chris and father, Noel.

The angel figures had once performed their guardian role in the sanctuary until the 1960s, but were discarded following some of the changes prompted by Vatican II. They

were rescued from a skip destined for the rubbish tip, and went into storage up in a room in one of the cathedral towers. At the time, the wings were in a damaged state and were not retained. Part of the restoration contract included the making of new moulds to produce replacements. While the repair and installation of the angel figures was achieved on the desired date in November, the making and completion of the wings took longer. Hence the further delay of nearly a month.

In discussion after Mass, it transpired that the three Walkers had travelled down from Rangiora on the Saturday, arriving at the cathedral late in the afternoon. They set about fitting the now cured new set of wings. The sight of the sanctuary angels, complete with their new wings, generated a lot of interest, to the point where many parishioners were busy after Mass using their phone cameras to record the scene.

The addition of the wings produced a new dimension to the figures by increasing their height. The artist noted that the figures themselves were now about two metres in height, and much higher than their bodies had been, standing on their individual plinths. The wings added to the visual appeal of the figures, with gold paint featuring prominently along the leading edges.

Parishioners are very pleased with the changes brought about in the sanctuary with the completion of this well-supported project, initiated by parish priest Fr Vaughan Leslie.

WIT'S END

If you are getting bogged down by mission statements, strategic goals, and budgets, remember the philosopher who said, "Everything I need to know about life, I learned from Noah's Ark." One: Don't miss the boat. Two: Remember that we are all in the same boat. Three: Plan ahead; it wasn't raining when Noah built the ark. Four: Stay fit; when you're 600 years old, someone may ask you to do something really big. Five: Don't listen to critics; just get on with the job that needs to be done. Six: Build your future on high ground. Seven: For safety's sake, travel in pairs. Eight: Speed isn't always an advantage; the snails were on board with the cheetahs. Nine: When you're stressed, float a while. Ten: Remember, the ark was built by amateurs, the Titanic by professionals. Eleven: No matter that storm, when you're with God, there's always a rainbow waiting.



St Peter's College

Mountain Road, Epsom
Tel: 09 524 8108

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OPEN DAY

For year 7 Enrolments in 2025

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TUESDAY 20th FEBRUARY 2024
9:30 am or 1.00 pm

in the College Hall (main school entrance – Mountain Road)
followed by a conducted tour of the College by senior boys.
You do not need to register.

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"St Peter's builds outstanding men"



Final profession for Marist sister in Auckland

Sr Tulua Matangi 'Otuafi, SM, made her final profession as a Marist Sister at Holy Cross Church in Papatoetoe on January 27. She is shown with Bishop Stephen Lowe. (Photo: Facebook).