

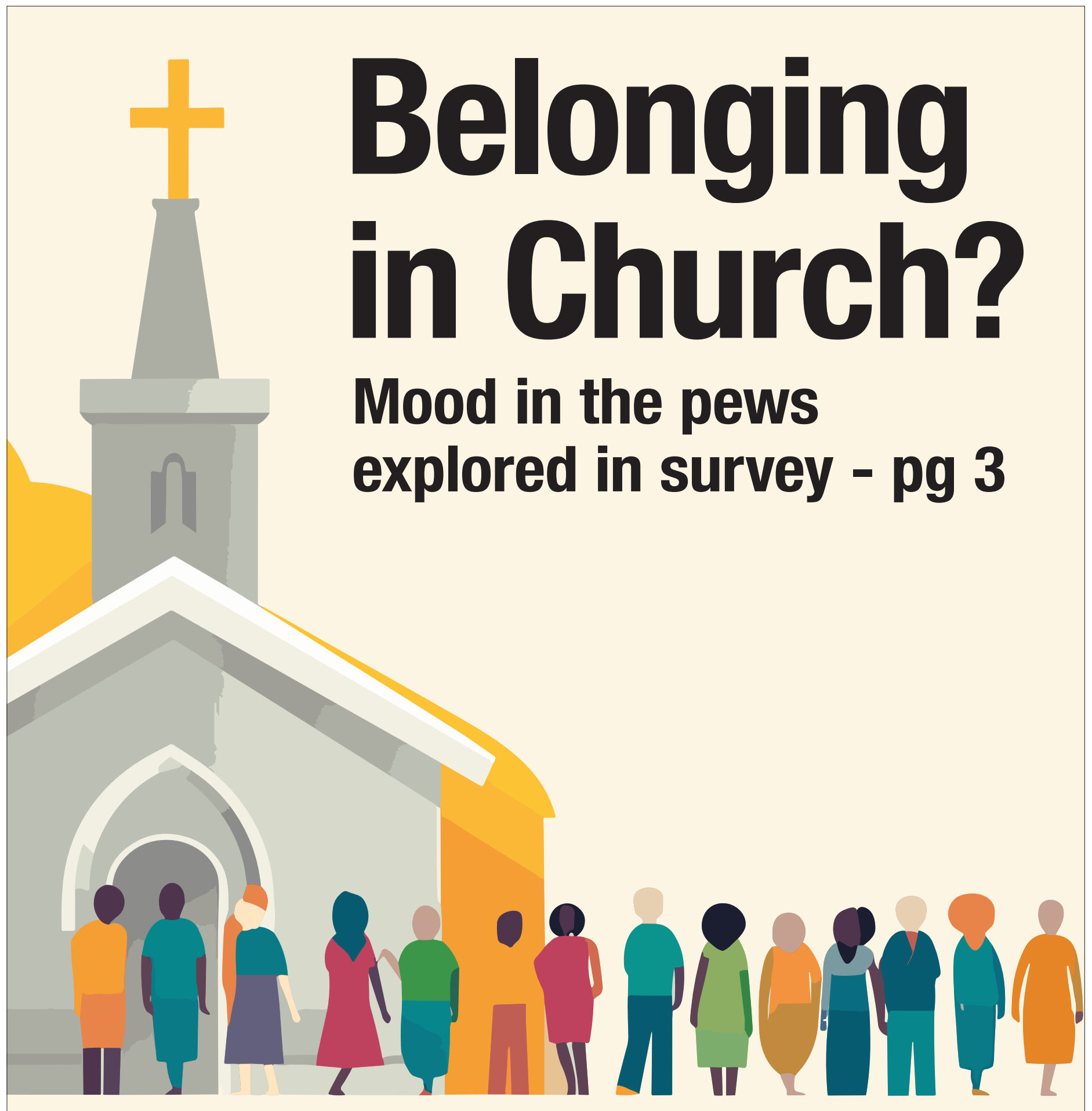
NZ Catholic \$4

The national Catholic newspaper

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as rector of Holy Cross
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On the front cover: Mood in the pews explored in survey. Image: Adobe Stock.

NZCatholic

Pompallier Diocesan Centre, 30 New Street, Ponsonby, Auckland. P.O. Box 147-000, Ponsonby, Auckland 1144.

Phone: (09) 360-3067 or (09) 378-4380.

Email: admin@nzcatholic.org.nz

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Design & Advertising: Anne Rose

Advertising enquiries contact:

design@nzcatholic.org.nz

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Wgtn priest appointed seminary rector

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

Father David Dowling has been appointed the new rector of Holy Cross Seminary in Auckland.

The appointment has been confirmed by the Vatican's Dicastery for Evangelisation. Fr Dowling is at present the Human Formator at Holy Cross. He will take over the role in April from the present Interim Rector, Bishop Emeritus Colin Campbell.

Holy Cross Seminary is the national seminary for the education and formation of diocesan priests for the Catholic Church in New Zealand.

Fr Dowling is a priest of the Archdiocese of Wellington, whose priestly journey began when he entered Holy Cross in 2001 after an 18-year career as a customs officer. A born Wellingtonian and proud supporter of the Hurricanes, he attended St Patrick's College, Wellington, before his customs career. He studied for the priesthood at Holy Cross from 2001 to 2007, and was ordained in Wellington on September 1, 2007 by Cardinal John Dew. He has a Bachelor of Theology degree from Sydney College of Divinity, and a Graduate Diploma in Theol-

ogy from Good Shepherd College.

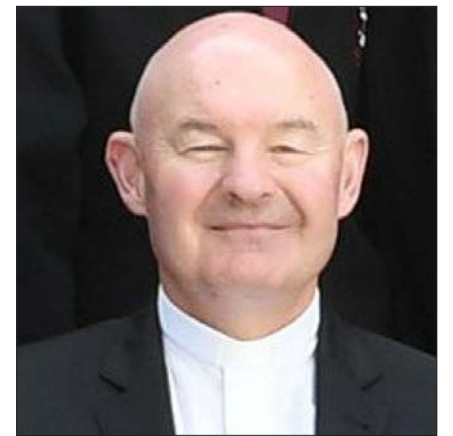
Fr Dowling said that he is committed as rector to following the example of Pope Francis in cultivating the joy of the Gospel, with a sense of being part of God's people.

"I am inspired and encouraged by the teaching of Pope Francis, who sees priestly formation as service, not simply as the transmission of a body of teachings, but also the art of concentrating on others, bringing out all their beauty and all the good that they carry within.

"As Francis has said, 'we can only be missionary disciples all together.' As a human formator at the seminary, I have endeavoured to encourage and challenge our seminarians to be fully human, mature, and capable of healthy relationships. We minister through our humanity and personality, opening ourselves to being transformed by the Spirit of Jesus.

"I hope to help form our seminarians to understand what it means to live 'generative service', which Pope Francis describes as 'the identity card' of Christ's ministers."

Auckland Bishop Stephen Lowe, who is president of the



Fr David Dowling

New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference, said that the bishops are delighted with Fr Dowling's appointment as rector.

"He is a prayerful man, who has had a rich pastoral experience as a priest of Wellington, and who has done an excellent job of being the human formator. These qualities will enrich his overseeing the forming of the new priests for our dioceses," said Bishop Lowe.

Bishop Emeritus Campbell has been interim rector since April, 2023, after the former rector, Fr Mathew Vadakkevettuvazhiyil, left.

Aotearoa NZ tour for Missionary of God's Love priest Fr Chris Ryan

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

Fr Chris Ryan from the Missionaries of God's Love, Sydney, will be in Aotearoa New Zealand for a week-long tour in March.

From clergy lunches to diocesan leadership workshops, these events will gather priests and parish leaders to provide a place of connection, learning, and encouragement, in light of the Lord's command to "Go and make disciples of all nations."

(Matthew 28:19).

The dates are as follows: March 11, Auckland: 'Go and Make Disciples' — Evening Presentation; March 12, Auckland: 'Can these bones live?' — Clergy Lunch; March 12, New Plymouth: 'The Case for Mission' — Evening Presentation at Catholic Parish of New Plymouth; March 13, Palmerston North: Clergy Lunch 'The Case for Mission' — Parish Council and Diocesan Leaders; March 14, Dunedin: 'Can these bones

live?' — Clergy Lunch; March 15, Christchurch: 'Can these bones live?' — Clergy Lunch, 'You go into the Vineyard too' — Matthew 20:4 — Evening Presentation at St Mary's Pro-Cathedral; March 16, Christchurch: 'Growing Missionary Parishes: A Half-Day Workshop for Priests and Parish Leaders'.

To find out more and to register your spot, visit the website www.divinerenovation.org/mis-sion-tour

Bishops' new teaching document available

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

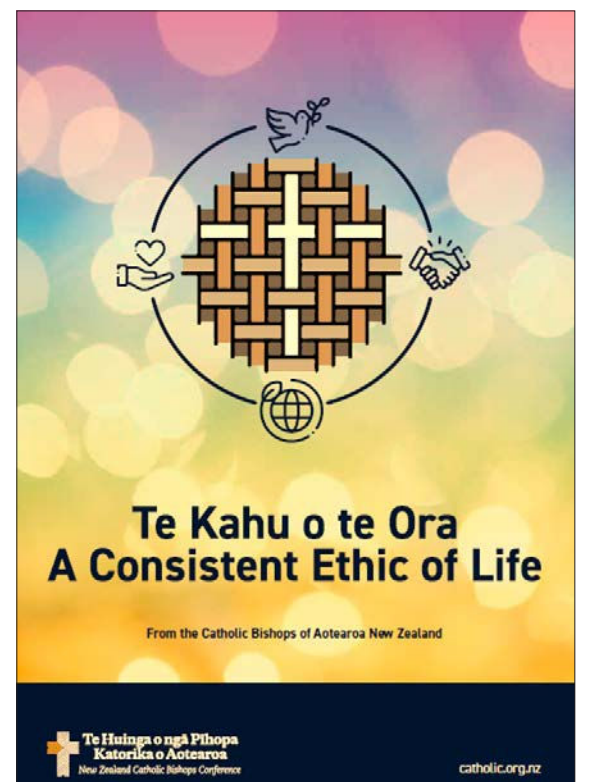
The landmark new Catholic bishops' teaching document *Te Kahu o te Ora: A Consistent Ethic of Life* has been reprinted, with paper copies available to schools, parishes, Church organisations and individuals for just \$3 each.

Te Kahu o Te Ora contains a succinct overview of eight key moral areas including creation; the beginning and end of life; discrimination and abuse; poverty; war and peace; justice and correction; and information technology and artificial intelligence. Published by the NZ Catholic Bishops Conference last September, it is a revised and much-expanded version of a 1997 bishops' statement and reminds us that all life is a gift from God.

NZCBC president and Auckland Bishop Stephen Lowe said that the bishops want every Catholic to read *Te Kahu o te Ora*: "We are confident that reflecting on the document will foster hope-filled conversations that will lead to attitudinal change and positive action towards a better world in which all life is consistently treasured and protected."

Order printed copies of *Te Kahu o te Ora* by sending an email with your name, the name of your parish, school or organisation as appropriate, your postal address and the number of copies you require, to communications@nzcbc.org.nz with "Te Kahu o te Ora" in the subject line.

NZCBC said it would invoice with the delivered order.



Te Kahu o te Ora A Consistent Ethic of Life

From the Catholic Bishops of Aotearoa New Zealand

Te Huiinga o ngā Pihopa Katorika o Aotearoa New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference

catholic.org.nz

New Zealand Catholic Church faces engagement and giving challenges, survey shows

by MINA AMSO

A survey looking into church culture in New Zealand has found that the majority of Catholics are not involved in their parishes and are not tithing, prompting questions around engagement levels and their sense of belonging within their church.

The 2023 Church Life Survey NZ had feedback from nearly 25,000 Christians in Aotearoa New Zealand last year. Respondents came from some 500 churches, including Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians and Baptists.

People were asked questions around demographics, church life, community engagement, spiritual health and leadership.

■ Details of findings for Catholics

Survey committee member and historian Professor Peter Lineham said that there isn't a strong sense of engagement in the local church for many Catholics outside Auckland, unlike their Protestant counterparts.

"The question around midweek activities — for events around the church other than the Sunday Mass, the figures show that there aren't such events, or the proportion of people who attend is much lower than typical Protestants.

"For quite a lot of Catholics, the preaching does not engage them into action," he said.

There is however a stronger sense of belonging in Auckland, as migrants make up a dominant majority, and therefore the church is a "critical basis upon which they're able to feel a part of New Zealand".

Some 44 per cent of Catholics surveyed said that they had no role within the life of the Church.

"They probably learned these habits from the tradition of leaving the work to the priests and religious orders; but another factor today is that Catholic churches are much larger than most other local churches, and so fewer participants can have roles," said a report into insights from the survey.

The lower engagement could've possibly determined the poor sense of giving from Catholics, said Professor Lineham.

"If you're engaged in the life of the parish, you're more likely for example to sense that there's a need, and therefore to be engaged in and participate in, and support the activities that are going on."

Catholics have the lowest levels of giving, with just five percent giving 10 per cent or more of their earnings. This is driven by the reluctance of younger and overseas-born Catholics to give. Low levels of commitment beyond Mass are more common for new migrants, who are understandably preoccupied with settling into New Zealand.

There are striking differences across overall age groups, with 41 per cent of young people giving nothing.

■ Age, Education and Covid-19 Impact

Considering all the denominations surveyed, churches are gravely lacking in young people, and are over-represented in the older age groups when compared to the general population in the census. But the Catholic Church has a much younger cohort due to migrants, said the report.

Amongst Catholics, the percentage born overseas is 74 per cent in Auckland diocese, but 34 per cent in Wellington Archdiocese, and lower elsewhere.

"In the extreme case of Catholics, the median age of the New Zealand-born is 69, and the median age of migrants is 49. This means that the Auckland churches are significantly younger than other regions."

Within Catholic churches, some 41 per cent are from Asia, concentrated in Auckland which is 55 per cent Asian.

When compared to the census, church attendees are significantly better educated than the general population.

"We may deduce that churches attract middle class people more than working class people," said the report.

In fact church attendees are more likely to have a university qualification today (53 per cent) than 20 years ago (25 per cent). Nearly 67 per cent of overseas-born church attendees have a degree, as

against 43 per cent of New Zealand-born respondents.

"This reflects trends in wider society, with the rising demand for education in the new generation and among migrants."

Church participation after Covid-19 [in 2023] is similar to pre-Covid-19 levels.

Anglican numbers declined by 3 per cent, Baptists 3 per cent, and Catholics 2 per cent. Major net gains were recorded by Independent (9 per cent), Christian Community Churches of NZ (7 per cent), and Confessing Anglicans.

■ God's Presence, Values, Spiritual Growth

Some 58 per cent of Catholics responded that they nearly always feel God's presence, while just 35 per cent of Baptists said the same. That sense of adoration of God curated at Mass seems to powerfully influence attendees' perceptions, said the report.

In fact, Catholics value Communion the most (51 per cent say that this is one of their most-valued aspects), but this has dropped significantly from the figure of 63 per cent for Catholics in 2001. Traditional worship is significantly more popular among Catholic respondents than in 2001, rising from 28 per cent to 37 per cent.

Overall, nearly half of all church attendees consider that they have grown significantly in a spiritual sense over the past year, and the local church was identified as the key factor by many.

All denominations reported that churches are resourcing spiritual journeys of their attendees well. The results for Auckland Catholics are particularly strong, especially for those born overseas, who value the Church highly for resourcing their spiritual journey. Perhaps there is something in New Zealand Catholicism which really helps migrants, said the report.

However, local born New Zealanders, both Catholic and Protestant, do not feel so strongly on this question.

The survey showed that young people are only moderately satisfied with what is currently offered to support their participation.

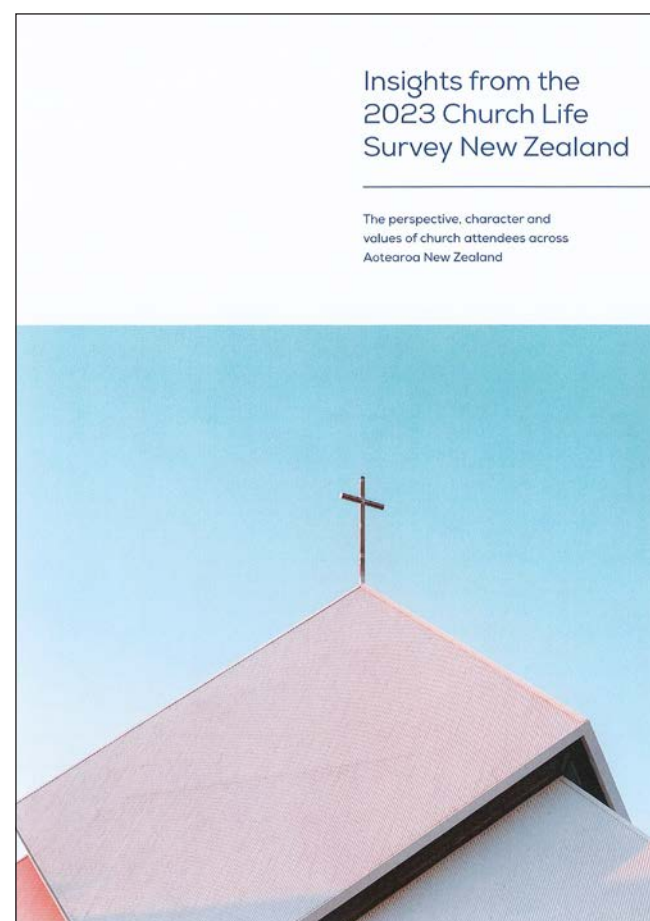
"These results suggest many churches have a lot of work to do, if they really want to attract or retain youth. In fact, 15-24 year olds who participated in the survey are more dissatisfied than those older."

According to the survey, Catholics don't read their Bibles. Significantly more than half said that they occasionally, hardly ever, or never read their Bibles. Only around 30 per cent of Catholics read the Bible everyday/most days, a few times a week or once a week.

■ Community Service and Evangelisation

The report found that more than a quarter of respondents are involved in community service or welfare activities [operated by the church]. This is up from 18 per cent in 2001. Also, overseas-born Catholics are much more likely to share the faith with others than those born in New Zealand (27 per cent versus 15 per cent respectively).

"It is another signal that the future of the



NZ church increasingly sits with overseas-born Christians."

Professor Lineham said that there wasn't such a "bad representation" amongst the different denominations. He felt that there was a balance despite a poor uptake from mega-Pentecostal churches in New Zealand.

"Some of those Pentecostals with their very large churches, we have little idea of representation of them, which is a great pity."

Findings from the survey showed that people favoured building stronger communities within the church, more spiritual growth, and that they needed worship services that nurtured faith.

"For Catholics, the potential is that, if a priest can engage members of the congregation, there's a tremendous potential for actual involvement," said Professor Lineham.

For the denominations that responded to the survey, there were some 8300 Catholics, about 5000 broad Protestants [Presbyterian, Anglican, Methodist, Uniting], and just over 6800 other Protestants [Baptist, The Salvation Army, Confessing Anglicans, Christian Community Churches [CCCNZ], Wesleyan Methodist and Independent].

The survey was made available online for the first time since its inception in mid 1990s, and has been running every five years in line with the NZ Census. It was also the largest since 2001, running from May to November.

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Giving thanks for the life of MP Efeso Collins

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

The parish priest of the late Fa'anānā Efeso Collins has said that the Green Party MP in his life did what Pope Francis asks — he widened tents for many.

Fr Martin Wu of St Joseph and St Joachim parish in Otahuhu gave the final address at the public memorial service for Mr Collins, at Due Drop Events Centre in Manukau on February 29.

Fr Wu said that Mr Collins “came to help those in need. He was a voice for the voiceless”. He was also a “special and beautiful soul”, for whom one “could never give enough thanks to God . . .”.

Fr Wu noted that Mr Collins’ daughter Kaperiela attends St Joseph’s School in Otahuhu, and that Mr Collins and his wife have taken an active interest in their daughter’s achievement and learnings. Kaperiela is also an altar server at Sunday Mass.

“On an average Sunday, Efeso would drop his daughter off for altar serving, go and get a coffee to stay awake during the homily, and then he would come and attend Mass,” Fr Wu said, to much laughter.

Fr Wu would often notice Mr Collins smiling during his homilies, and took that as a sign of approval.

But the thought also occurred to Fr Wu that Mr Collins was actually smiling at his daughter doing the altar serving.

“I will miss that smile,” Fr Wu said.

Fr Wu added that many were walking with Mr Collins’ family now, “as their Dad walked with so many in the lives he has touched”.

At the start of his address, Fr Wu passed on the condolences and apologies from Auckland Bishop Stephen Lowe, who was unable to be at the service.

Fr Wu passed on Bishop Lowe’s “prayers, love and blessings on the family at this time”.

In a facebook post on February 21, Bishop Lowe asked for prayers for the soul of Mr Collins, who



Fa'anānā Efeso Collins (Photo: Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand)

had also been an Auckland City councillor, local board member and mayoral candidate.

“We give thanks for Efeso’s ministry in our Church and his mahi in the world. Please join me in praying for his family, and all those who are struggling with this sad news,” Bishop Lowe wrote.

Auckland diocese’s Justice and Peace Commission also expressed heartfelt sorrow, after the death of Mr Collins at a charity event in Auckland on February 21, at age 49.

In a February 21 statement, the commission stated that “we especially extend our prayers and aroha to Fia, Efeso’s wife, and whānau at this sad time”.

Auckland diocese vicar for social impact and communications Loraine Elliott remembered Mr Collins “as a man of strong faith who was the first to ‘put his hand up, volunteer and support’ the Justice and Peace Commission Electoral Forum”, that was held at St Anne’s, Manurewa in September last year, in the build-up to the General Election in October.

The Electoral Forum saw four candidates from major political parties, including Mr Collins, present party policy and engage in debate. The Electoral Forum was jointly hosted by Caritas Aotearoa and facilitated by St Anne’s Manurewa parishioners, and young participants of the Social Welfare and Antipoverty Committee of the Justice and Peace Commission.

At the forum, Mr Collins introduced himself by saying that he didn’t grow up as Catholic, but “[I] now go to St Joe’s in Otahuhu (Sts Joseph and Joachim). Apparently, I found the right woman (his wife Fia) . . . she was originally from St Paul’s in Massey”.

“We would go to St Malachi’s in Ranui,” he added.

At the forum, NZ Catholic reported last year that Mr Collins spoke passionately about poverty, criticising the untaxed wealth of a few, leading to a disproportionate burden on those at the lower end of the socio-economic scale.

Among the topics he mentioned were income guarantees, caps on rental increases, and the impact of climate change.

As with the other candidates, he strongly encouraged South Auckland voters to get out and vote.

The Justice and Peace Commission remembered Mr Collins for his enthusiasm, humour, wit, deep faith, spirit of justice, and readiness to muck in and get the job done. “His inspiration for life and justice will be sadly and sorely missed.”

Consultation for Synod’s second phase

by ROWENA OREJANA

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference has started consultations on how the Church in this country can be a synodal Church in mission. The results of the consultation will form part of the *Instrumentum Laboris* (working document) for the second session of the Synod on Synodality.

A document released by the NZCBC to parishes and groups clarified that the consultation is “about actions to be taken”, and not a “critique” of the synthesis report from the first session.

Parishes and groups are asked to

engage in the process of “Conversation in the Spirit” to respond to the question of how we can be a Synodal Church in mission.

The NZCBC has set a deadline of April 5, 2024, for the submission of feedback, which should be 300 words long in each case.

The feedback from the different dioceses will then be summarised in a maximum eight-page national document, that will be sent to Rome by May 15, 2024.

There are seven topics to be discussed. These include: Church is mission, Women in the life and mission of the Church, Consecrated Life and Lay

Associations and Movements, Deacons and Priests in a Synodal Church, The Bishop in Ecclesial Communion, Towards a Listening and Accompanying Church, and Structures for Participation.

Wellington Archbishop Paul Martin, SM, said that he is really interested to find out what the feedback on the first session will be.

Archbishop Martin, Fr Dennis Nacorda and Auckland Vicar for Maori Manuel Beazley, the three New Zealand representatives to the Synod on Synodality, spoke about their experiences at a Zoom meeting held on February 15.

“If you look at the synthesis document, you would see that, under each of the topics there are matters for consideration and then, proposals. I think that gives an idea of what was discussed, and what was being put forward as possibilities in the first stage,” Archbishop Martin said.

“What I’m interested in is, when we return for the second phase, to see what has come out of the feedback and discernment around that synthesis document.”

Archbishop Martin said that he was really conscious of the fact that the synod was a process, and would not speculate on what the result of the second session would be.

Mr Beazley believes that the process of synodality will go on for several years.

“It’s a process that’s going to unfold and evolve over many years, but I personally have the sense that there is no going back, and that a Church of the 21st century must hold these elements of synodality in order to go forward,” he said.



Fr Nacorda expressed excitement over what the future holds for the Church.

“I think the new era is dawning upon us. I can see a new image of the Church forming. For me, it’s quite exciting, full of hope, and I can’t wait for it to happen,” Fr Nacorda said.

The three representatives said that they used Conversations in the Spirit at the Synod sessions to tackle each topic in the *Instrumentum Laboris*.

This involved three rounds of sharing. The first round was for people to give their opinion on a particular topic. After a number of speakers, the group would pause for three minutes of silence to reflect on what had been said.

In the second round, the participants spoke about what they heard other people say, and what the Spirit might be saying to them.

“It was really powerful as a way of calling the Spirit into all of the conversations,” noted Archbishop Martin.

The last round was when participants have an open conversation to decide what they, as a group, want to say about the topic they discussed.

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Palmerston North bishop argues for Catholic thought in the public square today

by MICHAEL OTTO

Is there a case for Roman Catholic thought in the public square today?

That was the question put by Palmerston North Bishop John Adams, in a homily at the Te Kupenga Catholic Theological College inaugural Mass for 2024 celebrated at Sacred Heart church, Ponsonby, on February 16. The answer, Bishop Adams said, is an emphatic “yes”.

The bishop started his homily by mentioning recent movies such as *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer*. The latter movie prompted Bishop Adams to do some reading about physicist Robert Oppenheimer, the Manhattan Project, the development of the first nuclear weapons, and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Bishop Adams mentioned the ethical debate over the dropping of the bombs. Then-President Harry Truman claimed that the dropping of the bombs was justified because it brought about an early end to the Second World War, Bishop Adams said.

But it is also true that “80,000 people died instantly, at Hiroshima. Tens of thousands have died subsequently of radiation. Hiroshima was not a military centre. It lacked any major war industries. Those who targeted it ensured that the aiming point for the bomb was the middle of the city, whereas in every Japanese city . . . light industry was on the peripheries of the city. Truman’s diary entry



Bishop John Adams preaches at Sacred Heart church, Ponsonby, watched by (from left) Fr Ron Bennett, Fr Rory Morrissey, Fr Mervyn Duffy, SM, and Fr Michael Smith, SJ

was that the target would be a purely military one”.

Bishop Adams asked, “Now as we prepare at this Mass, in the spiritual sense, for the opening of the Catholic Theological College, we might ask — was there a Catholic voice in that debate?”

He suggested that the English Catholic philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe was one such voice, albeit slightly later.

“She worked at Oxford University, and that university had decided to grant Mr Truman an honorary degree. Anscombe was appalled by the decision.” She composed a pamphlet (titled ‘Mr Truman’s Degree’) and forced through a vote of the doctors and masters of her university as to whether Mr Truman should be awarded the degree. She lost.

“Elizabeth Anscombe accused President Truman of a crude, consequentialist [reasoning],” Bishop Adams said.

“She claimed that it is a moral given that choosing to kill the innocent as a means to an end is always murder. She went on to say that the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were clearly innocent. The clear and immediate intention of the bomber pilots, [and] those who ordered the bombing, was to obliterate a huge number of Japanese people as a means to their further aim of bringing about a Japanese surrender.”

“Intentions matter,” Bishop Adams continued. “They help form our characters in a particular way. And that includes not only our ultimate intention, but all the means we choose to achieve them.”

Bishop Adams allowed that most people can and do act in ways that can have bad side effects. “However, intending bad effects is always to be avoided,” he said.

“I’m guessing that most of us here today would concede that there is a difference between war crimes such as the targeting of civilians, and the acceptance of the sometimes unavoidable loss of combatants in the theatre of war [that] is, perhaps at times, in proportion, justified.

“Many of you will, of course, know these same consequentialist arguments are being used today on several fronts, most obviously in defence of the military action currently taking place in Gaza and in the Ukraine.

“Yes, innocent people are losing

their lives because military and political leaders see them as being expendable in the light of the supposedly greater cause. According to Anscombe, this is never morally acceptable. I agree with her.”

Bishop Adams referred to St John Paul II’s 1993 encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (*The Splendour of Truth*), noting that this taught that universal moral norms can be known and applied by people.

“Again, I am sure that that is the case,” Bishop Adams said.

“I mention all that to you this afternoon because of a broader thought. And it is this — we need places which foster and protect the great Catholic intellectual tradition. We need places which value the great heritage of Catholic learning. Our theology is not a museum piece, but it is an understanding of the Gospel — I put it to you anyway — that the world needs to hear today more desperately than before.

“And for me personally, the courage and the Catholic insight of Elizabeth Anscombe had helped me enormously to negotiate the complex and so-often flawed world of ethical consequentialist thinking.”

Bishop Adams said that he offered the Mass for the staff of Te Kupenga Catholic Theological College “who are in the front line of this worthy mission to disseminate the Roman Catholic intellectual tradition to the students of this college and — I put it to you — further afield.”

“. . . Is there a place for Roman Catholic thought in the public square today? Yes, most certainly, there is,” Bishop Adams said.



Holy Cross Seminary students and staff visited Aotearoa New Zealand’s largest living Kauri tree, Tane Mahuta, in the Waipoua Forest in Northland, on February 13. They went on to visit Motuti, Waitangi and Russell, at the beginning of the Māori Pastoral Care course at Te Kupenga Catholic Theological College.

Visit our website:
www.nzcatholic.org.nz

How deep are our divisions?

The movie, musical and now musical movie “Mean Girls” is a reminder of one of the more miserable sides of adolescence: in groups and out groups, the cool kids and the losers, the nerds and the jocks.

Unfortunately, however, in groups and out groups don’t just exist in grammar schools and high schools. Social scientists say that this kind of group identity is hard-wired in us. We seek the protection of our tribe, and we view outsiders with hostility.

This is one way to understand our highly polarised and politicised world today. Americans increasingly identify with one political group, and react with hostility or fear to those who are not in their group. Political identity has become a “meta-identity”, impacting not just our politics, but where we live, how we pray, who we associate with. Communities are becoming more politically homogenous as we seek out like-minded people, and avoid those who do not think like us.

That is one of the intriguing insights of Father Robert Aaron Wessman, the author of “The Church’s Mission in a Polarised World” (New City Press). In an effort to understand the harsh divides that are separating Americans, including Catholics, Father Wessman explores the power of groups, looking at

is unlikely to socialise with Trump voters.

Surveys suggest that, as we grow more polarised, we even view these political differences the way we once viewed religious differences. Today, parents are more likely to be concerned about their child marrying someone from another party, than someone from another faith tradition.

In “mean girl” terms, we identify our group as the “in group”, and the other side as the “out group”. Most disturbing is that often the punishment or defeat of the out group becomes our primary driver. Rather than looking for areas of agreement or compromise, we look for annihilation. “Rage motivates,” Father Wessman wrote, and politicians are incentivised to stimulate this rage.

“There exists an ‘us versus them’ competition taking place where winner takes all, and where the common good is rarely considered,” Father Wessman wrote.

For Christians, this environment is spiritually deadly. It divides us, not just into warring camps, but hate-filled ones.

Nor is the Church immune to this polarisation.

On a political level, red Catholics and blue Catholics are tempted to pick and choose which parts of the social gospel they highlight — a kind of cafeteria polarisation. Pastors tell horror stories of how these political divides can impact parish harmony. Parishes themselves are at risk of becoming ideologically homogenous, as Catholics seek out spaces where they will find others who think like them.

None of this is compatible with our baptismal bonds. “Baptism makes us members of the Body of Christ,” the catechism reminds us. “Therefore . . . we are members one of another” (CCC1267). The catechism describes this as our “sacramental bond of unity” (1271).

Perhaps when the Church is done with the eucharistic revival [in the US], it could mount a baptismal revival. Its mission would be to help Catholics understand that their baptismal bonds transcend class, gender, and most certainly political affiliation.

Such a revival would be good for the Church. Good for the nation too.

Greg Erlandson is a former editor-in-chief of CNS

Greg Erlandson

the sociological and psychological research that shows how important group identity is, and how easily it can pit us against each other.

Surveys show that, when our political identity is more and more central to how we see ourselves as members of a group, the less likely we are to want to associate with, or socialise with, people who are not in our group. This is most obvious this year in our presidential politics, where a Trump voter in a red state is unlikely to socialise with Biden supporters, and a Biden supporter in a blue state



US President Joe Biden and former US President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump are pictured in a combination photo. (OSV News photo/Leah Millis/Amr Alfiky, Reuters)

Ronald Rolheiser

Praying the Psalms

God behaves in the psalms in ways that God is not allowed to behave in theology.

That quip comes from Sebastian Moore, and should be highlighted at a time when fewer people want to use the psalms in prayer because they feel offended by what they sometimes find there. More and more, we see people resisting the psalms as a way to pray (or desire to sanitise them) because the psalms speak of murder, revenge, anger, violence, war-making, and patriarchy.

Some ask, how can I pray with words that are full of hatred, anger, violence, speak of the glories of war, and of crushing one’s enemies in the name of God? For others, the objection is to a patriarchal colouring in the psalms — where the divine is masculine and the masculine is too-much deified. For yet others, the offence is aesthetic. Their objection: “They’re bad poetry!”

Perhaps the psalms aren’t great poetry and undeniably do smack of violence, war, hatred of one’s enemies, and the desire for vengeance, all in the name of God. Admittedly, they’re also patriarchal in character. But does that make them a bad language for prayer? Let me suggest something to the contrary.

One of the classical definitions of prayer says, “prayer is lifting mind and heart to God”. Simple, clear, accurate. I suggest that the actual problem is that we seldom actually do this when we pray. Rather than lifting up to God what is actually on our minds and in our hearts, we tend to treat God as someone from whom we need to hide the real truth of our thoughts and feelings. Instead of pouring

out mind and heart, we tell God what we think God wants to hear — not murderous thoughts, desire for vengeance, or our disappointment with God.

But expressing those feelings is the whole point. What makes the psalms particularly apt for prayer is that they do not hide the truth from God, but express the whole gamut of our actual feelings. They give an honest voice to what’s actually going on in our minds and hearts.

Sometimes we feel good, and our spontaneous impulse is to speak words of praise and gratitude, and the psalms give us that voice. They speak of God’s goodness in everything — love, friends,

“Sometimes we feel good, and our spontaneous impulse is to speak words of praise and gratitude, and the psalms give us that voice.”

faith, health, food, wine, enjoyment. But we don’t always feel that way. Our lives also have their cold, lonely seasons, when disappointment and bitterness simmer or rage under the surface. The psalms give us honest voice where we can open up all those simmering feelings to God. Also, there are times when we are

filled with the sense of our own inadequacy, with the fact that we cannot measure up to the trust and love that’s given us. Again, the psalms give us voice for this, asking God to be merciful and to soften our hearts, wash us clean, and give us a new start.

As well, there are times when we feel bitterly disappointed with God, and need some way to express this. The psalms give us voice for this (“Why are you so silent?” “Why are you so far from me?”) even as they make us aware that God is not afraid of our anger and bitterness; but, like a loving parent, only wants us to come and talk about it. The psalms are a privileged vehicle for prayer

because they lift the full range of our thoughts and feelings to God.

However, there are a number of reasons why we struggle with that. First, because our age tends to eschew metaphor and, taken literally, some of the images in the psalms are offensive. Second, we tend to be in denial about our actual feelings. It’s hard to admit that we feel some of the things we sometimes feel — grandiosity, sexual obsessions, jealousies, bitterness, paranoia, murderous thoughts, disappointment with God, doubts in our faith. Too often our prayer belies our actual thoughts and feelings. It tells God what we think God wants to hear. The psalms are more honest.

To pray with full honesty is a challenge. Kathleen Norris puts it this way: If you pray regularly “there is no way you can do it right. You are not always going to sit up straight, let alone think holy thoughts. You’re not going to wear your best clothes, but whatever isn’t in the dirty clothes basket. You come to the Bible’s great ‘book of praise’ through all the moods and conditions of life, and, while you feel like hell, you sing anyway. To your surprise, you find that the psalms do not deny your true feelings, but allow you to reflect them, right in front of God and everyone”.

Feel-good aphorisms that express how we think we ought to feel, are no substitute for the earthy realism of the psalms, which express how sometimes we actually do feel. Anyone who would lift mind and heart to God without ever mentioning feelings of bitterness, jealousy, vengeance, hatred, and war, should write slogans for greeting cards and not be anyone’s spiritual advisor.

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

Voices of faith in corridors of power

Editorial

The sudden death of Green Party MP Fa'anānā Efeso Collins shocked the nation, and led to a widespread and heartfelt outpouring of emotion.

Mr Collins made mention of his involvement with the Catholic Church in his maiden speech in Parliament, delivered only a matter of days before his untimely death.

At the conclusion of his speech, which touched on many matters, including poverty and climate change, Mr Collins said, "My favourite part of the Mass on Sunday is when our parish priests will rise and say, 'The Mass has ended.' It's about that time that I start to think about what we're going to be having for lunch! But our priest continues, now with his arms outstretched, and he will close with this charge to the congregation: 'Go now in peace to love and serve the Lord.' Mr Speaker, it is with that spirit, the spirit of peace and love and service, with which my extended family who are here today come to this House."

According to the St Joseph and Joachim Otahuhu parish facebook page, Mr Collins was at Mass on the Sunday before he delivered his maiden speech.

The many friends, colleagues, fellow parishioners and associates of Mr Collins are mourning his loss deeply, and none more so than his wife and daughters.

The wider Catholic community is also experiencing a loss, in the sense that Parliament needs more strong voices whose outlook on life has been informed by faith — especially the Catholic faith. Mr Collins was seen by many as potentially adding to a history of prominent MPs with similar formation — notably Michael Joseph Savage, Jim Bolger, Sir William English, Geoff Braybrooke, Jim Anderton, Sir Gerard Wall, Chris Finlayson and many more.

There are Catholics and former students of Catholic schools among the current MPs, for instance, Gerry Brownlee, Paulo Garcia, Megan Woods, Kieran McNulty, Damien O'Connor, Greg O'Connor, and new Green Party MP Lan Pham, to name a few. Prime Minister Chris Luxon was raised as a Catholic. Theirs is a difficult job, and they are in need of prayers.

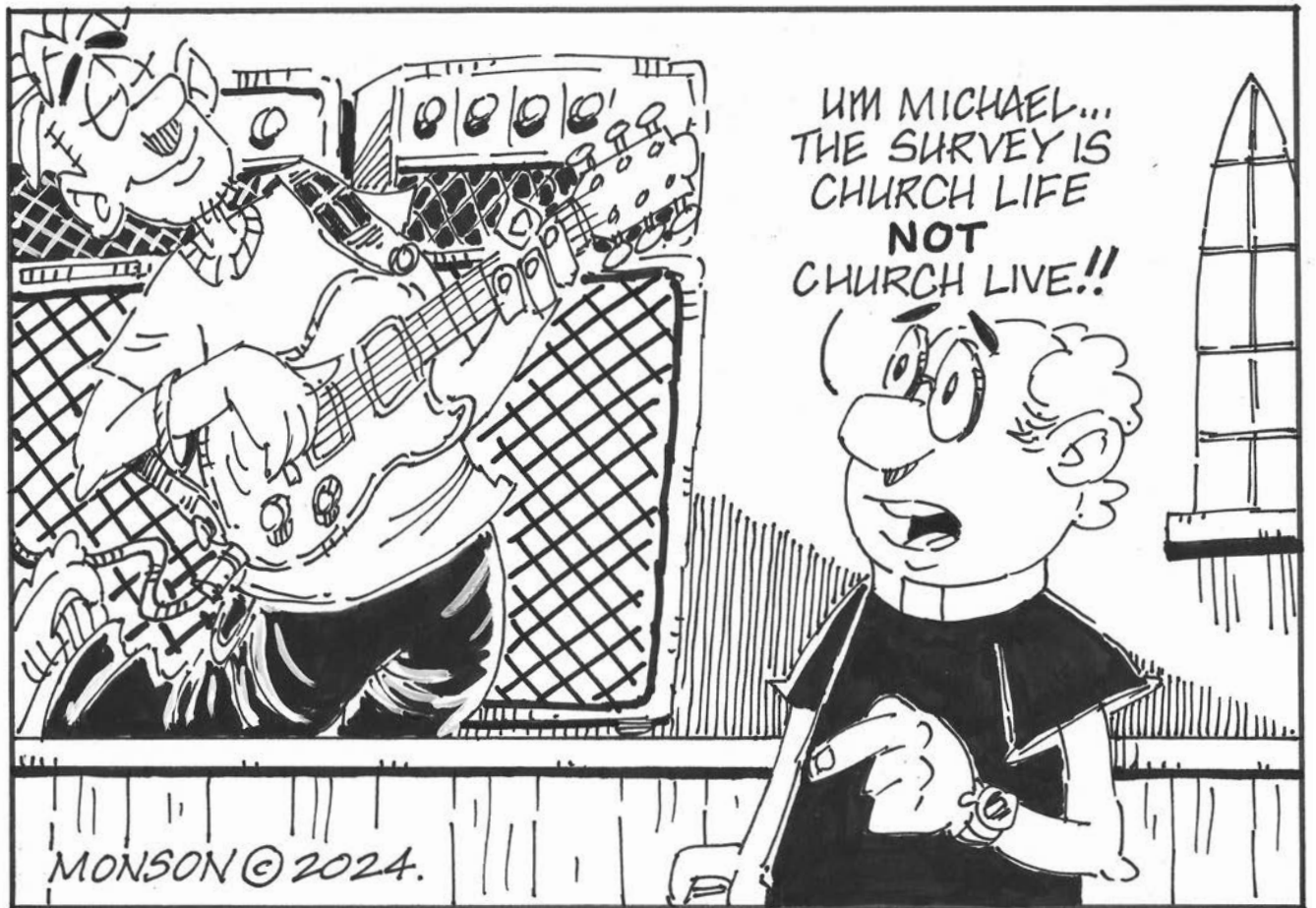
In 2002, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a "Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life". The note, signed by then-CDF prefect Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, referred to a "legitimate freedom of Catholic citizens to choose among the various political opinions that are compatible with faith and the natural moral law, and to select, according to their own criteria, what best corresponds to the needs of the common good".

The note also stated that "when political activity comes up against moral principles that do not admit of exception, compromise or derogation, the Catholic commitment becomes more evident and laden with responsibility. In the face of fundamental and inalienable ethical demands, Christians must recognise that what is at stake is the essence of the moral law, which concerns the integral good of the human person".

Especially, those involved in lawmaking bodies have a grave and clear obligation to oppose any law that attacks human life. Sometimes, they need to limit the harm, if that is all that can be achieved at present. As St John Paul II wrote in *Evangelium Vitae*, "regarding the situation in which it is not possible to overturn or completely repeal a law allowing abortion which is already in force or coming up for a vote, an elected official, whose absolute personal opposition to procured abortion was well known, could licitly support proposals aimed at limiting the harm done by such a law, and at lessening its negative consequences at the level of general opinion and public morality".

It is sadly unlikely that abortion law will come before this Parliament, having dealt — badly — with the topic in the previous term. But pressure will likely be applied for the grounds for legal euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide to be broadened. The need for voices of faith and voices of sense among MPs to defend life and the common good will be great.

The Habit



Letters

Lord's Prayer

The correctness of the English translation "Lead us not into temptation" has recently again received comment (*NZ Catholic*, letters, February 25). Christ spoke to the disciples and the crowds in Aramaic — the local language in Palestine. As the Church spread, the first written records (the Gospels) were written in Greek — a language widely understood throughout the Mediterranean world. Later, with the Popes now in Rome, the Gospels were translated into Latin, and much later still (16th Century) from Latin into English.

Every language has its own nuances and structures — the skill of the translator is to express the ideas involved, in the appropriate form in a different language.

The Catholic understanding of the Lord's Prayer has been significantly influenced by Latin, which for the petition in question is "et ne nos inducas in tentationem".

Two words are critical. First "inducas" — we are asking Christ to lead us, to guide us, to support and strengthen us. This is what we need and want.

Secondly; "ne". This is a negator, turning the whole sense around to mean the opposite — in simple English "lead us

away from temptation", that is, the human inclination not to obey Christ's second commandment to love our neighbour as ourself.

In other words, Christ is teaching us to ask for his help to be truly his disciples.

Tony Williams, Napier.

Science

The editorial on the dialogue between faith and science (*NZ Catholic*, Feb. 25) brings to mind the writings of the Benedictine priest Fr Stanley Jaki. A review of a book about him on the Goodreads website notes that Fr Jaki claimed that "the culture of systematic, ongoing quantitative study of nature arose within, and only within, the theological, philosophical and psychological milieu of Christian medieval Europe, and that it arose because of that milieu".

Fr Jaki researched the beginnings of what we now call the scientific method in seven cultures that predated medieval Europe, and despite all these cultures making scientific advances and having scholastic institutions, the momentum towards "science" stalled in each of them. In the reviewer's words, they "never coalesced into a systematic, self-perpetuation culture of quantitative

study of nature".

The reasons Fr Jaki posited for this, had to do with the worldviews, often religious, that underpinned these cultures. Some held that all of nature could be changed by the whim of a capricious deity at any time. Others believed that "life was simply an endlessly repeating cycle from which there was no escape, or escape only by detachment from nature and the body".

But Catholic Christianity believes in a "personal God who, though transcendent, was nevertheless rational. . . [God] created the universe to run by its own set of laws rather than by mere divine whim, and as such it was predictable, rational and discoverable".

S. Maitland, Auckland.

Hymns

I was visiting a friend recently and accompanied him to Mass in his local parish church — not in Auckland. The liturgy was good and edifying, but the singing of the hymns seemed to go on for ever. Surely, it is enough to sing three verses of a hymn, not five or six.

I couldn't help but notice that the celebrant was standing and waiting — and singing at times — when he arrived at the sanctuary and at the preparation of the gifts.

When the celebrant is ready to continue with the Mass, that should be

a signal to wind up the hymn at the conclusion of the current verse. There shouldn't be another three verses after that, in my opinion.

And when the Mass has finished and the celebrant has bowed to the altar and has made his way down the aisle and out of the church, usually at the start of the second verse of the final hymn, maybe that is a sign to complete the verse and finish there. It is not the best look to have some people getting up and walking out, while an ever-diminishing number carries on singing.

Don't get me wrong — I am grateful to those who come forward and offer their gifts in music ministry. But, as they say, timing is everything!

John Cowen, Auckland.

Suggestion

I should like to make [a] suggestion.

. . . [T]hat we ask our bishops to make it mandatory for all of our schools to prominently display a copy of the overhead which was displayed in the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit on Waitangi Day.

Michael Vanderpump, Palmerston North.

■ *Abridged* — The overhead displayed New Zealand and Tino Rangatiranga flags and the words "partnership", "protection", "participation" — Editor.

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How to find our true identity

Who am I? This question lurks at the core of every human heart. So often the real answer is blurred by responses that we so readily grasp after, and yet time and again fail to satisfy. One response in particular, I think, gnaws at so many of us today: "I am important."

Of course, human beings have inherent value. Created in God's image and likeness, our value is inestimable. Yet, when we focus too much on that value, we miss the big picture that our heart longs to see.

Consider the typical "getting to know you" questions.

Sr Alicia Torres

"What do you do?" "Where did you go to school?" "Where do you live now?" "What do you do for fun?"

Such questions can fill an awkward silence, and help us to learn about a person, but they can also help evaluate that person's place in the social hierarchy.

Last year, I was invited to a networking event. As I waited to check in, the man standing behind me began to make conversation with me. He was kind and eager to meet people and make connections. But once I revealed by my answers to his questions

that I wasn't in the "in crowd", he politely stepped away from the conversation.

It was a fascinating experience for me. I wasn't offended and understood how eager the people at the event were to make the most of their experience, and make as many connections as possible.

But it raised the question for me: "With whom are we ultimately trying to connect?"

A dear friend of mine was recently describing a piece of art that had really moved him. It was an image of Jesus, sitting in the midst of a schoolroom surrounded by children. Some were close to Jesus, affectionate and intimate, while others were gathered round that inner circle, gazing with desire. Still others were far off, yet not outside the room. What my friend loved about the artwork was that he could identify with one little boy in particular, and how that child so evidently longed to be near Jesus.

I am important, but that means nothing unless I know I am loved.

The only way to confirm that we are loved is if we know that we are children of God. Because of this relationship, everything else in our world becomes true, good and beautiful. Our identity in Christ makes our accomplishments meaningful, our relationships enjoyable, and our wildest dreams at least fun to think about, if not completely possible!

Our identity as children of God is confirmed and nourished above all in our celebration of the Eucharist. At the moment we make the sign of the

cross, not only does the Mass begin, but as I sign myself, I am reminded of my identity -- that I am made in the image of God, a trinity of persons bound in a relationship of self-giving love. As the Mass continues, I am drawn into deeper communion with the God who loves me, hearing his Word, spoken for me, witnessing his offering, prepared for me at the hands of the priest, and gazing upon his hidden presence in a tiny white host, given, completely, for me.

He gives himself to me, and I, in turn, can give myself to him. In the end, I don't really want to know if I am important, and neither does anyone else. What I want to know is if I am loved. And if it is true - that love is at the core of my identity - then all truly shall be well.

And what about that big picture? The image that I see in my mind's eye, and that my heart is drawn to contemplate, is of a little girl smiling, cheerful, with rosy cheeks and a tiny brown teddy bear being held tenderly in the arms of Jesus, her head resting upon his heart. And that little girl is me. And when I can truly see that little girl, I know the answer to the question, "Who am I?" The answer is, "I am loved."

Sister Alicia Torres is an executive team member for the National Eucharistic Revival, editor of the Heart of the Revival e-newsletter, and a member of the Franciscans of the Eucharist of Chicago, a religious community that carries out the mission of the Church through service to the poor, evangelisation and teaching. (OSV News)

'I worked with my hands': The Life Of Friar Garry Hill

by NICOLE van HEERDEN

"I worked with my hands: My Life as a Franciscan Friar" is a short read packed with entertaining and inspiring stories about the kind of life that is rare, and possibly becoming rarer, in our digitally-dominated present. It recounts the life of Australian Friar Garry Hill, OFM, whose vocation as a Franciscan friar led him to work as a missionary in Papua New Guinea, from 1966 until 2004. The book was co-written by New Zealander Fr Anthony Malone, OFM, and was published last year.

Starting out as a cook in a retreat centre in Australia, Friar Garry completed a commercial chef's course by going to evening classes, and was soon producing professional catering for the retreat centre. Then, eager for a new challenge, he volunteered for the mission in Papua New Guinea, but they didn't need cooks. So, in his spare time, he took a correspondence course in mechanics, then worked for six months in a Honda factory in Australia. When he eventually arrived in PNG, his reputation as an expert motorbike mechanic preceded him, and he was welcomed with open arms by the community. Then the need arose for field workers in leprosy-prone villages; so Friar Garry trained in a new set of skills, and began work

diagnosing and administering medicine to people with leprosy and tuberculosis in remote villages. As if three changes of expertise weren't enough, he then applied and trained for three years to become a Health Extension Officer (HEO), a kind of intrepid doctor. This part of the book is page after page of fascinating, sometimes macabre, stranger-than-fiction stories, throughout which Friar Garry found himself delivering babies by candle light with hot wax dripping down his neck, fixing the roof and electrics in a government health centre, stitching up shark bites, removing tumours, and the list goes on. Wherever a need arose, whether medical or otherwise, Friar Garry had the skills and practical know-how to find a solution. So when a tsunami hit PNG in 1998, he was flown into the midst of the devastation. His account of working in the wake of the disaster as it unfolded is harrowing, but again shows his adaptability as he worked as an anaesthetist for those undergoing emergency surgery. Finally, when he moved back to Australia in 2004, he learned to install solar panels, and became an all-purpose maintenance technician for the friaries, once again seeing a need and filling it, in the most hands-on way.

"Vocation" is perhaps often understood as "what do I want to do with my life?". Whereas in Friar Garry's life story, "vocation" is very much presented as "what is the greatest need in the community and how can I best help to fill that need?". Friar Garry used his head and hands as the tools for serving and improving the lives of others. But there is also an incredible amount of heart in his stories, and his genuine love for his neighbour shines through.

In 2021, Pope Francis spoke to a new technical college in Rome about the need for the head, the hands and the heart to be "a circle that must always be kept open and dynamic". It is important "that one thinks what one feels and does, feels what one thinks and does, and does what one feels and thinks".

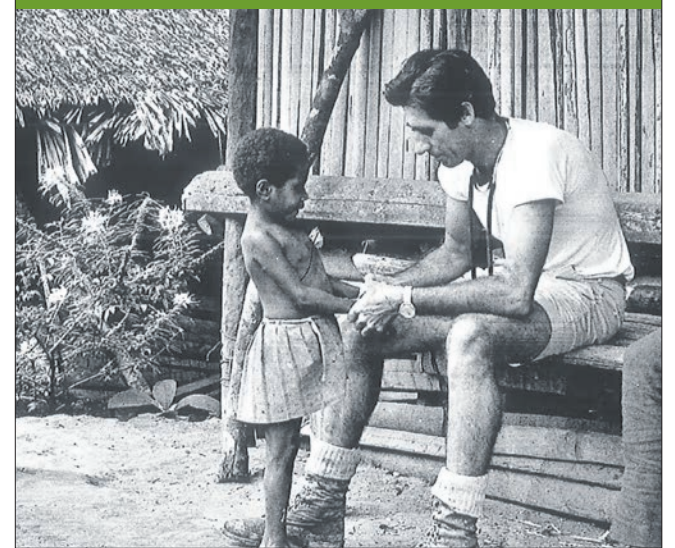
His sentiment echoes the words of philosopher John Ruskin; "Fine art is that in which the hand, the head, and the heart of man [sic] go together." This idea of connecting in real, hands-on ways to one's work was central to the ideals of the Arts and Crafts Movement in 19th Century England, in which philosophers and artists such as William Morris sought to improve social conditions in the face of the dehumanising mass-production of the Industrial Revolution. They argued that allowing makers to connect more fully with the making process, and with other people, would result in objects with more integrity and beauty, and lead to greater social happiness.

It's no great stretch to compare the factory

I worked with my hands

My life as a Franciscan Friar

Friar Garry Hill, OFM with Anthony Malone, OFM



worker of the 19th century to the 21st century office worker, stuck behind a screen, engaging with unbeautiful interfaces, and connecting with people through dehumanised, virtual filters.

In his book, "The Case for Working With Your Hands", philosopher turned motorbike mechanic Matthew Crawford argues that manual work has become devalued in favour of more abstract and cerebral skills. But he says, "the act of making something tangible with your hands is a powerful antidote to the intangibility of modern life".

So many careers now effectively sentence young people entering the workforce to 8-hour-plus days staring at a computer screen. The world is unavoidably digitised, and we cannot all choose a life lived in a hands-on way. For those whose vocation and skillset leads them into screen-based jobs, Friar Garry's life is a refreshing reminder of the antidote to be found in learning practical skills, and using them to connect with and serve others.

Nicole van Heerden is a Catholic from East Auckland.



Fr Anthony Malone OFM and Friar Garry Hill OFM

Big year for Vinnies working with students

by MINA AMSO

The leaders of the Vinnies (Society of St Vincent de Paul) in Auckland are gearing up for 2024, which they anticipate will be a momentous year for them.

The general manager for the Vinnies Tamaki Makaurau hub in Onehunga, Delphina Soti, said that the Young Vinnies Programme typically attracts between 500 and 1600 secondary students annually. This year's participation is expected to hit north of 1600.

"Over the past three years, nearly 4000 secondary students from approximately 17 different schools, mainly Catholic, have engaged in the programme," said Ms Soti.

According to Ms Soti, students describe the experience as "eye-opening". They choose areas of focus such as food insecurity, poverty, or homelessness, with opportunities to visit SVDP hubs and engage with social services in the community to gain first-hand experience.

"They didn't understand the cause and effect of poverty, or understand that there are a lot of people who are food-insecure, [and] so many homeless. We have a lot of people who have never experienced the cost of living [crisis] before.

"Packing as simple as a sugar bag, they ask 'why are we packing sugar? Do they not have sugar?'"

In fact, one in five children in New Zealand live with food insecurity, said Ms Soti.

According to the Growing Up in New Zealand website, children living in households with moderate to severe food insecurity are less likely to receive the nutrition they need for healthy development. (Growing Up in New Zealand is this country's largest longitudinal study of child health and well-being, following the lives of more than 6000 children and their families. The University of Auckland study has been following the lives of these children since 2009 and 2010 - before they were born.)

"Compared to children in food-secure households, children with food insecurity have lower fruit and vegetable intake, are less likely to eat breakfast at home before school, and have more fast food and more fizzy drinks because these are cheap, filling alternatives," a report from Growing Up in New Zealand stated.

Food insecurity is related to low disposable household income and material deprivation. It is being used as an indicator to monitor progress, in line with the Child Poverty Reduction Act.

There is a downward trend since 2012/13 in the proportion of children living in households where food runs out often or sometimes.

Some of the participants in the youth programme in recent years have sought support for well-being and mental health, Ms Soti said.

This was especially the case for some young adults and school leaders, notably during the Covid pandemic years, she said.

There has been a real need to engage with these young people, who had been enduring isolation, the pressures of studying remotely, and who experienced the grief of not being able to complete final school year events with classmates and friends.



Rosmini Young Vinnies cooking ready-to-heat meals out of their Food Tech classroom, to support vulnerable families in the local area.



Smiles in the kitchen at the Vinnies hub in Onehunga

Students also had to juggle studies and employment to assist their families at this time.

After the Covid restrictions ended, Vinnies has been helping young people attend youth evenings by providing support vouchers for transport. Food support has also been given during and after the Covid years.

Ms Soti said that there was a need to help young people "de-stress". So, it was important for Vinnies to create gatherings involving fun activities, and centred around supporting mental health, helping well-being, safeguarding, and positive socialisation.

"We also brought in some mental health, psychotherapist, [and] social worker practitioners and mentors, to support students one-on-one and in group sessions," Ms Soti said.

Young people involved with Vinnies also carried out advocacy work on issues that they were concerned about at their schools.

The Vinnies student programmes cover various social justice and awareness themes throughout the year, including social exclusion, diversity, and homelessness. For the homelessness programmes, the Vinnies work with Auckland City Mission staff to facilitate overnight retreats, giving students first-hand experiences and perspectives.

Ms Soti said that the Vinnies Youth Programme is about putting faith into action, providing opportunities for spiritual exploration, understanding, empathy, and advocacy. It serves as a safe space for young people to connect, grow, and find belonging.

The students look forward to meeting students from other schools, said Ms Soti. In fact, it became more apparent following the pandemic that more students were enjoying the socialising aspect of the programme after feeling isolated at home.

This prompted some tweaking of the programme so as to meet the needs of the young people. She also noted that community volunteering and well-being programmes attract many other groups.

"Throughout the year we have all sorts of communities come through. This includes, and is not limited to, corporate groups, businesses, families, clubs and sports groups, university teams, parish and youth groups and school staff.

"The other week we had the entire staff of McAuley High School, who volunteered for half of their working day. As part of this community volunteer programme,

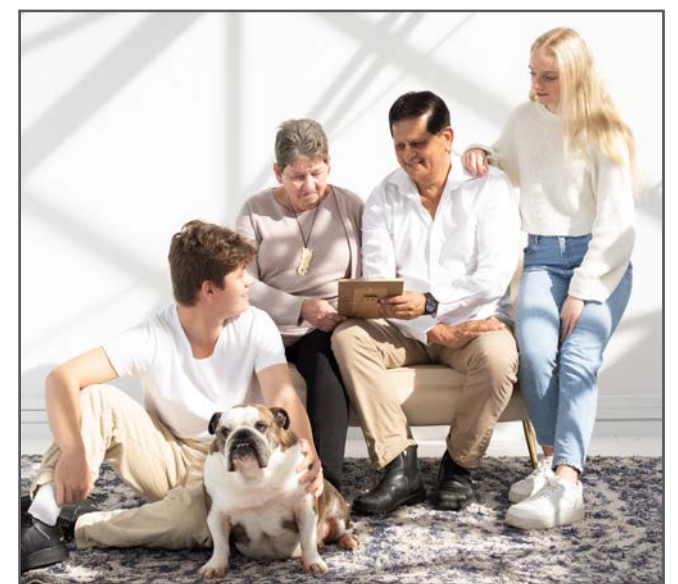
we always start in karakia (prayer), and integrate whakawhanaungatanga (relationship building), and manaakitanga (hospitality)."

These programmes are run by the Vinnies management team, warehouse staff, and youth workers, and offer various activities and reflection opportunities, concluding with the breaking of bread together in a communal lunch whipped up by the Vinnies chef and cooks.

The Vinnies Youth Programme engages with colleges, both Catholic and non-Catholic, offering programmes centred around service, charisma, faith, and leadership.

This year's activities started with a leadership session in late February [Youth Leadership Programme], at which some 70 leaders from the 17 colleges in Auckland diocese gathered. The leaders will attend a training camp, and later be commissioned for the year at a Mass celebrated at St Patrick's Cathedral. These leaders then lead their Young Vinnies cohort at their colleges in their service activity for the year.

Beyond the Young Vinnies Programme, Vinnies centres throughout Auckland offer a wide range of social services, including op shops, social enterprise initiatives, food banks, budgeting services, well-being programmes, community connections, and mentoring.



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Is the Church ready for women leaders?

by MINA AMSO

Is the Church ready for women leaders?

Is there a need for more women leaders in the Church? Should they be considered in the diaconate and ordained ministry? If not, how could they be equipped to contribute in other roles within the ecclesiastical structure? And is there the appropriate leadership training and mentorship?

Debates around whether women should be ordained in the Catholic Church are consistent, both by men and women. In a recent episode of The Dispatches podcast, run by Left Foot Media, which has been set up by Catholic speaker and activist Brendan Malone, the host introduced the topic of women, leadership and the Church. First up was whether women should be ordained ministers. The podcast episode featured discussions with theologian Anna Abraham and leadership expert Jemma Brunton, both young Catholic women.

Mrs Abraham has believed that, theologically, ordination to ministry is not something for women, although she acknowledged that people can and do have different views. But the issue does raise questions.

"If ordination isn't for women, what is our role in the Church? And I think the Church has said plenty of things about it. But it sometimes doesn't filter down to everybody in the pew or just to feel empowered, not empowered either, but just to know what is my responsibility as a faithful Catholic, as a faithful woman, what is my responsibility in the Church? What is my baptismal duty?", she asked.

Arguments over opportunities for women's leadership in the Church don't exercise Ms Brunton, a former director of Hearts Aflame.

"Honestly, for me, it's just a non-issue. Personally, I just think there are so many places that women can lead in the Church. I see so many opportunities for things that I would love to help out with, or ways that I could lead and serve, and I don't have the time for it. I don't think the opportunities for women to step up and serve and show leadership in the Catholic Church are lacking at all," she said.

The question then: Is this a politicised fight? Mr Malone asked. Is it just political? Or is liberalism the reason for this continuing fight for women's rights in the Church?

"We're living in an age of post-enlightenment liberalism in all its various forms," Mr Malone said.

"And the whole idea of the radical individual is a big thing now, the autonomous self-choosing individual. And that means we are not as connected as we once were with the concept of tribe and nation and family and community.

"A lot of that's broken down. So those are things that give you your identity and your sense of meaning and your sense of role in place in the world. But if that's broken down, is that a factor here, that people are like, well, what do I do?" he asked.

Ms Brunton said that it isn't so much that women want leadership roles, or there's a lack of roles for women, it's that there's a real need for people to just step up and lead, whether female or male, within the Church.

"I'm often looking for people to stand up and lead, and there's just so much need out there, and we need more people to stand up."

On another level, though, Mrs Abraham said that there is a crisis of faith around the world, fuelling contributing to poor involvement in Church and leadership.

"Certainly, in the western world, faith isn't an ordinary part. Well, it's been pushed out of just everyday life. What you find is, even people who are Catholic and maybe go to Mass on a regular basis, there's all this other stuff in life, that they do, like children are in five million different sports and things like that. Everyone's just so busy, and people are working long hours, and both parents are working.

"They're just giving their time to lots of other things because they've got a list of priorities, right," said Mrs Abraham. This means sometimes that it's the handful of people who do everything in the parish, put their hand up to serve every time there's a need, while others just show up on Sundays or other occasions.

Mr Malone said that women leaders add that maternal instinct, that tenderness, the feminine genius that St John Paul II wrote about.

"The way females lead — it doesn't matter whether they've got children or not, they lead from a very, genuinely speaking, maternal instinct. They have a genuine, nurturing, emotional connection [with] the subjects they lead, [and] to the ministries they're involved [in]. It's a beautiful thing. Blokes can be a bit brutish, and sometimes you need that sort of 'Right, we're just going to get on and get going'. Other times it's just not good at all," said Mr Malone.

However, while the number of women who attend Catholic Masses in Australia has dropped post-Covid-19,



A facebook graphic for the podcast

even then, there are still more women than men participating in the Church.

"Where are the men particularly? I think that, with the sort of middle-aged type blokes in particular, there's quite a few younger blokes now starting to step up, but the leadership and the mentoring for those men is missing. And there's a lot of older guys who you still see coming to daily Mass and stuff like that. But there's that big group of men who are missing in the middle," said Mr Malone.

There is a lack of leadership process: the training, the means to become a good leader in the Church, and the mentoring that is needed, said Mr Malone.

So how do we develop leaders? Drawing on her own experience leading Hearts Aflame, Ms Brunton said that it's all about getting one's hands dirty in the work.

"It's from the work I do and bringing people into Hearts Aflame and trying to get them to say 'yes' first. And then just through the experience of being around the amazing people that we are here at Hearts Aflame, and the learning that they do in this space, I think, really grows leadership skills."

"It's about getting people involved and calling on them, challenging them. And the same in parish life. I think of priests who are really good at that, when someone comes to them, maybe they're a visionary person. They come to them with an idea,

and the priest goes: 'so tell me how you'd make that work, and what do you need to get that going', and backs them and supports them," she said.

Prayer and discernment should be part of the process too, she said, but also responsibility for one's own faith life.

"When I took over this role, for me, there was an extra level of accountability in my own faith life of going, right, I'm in this role. I've really got to make sure that I am doing my utmost to be growing in faith, to be building that intimacy with God," said Ms Brunton.

She said that, practically speaking, the easiest thing to do is to simply invite people.

"If someone's got an idea, what's the purpose behind it? What are they trying to get at? What's their goal? What support do they need? If it's a younger person, do they need to be paired up with someone, or mentored by someone in the Church that might be able to just help them get started?" she added.

In this ongoing dialogue, the need for a deeper understanding of roles and responsibilities persists. As discussions evolve, the focus shifts towards, not just inclusivity, but also effective training and mentorship for aspiring leaders, irrespective of gender. It's a call to nurture leadership potential, fostering a community where all voices are empowered to contribute meaningfully to the Church's mission and vision.

Pope will visit art exhibit held at women's prison in Venice

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis will go to Venice in April to visit a women's prison, where the Holy See has set up its pavilion for the Venice Biennale, a major international contemporary art exhibition.

The Pope will make the one-day trip on April 28, according to a joint press release on February 13 from the Dicastery for Culture and Education and the Patriarchate of Venice.

He will visit the Holy See pavilion at the Giudecca women's prison, and he will meet with the Church community of the patriarchate, it said. Details of the final programme were to be "announced soon".

The prison, which used to be an ancient convent, is on Giudecca Island, south of the historic centre of Venice. With the help of a local cooperative, the inmates grow organic produce for sale to the public, as well as create cosmetics, bags and accessories from recycled PVC products, and customised silk-screened clothing and items.

The Holy See pavilion is dedicated to the theme of human rights, and to those who live on the margins of society, "where our eyes rarely end up", the dicastery said in a press release on February 8.

The event runs from April 20 to November 24, with the title, "With my eyes," inspired by the

Pope's insistence that people go outside their comfort zone and pay attention to realities that are ignored and often left out of cultural discussions, it said. The pavilion will feature works by international artists, including the late Corita Kent, a pop artist and former US member of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart, and US actress Zoë Saldana-Perego and her husband, Italian film director and artist Marco Perego-Saldana.

Pope Francis' last trips in Italy were in 2022, when he visited Matera for the conclusion of the 27th national eucharistic congress, Assisi, for an "Economy of Francesco" event, and L'Aquila for the opening of the basilica's holy door.

Teams of Our Lady Aotearoa help ordinary couples to become saints

by MINA AMSO

Seventeen married couples have gathered in Titirangi and shared two things they had in common: marriage and faith. This was to strengthen their relationship with each other and with God.

Teams New Zealand Leaders Jan and Tony Baker said that the retreat was a really good way to connect with other like-minded couples, sharing the marriage journey together.

"It's really nice to connect with another couple," said Mrs Baker.

Teams strengthen married relationships, said Mr Baker.

"We usually meet around a meal, and for me, there's nothing like meeting around the table for discussion and friendship. I think there's something unique in that," he said.

Teams of Our Lady Aotearoa brings ordinary couples on a journey of becoming saints together, said Gerry Smith, Auckland Team member.

Mrs Smith, along with her husband Jonathan, joined the international group when it started in Auckland five or six years ago. They've been "in it to win it" ever since.

The group held an annual retreat for the couples from all around New Zealand on Marriage Sunday in February. Present were couples from different nationalities, cultures and backgrounds.

There was an instant connection. Strangers became friends in minutes because of the commonality that brought them together, which was Teams, said Mrs Smith.

"Everybody was in the kitchen and everybody was helping. [This is] the peace and beauty of Teams, which is a very gentle movement. I think all the guys got on well together, which was a moment to bond and share guy stuff! We were chatting over lunch and it was just a very calm, relaxed day in spite of the high winds."

The theme for the retreat was prayer, which has been requested by Pope Francis ahead of the jubilee next year. He called on the faithful to "intensify" prayer to prepare for the Jubilee year, an event of grace and experience of the power of God's hope.

The Holy Father decided that 2025 will be a year of Jubilee, something which happens every 25 years. The theme is "Pilgrims of Hope", for a world suffering the impacts of war, the ongoing effects of Covid-19, and the climate crisis.

Mrs Smith said that one of the topics was the Our Father, the prayer given to disciples by Jesus.

The couples meditated on the prayer using *Lectio Divina*, which is a traditional monastic practice of scriptural reading. The meditation was led by Father Ron Bennett.

"The next topic was couples prayer with Debora and Engelbart (St Joseph's, Takapuna), and they really gave witness to the charismatic movement and how they got involved in couples prayer.

"They were talking about the importance of couples prayer from a spiritual perspective, and how it deepens your intimacy with your spouse. And that was the plan of God."

The couple talked about praying together on their



Couples on the retreat

nature walks. People were then put into groups to pray for each other. Later on, Mrs Smith and her husband talked about Teams and family prayer, choosing to focus on the Magnificat, because this is the Teams prayer.

"Mary is our patron and that's our prayer, we pray it every day; all couples globally say this prayer daily."

The couples were encouraged to take family prayer into their homes and pray with their children.

"To set aside time every day, where it was a priority in their family life and their children come on board. And if their children had left home, then when they come together [they can pray] just as they did when they lived at home.

"And we looked at different types of prayer like grace and formal prayer and the rosary, and whatever works for them and encouraged them to really pray as a family."

The day ended with an outdoor Mass celebrated by Fr Bennett, at which the couples were invited to bless each other and renew their wedding vows.

Praying as a family can strengthen the bond of couples with their children, and the challenges and joys that this may bring

But Mrs Smith said that married couples are challenged with setting aside time in their busy schedules to pray together as couples and as a family. Understandably, though, it is challenging with children and the chaos that a family life brings.

Praying together enhances the spiritual intimacy of a couple. Often couples work on their sexual and verbal communication intimacy; however spiritual intimacy is often set aside or even forgotten. However, there is a pleasing, growing trend that couple and family prayer are becoming a focus in many Catholic families.

Couples can pray together through their daily lives. When they're out for a walk, in the garden pruning trees, or at the kitchen sink washing dishes, Mrs Smith said.

She said that when we spend time together as a couple and we have that spiritual intimacy, it's like no other, and it completes us as husband and wife.

Statistics around the health of Catholic marriages and divorces/annulments is limited in New Zealand. Mrs Smith, who's also a Marriage and Family Life Leader at the Diocese of Auckland, looking after pre and post-marriage preparation courses. She said that, although Catholic marriage preparation numbers have slowly been recovering to pre-Covid levels, the number of Catholic marriages have been on a steady decline and reflects the national trend.

"We have noticed that some people have challenges with their Catholic faith, and still has and want a relationship with God, and they still want to get married in church with a priest. Sometimes it's the cost of the

wedding they would like, especially in Auckland, [having] high mortgages and [the] increased cost of living.

"A trend we are seeing is small intimate weddings in a church with immediate family and friends only, and then a big party for friends and family later on in the year."

Marriage isn't always the happy-ever-after picture that we all desire. If you are in a marriage you have to work at it constantly to keep connected and in unity with your spouse, said Mrs Smith.

"The Church is always a welcome place for couples who need help with their communication challenges, and at Marriage and Family Life [Catholic Diocese of Auckland] we offer couples that added post-marriage support, through one-on-one sessions or group workshops to top up what they learned previously. And, of course, Teams of Our Lady Aotearoa will keep on supporting couples through the journey of life."

Mrs Smith said that Teams are especially important for migrant couples who don't have family support to fall back on here.

A Teams group has five couples who meet monthly at the home of one of the couples. Attendees take turns to host the group, she said.

"We have different events, so if it was somebody's birthday, or if somebody is moving in and they need a hand, everybody helps everybody to move in. If you need a wall painted, we turn up."

Many couples end up joining Teams through a marriage preparation course, or an Alpha course for couples that Marriage and Family Life run online every year.

"A year after the couple's been married, we invite them back - and [we've] already loosely introduced Teams [through the course].

"We invite them for breakfast and then get all the Teams members, and [get them to] ask us questions, we have a lovely breakfast, and because Teams is such a positive experience the couples sign up, they then start the amazing journey with Teams."

There are two Teams in Auckland, one in Tau-ranga, two in Mt Maunganui, and almost three in Hamilton.

Mrs Smith said that Christchurch Bishop Michael Gielen "is keen" to introduce the Teams movement in Christchurch.

Teams of Our Lady emerged from the initiative of four couples who approached their parish priest in Paris, France, just before the outbreak of World War II. In 1938, Madeleine d'Heilly, a young married woman, sought guidance from Fr Henri Caffarel on how she and her husband, Gerard, could deepen their Catholic faith within their marriage. Aged in their twenties, Madeleine and Gerard, along with three other couples, convened with Fr Caffarel on February 25, 1939, marking the inception of what would later become The Teams of Our Lady.

Fr Caffarel dedicated significant efforts to support couples in their journey towards Christ. These couples have found solace, encouragement, and spiritual nourishment within intimate Christian communities, discovering the path of prayer and contemplation amidst the hustle and bustle of everyday life.



Couples renew vows on the retreat

Vatican goes virtual: offers digital pilgrimage for youth

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Vatican is seeking to draw pilgrims to the four historic papal basilicas scattered around Rome — not physically, but virtually, through a website and podcast aimed at drawing young people into the spiritual depth of Rome's sacred spaces.

The website — basilicas.vatican.va — was launched by the Vatican on February 22.

It features a virtual “table” at which animated saints and artists are seated with descriptions of who they are, and their significance for the holy spaces highlighted on the site. An empty chair is also present to invite each “digital pilgrim” to sit at the table with them and visit the four papal basilicas.

Rome's four papal basilicas are St Peter's Basilica, the Basilica of St Mary Major, the Basil-

ica of St Paul Outside the Walls, and the Archbasilica of St John Lateran; they are the most highly ranked churches in the Catholic Church, and each possesses a holy door that is opened during Holy Years, typically every 25 years.

The new Vatican website showcases a podcast produced in partnership with Vatican News, “From Tourists to Pilgrims,” in which art historians, restoration experts, professors, and religious men and women discuss the spiritual significance of the history and art of each basilica.

The first episode of the podcast, less than three minutes long, explains the history behind the tomb of St Peter upon which the basilica was built: a poor man's grave of bricks and stone assembled next to where he was martyred. Prayers centred on each of the saints, for whom each basilica is

named, are also published on the site.

A Vatican press release accompanying the website's launch said that the project was born out of a pilgrimage undertaken by 16 young communications professionals from 10 different countries, who explored the four basilicas “not just as architectural monuments, but as living witnesses of our faith”.

“The multilingual minisite is the answer to the challenge of how to convert this experience into a digital project, to introduce the basilicas to a younger audience,” it said.

Ahead of the Holy Year 2025, “the hope is that this experience will encourage a revival of the storytelling surrounding the millennia-old” tradition of going on pilgrimage to the threshold of the apostles, the Vatican said.

Conflicts of interest impede abuse handling in Church of England

(OSV News) — A new report has revealed what it describes as conflicts of interest in the handling of allegations of sexual abuse in Britain's established state church, the Church of England.

The report, released on February 21, found that, despite numerous reviews, the church cannot be trusted to investigate allegations of sexual abuse without outside involvement.

The former chair of a government-ordered Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse said that policies around the protection of children and vulnerable adults within the denomination are “flawed” and “cannot be sufficiently improved whilst it remains within church oversight”.

Alexis Jay concludes in the report: “[The church] needs to fundamentally change, in order to restore the confidence of victims, survivors and others, including clergy.”

“This can only be achieved by being delivered by a fully independent body,” she writes. Jay is a visiting professor at Strathclyde University, where she chairs the Centre for Excellence for Looked-After Children in Scotland.

The report proposes the establishment of two separate charities, independent of the church, one with operational responsibility for safeguarding, and the other to provide scrutiny and oversight.

Jay insisted that the proposed new independent bodies need to be funded by the church, and that anyone complaining of abuse in the church should be referred to them as soon as possible.

“Further tinkering with existing structures would not be sufficient to make safeguarding in the church professional, accountable and trusted, by those who use its services,” she said.

Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury and Archbishop Stephen Cottrell of York — the two primates in the Church of England — welcomed the report's “wisdom, expertise and meticulous proposals”.

According to Jay, “There are conflicts of interest in several aspects of safeguarding, which are not openly acknowledged or addressed in policy, procedures or practice.”

“This serves to further undermine the trust of many of those who need to engage with church safeguarding,” the academic expert said in one of

her conclusions.

Jay was called in by the Church of England in the summer of 2023, following the bishops disbanding their own Independent Safeguarding Board after panel members accused the hierarchy of obstructing their work. Her research also included experiences of those who had made abuse allegations to the church. She reported that some survivors talked of feeling like the system had, in their words, been “weaponised against them”, and many respondents reported an “all-time low” in relations between the bishops and survivors.

In a statement, the archbishops of Canterbury and of York, said: “We recognise her criticism of our safeguarding structures and processes, and we welcome this scrutiny and challenge. For the sake of all those who come into contact with the church, particularly victims and survivors, we welcome the plans that are in place to take forward this work as swiftly as possible.”

In 2023, church leaders announced funding of some US\$190 million for redress for abuse survivors.

Vatican announces synod assembly dates; formation of study groups

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The second assembly of the Synod of Bishops on synodality will meet from October 2-27, and will be preceded by several formal studies coordinated by the synod general secretariat, working with various offices of the Roman Curia.

The Vatican announced the dates for the assembly on February 17, indicating that the desire of some synod members to spend less time in Rome was not accepted. The assembly will be preceded by a retreat for members from September 30 - October 1, the Vatican said.

And in response to a formal call by members of the first assembly of the synod, Pope Francis has agreed to the establishment of “study groups that will initiate, with a synodal method, the in-depth study of some of the themes that emerged”.

In a chirograph, or brief papal document, released on February 17, the Pope said that “these study groups are to be established by mutual agreement between the competent dicasteries of the Roman Curia and the General Secretariat of the Synod, which is entrusted with coordination”.

However, the papal note did not list the topics to be studied or the members of the groups. The synod office said that it hoped the approved groups and their members

could be announced by mid-March.

Pope Francis' note focused on the obligation of the offices of the Roman Curia to work with the synod, since both bodies, though distinct, are established “to promote in a synodal spirit the mutual relations of the bishops, and of the particular Churches over which they preside, among themselves and in communion with the Bishop of Rome”.

In their synthesis report at the end of the first synod assembly, members voted to ask Pope Francis for several studies before the 2024 assembly, including on “the terminological and conceptual understanding of the notion and practice of synodality” itself; and another study on

“the canonical implications of synodality”, conducted by “an intercontinental special commission of theological and canonical experts”.

Synod members also called for further theological study on the permanent diaconate and said, “theological and pastoral research on the access of women to the diaconate should be continued, benefiting from consideration of the results of the commissions specially established by the Holy Father, and from the theological, historical and exegetical research already undertaken”.

“If possible,” members said, “the results of this research should be presented to the next session of the assembly.”

Retired Australian bishop charged with sex offences

BROOME, Australia (OSV News) — Retired Bishop Christopher Saunders of Broome was arrested by Western Australian police on February 21 on charges of historical sexual abuse. He was subsequently charged in court in relation to 19 alleged historical offences, including two counts of rape, 14 counts of unlawful and

indecent assault, and three counts of indecently dealing with a child aged 16 to 18.

Bishop Saunders appeared in the Broome Magistrates' Court on February 22. He pleaded not guilty to all charges, and was granted bail.

He is next due to appear in court on June 17.

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Warning of schism if German bishops keep to reform course indicated

AUGSBURG, Germany (OSV News) — Cardinal Christoph Schönborn of Vienna has warned of schism as German bishops want to keep to their reform course despite the latest letter from Rome, which halted the vote on the statutes of a Synodal Committee.

The move has proceeded “in dialogue with Rome”, the president of the German bishops’ conference, Bishop Georg Bätzing of Limburg, said in Augsburg on February 19. He called the coordination of fundamental Church reforms with the Vatican “a matter of course”.

That is why, he said, “out of respect for those responsible in Rome”, he had removed the controversial voting from the agenda of the bishops’ meeting in Augsburg, at which the establishment of a Synodal Committee for Germany was to be decided. “We do not want to and cannot ignore the Roman objection. Now we have to talk,” said Bishop Bätzing.

The German bishops were “eagerly” awaiting concrete talks with Vatican officials, he said. Three further meetings have currently been “announced”, although the bishop stressed it may take up to six months for the Vatican to set the concrete date.

Bishop Bätzing emphasised that, in

his view, the Synodal Path in Germany and the worldwide Synod on Synodality were heading in the same direction.

In the letter from the Vatican that surfaced in mid-February, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, and Cardinal Robert Prevost, prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, called on the German bishops to suspend a planned vote on the creation of a mixed decision-making body for the Catholic Church in Germany because it would violate canon law. The cardinals said that their letter was “brought to the attention of Pope Francis and approved by him”.

Bishop Bätzing emphasised that he was willing and able to refute the Vatican’s concerns expressed in the letter, and said that a joint body of bishops and laity would not weaken the authority of the bishops, but rather strengthen it.

Lay German Catholics involved in the Synodal Path called on the bishops to defy Rome and stick to the reform course.

The planned Synodal Committee, whose statutes were to be voted on, was to prepare a Synodal Council in which bishops and laity would not only consult together, but also make

decisions.

The Central Committee of German Catholics, the highest representative body of the laity, which had participated in the Synodal Path at the request of the bishops, along with its president Irme Stetter-Karp, called on the bishops to continue the reform project despite the signals from Rome to halt it: “The Catholic Church in Germany will not have a second chance if it stops the Synodal Path now.”

Cardinal Schönborn, however, made an unusually clear statement on the debate about the Church’s path to reform in Germany. He called on the German bishops not to let the dialogue with Rome break off.

In an interview with the theological website Communio on February 19, he agreed with the Roman criticism of the planned progress of the German reform process. The envisioned involvement of laypeople in fundamental decisions contradicts the constitution of the Church, the Austrian cardinal said.

In Cardinal Schönborn’s view, the German bishops should not make any decisions that could lead to a schism. They should “seriously ask themselves whether they really want to leave the communion with and under the Pope or rather accept it

loyally. Refusing to give in would be ‘obstinatio’ (obstinacy) – a clear sign of a schism that nobody can want.” In his view, ignoring the warnings from Rome would be negligent.

Cardinal Schönborn recalled that the Vatican had already stated several times that the Church in Germany was not authorised to establish a joint governing body of lay and clerical people.

“I am impressed by the patience with which the Pope and the Roman dicasteries are trying to remain in dialogue with the German bishops and maintain unity and communion,” the cardinal emphasised.

The current conflict between the German bishops and Rome is not about “questions of power” or disciplinary issues, Cardinal Schönborn added. “Rather, Pope Francis is fulfilling his core task of maintaining unity in the faith” because it is about the “basic understanding of the Church”.

A bishop cannot delegate personal responsibility for important decisions and the transmission of faith to committees, the cardinal said. “Therefore, the idea of bishops voluntarily binding themselves to the decisions of synodal councils is not compatible with the core of the episcopal mission.”

Litany of Saint Joseph (March - month of St Joseph)

Lord, have mercy on us
 Christ, have mercy on us.
 Lord, have mercy on us.
 Christ, hear us, Christ, graciously hear us.
 God the Father of heaven, have mercy on us.
 God the Son, Redeemer of the World, have mercy on us.
 God the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.
 Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us.
 Holy Mary, pray for us.
 Saint Joseph, pray for us.
 Renowned offspring of David, pray for us.
 Light of Patriarchs, pray for us.
 Spouse of the Mother of God, pray for us.
 Chaste guardian of the Virgin, pray for us.
 Foster father of the Son of God, pray for us.
 Watchful defender of Christ, pray for us.
 Head of the Holy Family, pray for us.
 Joseph most just, pray for us.
 Joseph most chaste, pray for us.
 Joseph most prudent, pray for us.
 Joseph most strong, pray for us.
 Joseph most obedient, pray for us.
 Joseph most faithful, pray for us.
 Mirror of patience, pray for us.
 Lover of poverty, pray for us.
 Model of workmen, pray for us.
 Glory of family life, pray for us.
 Guardian of virgins, pray for us.
 Pillar of families, pray for us.
 Solace of the afflicted, pray for us.
 Hope of the sick, pray for us.
 Patron of the dying, pray for us.



Terror of demons, pray for us.
 Defender of Holy Church, pray for us.
 Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, spare us, O Jesus.
 Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Jesus.
 Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us, O Jesus.
 He made him the lord of his household, and prince over all his possessions.
Let us pray:
 O God, in your ineffable providence you were pleased to choose Blessed Joseph to be the spouse of your most holy Mother; grant, we beg you, that we may be worthy to have him for our intercessor in heaven whom on earth we venerate as our Protector: You who live and reign forever and ever, Amen.
 Saint Joseph, pray for us.

101680

“Saint Joseph is very powerful – Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint Thomas Aquinas and many Popes, asked Saint Joseph for help and received it. I petition Saint Joseph regularly. Yes! I get lots of help for family & friends. GO TO JOSEPH!”

– Judy Chandler Jones

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF
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Check the Classification

Saints in coffee jars exhibition attracts hundreds

by MINA AMSO

A Christchurch exhibition of relics from Catholic saints has “blown away” organisers, after attracting hundreds of people, “far more” than what was expected.

Triona Doocey, archivist at the Catholic Diocese of Christchurch, said that the “Saints in Coffee Jars” exhibition, which ran at The Arts Centre from February 6-10, was about items of religious significance, so she only expected around a couple of hundred people to show up — mainly those who read church newsletters — but more than 1300 attended.

“It’s been an amazing turnout; over the five days we’ve had well over a thousand visitors.”

She said that there’s been a “brilliant range” of people and different denominations come through, some stumbling across the exhibit without realising, ending up spending hours browsing through.

“[It has been] interesting to see people connect with Bishop [John] Grimes’ story, because he was very much pushed to the side in terms of history, and it used to annoy me when all I’d hear was ‘oh his biggest achievement was the cathedral’, because that’s a building and that’s not what he was about.

“He was about bringing the diocese together, and he did that in such a real way, and the relics were part of that.”

Mrs Doocey said that it was great to be able to tell his story, and show what an amazing man he was. Bishop John Joseph Grimes, SM, was the first Bishop of Christchurch. He assembled the Christchurch collection of saints’ relics when he arrived in Christchurch in 1888.

Reportedly, he was an unusual appointee, and his parishioners weren’t at first sure what to make of him. He soon won over the hearts and minds of people, proving his advocacy for education; pursuing a passion for

New Zealand’s natural history, and encouraging the humane treatment of animals.

The relics that he brought with him were discovered in glass, wrapped in steel, under the floor of the earthquake-damaged Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Christchurch in April, 2021.

Undisturbed for nearly half a century, and almost forgotten, the box contained glass coffee jars, inside of which were the bones of saints. Their precise content was known only to the priest who arranged their burial on April 26, 1975.

The two Gregg’s Coffee jars were recovered over a century after the death of Bishop Grimes in 1915.

“Remarkably the jars remained water-tight. This allowed researchers to identify labels attached to many of the individual items, some dating back as much as a millennium. A list had been kept of the collection,” said Mrs Doocey.

“Bishop Grimes recorded the saints’ [relics] he brought to Christchurch in a ledger that both noted the individual relics, and also included information intended to authenticate each item.”

Mrs Doocey said that the entire exhibition was a way to evangelisation.

“There was a couple of guys in yesterday, I don’t think they particularly have any faith, but they were really engaged and chatting. We were talking about the relic of the cross. The big thing is that, was it real? When you talk about faith and just believing, then all of a sudden they’re like ‘okay I get it’, and they’re not disparaging. So I thought that was genuine and really good, she said.

“We have a whole range of prayer cards, and they’re all gone because people are taking them. To me, you read the back, you don’t realise it, but you’re actually saying the prayer.”

The exhibition came about as a collective effort between the Catholic



The box containing two coffee jars uncovered after the demolition of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament

Diocese of Christchurch Archives and the University of Canterbury, supported by creative agencies like Bread Design and Screen Weave Collective.

Mrs Doocey said that the relics will be packaged and be made available online at relics.nz.

“We’ll have a Saints in Coffee Jars section, as well as the rest of the relics story.”

One day at the exhibition, standing next to the relic of the True Cross was Anna-Marie Milne from Christchurch West Parish. She’s been to Jerusalem where the cross was uncovered by St Helena.

“I’ve been to the church of the

Holy Sepulchre, where St Helena discovered the cross, the site where she discovered the cross. I think that it’s interesting that it survived all that time.”

Her daughter, Georgina Milne, said that she’d like to believe it’s true.

“It’s hard to believe, but it’s all about having faith.

“It’s quite unbelievable that something so old is still something we can see with our own eyes.”

Other relics on display belonged to St Thomas Aquinas, St Mary Magdalene, St Rita of Cascia, St John (Don) Bosco, St George, and Pope St Pius X, just to name a few.

Family Matters

Helen Luxford



Lent is a challenging season

Lent is challenging season. It’s always hard to reflect and wait. In today’s world, we are saturated in a culture of instant gratification, and we don’t want to wait. We recently had a birthday in our house, and I was reminded yet again how hard it is for kids to wait. We were asked multiple times each day leading up to the birthday when it was going to be, and why couldn’t it come quicker, and when they could get their presents! Learning patience and the ability to wait is such a virtue, a really hard one for many of us to learn.

There are so many things that we can consider giving up for Lent. The list is very long for many of us — ranging from chocolate to coffee, alcohol to meat, swearing to social media. Many of us have “given up” things for Lent over the years, practising self-discipline, and loosening the grip a vice has on us. It is a humbling experience to reflect on the things that you want to take out of your life. And then an empowering and rewarding experience to successfully enact these sacrifices.

Keeping the kids involved in Lent every week helps to keep the focus on the journey to the cross over the 40 days of Lent, which can feel like a long time from Ash Wednesday to

Easter. It starts with Shrove Tuesday, though ironically I know families who had to go and buy ingredients in order to take part in this tradition. I feel that not having meat on days such as Friday in Lent is perhaps no longer such a sacrifice for many families, including ours, who don’t eat meat every single night. We can make it Fish Friday, but that feels more like a treat than a sacrifice.

During Lent this year, I am trying to put more into my faith — reading the Bible more often and praying more often. I have added yet more podcasts to my list, and am still working through the Catechism in a Year and the Bible in a Year with Fr Mike Schmitz. I keep podcasts of the rosary in my playlist, so I can pray this anytime I have my phone and headphones; for example, on the train. It can bring much peace and joy to me to feel that I am praying the rosary with others.

Of my children, only one hasn’t completed their first holy Communion (will be doing so in 2025) and so we are now really past the Children’s Liturgy stage now, and our youngest would rather stay with us in Mass, which I welcome. As our family continues to grow in faith, we are finding it more important to

have the deep discussions and to give deeper explanations as to why we believe as we do. The Stations of the Cross is an important liturgy to help reflect on the true depth of the sacrifice that Christ made for us. It is extremely difficult to fully comprehend the depth of his suffering — both physically and emotionally, during his journey.

As Catholics, we are people of hope and, as humans, we know that change is inevitable — changing houses, changing jobs, and change can come in big or small bundles. Changes in our health or that of a family member can be a sombre reminder of our faith, and how important it is to keep hope in the difficult situations we face. As we journey to Lent, keep the light of your faith shining and burning bright, and grow your faith to further move towards holiness.

Matthew 14:32; “Then they came to a place named Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, ‘Sit here while I pray’.”

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.

Raw life on the frontier

by NEVIL GIBSON

The biggest local release of the year so far heads straight into a contentious period of pre-colonial history. Epworth, a fictional coastal settlement, has established itself enough in the 1830s to warrant a fulltime preacher for its already built church.

But Thomas Munro (Guy Pearce) comes with more baggage than the average missionary. In the title role of *The Convert* (Kismet), he is a former soldier-turned-Christian who is trying to atone for his participation in an unspecified incident in which British troops committed an atrocity against natives.

This presumably was in another part of the British Empire, as 1830s New Zealand had no imperial military presence. The setup has obvious implications for the rest of the plot, as Epworth is on leased land that is an issue in the inter-tribal warfare known as the Musket Wars.

Munro soon finds his calling put to the test, as the settlers and two rival Māori chiefs have more on their minds than the spirit of brotherly love. His attempts to make all parties act for the common good fail against the strong appeal of revenge, or utu.

The plot takes shape after he saves a young Māori woman, Rangimai (Tioreore Ngatai-Melbourne), whose father Maianui (Antonio Te Maioha) offers protection, as his tribe faces an attack from another chief, Akatarewa (Lawrence Makoare).

While the forces of good and evil are clearly delineated on racial grounds, the sordid side of commerce, gun running, is also under scrutiny. In one of the esoteric conversations, the economic philosopher Adam Smith is mentioned.

The movie's origins go back some 11 years, and several



Tioreore Ngatai-Melbourne and Guy Pearce star *The Convert*

Movie Review

hands have worked on the script since that time. It is therefore not surprising that it has many layers: the experiences of the British sailors and settlers; the realities of Māori existence and their differing responses to the arrival of foreigners; and the clash of cultures from the impact of Christianity.

On top of this, director Lee Tamahori must create an action-based drama with identifiable characters and motivations, as well as stage authentic battles that are unique to New Zealand. This is no easy task when audiences will bring different preconceptions.

Though some of the dialogue is comic-book in its exposition and delivery, Pearce convincingly manages his transition from

one side of history to the other.

The most interesting role is that of Charlotte (Jacqueline McKenzie), a Pākehā woman who is a bridge between both cultures as a linguist and healer. She also becomes Munro's companion at a time when he realises the limitations of his faith.

Though her cross-cultural abilities stretch credibility for the period, her insights are more helpful than some other unlikely elements, such as the hijacking of a warship, and a musket fired straight from its box.

The level of violence may catch some by surprise, but the location photography and the tenuous hold of civilised values provide both visual and mental stimulation.

Rating: R16. 119 minutes.

CLIPS

Drive-Away Dolls (Universal)

The Coen brothers, Ethan and Joel, noted for their offbeat crime capers (*Blood Simple*, *Fargo*, *Burn After Reading*), have ended their creative partnership after 40 years. They are now working with their respective wives, Tricia Cooke, an editor, and Frances McDormand, an actor. The latter couple released *The Tragedy of Macbeth* in 2022 to little effect. The former have gone back to the early Coen formula, with an outrageous road movie that is best enjoyed without knowing much of the details. Two mis-matched young women (Margaret Qualley and Geraldine Viswanathan) rent a drive-away car without knowing there's cargo in the boot that could get them in big trouble with a criminal gang. Fortunately, they are the bumbling kind, and are easily outwitted. This is a step up for both Qualley, noted for *My Salinger Years* and a brief appearance in *Poor Things*, and Australian-born Viswanathan (*Blockers*), who deserve more leading roles. The screenplay has come a long way since it was first drafted back in the early 2000s. This period, in which same-sex haunts were hidden from sight, has been retained. Watch out for a cameo by a Hollywood A-lister. Rating: R16. 84 minutes.

The Great Escaper (Transmission)

The British tradition of eccentrics who make new headlines for all the right reasons continues, with nonagenarian Michael Caine playing real-life D-Day veteran and British Navy seaman Bernie Jordan, who at 89 finds his own way to the 70th anniversary events in Normandy across the English Channel from his flat in a Hove care home. As you would expect from two actors who have received the highest honours for their respective careers, Caine cruises through his role with his deadpan humour and stubborn resilience. In her last screen role, Glenda Jackson shows that, while age has caught up with her physically, it hasn't blunted her sharp tongue and acerbic views. It is nearly 50 years since they first played together in Joseph Losey's *The Romantic Englishwoman* (1975). A back story of their wartime relationship, and Bernie's memory of a lost comrade, threaten to overdo the inherent sentimentality in the story. But director Oliver Parker pulls back, with scenes of reconciliation with the past that are emotionally powerful. Rating: Mature audiences. 96 minutes.

Upgraded (Amazon Studios)

Amid the heavyweight fare on the main streaming services, this lightweight reworking of *Emily in Paris* with overtones of *Cinderella* is worth more than its Valentine's Day branding. Camila Mendes (*Riverdale*) plays an intern at a big-time Manhattan art auction house. She is offloaded from the plane taking her imperious boss (Marisa Tomei) and two "stepsister" aides to London, where they hope to land a big deal. Instead, she finds herself upgraded to first class on the next flight where she meets her handsome "prince" (Archie Renaux), the son of a flamboyant aristocrat (Lena Olin) who is selling the aforementioned art collection. The coincidences keep piling up as the plot heads toward its inevitable happy ending. Rating: Mature audiences. 105 minutes.

This publication shows Catholicism through and through

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE BEAUTIFUL: History in Three Dimensions, by Joseph Pearce, Ignatius Press (2023), 300 pp, US\$19.95. Reviewed by CECILIA CICONE (OSV News)

Whether it's the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition or Galileo, the apparent missteps of the Catholic Church within history are commonly used as arguments against her claim to be the one true path to salvation. In his latest book, Joseph Pearce sets out to work through all of Church history, in hopes of identifying where God was actually at work, as opposed to where human impulses and evil influences appeared as wolves in sheep's clothing.

Each chapter of "The Good, the Bad, and the Beautiful" summarises one of the centuries making up the 2000-year history of the Church. Pearce takes a trinitarian formula, based on Jesus' identity as "the way, the truth, and the life", and identifies where the Church, in that century, had been "Good," serving as the way of salvation; where she went "Bad", distorting the truth of God's love; and "the Beautiful" thing she produced as a lasting testament to God's majesty, and the wonder he is due.

"The Good" of each century of Catholic history is what the reader is most likely to expect. The saints, most especially martyrs who witnessed to the faith with their lives and their service to the poor and vulnerable, kept the Church on the right path. Scholars such as Irenaeus and Thomas Aquinas revealed the divine through theological works. Widespread practice of the sacraments meant that people were continually given access to the grace they needed for salvation.

And yet, from even the first century of the church, Pearce acknowledges that there have been forces working against the Holy Spirit, seeking to confuse, divide, and even destroy the Bride of Christ, beginning with rampant heresies and persecution.

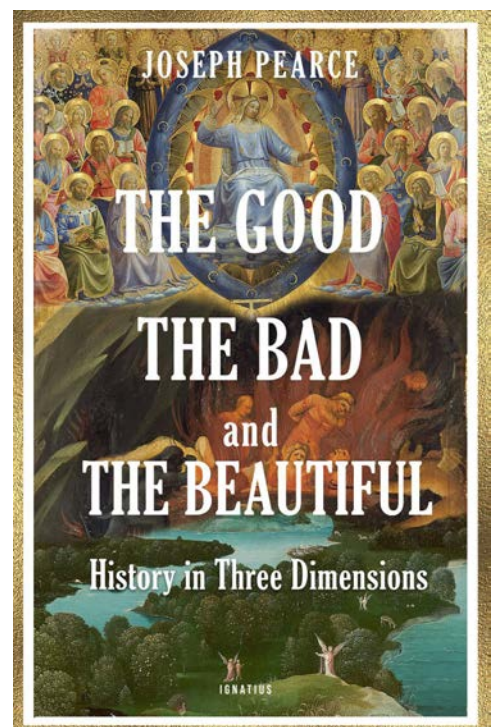
When Joseph Pearce discusses what is beautiful about each century of church history, he looks primarily at the creation of art as a participation in the transcendental good of "beauty", without excluding secular art. What is beautiful, he says, reflects not only human culture, but also brings insight into the divine as the Creator has revealed himself in that particular age. From Augustine's "City of God" to

Book Review

Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings" trilogy — with many artists, writers, composers, architects, and more in between — the subsections of "The Beautiful" that close out each chapter are delightful expositions of how the popular culture of the day has continually and surprisingly fostered an encounter with God.

Pearce ends the book in the 20th century, however, without mentioning the realities that we now know and must face regarding clerical sex abuse, and the cover-ups surrounding all kinds of clerical misconduct. Given the cacophony of the other evils that took place in the last century, and the fact that the abuse and misconduct issues primarily came to light in the 21st-century, this makes some sense, but at least mentioning the apparent evils being faced almost daily by the Church faithful might have made the book feel a bit more current and complete.

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



We are here ▼ Fourth Sunday of Lent

THE CHURCH YEAR

Advent

Christmas

Ordinary Time

Lent

Eastertime

Ordinary Time

The presence of the divine is at the heart of God's Word in Lent

Scripture

by Fr Kevin Waldie SM

There is in these readings a real sense of a right and fitting relationship which should be evident between God and his people. Human history, however, records how that often needs to be restored and made visible again.

In 2 Chronicles we hear how the world needs reforming. Israel itself has become an unfaithful partner in its covenantal relationship with God. And, as a result, Israel enters into uncertain times, dislodged from its divinely ordained vocation. But more important here is the way in which God is depicted. Compassionately, he redirects those who have strayed and have been uprooted from their

homeland. That bestowal of new life is a fitting image for us in these days of Lent.

Also, in Ephesians, there is a similar perception of God's hand at work, redirecting the Christian community to see itself in a new light. God's gracious, merciful dealings with humanity are praised. Centre-stage here is Christ Jesus, who came to save the world, and be the loving kindness of God transforming life for us. Reflecting on that stirs in us a thankful heart, tapped into mirroring God's ways.

John's Gospel passage is an equally focused view of the divine-human relationship. In his

March 10: Fourth Sunday of Lent. **Readings:** 1. 2 Chronicles 36:14-16,19-23; **Psalm:** 137; 2. Ephesians 2:4-10; **Gospel:** John 3:14-21.

typical style, the evangelist lays before us the special nature of the Son of Man's work of saving the world. His gift of eternal life secured for all human beings demands recognition. And that acknowledgement is conveyed through a person's response in faith, reverencing the only Son of God. By being drawn into this wondrous mystery, the soul receives a great boost.

The presence of the divine in our midst is at the heart of God's Word in Lent. And our willing engagement with that Word is then a worthy act at this moment in this holy season.

The Lord's passion will usher in his victory over death

God's revealed Word is very much central to these biblical texts. Their sharply focused content, therefore, guides our thoughts through the final days of Lent. It helps us grasp something of the enormity of what we are shortly to celebrate.

Jeremiah's familiar text reminds us that a new era for God's people was foreseen. It would usher in an extra special conception of the divine-human bond. The new covenant here is a sign of a truly transformed state of being, brought into effect through the forgiving love of God, and the creation of a new kind of intimacy with the divine.

From our own perspective in time, we can now see that Jeremiah's prophetic insight finds

its fulfilment in the Lord's coming as one like us.

This passage from Hebrews offers us a neat, pithy summary of what we call salvation. With Jesus at its heart, his suffering and self-sacrifice on behalf of humanity comes to the fore. In his act of submission, he sets the example for all of us, that we follow in his footsteps and unite ourselves with him in obedience to the will of God.

John's Gospel text indicates what he wishes to emphasise. His repeated reference to "the hour" tells us what is fully occupying Jesus' mind.

It is the hour of glory, that is the triumph of the cross. With that clearly stated, we are being prepared for what is about to be remembered.

March 17: Fifth Sunday of Lent. **Readings:** 1. Jeremiah 31:31-34; **Psalm:** 51; 2. Hebrews 5:7-9; **Gospel:** John 12:20-33.

John's words make us astutely aware that our annual celebration of the Lord's passion will usher in his victory over death which, in its turn, will announce the wonder of eternal life for all people.

Inspired by these readings, we surely find ourselves buoyed up by their message. Being immersed in the mystery of Christ undoubtedly brings us much satisfaction.

SAINTED GLASS



At the beginning of the fifth week of Lent, we celebrate the feast of St Patrick. The famous Irish saint is usually pictured as a bishop with green vestments standing on serpents, as he is here in St Francis of Assisi church, Paddington, Sydney. He is so revered in Ireland that he bridges the religious divide. For example, I visited two cathedrals named after him in Armagh, Northern Ireland — one Catholic (he is holding a model of it), the other Church of Ireland. St Patrick, pray for us in New Zealand.

— Glen McCullough

2023's top Bible archaeology news

JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Some of the biblical archaeology stories that generated headlines in 2023, according to the Christianity Today website, are summarised below.

- Archaeologists in Gaza found graves from a Roman-era cemetery. A highlight of the discovery were extremely rare lead coffins — one decorated with ornate grape leaves, the other with images of dolphins — suggesting social elites had been buried there. However, work on the site has been disrupted by the war in Gaza.

- Genetic material was extracted from two individuals whose remains were found in a family tomb west of Jerusalem, dating to around 750-650 BC. This was said to be very important for study of the origins of ancient Israelites.

- Evidence was uncovered in Lower Galilee and the northern Sharon plain, pointing to preparations for battle in 5800-4500 BC. Hundreds of sling stones — smoothed into a uniform, aerodynamic shape — were uncovered.

- In Hyrcania, site of a mountain fortress, and later a monastery overlooking the Dead Sea, archaeologists discovered, painted in red, a simple graffiti cross with an inscription underneath. It was a prayer quoting, in part, Psalm 86: "Lord guard me, for I am poor and needy." The inscription has been dated to the sixth century AD.

- Archaeologists excavating Tel Gezer published radiocarbon test results that located the construction of Gezer's famous six-chambered gateway in the first half of the 10th century BC. This seems to lend support to 1 Kings 9:15, which describes Solomon conscripting labour to work on Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer.

- An extraordinarily well-preserved mud brick arch has been carefully uncovered at Tel Shimron, at the acropolis of a Canaanite city overlooking the Jezreel Valley in northern Israel. The city of Shimron covered 48 acres at its height in the Middle Bronze period, 4000

Bible News



The ruins of the fortress at the acropolis of Hyrcania (Photo: Wikipedia)

years ago.

- Work continues on the remains of a Byzantine basilica near the Sea of Galilee, with archaeologists convinced that they are uncovering the true site of Bethsaida. In 2022, a mosaic inscription was found referencing "the chief and commander of the heavenly apostles," which suggests that this ancient church may have been built to commemorate Peter.

- A moat, almost 100 feet wide and at least 20 feet deep, is said to have been uncovered in Jerusalem. Part of the moat dates from the Ninth Century BC. It is believed to be part of the architecture of the ancient city, and not a feature of the landscape.

Onehunga bishop burial was big news in 1890s

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

The graves of two priests and a bishop at the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption in Onehunga in Auckland have been the subject of media attention recently.

The graves of Bishop John Edmund Luck, OSB, the fourth Bishop of Auckland, Msgr James Paul and Fr William Kemp, were uncovered while workers were preparing the floor in the church for a new carpet. The coverings have been restored, and Auckland Bishop Stephen Lowe blessed the site on January 28.

The media attention came after workers expressed surprise at finding the graves. Plaques on the wall of the church listed the names of the priests and bishop, but it was reported that there was uncertainty about the location of the graves in the building. Former parishioners commented on social media that the fact of the burials in the church was well known several decades ago.

Following the death of Bishop Luck in 1896, at age 55, the *New Zealand Herald* published an account of the funeral, noting that a requiem Mass was sung at St Patrick's Cathedral on January 25, 1896.

"At two in the afternoon, one of the largest funeral processions ever seen in Auckland started from the cathedral for Onehunga, where the actual interment took place," the article, published on January 27, 1896, stated.

"... along the line taken, very large numbers of people gathered to witness the passing of the cortege; Queen Street and the main street

of Onehunga, in particular, being thronged, while the closing of shops, the flags at half-mast, and the deeply respectful attitude of those assembled in the streets testified to the great esteem felt for the late bishop."

The article noted that reference was made during the requiem to Bishop Luck having built the bishop's house in Ponsonby, while knowing that he did not have long to live, and that the building would not be for him.

Also in the article was the order of those who took part in the funeral procession, among them representatives of the Anglican church.

There were 75 "vehicles" in the procession. "Some idea of the numbers may be gathered by the fact the procession of carriages extended from one end of Khyber Pass Road to the other, nearly a mile in length," the article stated.

One of those in the procession was the then-Mayor of Auckland, J.J. Holland. When the procession moved through Onehunga, the bell of the Anglican Church of St Peter was tolled as a mark of respect.

It was noted that the grave in the Church of the Assumption was "sunk in a bed of concrete in the west transept of the church". The Onehunga church could only admit about one tenth of the people who wished to be present at the interment.

When the final rites were administered, the *New Zealand Herald* article stated, the congregation dispersed, "but crowds of those who had been unable to gain admission poured into the church to have a look at the coffin and grave of the late bishop".



Bishop Steve blessing the graves (Photo: Auckland Catholic Diocese)

Pope's representative visits Northland, attends 2024 Waitangi Day

by WIGA AUTET

The deputy head of mission at the Apostolic Nunciature, Msgr Giosué Busti, attended the annual celebrations at Waitangi in February.

At the dawn service on Waitangi Day, the atmosphere was charged with prayers, waiata, and reflections from speakers and crowds. They reflected on the past, placed expectations for the present, and laid out hopes for the future.

In his karakia at the dawn service, Msgr Busti alluded to the "tree of healing" that was placed at the centre of the heavenly Jerusalem (as described in the Book of Revelation), and prayed for God's healing and blessings for all people. He also offered prayer for the people of Aotearoa.

Msgr Busti met dignitaries and distinguished guests along with tūngata whenua. Among those he met was Hinerangi Puru-Cooper of Panguru, daughter of Land Rights Campaigner Dame Whina Cooper.

During his visit to Northland, a highlight for Msgr Busti was his visit to Te Kura o Hāto Hohepa te Kāmura, a primary Catholic school in Waitaruke.

Tamariki (children) welcomed him with pōwhiri, kōrero and waiata. The visiting monsignor shared his whaka-papa, and the link between all priests, bishops, cardinals, and popes. He explained how they are linked to the first disciples, and ultimately to Christ.

He talked about the "robe" he was wearing, and the different colours it might be, mentioning Bishop Pompal-

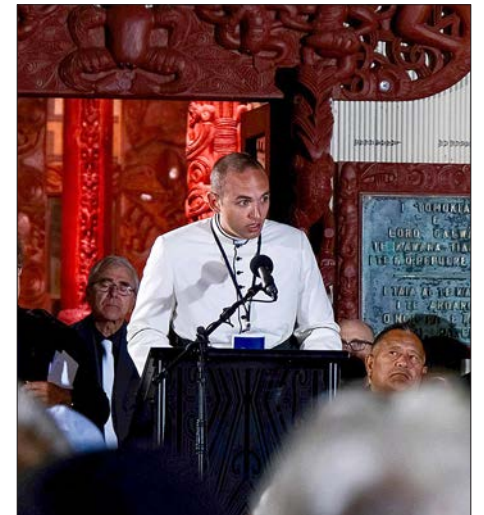
ier and the love the bishop had for this land and its people.

The tamariki listened with attention, asked questions, and made a "pūkana" to ngā mihi (thank him) for his visit. Msgr Busti was able to celebrate Sunday Mass at the National Shrine of St Peter Chanel in Russell. A few other representatives of the diplomatic delegations attended. Catholic faith formation coordinator for Northland Wiga Autet shared with those present the story of the saint, and of the whare karakia (the shrine).

"I was happy and privileged to accompany [Msgr] Busti all along, to organise and facilitate his visit and meetings, taking him also to other beautiful and significant places for our faith in Te Tai Tokerau," Mrs Autet said.

Msgr Busti hails from Perugia, Umbria, in Italy. He arrived in New Zealand in August, 2022, to take up his appointment as First Secretary-Deputy Head of Mission at the Apostolic Nunciature of the Holy See in Wellington.

The current Head of Mission is the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Novatus Rugambwa, who suffered a serious stroke last year. A message on X (formerly Twitter) from the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference on January 23 stated that Archbishop Rugambwa "continues to improve following the stroke he suffered in October. Archbishop Novatus has been in Kenepuru Hospital in Porirua since late November undergoing rehabilitation. Thank you for keeping him in your prayers".



Above: Msgr Giosué Busti with tamariki (children) from Te Kura o Hāto Hohepa te Kāmura. Above: Msgr Busti with Alfredo Perez Bravo, the Mexican Ambassador to New Zealand, who acts also as the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps. Above right: Msgr Busti at the dawn service at Waitangi.

Did Pope Benedict XVI validly resign?

by JENNA MARIE COOPER (OSV News)

Q: Did Pope Benedict XVI validly resign, even though he did not renounce the munus? (Scottsville, VA)

A: As many of us will recall, on February 11, 2013, Pope Benedict XVI surprised the world when, after noting his advancing age and declining health, he announced: "... For this reason, and well aware of the seriousness of this act, with full freedom I declare that I renounce the ministry of Bishop of Rome, Successor of Saint Peter, entrusted to me by the Cardinals on 19 April 2005, in such a way that, as from 28 February 2013, at 20:00 hours, the See of Rome, the See of Saint Peter, will be vacant."

The 1983 Code of Canon Law had already accounted for the possibility — however theoretical it might have seemed at the time of the drafting of the code — for a pope to step down.

As Canon 332, Paragraph 2 tells us: "Should it happen that the Roman Pontiff resigns from his office, it is required for validity that the resignation be freely made and properly manifested, but it is not necessary that it be accepted by anyone."

Thus, canonically only two elements are necessary for a papal resignation to be valid: 1. That the resignation comes about as a result of a truly free choice on the part of the Holy Father — for example, a resignation made under threat of

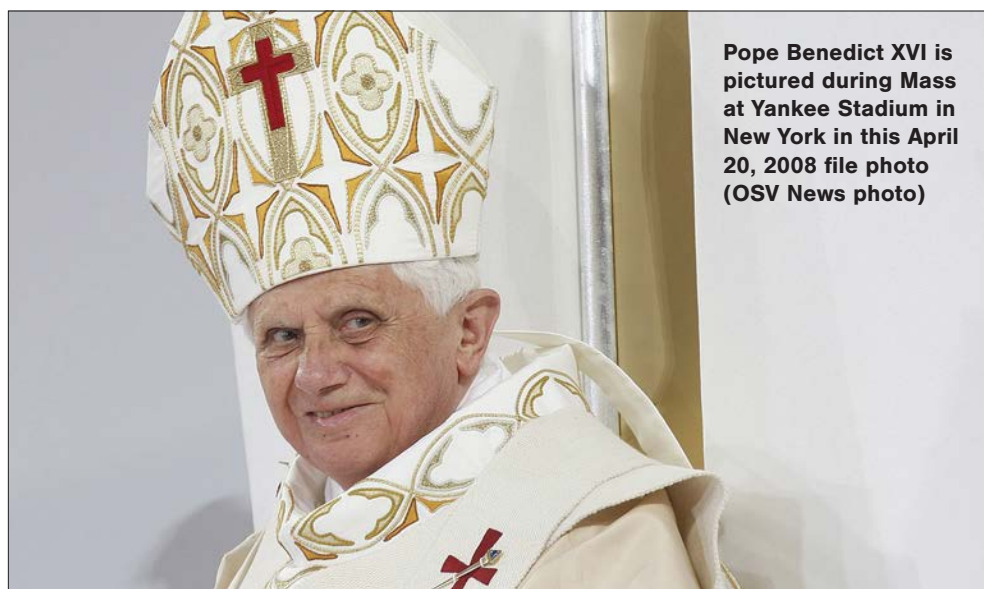
violence would not "count"— and 2. That this resignation be "properly manifested". This latter aspect means that it should be public, and obvious what the incumbent pope intends to do. Or, in other words, the pope privately expressing a wish to resign to a handful of close confidants would not effect a valid resignation; nor would a papal resignation take effect if the only evidence of it were rumours or second-hand accounts.

As far as anyone can reasonably discern, Pope Benedict XVI's resignation plainly fulfilled both of these criteria. There was no evidence that Benedict was coerced or pressured to resign, and he specifically mentioned that he was making this choice "with full freedom". And Pope Benedict clearly manifested his intention to step down; his resignation announcement was made at a meeting of the College of Cardinals, and in front of several journalists.

At the time, different people had different feelings on the appropriateness of a contemporary pope deciding to abdicate for reasons of physical infirmity and old age. However, the general consensus among canon lawyers was that this resignation was nevertheless lawful and effective. Still, as you note, there was some limited speculation that Benedict XVI might not have resigned validly.

One such argument was that the resignation was invalid because

Our Faith Q&A



Pope Benedict XVI is pictured during Mass at Yankee Stadium in New York in this April 20, 2008 file photo (OSV News photo)

Benedict supposedly did not resign the "munus" — a Latin term that, depending on the context, can be best translated into English as "office" or "duties" — of the papacy explicitly.

But, as I see it, this argument doesn't hold water because the papacy is technically nothing more than an "office" (albeit a deeply significant one). That is, unlike priestly or episcopal ordination, which can be primarily understood as a personal, sacramental configuring to Christ independent of any "job" or "position" that a priest or bishop might eventually hold, at the end of the day the role of pope is in

some sense "just a job". There is no sacrament that makes a bishop into a pope; a newly elected pope essentially just accepts a new position as the head of a new diocese, the Diocese of Rome.

Therefore, if a pope is announcing his resignation from the papacy, it's already very strongly implied that he intends to renounce the papacy as an office or "munus", even if he doesn't specifically use the exact word "munus".

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

Papal Prayer

The Pope's universal prayer intention for March: For the New Martyrs

Pope Francis invites prayer "for those around the world who risk their lives for the Gospel, to inspire the Church with their courage and missionary zeal."



40 YEARS AGO

ANTI-CATHOLIC PAMPHLETS HIT AUCKLAND

Catholics upset by the distribution of anti-church pamphlets outside Auckland schools and churches will probably have to put up with it, according to a spokesperson for the Human Rights Commission.

She was commenting on the activities of an organisation called Scripture Preservation, which has had people distributing anti-Catholic literature at Takapuna since last November.

The pamphlets take issue with Catholic teaching on purgatory, the Sacrament of Confession, the authority of the pope and the Mass as a re-enactment of Christ's sacrifice.

Great News for Catholics, a cartoon-style booklet, makes the extraordinary claim that Jesus himself said that every Catholic "who trusts in saints, popes, sacraments, Mary, or good works, will go to the lake of fire — forever".

North Shore's Rosmini College has become a target of Scripture Preservation's agents despite the fact a member of the college staff

approached two middle-aged women distributing the pamphlets at the end of the school drive and told them he objected to their activities.

He said that as a parent, he opposed the offering of unsolicited propaganda to school children.

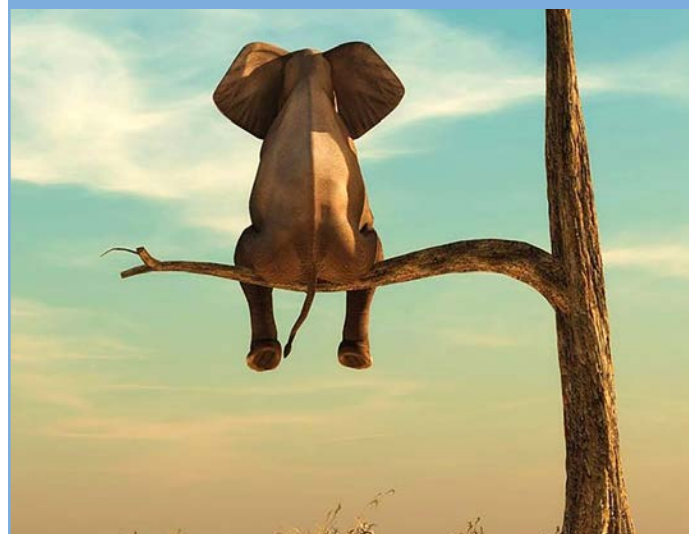
Mr Jim Flanagan, the deputy-principal of Rosmini, said every effort was made to collect the pamphlets and to dispose of them. "If anything," he said, "the incident has strengthened school spirit."

One concerned parent complained to the Race Relations Conciliator, but the investigating officer there decided the literature does not come within the conciliator's jurisdiction and passed the matter to the Human Rights Commission.

The Human Rights Commission spokesperson said the commission is not allowed to say whether specific complaints are under investigation. But, she added that, in general, literature expressing religious opinions is immune from prosecution.

— *Zealandia*, March 11, 1984

CAPTION CONTEST



Write the best caption for this photo and win a \$30 Countdown voucher. Email your ideas by Friday, March 22 to design@nzcatholic.org.nz Subject 'Caption Contest 680'. Or post to NZ Catholic, PO Box 147000, Ponsonby, Auckland 1144. Please include your postal address.

The winner of the Caption Contest from issue 678 (right) was — **Richard Small, Palmerston North.**

Other suggestions were:

"It is way better than a black eye." — **Russell Watt, Auckland.**

"No, my name is NOT Pinocchio!" — **Patricia Jackson, Auckland.**

"The new Covid mask at its peak. Keep your distance!" — **Kieran Fenn, Auckland.**

"There is nothing better than an eye-cream on a hot day!" — **Grace Jackson, Auckland.**

"Hey everyone, get an eyeful of this!" — **Karen Reid, Auckland.**

Michelangelo to his Assistant: "I said I want a nice clean bone!!" — **Carmel Anne Malone, Christchurch.**



Eyes cream

"I spy with my little eye something beginning with I." — **Paul McKee, Christchurch.**

"I would see better if I used a telescope." — **Ron Ingram, Hawera.**

New NZ knights invested for equestrian order

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem saw three new knights invested at St Patrick's Cathedral, Auckland, last November.

They are Rodolfo de la Vega, KHS, Jacob Anithottam, KHS, and Aldrich Rasco, KHS.

The investiture was attended by many family members and friends. Ecclesiastical Master of Ceremonies Fr Anthony Malone, OFM, KCHS, celebrant Fr Chris Denham, KCHS, and Deacon Nimo Ponifasio KCHS, oversaw the ceremonies for both the vigil held at St John the Baptist Church, Parnell, and the investiture.

The three investees have committed to supporting Christians living in the Holy Land through material and spiritual support, and to further develop their individual spiritual growth. All members hold the Holy Land dear to their heart, and at this time are especially praying for peace and an end to the Gaza conflict, in the land where our Lord once walked and taught.

Also in November last year, leaders of the order gathered in Rome for the "Consulta", to discuss the theme of formation.

According to the Holy See website, this is a "formation necessary for candidates aspiring to enter the order; an ongoing formation for those who already participate in its life and mission; and furthermore, the formation of those who are called to hold roles of responsibility, with two elements: the spiritual, in the awareness of the high moral commitment assumed before the altar; and that related to the organisation of activities and resource management, to meet the

needs of the Holy Land continually and adequately".

The Consulta is the advisory body of the Cardinal Grand Master. Its proposals are part of the decision-making process on the most important issues concerning the order. Every four years, under the chairmanship of the Cardinal Grand Master, all the highest offices of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre (the Grand Magisterium with the Lieutenants and Magistral Delegates), together with a representative of the Secretariat of State and one from the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, meet to discuss and reflect on common issues concerning the life of the order in all its peripheral structures.

The order in New Zealand was represented by magistral delegate Carleen Blucher, DCHS.

Some 200 leaders from 40 countries prayed and worked from November 6-10.

A poignant speech from the Grand Prior, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, OFM, via video link in Jerusalem, on the impact that the war in Gaza is having on all those living there and beyond, reinforced the importance of the Order's work in supporting those living in the Holy Land. Finally, there was an audience with Pope Francis, which members found to be moving and uplifting.

Mrs Blucher said that the Consulta was "a truly unforgettable experience".

"I am extremely grateful for having the opportunity to take part in this significant gathering of the order," she said.

"It enabled me to appreciate the importance of the work we are called to do in service of our Lord."



(From left) Rodolfo de la Vega, KHS, Jacob Anithottam, KHS, and Aldrich Rasco, KHS



Pope Francis greets members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, in the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican on November 9, 2023 (CNS photo/Vatican Media)



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EVENTS

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Special servers love their altar ministry

by BEATE MATTHIES

When one thinks of altar servers, the image that comes to mind is usually that of boys and girls who are in the age range of 7 to 17, approximately.

However, there is no restriction on the age of who can be altar servers — and since some time after Vatican II, this lay ministry is open to boys and girls.

Altar servers support the priest during the Mass, ring the bells, carry the cross, and do much more.

Maria Assumpta parish in Beach Haven, Auckland, could well have one of the longest continuously serving altar servers in the diocese, and maybe even in the country.

Donald Brannigan has been an altar server for about 40 years. Some years ago, he convinced his brother Michael to get trained and to serve together with him.

The two brothers, Michael and Donald, are aged 60 and 58 respectively, and have served in the parish diligently. They regularly attend 8am Mass, where they have been serving with joy and dedication.

The routine in the Catholic liturgy is what gives Michael and Donald the chance to participate fully. They are both intellectually disabled and love routines. They know exactly which step comes next. They know what the priest needs, they light the candles at the right moment, and they sing whole-heartedly all the hymns they know by heart. At the end of Mass, when they like a certain recessional hymn, they sometimes sing, move with the rhythm, and clap their hands.

Michael and Donald are special. They



Michael and Donald Brannigan at Maria Assumpta parish in Beach Haven

are faithful children of the parish, and when the Prayer for Life is said every Sunday at the end of the Prayers of the Faithful, the two brothers are testimony to the truth behind that prayer. It is a blessing to have them in the parish.

The Prayer for Life was sent out by the Catholic Diocese of Auckland some years ago, and has been adapted by Beach Haven parish for its own use. The adapted version of the prayer is:

“Loving God, inspire in us a deepening respect for life and the human dignity of every person. Guide and strengthen us in caring, especially for the vulnerable, for

those with disabilities, for those who are sick, lonely, or depressed. Help us to value the elderly. Encourage us in enabling people with disabilities to live their lives to the full. Support and empower all those working to protect life, especially for the unborn, and protect us from euthanasia and assisted suicide. We make this prayer with full confidence in your guidance, compassion, and love.”

Recently, the parish awarded the brothers’ long-time service with brand new albs. These albs were especially made for them. They are special albs for special altar servers.

WIT'S END

Given the time of year, some diet humour might be in order. . .

My friend Joe recently started the Dolly Parton diet. It's really made Joe lean, Joe lean, Joe lean, Joe leeeaaaannn...

My wife is on a tropical fruit diet, the house is full of the stuff! It's enough to make a mango crazy.

Went on a site claiming to offer the best diet programme. The first thing it asked me is if I accept cookies!

I was gonna start a new diet tonight... but I have too much on my plate.

Have you heard of the new squirrel diet? It's just nuts.

Alexandra Parish plans and sets up a wedding for newcomers from Africa

by Sr LEONA GARCHOW, RSM

Recent migrants to Aotearoa, Francisca and Peace Aborah, had had a cultural and civil wedding in Nigeria, and then requested a Catholic wedding at John the Baptist Church in Alexandra.

A parishioner heard that the couple were only going to have two witnesses and the celebrant, Fr Sani Lam, at the wedding.

This was not good enough to make this couple feel welcome in Alexandra, so wheels began to turn.

Francisca (nee Orji) and Peace agreed to the invitation being in the parish newsletter. The photographer had a plan. A parishioner provided the “taxi service” for the couple. A cake-maker from among the parishioners was found. White flowers in abundance arrived in the church for a parishioner to prepare the floral arrangements.

A group of St Gerard’s School pupils formed a choir, and learned the Nigerian National Anthem.

They were accompanied by a flautist and a double bass player. The organist was there to play the other hymns and, at the conclusion of the Mass, “Love Changes Everything” was sung with gusto.

A group of parishioners had cleaned the parish hall, and set it up for the wedding with white table cloths and greenery decorations amongst the white flowers.

Parishioners knew what they needed to contribute for the meal because it was all organised by Donald Lamont, the photographer. The couple have a wonderful photographic record of the occasion, as well as a video that can be shared with family overseas.

Close to 100 parishioners witnessed the wedding and shared the wedding “breakfast”. Many said it was a wonderful parish celebration. It was said that “any parish could do this, for any reason, like a wedding, baptism, funeral. It is what used to happen in every Christian village for the last 2000 years”.



Fr Sani Lan with Francisca and Peace Aborah

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