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On the front cover: The specially designed reliquary will be in Auckland from April 26 to May 5. (Photo supplied by The Maronite Eparchy of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania)

Relics of 11 saints to visit Auckland

by ROWENA OREJANA

The relics of 11 saints, including those of St Peter Chanel, the patron saint of the New Zealand Catholic Church, and Australia's first saint, St Mary MacKillop, will be welcomed by the Auckland diocese from April 26 to May 25.

The Maronite Eparchy of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania described the event as "a unique and historic opportunity to welcome the relics of saints from both the Eastern and Western Catholic Churches".

"The relics represent a tangible connection to the spiritual heritage of both Eastern and Western Catholics, serving as beacons of holiness in our contemporary world. Despite the challenges we face, these saints inspire us to persevere in our faith and strive for greater holiness," a spokesperson for the eparchy said.

Last year, the Maronite Eparchy of Australia celebrated the golden jubilee of its official establishment.

During the year, a tour of the relics of four Maronite saints — St Maroun, St Charbel, St Rafqa and St Nehmetallah — with the relics of Australia's St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, brought communities together in prayer asking for the blessings of the Lord through the intercession of our saints.

This inspired Maronite Eparchy Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay to do the New Zealand tour this year coinciding with the Year of Prayer in preparation for next year's Pilgrimage of Hope.

"The purpose of the relics tour in Auckland extends a rich tradition of spiritual reverence and unity within the Church," the spokesperson said.

"It will also connect Eastern Catholics with their spiritual heritage and provide a unique opportunity to deepen faith and strengthen spiritual bonds."

The relics will be accompanied by the Eastern Catholic Bishops of New Zealand and will be received with a Maronite Divine Liturgy at St Anne's Church, Manurewa.

They will be formally welcomed the following day at St Patrick's Cathedral.



Relics of St Alphonsa, India's first female saint

The Maronite eparchy hoped the tour will be "a spiritually enriching experience for the faithful and a positive opportunity for the Church in Auckland to engage with the Eastern communities in the region and experience their rich faith traditions".

The relics will tour the other Eastern Catholic Churches of Auckland: Saint Elias Melkite Catholic Church, Mother of Perpetual Help Church of Ukraine, St Addai Chaldean Catholic Church and the Immaculate Conception Syro-Malabar Church.

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

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

Email: admin@nzcatholic.org.nz

Website: www.nzcatholic.org.nz

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Editor: Michael Otto Journalist: Rowena Orejana

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Design & Advertising: Anne Rose

Advertising enquiries contact:

design@nzcatholic.org.nz

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Whānau Mercy Ministries Trust appoints first Ko Te Hapai O – executive director

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

Whānau Mercy Ministries Trust has appointed David Mullin as its inaugural Ko Te Hapai O — executive director.

Board chair, Denise Fox rsm, described Mr Mullin as a highly accomplished, thoughtful, and effective Catholic leader.

"Dave brings a deep understanding of the New Zealand Catholic Church, as well as extensive business and management skills and a recognised ability to work effectively with a wide range of people," she said.

"It is vitally important that our first-ever executive leader is someone who builds trust and confidence with our ministries and our many stakeholders. Dave's calm and respectful manner and his heart for mercy will enable him to do that exceptionally well".

Whānau Mercy Ministries, New Zealand's first canonical ministerial public juridic person, is the new structure set up by the Congregation of Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand to own, govern and continue to grow its education, health and aged care and community ministries across New Zealand.

These include five colleges, Mercy Hospital in Dunedin, Mercy Hospice in Auckland, Mercy Villas Upper Hutt, Coolock Cottages in Dunedin, and Te Waipuna Puawai, a community services agency in Auckland.

The dual title for the role underlines the Trust's bi-cultural commitment.

"Ko Te Hapai O comes from a whakatauki (proverb) that reminds us that leadership is collective and requires both more visible and less visible contributions," explained Sr Denise.

"Dave's role will be to work with leaders in our



David Mullin

ministries to support their success and widen the tent of Mercy in Aotearoa New Zealand in response to the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth and in the light of the Gospel and Te Tiriti o Waitangi."

Mr Mullin has been working with the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference in two key roles: as project director for the Church response to the Royal Commission into Abuse in Care and as manager of the national Catholic insurance scheme.

After a period of transition, Mr Mullin will commence in the role full-time from mid-June, based in Wellington.



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Sacred Heart Cathedral to open in June

by ROWENA OREJANA

After almost six years of waiting, parishioners of the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Sacred Heart will finally be able to come back “home” on the weekend of June 7 and 8.

Wellington Archbishop Paul Martin SM said they are looking at the final days of preparing for the opening but will need to raise more funds to finish the project.

“I’m really excited about the future for our cathedral, both that it is safe [and] that the work has been done inside which is helping it to be a place of beauty and of reverence, and of community and worship,” he said.

“I think you’ll be really delighted when you see the work that has been done. And for us to be able to come home again to that place is something that I know so many are looking forward to.”

The cathedral in Thorndon closed its doors on July 13, 2018, to ensure the safety of parishioners and the public, after a structural engineer’s report confirmed it presented a significant risk to occupants in the event of an earthquake.

The archbishop said the project cost was \$13 million but they still need to raise another \$1 million.

“As we come to the end of the financial year, people might be looking for ways to donate, so if you are able

to help it would be really appreciated and a real contribution to the life of the whole archdiocese,” he said in a video appeal released last month. “I hope that if you are in a position to be able to help, that you will give to the campaign so that we can get to the end of this and then move forward.”

The focus of the work is shifting to the interior of the cathedral after the task of the rewiring has been completed, according to latest update posted on the Sacred Heart Cathedral Restoration website.

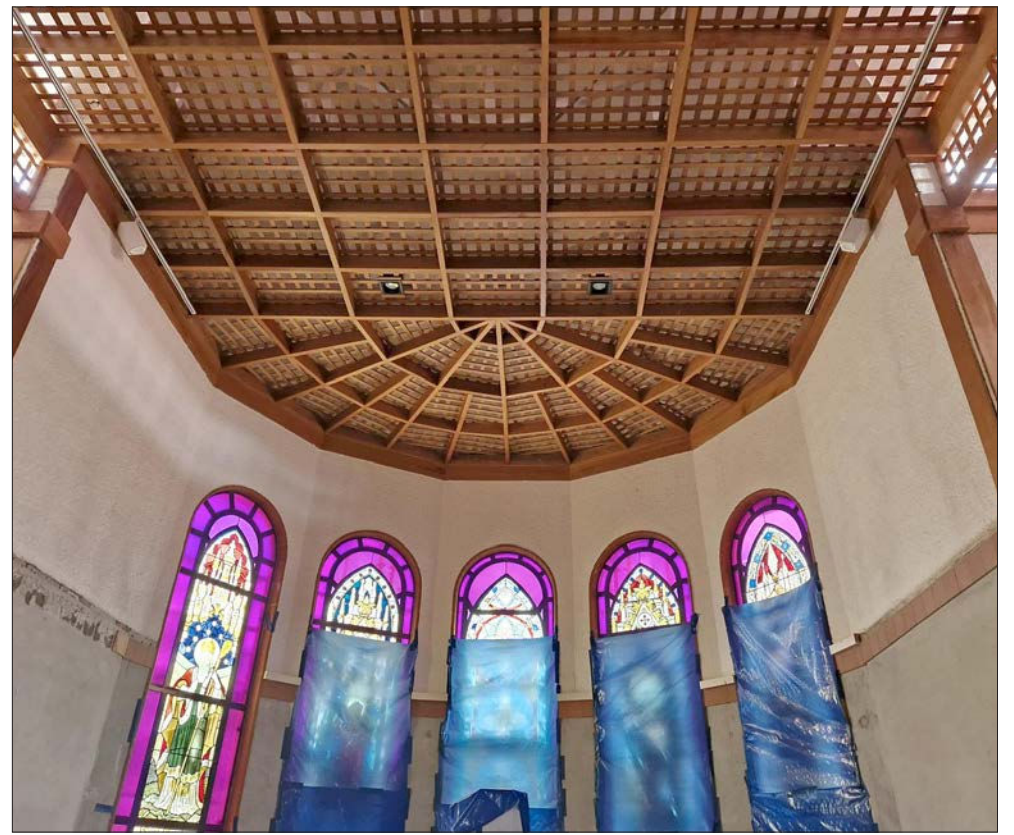
The stairs to the choir loft were redesigned and replaced to allow space for the reinforced concrete structures, a key element of the earthquake strengthening work.

The update also said an internal wall in the foyer had been removed to open the space so that “it will become a vibrant space for people to meet, connect and gather after Mass and other community events”.

Archbishop Martin thanked all those who already “donated their time, their talents and especially if you’ve contributed your funds as well, that’s very much appreciated”.

He stressed that the cathedral is the heart of the archdiocese.

“It’s the focal point, a church that binds us all together, that we all belong to, because it’s the cathedral,” he said. “I know you’ll look forward



Renovation focus shifts to the inside of Wellington’s Metropolitan Cathedral of the Sacred Heart.

to seeing the cathedral, as am I, and that we will be able to have lots of opportunities in the future to celebrate there together.”

The restoration committee is holding a gala dinner, debate, and auction on April 12, 2024 as part of its fundraising campaign.

Hamilton bishop urges blokes to know Jesus

by MIKE BAIRD

“What’s my vision for Hamilton Diocese? To know Him, love Him, follow Him. . . in that order.”

Newly ordained Bishop of Hamilton Diocese, Bishop Richard Laurenson, was drawing on his episcopal motto inspired by Saint Richard of Chichester while addressing over sixty men at a Blokes Breakfast with the Bishop held at Te Manawa, St Columba’s Catholic School Hall recently.

The event was the initiative of a small group of men keen to organise an opportunity for the men of Hamilton city and surrounding areas to gather over an early Saturday morning breakfast to hear from Bishop Laurenson his vision for the diocese and his expectations of the men of the Church.

Bishop Laurenson called on the men to know Jesus. “We can only love who we know, otherwise we only love a dream,” he said.

The bishop said men were given a “call to arms” to face the enemy and keep him at the door, to protect our homes, live faithfully despite the worldly challenges and to bring our loved ones to the other side.

“This takes a sacrifice of time, of skin and sometimes of reputation” he said.

As for his immediate plans, Bishop Richard said he intends to draw on the diocesan “collective imagination” for a year to learn what needs to be done or be left alone if it’s not broken.

Bishop Laurenson shared that he was a Hamilton boy through and through, having received all his sacraments in the Hamilton diocese.

He made a point also of highlighting his ancestry which went back to early European New Zealand. An ancestor of his was on Cook’s second expedition to New Zealand, crewing on *HMS Adventure* which arrived in Queen Charlotte Sound on May 7, 1773.

Just as that expedition repeated Cook’s earlier discovery of New Zealand, and similar voyages by even earlier explorers, Bishop Laurenson challenged the men to rediscover Jesus and accompany others in their rediscovery.

The breakfast was attended by a wide age range of men with a number of fathers bringing along their sons.

A small group of dedicated men had their BBQs fired up at 6am and began cooking the sausages, meat patties and bacon in the dark while some of



Bishop Richard Laurenson addresses the blokes at breakfast

the organisers’ wives had volunteered to co-ordinate things in the kitchen inside.

Blokes being blokes, the organising team had initially planned on using paper plates, disposable cutlery and plastic tablecloths but the ladies insisted on using proper crockery and cutlery as well as tables and the servery adorned with linen.

This elevated the sense of occasion to honour the visit of the new bishop.

The breakfast wound up at around 8.30am, just in time for those who were able to stay on a while longer to head over to the parish church next door for the 9am Saturday morning Mass, also celebrated by Bishop Laurenson.

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Villa Maria wins Bishop Lyons Shield 2024

by ROWENA OREJANA

After 12 years, Villa Maria College has taken home the Bishop Lyons Shield.

Villa Maria College principal Deborah Brosnahan said “the girls performed beautifully and shared their talents and faith in the activities” at the annual public speaking competition among the secondary schools in the Christchurch diocese.

“We are incredibly proud that our students achieved a placing in each event, with the debaters and religious questions team each winning their events, Madison Sillifant coming first equal in the junior prepared speech, and Emily Ng winning the senior prepared speech,” she added.

She said getting back the shield for the first time in 12 years was special for the team and wider Villa whānau.

“While winning was very enjoyable of course, it was the sharing of faith and manaakitanga together as rangatahi Katorika (young Catholics) that really mattered. Our students made great connections with other leaders over the weekend,” the principal said.

Catholic Cathedral College student Elijah Derwahl won the Speaker’s Cup.

The winners in the different categories include: Impromptu Speech: Daniel Van Der Werf (St Thomas of Canterbury College, first place), Jasmine Sare (Villa Maria College, second

place) and Isa Chuntic (Catholic Cathedral College, third place);

Junior Prepared Speech: Luke Coyle (St Bede’s College, first equal) and Madison Sillifant (Villa Maria College, first equal) with Grace Lysaght (Roncalli College, third place);

Senior Prepared Speech: Emily Ng (Villa Maria College, first place), Simon Curnow (St Bede’s College, second place) and Sophie Lumb (Marian College, third place);

Debate: Catherine Grant, Jemma de Burger and Jordana Johnston (Villa Maria College, first place); Elijah Derwahl, Aidan Cheong and Jack Gibbons (Catholic Cathedral College, second place) and Thomas Richards, Hunter Heath and Liam Speechley (St Bede’s College, third place);

Scripture reading: Tanui Pauling (St Thomas of Canterbury College, first place), Luatimu Taaso (Marian College, second place) and Lily Holm (Roncalli College, third place);

Religious Questions: Sophie Glass, Ciara Nystad and Gabrielle Segar (Villa Maria College, first place), Ella Malone, Gabriella McKey and Rosie Mones-Cazon (Marian College, second place) and Samuel Leitch, Isaiah Pridmore and Jack Segar (St Bede’s College, third place equal), Sabrina Lopez, Leah Hammond and Ivan Buanaos (Catholic Cathedral College, third place equal).

Overall, Marian College placed second while Catholic Cathedral Col-



Villa Maria’s winning team. Back row: Emily Ng, Jasmine Sare, Madi Sillifant, Jordana Johnston, Mihimarino Parata, Catherine Grant, and Jemma de Burger. Front Row: Gabi Segar and Ciara Nystad. Not in the photo: Sophie Glass

lege and St Bede’s College shared the third place.

Ms Brosnahan thanked this year’s host, Marian College.

“The hospitality of Marian College was incredible with so many of their staff and students around all week-

end to make us all feel at home in their beautiful school. The high point for us all was the beautiful Mass we celebrated together at St Bede’s on Saturday night,” she said.

Next year’s event will be hosted by St Bede’s College.

St Mary’s girl contracted straight into Black Ferns Sevens

by ADAM JULIAN

Justine McGregor (Ngāti Porou/Ngāti Kahungunu) has played seven matches in the Farah Palmer Cup for the Wellington Pride but has yet to feature on the winning team.

When she applied for a place at Manukura, the leading female rugby school in the country, she was rejected.

McGregor was educated at St Mary’s College on Guilford Terrace in Thorndon. Not far from the Beehive, there isn’t enough space on the premises for a full-sized rugby field and the school can’t afford exorbitant council rates for alternatives, so they often rely on private rugby clubs for charity.

Yet against these various odds, McGregor has come out of school and been contracted straight into the Black Ferns Sevens for a year.

McGregor is 17 years old. She joins veterans Risi Pouri-Lane and Tenika Willison, who were contracted at the same age, in the Olympic gold medal-winning squad.

“Where do I start? I’ve pretty much got here through hard work. I’ve played rugby from a young age. I played multiple sports, but when I decided to settle on the one code, I was really able to apply myself in pursuit of my goal to wear the black jersey,” McGregor said.

She is strikingly mature. The Pride failed to win a single game for the first time in FPC history last year, but utility back McGregor thrived.

Her natural talent was no more obvious than in her starting debut against Canterbury in Christchurch. The visitors were smashed 58-29. McGregor scored three tries, including a swiftly anticipated 60m inception and a 40m solo runaway.

“I didn’t get a lot of exposure in

my first season, so I was determined to showcase myself more. I can’t let nerves get in the way; I’ve just got to play,” she said.

McGregor scored six tries in as many FPC matches. She was the youngest player selected in the Black Ferns XV in September which beat Manu Sina 38-12 in Pukekohe. Her impact from the bench was immediate, delivering a try-scoring pass to lock Laura Bayfield.

Earlier in the season, McGregor played centre for Petone in the Wellington Women’s senior competition. She won the Erin Rush medal as Best & Fairest player while also helping St Mary’s College continue their domination of the local secondary schools competition.

St Mary’s has won the Wellington First XV grade four times in a row. They’ve flourished even more in Sevens, winning the one-off Wellington Condor Sevens for nine years successively. Her single mum Terina McGregor is the team manager.

Despite few opportunities, Sevens is the game McGregor finds truly captivating. She was picked for the Central Storm for the 2021 World Schools Sevens in Auckland. It was another team, however, that made an even bigger impression.

“When I saw the New Zealand Under-18s play, I was like, ‘Wow I want to make that team,’” McGregor conceded.

She achieved that goal twice in 2022 and 2023, catching the attention of Black Ferns Sevens coach Corey Sweeney.

“Justine has been a standout performer in the secondary school scene and has not taken a backward step since joining us. It’s obvious that she has had some great support and coaching in her conditioning and rugby; we are proud of how she has adapted in



Justine McGregor in action

our environment and she’s already putting her hand up for selection.”

McGregor said, “I love Sevens. I’m typically a centre or first-five, though I’m adaptable and can play in the forwards. I love the speed of the game and the space it provides.”

She now lives in Mount Maunganui, where she flats with two-time World Rugby Sevens Player of the Year Michaela Blyde.

One coach and mentor made a profound impact on McGregor. Shannon Nightingale is not a household name. But the Petone and St Mary’s coach from Heretaunga, a humble suburb half an hour from Wellington, has been a big influence. He’s been coaching female sports for two decades, compelled to take part because of his daughter.

“Justine and my daughter have

played with and against each other. Besides being naturally gifted, Justine has a work ethic that is second to none,” Nightingale said.

“She is willing to listen and take constructive feedback. Sometimes we’ve had to have conversations with her about overtraining. I’m so proud of her achievements. It’s only the start of great things.”

The player’s view? “Shannon is like a Dad to me. He’s helped me on and off the field — he’s that one guy who really believed in me and pushed me. I didn’t meet him until I went to St Mary’s, but he saw me playing junior rugby at Wainuiomata and was in touch with Mum. He had his eye on me.”

This article originally appeared in the LockerRoom website. It is reprinted here with permission.

American scholar: Book of Job points to Christ as Redeemer

by ROWENA OREJANA

The Book of Job is one of the “most complicated, mythological and esoteric texts” in the Old Testament which deals not only with the idea of innocents suffering, but also signals the coming of the Redeemer.

This was proposed by American Old Testament scholar Dr Israel McGrew at a two-hour talk held at the Te Kupenga — Catholic Theological College on March 20, 2024. Dr McGrew is a professor of Sacred Scripture at the Augustine Institute in Colorado and specialises in the Book of Job.

Dr McGrew said that when studying the books of the Old Testament, one must consider what God was teaching the Jews at that point in their history and how a particular book prepares both the Jews and the scholar for the mystery of Christ.

“I would suggest that this is criterion by which good Old Testament scholarship is to be judged. Does it help you love Christ better? Does it bring to life something about Christ that you hadn’t quite appreciated before?” he said.

In the first hour of his talk, Dr McGrew set out the “dynamics of the strategies going on with the book”.

He said the author of the Book of Job employed allusions to other books in the Old Testament, ambiguity, mythology and the use of prose against poetry.

Dr McGrew, then, delved into two major myths: the Babylonian Creation story, Enuma Eilish and the Ba’al epic, how Israel engaged with these myths, how they (myths) influenced the Bible and how the Book of Job synthesised these myths as compared to the true God and foreshadowed the New Testament.

■ Third party

Dr McGrew gave three arguments to support his proposition that the Book of Job pointed to Christ, the first being Job’s introduction of a third party between himself and God, someone

else who can mediate on behalf of Job.

“The idea of a third party was raised without belief in (Job) 9:33. According to the Masoretic text, Job expressed his regret that such a figure does not exist: ‘there is no arbiter between us who might lay his hand on us both,’ that is, there is no third party who can coerce God to be just to Job,” he said.

“But Job scholars see this theme being resumed in (Job) 16:19, when Job expresses his confidence in the existence of a witness in heaven who will attest to the injustice Job suffers. Job 19: 25’s *go’el* (Hebrew for redeemer), then, could be the continuation of this theme, as Job despairs of receiving any justice from God and looks, instead, to a third party.”

In Job 14:7-15, Dr McGrew said Job also explicitly considered the reward of an afterlife as the solution to the problem of evil. The passage expressed hope that a tree cut down will sprout new shoots and that a man who dies will not rise again until the heavens are no more.

■ Divine Power

Dr McGrew’s second argument dwelled on the nature of divine power.

He said Job gave God an antagonist to his creative vision “to give an account of real evil in history and especially, to the full significance of the human creature”.

The Leviathan, from the Ba’al myth, is the king of the proud or the Satan in the Book of Job, who criticised God’s creation.

He said this critique is central to the book and relates to Job’s complaint that his (Job’s) piety is for nothing after the catastrophes that befell him.

“The Satan’s question whether Job, Israel, or humanity generally, can fear God for naught directly challenges whether God has succeeded in creating a creature capable of gratuitous love. The nature of this antagonism to the creator’s vision, furthermore, is such that God cannot overcome it coercively,” Dr McGrew said.

“God is, in fact, vulnerable to Job’s



Dr Israel McGrew

decision to submit and serve God ‘for nothing’. God cannot overcome the Satan’s critique of the impossibility of love without Job’s free decision to submit, trust and love God ‘for nothing’.”

Job, in his suffering, played the role of “God’s arm in subduing the Leviathan or the Satan”, Dr McGrew said.

“Insofar as the Satan refuses to recant and Job vindicates God’s creative vision, Job, in fact, overcomes the Satan,” he added.

It is not surprising to see how Job resembled Jesus, he said.

“But it is still more profound. . . in Christ’s cross, Christ not only saves us from sin and converts us, but he fulfilled for the first time — or the second time, allowing for Mary — what God set out to create: a human creature, made in the image and likeness of God,” Dr McGrew explained.

“In the Incarnation, God’s creative vision is fulfilled, as a man demonstrates that he can be ‘perfect and upright, fearing God and avoiding evil’, then go to his death in trust, demonstrating

that he can ‘fear God for nothing’.”

■ Theological concept

Finally, Dr McGrew said, Job’s exploration of an arbiter who will redeem him from God’s indifference “inadvertently sketched out a theological concept that would be realised in Christ’s incarnation”.

“The book’s dichotomies are bridged in Christ: the unbridgeable gulf between God and humanity is bridged; the transcendent God both descends to our level and mediates for us before the transcendent God; the redeemer lives and will make us live, too; the arm of the Lord is finally revealed in Christ, and in our inclusion into the body of Christ, we, too, become the arm through which God vanquishes his cosmic antagonist and through which God completes his ultimate creative vision.”

Faculties collaborate for growth

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

The managements of Te Kupenga — Catholic Theological College (CTC), University of Notre Dame — Australia (UNDA) and the

Catholic Institute of Sydney (CIS) held a series of meetings on March 17-19 to discuss ways to enhance their partnerships and how the three faculties can grow together.

CTC offers a Bachelor of Divin-

ity programme as CIS’ offshore campus.

CIS moved its civil accreditation to the UNDA in 2022, which meant CTC has also been accredited by UNDA through CIS.



From left to right: UNDA chief of staff and principal legal counsel Charbel Haddad, UNDA executive director for strategy and planning Julian Smith, Te Kupenga chief executive Robert Blucher, Catholic Theological College dean Fr Merv Duffy SM, CIS vice president and academic dean Dr Rohan Curnow, CTC director Dr John Evangelista, UNDA dean of school of philosophy and theology Prof Renee Kohler-Ryan, CIS president Prof Sr Isabell Naumann and UNDA vice-chancellor Prof Francis Campbell.

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Gaza by day and night

By day Gaza is news and images in the media. Perhaps we avoid them. Perhaps we read about the latest deaths and diplomacy, look at the photos, glance at the opinion pieces that justify or criticise Israel and Hamas, or that set the war in the larger geopolitical interests of the various actors, including Australia. But some delicacy, some despair, some suppressed feeling may hold us back from dwelling on it. We concentrate on the business of our daily lives.

But sometimes at night Gaza returns. It becomes personal. For some of us it comes linked to biblical

Andrew Hamilton

texts such as that of the prophet Jeremiah speaking of the destruction of the Northern kingdom, 'In Ramah a voice was heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not'.

We imagine the mothers in Gaza keening for their children who have been killed, the children who were left maimed and orphaned and who will never again be touched in love, the families scrabbling at rubble desperate not to leave their crushed children unburied, the children crying out for food and water which their parents cannot give them, the children whose last memories of their parents were of gunfire, the children who in another universe could be our children. And we hear the echo of Rachel weeping for their children who are no more. In night there is no comfort.

During the day we nod as we see the plausibility of all the arguments. Yes, Hamas started this war; Yes, Israel has the right to defend itself. Yes, many Israeli people have died in the war. Yes, their lives are as precious as those of the people of Gaza; Yes, many peoples have a historic claim on the same land. Yes, Israel is a democracy. Yes, Hamas fights and hides hostages among civilians. Yes, a ceasefire

is of itself no solution. Yes, there are other players arming each side in the war with their own aims. Yes, more people died in other wars. Yes, it is not in Australia's interests to separate ourselves from our powerful friends. And yet these arguments bring no comfort.

But sometimes at night, we may hear again the voice of lamentation, weeping and great mourning. We see the cities lie in ruins; the houses, the apartments, the shops, the mosques and marketplaces are now rubble; the hospitals, havens of healing, are now places of death; the delicate network of daily human living is now torn apart. We smell the fear that precedes each drone, each bomb, each shell, each scattering of a family. We see the families who have fled from the city into tents and other cities and touch their terror as bombs fall close. We taste the bitterness of hunger, the humiliation of fighting



Displaced Palestinian children wait to receive food in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, on March 5, 2024 (OSV News photo/Ibraheem Abu Mustafa, Reuters)

one's friends for food. And we look into the eyes of children who know only this as their world. And Rachel weeps for her children who are no more. At night no comfort comes.

By day, we feel for the Jewish and Palestinian communities in our land who grieve for dead relatives, fear for their nations, are enraged at their nations' enemies, and who experience abuse on the grounds of their religion, race and national origin. And perhaps we march for peace and support our friends in these communities. Yet these things bring little comfort.

In daytime, we wonder what will become of Gaza and Israel in thirty years' time. By then the surviving children will be adults carrying the memories and the scars of this war. Will the relationships between the people of Israel and their neighbouring peoples be dominated by fear and hatred magnified by this war and controlled only by military power? And what will serve the interests of other powerful nations? Such questions bring no comfort.

But sometimes at night, if faith has shaped our imagination, we may see the thirty thousand persons who have died in white robes, washed in the blood of the Lamb, each valued, each alive. And we may be led to pray for all those whose lives have been blighted by this war — the people who live in fear, hunger, grief and isolation as a result of it — that they might live securely and be free. We may pray also for the leaders responsible for it, the soldiers involved in the killing and devastating, and the people who have supplied the weapons, and all the people of Israel and Gaza, for a change of heart that looks in the eyes of the persons whom their decisions maim and kill and seeks peace through respect.

Such prayer does not bring comfort. But it may foster hope against hope.

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

Ronald Rolheiser

The dark night as impasse

What happens to us when we experience a dark night of the soul? What's happening and what's to be our response?

There are libraries of literature on this, each book or article making its own point, but here I want to share a rather unique and highly insightful take on this by Constance FitzGerald, a Carmelite nun and someone well versed in the various classical spiritual writers who speak about the dark night of the soul.

She uses the word "impasse" to render what is commonly called a dark night of the soul. For her, in effect, what happens in a dark night of the soul is that you come to an "impasse" in your life in terms of your emotions, your intellect, and your imagination. All the former ways you understood, imagined, and felt about things, especially as this relates to God, faith, and prayer, no longer work for you. You are, so to speak, paralysed, unable to go back to the way things were and unable to move forwards. And part of the paralysis is that you cannot think, imagine, or feel your way out of this. You are at an impasse — no way back and no way forward. So, what do you do? How do you move beyond the impasse?

There's no simple or quick path out of this. You cannot imagine, think, or feel your way out of this because the vision, symbols, answers, and feelings you need, in effect, don't exist yet, at least they don't exist for you. That's the exact reason why you are at an impasse and so emotionally and intellectually paralyzed. The new vision and feelings that can reset your vision, thoughts, and feelings first have to be gestated and given birth to through your own pain and confusion.

At this stage, there is no answer, at least not for you. You may have read accounts of others who have undergone the same impasse and who now offer counsel as to how to undergo the dark

night. That can be useful, but it's still your heart, your imagination, and your intellect that are in the crucible of fire. Knowing that others have gone through the same fire can help give you vision and consolation in your paralysis, but the fire must still be gone through in your own life to reset your own imagination, thoughts, and feelings.

For FitzGerald, being in this state is the ultimate liminal space within which we can find ourselves.

“God can flow into our lives pure and untainted when we are at an impasse and unable to substitute our vision for God's vision.”

This is a crucible within which we are being purified. And, for her, the way out is the way through. The way out of a dark night of this kind is through "contemplation", namely, staying with the impasse, waiting patiently inside it, and waiting for God to break the impasse by transforming our imagination, intellect, and heart.

So ultimately, this impasse is a challenge for us to become mystics, not that we begin to search for extraordinary religious experience, but that we let our disillusion, broken symbols, and failed meanings become the space wherein God can reset our faith, feelings, imagination, and intellect inside of a new horizon wherein everything is radically reinterpreted.

How do we do this concretely? How do we contemplate? We do it by sitting in the tension, helpless, patient, open, waiting, and staying there however

long it takes for us to receive in the depth of our souls a new way of imagining, thinking, and feeling about God, faith, and prayer — beyond the impasse.

Moreover, the broken symbols, the disillusion, and our helplessness to think or feel our way out of the impasse is precisely what assures us that the new vision which is given to us comes from God and is not the product of own imagination or projection or self-interest.

One of the most penetrating criticisms of religious experience ever given was made by Friedrich Nietzsche who claimed that all religious experience, all of it, is ultimately human projection. He argued that we create God in our self-image and likeness for our own self-interest, and that is why a lot of sincere faith and religion can be hypocritical and false. Reacting to this, Michael Buckley, the renowned Jesuit philosopher and theologian, made this counterclaim: Nietzsche is 95 percent correct. Ninety-five percent of what claims to be religious experience is in fact human projection. But, Buckley adds, Nietzsche is 5 percent wrong and that 5 percent makes all the difference — because in that 5 percent God's revelation flows untainted in our lives.

Now, and this is the essential point here, that 5 percent happens precisely when we are in a dark night of the soul, when our symbols are broken, our intellect is impotent, our imagination is empty, and our hearts are at loss. It is precisely then, when we are helpless to help ourselves that we are also helpless to fudge and taint the way God is entering us.

God can flow into our lives pure and untainted when we are at an impasse and unable to substitute our vision for God's vision.

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

Need a favour? Pray

Editorial

Need a favour? Pray
I have been hearing this country-rock song on the radio driving to and from work. Its refrain goes like this:
*I only talk to God when I need a favour
And I only pray when I ain't got a prayer
So, who... am I, who... am I
To expect a Saviour, oh
If I only talk to God when I need a favour?
But God, I need a favour*

In the song, one can hear the singer's raw desperation: he is about to lose the love of his life and pleading to God to hear his prayer even though he knows he is not worthy of asking anything from God.

In truth, without Jesus' Resurrection, none of us would be worthy of asking anything from God. In fact, we still pray in Mass a prayer based on the Roman centurion's words, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."

Jesus gave his life for us and now, we can confidently but also humbly communicate with the Father.

But how good are we at praying?

During Lent, prayers and reflections are emphasised. Community prayers are strengthened with the Friday Stations of the Cross, and other activities prepare ourselves for Christ's passion and his eventual triumph in the Resurrection.

In ordinary time, though, how do we pray as individuals and as communities?

"Prayer is the breath of faith; it is its most proper expression. Like a cry that issues from the heart of those who believe and entrust themselves to God," Pope Francis said at the start of his Catechesis on Prayer (General Audiences, May 2020 — June 2021).

He declared this year as the Year of Prayer to prepare for Jubilee 2025 asking, "how can we prepare for this event, so important for the life of the Church, if not through prayer?"

The Pope is always exhorting the faithful to deepen their prayer lives. He encourages us to pray anywhere and anytime, "on the streets, in offices, on public transportation".

Pope Francis added, "one who prays is like someone in love who always carries the beloved person in his or her heart wherever they go".

Like anything in life, practice makes perfect. We need to pray to God about important things, but we can also talk to him about mundane things. Just being in his presence brings us peace.

Praying enables us to keep an open line with God so that like children to their parents, we can turn to him in time of need. One cannot ask anything of another if they do not have a relationship.

In his General Audience Address in August, 2012, Pope Benedict said, "we must always knock at the door of the Lord with confidence, knowing that he cares for all his children. For this, we are asked not to be afraid to turn to him with confidence and to submit our petitions, in the certainty of receiving what we need."

Let us, then, pray every day and not only in times of desperation. Let us pray for ourselves, for our loved ones and for those who need our prayers. Let us pray for the poor souls in purgatory. Let us pray for our enemies as the Lord taught us. Let us pray, however trite it may sound, for world peace.

Let us pray because we love God and more importantly, because he loves us.

— Rowena Orejana



The Habit



Letters

Spirituality

There was an interesting juxtaposition between the article on Msgr Tomáš Halík and the editorial in the same issue (*NZ Catholic*, Feb 25 2024). Msgr Halík notes a hunger for spirituality present in our society, which has not been met by the Churches. The rise of secularisation and scientism, as highlighted in the editorial, may partly explain why many seek to fill a spirituality 'void' outside of religion with various 'new age' approaches. Scientism insists that the existence of God has been 'disproven' and thus our Catholic beliefs are merely a form of superstition that should be dismissed by sensible 'rational' thinkers. Yet this ignores the great tradition of reason underlying our beliefs, espoused by individuals such as Saint Thomas Aquinas. Our beliefs are simply not positivistic rather than not rational.

The dangers of scientism are particularly evident when we are told to 'trust science' to answer moral questions, such as life only 'beginning' when the brain develops, or that certain solutions to societal crises are mandated by 'science', obscuring the implicit moral judgements being made. In evangelising, therefore, we should perhaps remember to high-

light the strong rational aspect of our faith as a challenge to this limited form of rationality. In doing so, we may be able offer those seeking spirituality a deep and rational spirituality based on Truth.

T. Lee,
Auckland.

Breaking faith

I read "Breaking faith with each other" (*NZ Catholic*, Feb. 25) written by Father Ronald Rolheiser with interest. I believe in God for I trust God's Word and listen to his voice. In Matthew 5:43, it is stated, "But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you". God is love, and he teaches his sons and daughters to love him and serve others.

Love from God can overcome barriers and misunderstanding, to promote peace and advocate social cohesion. In the community, there are people who are heterosexual, homosexual and celibate, who live in perfect harmony when we acknowledge God in our shortcomings to him personally.

The persecution of celibacy is unfair because the celibate can pray to God, and that brings blessings. It is a virtue to forgive, because God gives love, blessing and protection. . . . Read God's Word for nourishment in heart and

spirit, and pray to God for peace in life. . . . There is peace when all love God and serve others in his commandments.

Jackie Chong,
Wellington.

basis over many years and seeing their children grow is a blessing for all.

Paula Avery,
Christchurch

TV Masses

Over the time of Masses on TV a positive affirmation of the Liturgy of the Word came from a number of people who found the same site. They learnt the truth taught by that early Church Father, Irenaeus: "The presence of the Lord in his Word is as real as his presence in the Eucharist." To this we might add the teaching of the Catechism of the Catholic Church 103: "For this reason, the Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord's Body. She never ceases to present to the faithful the bread of life, taken from the one table of God's Word and Christ's Body."

Every contributor to the Liturgy of the Word, readers, homilists, participants at Mass, there are two tables to be fed from. Prepare the Word beforehand, whether by Missal, Bible Diary, internet Universalis, also Diocesan Liturgy Centres. Let not the thundering words of Hosea 4 be heard in our day: "My quarrel is with you, O priests. My people perish from a famine of hearing the Word of the Lord!" Let us celebrate that Presence of the Lord in the Word, the Eucharist, and the Assembly of Priest and People.

Kieran Fenn,
Auckland.

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Small family arguments, part II

Intrusions

Where the difference between devotions and liturgy has not yet been well understood, efforts are still being made to re-insert various devotions into the liturgy, and objects of devotion into the sanctuary. But nothing is more striking than the “noble simplicity” of which the introduction to the Roman Missal speaks.

There have been sporadic efforts to re-introduce the maniple, the biretta, etc, but these are more usual with fringe groups, which tells its own story. Good ritual doesn't need things that have

Peter Cullinane

lost their meaning. For example: when the priest had his back to the congregation and prayed the Eucharistic Prayer quietly, in Latin, the people had no way of knowing where he was up to. And so, a bell was rung at various stages of the Mass to help the people know. The current rubric allows that a small bell may be rung “if appropriate,” “as a signal to the faithful” (it has no other meaning) — e.g. in a large congregation where it may be difficult for people to see or hear. But in a small building, where the people are carefully following the prayer which they can hear clearly, the sudden interruption of a bell can be quite a distraction.

Some ways of not causing distraction during the Eucharistic Prayer seem to be little more than common courtesies. But many of them come back to the fact that one voice prayerfully proclaiming the Eucharistic Prayer helps the prayerful participation of the people, and so the less shuffling around at the altar the better. This led priests and bishops, some years ago, to forgo options that are open to them, such as sharing different parts of the Eucharistic Prayer among the concelebrants, all concelebrants saying the words of institution out loud, bishops putting mitres off and on during the Mass. . . . Forgoing such options occurs naturally to those who think of the congregation's needs more than their own prerogatives.

■ Same signs, different meanings

Of course, “secondary things” and “externals” are often intended to point beyond themselves. Signs are a kind of language. Clerical dress is an example of this, and of a recent push-back. Dress can be a sign of being different, separate, apart. Alternatively, it can indicate closeness to people, being one with them. What counts is not what our signs means to ourselves, but what they mean to those we want to communicate with. Up-to-date research by the Wilberforce Foundation (*Faith and Belief*, 2023) confirms that it is not status or

position that attracts New Zealanders to explore the faith:

People living in Aotearoa New Zealand value authenticity with 66 percent of respondents being attracted to explore spirituality if they see people living out a genuine faith or spirituality first-hand. Authenticity around faith and spirituality in conversations is . . . a key factor in leading individuals to consider faith or spiritual matters. . . .” (p.28)

Then, more pointedly, it says: “the number one repellent to exploring faith and spirituality” was hearing it from people who publicly and officially represent it. The reasons for this might not be recent scandals, because the Wilberforce Study goes on to say that:

. . . the above finding does not hold for the younger generation, who are more open to influencers. Gen Z are the most likely generation to investigate faith or spirituality if they hear it from a representative public figure. . . .

Gen Z are also the most likely to be attracted to exploring spirituality further because of stories or testimonies from people who have changed because of their faith or spirituality . . . (p 28).

So, perhaps the research is saying, as many Catholics do, that ministry is not helped by regalia, customs or titles that symbolise power — the remnants of Christendom. Adaptation to pastoral need goes with being incarnational — being not of the world, but truly in it nevertheless — not just physically, but also socially. In 1971, the International Theological Commission had warned against “the tendency to form a separate caste”.

I have been struck by the coincidence of two unrelated events: in order not to re-traumatise victims, the NZ bishops knew better than to wear clericals when they came before the Royal Commission. Nearly fifty years earlier, one of our most pastorally dedicated priests had been visiting a hospital; when he told the nurse that a patient he visited had seemed agitated, she told him that the monitoring machines often showed a rise in blood pressure and pulse rates when “you men come in dressed in deep black”. After that he was always smartly dressed and identifiable as a priest, but never again in “deep black.” We needed to be sensitive to these matters because how we come across is meant to be for the benefit of others, and not just to satisfy some inner need of our own.

Throughout the Church, pastoral savvy has resulted in many different forms of clerical dress. It's the mission that doesn't change. Some push-back on this account comes out of a pious exaggeration relating to ordination which led Pope St John Paul II to remind us that “what one becomes through ordination is in the realm of function, not dignity or holiness” (*Christi Fideles Laici*, 51). It is the function that is special.

■ The importance of belonging

Our “small family arguments” do not cancel our belonging. They take place within the context of family bonds that go deeper than differences. There is a Catholic culture formed through the interaction of the Church's scriptures, liturgies, devotions, hymns, literature, art, pilgrimages, parishes, religious communities, schools, work for justice, peace, development and health care, personal sacrifices, faithfulness. . . . Within this culture, the desire to belong is mysteriously stronger than anything that offends.

But I could be accused of avoiding the more serious issues if I omitted to acknowledge the kind of differences that can threaten unity within the Church. At one level, the continued use of the unrevised Missal might seem harmless enough — live and let live. But it can also smudge reality: a General Council of the Church mandated a revision of the Missal, and every pope since has emphasised that continued use of the unrevised Missal is a special concession for specific pastoral needs. In other words, the revised and unrevised Missals are not just alternative, ordinary, ways of celebrating Mass. What mat-

ters here is not just the difference between two Missals; it is our Catholic practice of accepting the mandate of a General Council, and its endorsement by all subsequent popes.

There is no point in blaming Pope Francis: he is the one charged by the Holy Spirit to preside over the unity of the Church. Fortunately, he can be unphased by small family arguments, but he is also clear about the boundaries of unity. Our prayers for him need to be accompanied by our loyalty.

Bishop Peter Cullinane is Bishop Emeritus of Palmerston North Diocese. This is the second part of a two-part article. The first part was published in the last edition of the *NZ Catholic*.

“People living in Aotearoa New Zealand value authenticity with 66 percent of respondents being attracted to explore spirituality if they see people living out a genuine faith or spirituality first-hand.”

Let's celebrate Easter for a while

This year, I'm glad to see Lent come to an end, and not just because of Easter Alleluias and Cadbury dark chocolate eggs.

It was a tough Lent. Part of it, of course, had nothing explicitly to do with Lent. The news has generally been dreadful, a reminder, I suppose of why we need saving. This broken, battered, cruel world needs a saviour. I need a saviour.

Perhaps this was not true for you, but my Lent was especially difficult because I had trouble keeping my Lenten resolves. None of them were all that hard, by the way. But each of them demanded a certain amount of diligence in the sacrifice, and diligence was a struggle this year.

I won't go into all the bloody details, except to say that when “Son of a . . .” flew from my lips, only to remember that I had resolved to refrain from saying “Son of a . . .,” well, it was that kind of Lent.

One of my favourite Easter reflections is from St John Chrysostom. He is a saint revered by both the Eastern and Western churches, and for many

good reasons. But this quote from his Easter homily proclaiming the time to celebrate reveals his Christ-like love of our poor humanity.

“First and last alike receive your reward; rich and poor, rejoice together! Sober and slothful, celebrate the day! You that have kept the fast, and

Greg Erlandson

you that have not, rejoice today for the table is richly laden! Feast royally on it, the calf is a fatted one. Let no one go away hungry. Partake, all, of the cup of faith. Enjoy all the riches of his goodness! Let no one grieve at his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed. Let no one mourn that he has fallen again and again; for forgiveness has risen from the grave.”

St John Chrysostom reminds us that all of us are invited to the feast: The lazy and the good, the sober and the slothful, rich and poor.

Easter, St John Chrysostom says, is the same reward for all of us. Lent is a good discipline, a way of reminding us of the Lord's own suffering and sacrifice on our behalf. But that sacrifice has been already made for us, and now in this glorious Easter season, we can celebrate that he truly is risen, and death defeated.

And if I may suggest an Easter resolution: Let's not let Easter be forgotten in a flash. We spent 40 days in the desert of Lent. Let us now, as they did in St John Chrysostom's day, spend 40 days rejoicing.

Break out the Cadbury eggs! Celebrate with special foods! Express gratitude for the blessing that this, the greatest feast in the Church calendar, truly is.

There will be other Lents. There is just one Easter event. Let's remind this tormented old world that there is a happy ending.

Greg Erlandson is an award-winning Catholic publisher, editor and journalist whose column appears monthly at OSV News.

From doubter to devotee: atheist's remarkable conversion to Catholicism

by MINA AMSO

Have you ever felt that there is something missing in your life, or you don't belong to this world?

That was the case for 40-year-old Inji Hwang. A former atheist from a young age, Miss Hwang never thought God existed and wasn't the slightest bit interested in a deity of any sort. Her mother was a Buddhist and brother a Catholic, though not practising.

She had plans and dreams to live in a country where she could have a future of her own. But things panned out a little differently to what she thought.

"Things happened that brought me to New Zealand. In other words, God shifted things around me so that I would come to New Zealand to study English rather than another country that I had already planned and prepared to go to," she said. "Thanks to God, I came to New Zealand where I encountered God."

Miss Hwang became a Christian around 10 years ago.

"When I became a Christian, I loved God but at some point, I kind of drifted away from him, and went to church irregularly for a long time."

Her life began to "shake" a few years later.

"My dad was diagnosed with cancer during Covid-19. While my family was fighting with his cancer in Korea, they kept it a secret from me because I was in New Zealand, until my dad was rushed into ICU just a day before he passed away.

"At that time, he was no longer in a condition to have a proper conversation with me. I could only see his face for a short time via a video chat and talk to him briefly while he listened. I also couldn't make it for his funeral. I didn't know how to grieve or how to cope. One year passed like that."

Fortunately, Miss Hwang was able to go to Korea for her dad's anniversary a year later. While enroute, the technical analyst pondered her life deeply, questioning things, especially the meaning of life.

"That's when I realised that I needed God's presence in my life. When I came back to New Zealand, I started to go to different churches (without denomination) to find a church where I would feel comfortable. I prayed to God that he would lead me to find a home church, and that's when someone gave me a flyer about Alpha at Our Lady of Fatima [OLOF] in Meadowbank."

Miss Hwang found herself at an Alpha course in a Catholic church where she had never stepped a foot. Alpha is an 11-week programme that answers life's toughest questions such as what the meaning of life is and what our purpose is.

"The Alpha day was the first day I've ever visited a Catholic church in my life. It was a very warm feeling of environment where I felt comfortable learning, listening and sharing and focusing on Jesus. I quickly settled and felt like this would be a 'home church' for the first time."

What struck the Korean native was the fact that Catholic churches, including OLOF, opened their doors every day.

"It's like every day [is a] Sunday, so I don't need to wait for Sunday to go

to church. I really loved it. I was also surprised that there were so many talks and sessions everywhere every week in the Catholic community and was fascinated by the opportunities that I could learn more and understand more about God."

The newfound discoveries compelled Miss Hwang to go back for more, hungry to grow deeper in her newfound Christian faith.

Miss Hwang heard about an RCIA programme after the Alpha course. RCIA stands for Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults — a process through which non-baptised men and women enter the Catholic Church. She pondered whether she should enter.

"It was when I was looking for a house to move, so I prayed God to find me a place near OLOF before the programme starts if he wanted me to register for RCIA. I knew that I wouldn't have joined if I had lived far from the church with everything going on with my work and personal life at that time.

"Then, he found a house really close to the church, so I joined the RCIA programme to learn about Catholic faith."

During RCIA, Miss Hwang decided that the Catholic Church was home. She said it's been a "great" journey learning the faith from Alpha to RCIA.

"I'm really thankful for Father Austin and OLOF leaders for that. Without Alpha, I wouldn't have even thought about visiting a Catholic church. Without RCIA, I wouldn't have decided to become a Catholic."

She admitted being overwhelmed with RCIA. Thankfully, she had friends and sponsors by her side for support.

"My friends/sponsors always remind me that it is a lifelong journey and I'm enjoying learning little by little with the church family. I really like the openness of our group in RCIA.

"After watching a video, we share our thoughts, discuss and bring questions as well. No one judges my random questions and the challenges I have with some of the Catholic faith. Wonderful people to have this journey together helping each other."

She looked for a godmother or godfather to help her connect with the faith on a deeper level. She even thought about delaying her baptism and confirmation until she found the right person.

"Then one day, God opened my eyes to notice my friends during the RCIA programme who were with me from day one of my Catholic faith journey, since Alpha."

They became her sponsors on the Easter Vigil, which she is counting down the days to. She said it was a lovely way to celebrate her 10th anniversary with God.

"Feeling grateful for everything and also excited to finally receive the Eucharist.

"It's been a long journey, but I feel that things happened when they were supposed to happen. All dots are connected for me to be able to 'see' God, and being part of the Catholic community is deepening my faith and love for God."

She said it was important to be surrounded by good Catholic friends and community. She praised Alpha and the RCIA. Without going to Masses, praying and going to retreats, things



Inji Hwang

might have been different.

"I've been learning a lot more than ever. and the more I learn, the more I love God. I have also learned to surrender to God from my heart. If I need to summarise what I have learned so

far I think it would be that 'God is Love': 1 John 4:8.

"God will lead you to the right place, to the right people at the right time. When the time comes, follow him," she advised.

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'We are not alone, abandoned or afraid,' patriarch of Jerusalem says on Palm Sunday

JERUSALEM (OSV News) — When Christians gathered in Jerusalem to remember Jesus' entry into the city, it was one of a few joyful moments in the Holy Land, "crushed by so much hatred" in the months following the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel.

"Despite the war and everything going on around us this year, we have once again chosen to celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry into the Holy City," said Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, as the traditional Palm Sunday procession moved through the streets of the city.

"We have joined voices with those who sang in Jerusalem two thousand years ago: 'Hosanna Filio David,' Hosanna to the Son of David", he said. Especially now, it is "even more important and necessary to shout strongly that Jesus is our Messiah, He is our Lord," the patriarch said on March 24.

Over the past months, Cardinal Pizzaballa said, many felt "lost or alone and without reference points", and "crushed by so much hatred".

"This war, which is so terrible and seems never-ending, sometimes leads us to fear for the future of our families," he added.

Walking through the unusually empty streets of Jerusalem, given the Holy Week and Easter time, the patriarch emphasised that the celebration in this time, when many of the dioceses "could not join us", makes it all the more important to "shout with strength and faith that we have a point of reference, Jesus Christ".

"We are not alone, we are not abandoned, and above all we are not afraid!" the church leader emphasised in his message for Palm Sunday.

"Following Jesus also means accepting the way of the cross", something Christians in the Holy Land "unfortunately know well", he continued, because their "ordinary life is often a 'Via crucis', a painful road, marked by many obstacles, misunderstandings, rejections and hostilities of all kinds."

"Yet this does not discourage us," the patriarch said.

Father Waldemar Cislo, director of the Polish section of pontifical charity Aid to the Church in Need, said that when he saw the patriarch as they entered Holy Week, "he told me it's the

saddest experience that he has ever had in the Holy Land — to see empty streets of Jerusalem for Easter" and experience the suffering of so many Christians in the region.

"There are no pilgrims, and that means no income for local Christians, who also are barred from working in Jerusalem," if their permanent residency is in the Palestinian West Bank, Father Cislo told OSV News.

Cardinal Pizzaballa said Jerusalem is a land that is holy, but "wounded because it is invaded by so much hatred and resentment". "Woe to us if we allow ourselves to be contaminated by all of this," he said in his Palm Sunday message. "Today, we want to ask God to preserve our hearts from these feelings of enmity. For we cannot remain friends of Jesus if we cultivate enmity in our hearts. We cannot love Jesus, if we do not love one another, and if we do not have the courage to be close to all, even in the present tragic circumstances in which we live in. We want to live, suffer, and act with him and for him."

Father Cislo, who spends Holy Week in the Holy Land, said that the painful division between Jews and Palestinians is very much visible today throughout the Holy Land. Hamas militants killed over 1,200 people on October 7 in an attack that brought back horrors of the Holocaust to many Israelis. Israel started a war with Hamas right after the attack, which as of March 25 has killed over 32,000 people in the Gaza Strip, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza.

"Cardinal Pizzaballa told me he prays that the Lord slides the stone over the tomb of hatred, so that it ends once and forever here in the Holy Land," Father Cislo told OSV News.

Praying for peace for Jerusalem and the region, the patriarch asked for "peace, which is a cordial and sincere welcoming of the other, a tenacious willingness to listen and to be in dialogue, that opens roads on which fear and suspicion give way to understanding, encounter and trust".

"Peace is the element that is missing," said Father Cislo. "Jesus came and said, 'Peace be with you' and it's precisely peace and peace only that this land needs. Enough killing chil-



Altar servers process during Palm Sunday Mass at Holy Family Church in Gaza City on March 25, 2024. Over 500 Christians shelter in the parish amid the ongoing Hamas-Israel war. (OSV News photo/courtesy Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem)

dren," he lamented.

Cardinal Pizzaballa said the thoughts of Christians present during the Palm Sunday celebration were with "those who cannot be here with us today, and especially with our brothers and sisters in Gaza", to whom he had

a message of closeness: "You are not alone", assuring them of prayer.

"The whole Church in Jerusalem is united with you, embraces you and appreciates your testimony of strength and courage," the patriarch emphasised.

Canadian gathering says Church needs structural changes for Indigenous Catholics

MONTREAL (OSV News) — A gathering in the Diocese of Trois-Rivières hosted by Mission Chez Nous to commemorate its 30th anniversary — and attended by 150 individuals, including about 75 Indigenous people — aimed to reflect on Indigenous pastoral presence and the need for change to allow an Indigenous-focused Church.

According to Présence, a French-language news agency in Quebec, which attended the event, theologians Michel Andraos and Jean-François Roussel, advocated for "indigenisation" and "decolonisation" of the Church — a direction indicated almost 40 years earlier by Pope St John Paul II.

During a 1984 visit to Canada, the pontiff called the Church to work with Indigenous people and bring forth "from their own living tradition original expressions of Christian



From left, Jeffrey Papatie of Lac-Simon Anicinabe, Quebec, and Montreal Archbishop Christian Lépine on March 5, 2024 (OSV News photo)

life, celebration and thought".

Indigenous voices such as Tom Dearhouse, a Mohawk from Kahnawake — where the early Church in its history had some Indigenous features and structures that produced its own holy heroes, including St Kateri Tekakwitha — stressed the importance of Indigenous ministry and representation.

Other Indigenous testimonies highlighted

reconciliation efforts, such as Anishinaabe elder Monique Papatie's bond with Sister Renelle Lasalle and Jeffrey Papatie's journey to forgiveness after his abuse by a priest as a teenager.

The event ended with a eucharistic celebration led by Bishop Martin Laliberté, featuring Indigenous language readings and a form of greeting similar to an Anishinaabe friendship circle.

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Pope urges Argentinian city to address drug supply

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The fight against illegal drugs and narcotrafficking must target not just drug supplies, but also the demand for drugs through prevention programmes and assistance, Pope Francis said.

“The state’s silence on this issue only normalises and facilitates the promotion of the consumption and trade of drugs,” he said in a video message released by the Vatican on March 26 to Catholics in the Archdiocese of Rosario, Argentina. Rosario, the country’s third-largest city, has become one of

the most dangerous, being a hub for Argentina’s illicit drug industry and criminal gangs.

The violence has escalated, and federal troops were recently deployed to fight drug trafficking in Rosario.

In his video message, the Pope said, “we understand the need for the presence of security forces to bring tranquility to the community. However, we know that on the road to peace, complex and holistic answers must be found with the collaboration of all the institutions that make up the life

of a society.

“The current situation in Rosario would never have been possible without the complicity of a segment of political, police, judicial, economic and financial powers,” he said.

Therefore, he said, while it is necessary to strengthen the community, especially by helping the most vulnerable, it is necessary to “rehabilitate” politics and the public sectors so that they seek the common good and create laws and policies that help repair “the social fabric”.

US Catholic, other Christian leaders condemn Russian strikes on Ukraine energy grid

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and other Christian leaders in the US have denounced Russia’s massive recent attack on Ukraine’s energy system.

Russia launched more than 151 drones and missiles throughout Ukraine during the overnight hours of March 21-22, targeting 136 energy facilities in several regions across the country, leaving dozens of structures damaged.

The assault is believed to be the largest against Ukraine’s energy infrastructure since the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion in February 2022, which continued aggression begun in 2014 with the illegal annexation of Ukraine’s Crimea peninsula and the fomenting of separatist factions

in Ukraine’s Luhansk and Donetsk regions.

In a March 25 statement, “Let the light shine in the darkness”, 15 US-based religious leaders said they “condemn these Russian attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure as war crimes”.

Among the signatories were Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the US Archdiocese for the Military Services, president of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Metropolitan Archbishop Borys A. Gudziak of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia, head of Ukrainian Catholics in the US. Also signing the document were several Eastern Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and other Christian leaders.

Baltimore Archdiocese ministers to crew aboard ship involved in bridge collapse

BALTIMORE (OSV News) — The Archdiocese of Baltimore’s Apostleship of the Sea is normally a “friendly face” for international seafarers visiting the port.

That role is about to expand, according to its director, Andy Middleton, after a containership was involved in the catastrophic collapse of one of Baltimore’s major thoroughfares.

The Francis Scott Key Bridge collapsed about 1:30am on March 26 after a 275-metre container ship collided with one of its major support pilings.

According to state and US Coast Guard officials, a search-and-rescue mission was underway for an unknown number of survivors.

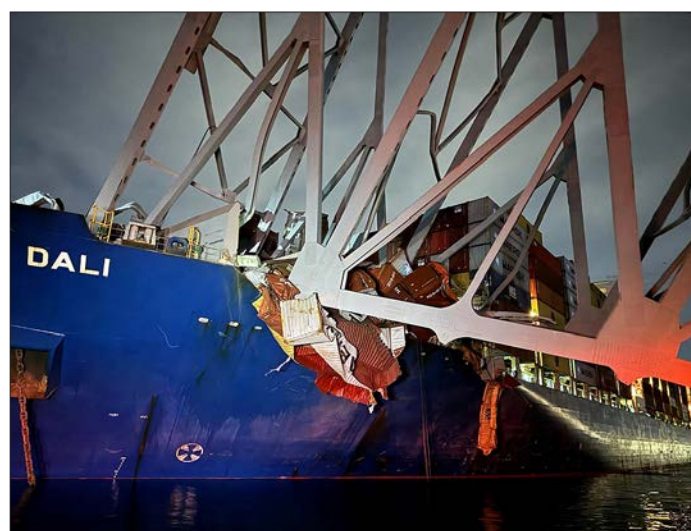
Middleton said the Apostleship

of the Sea, based at St Rita Parish in Dundalk, had ministered to members of the crew on March 24 and 25, delivering Easter boxes to the group aboard Dali, which was berthed at Seagirt Marine terminal.

Middleton said he had been in touch with a member of the crew just hours after the collision and all were safe and uninjured.

The organisation, begun by the archdiocese in 2003 to serve visiting crews, plans to assist the sailors once bridge debris is removed from the ship and it settles in a berth.

“Let us join in prayer asking the Lord to grant consolation and strength as we cope with this terrible tragedy,” said Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori, who will celebrate a 5:30pm Mass at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen to pray for all those impacted by the bridge’s collapse.



The Dali cargo vessel is pictured on March 26, 2024, after it crashed into the Francis Scott Key Bridge causing it to collapse in Baltimore. (OSV News photo/Baltimore City Fire Department Rescue Company handout via Reuters)

Sagrada Familia basilica to be completed in 2026, foundation says

BARCELONA, Spain (OSV News) — After more than a century, construction of Spain’s Basilica of the Holy Family in Barcelona, known as Sagrada Familia for its Spanish name, will be completed in 2026, the foundation overseeing the project announced.

During a March 20 press conference announcing the publication of the Sagrada Familia Foundation’s 2023 annual report, Esteve Camps, the foundation’s executive chairman, said construction of the basilica’s Chapel of the Assumption will be completed in 2025, while the tower of Jesus Christ is set to be finished in 2026.

The completion of the basilica in 2026 will coincide with the 100th anniversary of the death of its designer, Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí.

Construction of the sacred edifice began in 1882, and it is considered the masterpiece of Gaudí, a Catholic whose cause for sainthood is underway.

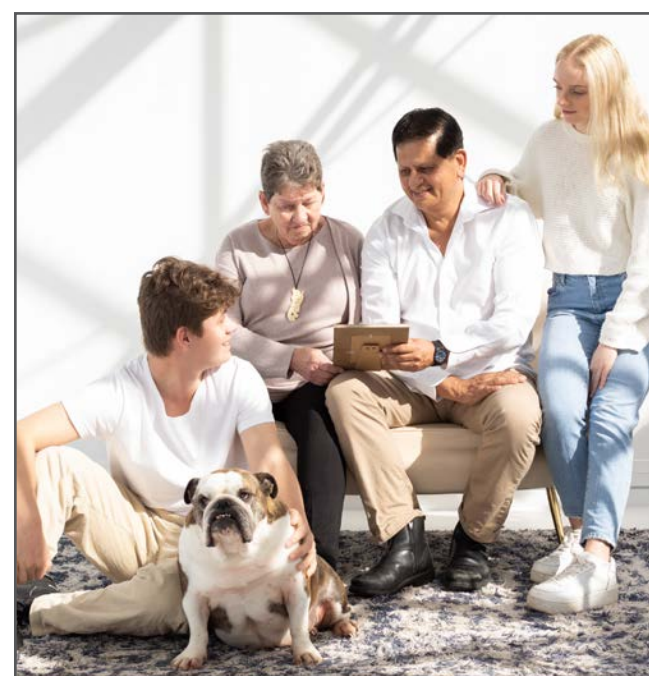
After construction was halted in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, work on the basilica resumed two years later. At the press conference, Camps said that the basilica welcomed more than 4.7 million pilgrims in 2023.



Sagrada Familia still under construction after more than 100 years

The largest number of the pilgrims who visited came from the United States, accounting for 19 percent of the total number, he noted.

While the main building will be finally completed in 2026, work will continue until 2034 on statues and other areas of the basilica.



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THE CHURCH YEAR

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Advent

Christmas

Ordinary Time

Lent

Easter Time

Ordinary Time

Be witnesses to the Resurrection

Scripture

by Fr Kevin Waldie SM

At the centre of these New Testament texts is the faith professed by the early Church community. What they came to believe and enthusiastically witness to is revealed by the biblical authors' specially chosen words.

In Acts Luke paints a defining picture of the communal wellbeing experienced by the first believers. With emphasis placed on the community's shared possessions and concern for one another, we gain an insight into the truly dynamic atmosphere that enveloped their life and sense of interconnectedness. And at the core of these verses, we find out that they ground their particular outlook

and lifestyle on believing in and testifying to the Lord's Resurrection.

Something similar is at work in the six verses from the first letter of John. Being part of the Christian community requires its members to be visibly committed to live what they believe about Jesus and to love appropriately as children of God. Everyone who claims to be in God's family must align themselves with the role of the Holy Spirit who inspires fitting witness to the divine work being done in our midst.

Today in John's Gospel Jesus' appearances also lead us to contemplate what it means to be heirs to

April 7: Second Sunday of Easter, Divine Mercy Sunday. **Readings:** 1. Acts 4:32-35; **Psalms** 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24; 2. 1 John 5:1-6; **Gospel:** John 20:19-31.

belief in the fact of the Resurrection. With Thomas featuring rather prominently in this piece of text, we learn from his hesitant profession of faith what a blessing it is for all of us who live much later and declare the Lord to be risen because of those original witnesses and the faith tradition that endures.

Reflecting upon these readings leaves us in no doubt that it is good to accept as most valuable our being part of the faith community and its mission. Continuing to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, truly risen from the dead, is vitally important.

The Messiah's victory over death

Aided by today's Scriptures we are drawn into a thought world that is founded on the idea that we are to be a forceful presence in this world. What we hear therefore orients us towards a deeper understanding of the ongoing work of the human in cooperation with the divine.

Luke's words from Acts make the point that the God of biblical history has constantly been at work in this world but then, at a particular moment, Jesus (purposefully named servant, holy and righteous one, author of life, and Messiah) executed a major shift in the divine plan. Rising from the dead, Jesus stood glorious over suffering and death. Peter's speech here thus proclaims the Resurrection to be a powerful, definitive witness

to the saving hand of God.

The text from 1 John connects nicely with our first reading in that it once again brings to our attention Jesus as the righteous one, the one who became an atoning sacrifice for the whole world. By following faithfully what he said and by revering what he revealed in his life, every believer participates in a divinely conceived plan that is rooted in a profound sense of love's true meaning.

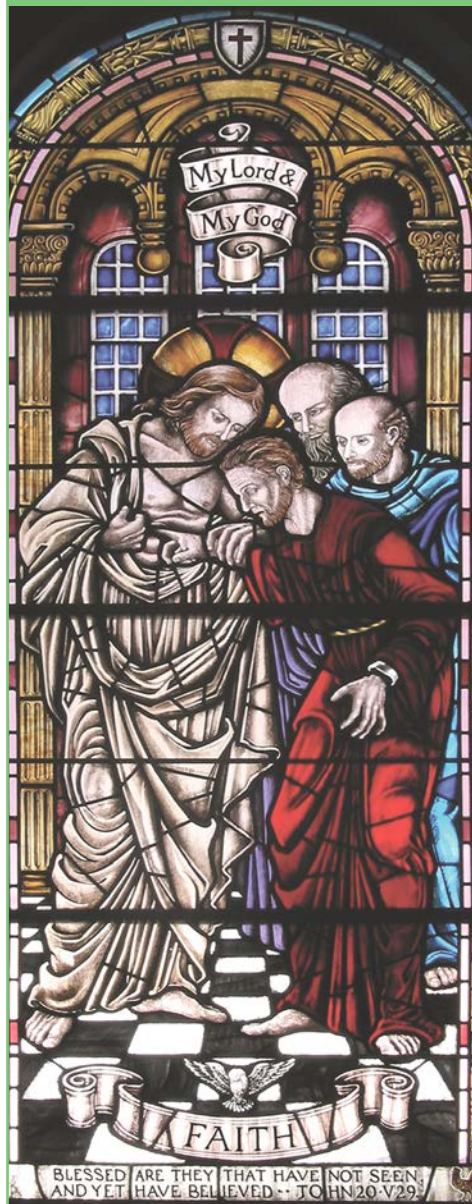
The Resurrection appearance related by Luke also bears witness to the central reality of our faith that honours the truth concerning those early days in which various people came face to face with the risen Jesus.

14 April: Third Sunday of Easter. **Readings:** 1. Acts 3:13-15, 17-19; **Psalms:** 4:2, 4, 7-8, 9; 2. 1 John 2:1-5; **Gospel:** Luke 24:35-48.

The physical presence is emphasised. And then it is stated that all of Scripture is fulfilled in this moment celebrating the Messiah's victory over death. The whole world deserves to hear this message and so it is the responsibility of those commissioned here to ensure that happens.

Today's Easter message from Scripture reminds us that we belong to a faith community that endures and continues fulfilling its mission.

SAINTED GLASS



The Gospel for this Sunday is about the Apostle we now know as Doubting Thomas. As shown in this window from St Anne's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Belfast, Jesus invites Thomas to put his hand in the wound in his side to prove he is real. There is much in me of Thomas — I have doubted, and then something happens to renew my belief in Jesus and the Holy Spirit. I can say again "My Lord and My God". I think Jesus understands my doubt and hurries to reassure me. How about you?

— Glen McCullough

A milestone for unity: first Norwegian Catholic Bible edition launched

By AC WIMMER, CNA

For the first time in Norway's history, the Norwegian Bible Society has announced the publication of a Catholic edition of the Bible, marking a significant milestone for the country's Catholic community.

Published on March 15, this edition is distinguished not only by its inclusivity; the project saw linguists and Scripture experts collaborating with poets and other literary authors, including Nobel laureate Jon Fosse.

The Catholic editor Heidi Haugros Øyma, deeply involved in the project, told CNA in a written interview: "The inclusion of the Deuterocanonical books represents a move toward a more inclusive, ecumenical approach to Scripture in Norway."

The new publication corrects a long-standing omission influenced by historical pressures, presenting a genuinely ecumenical Bible that reflects the entire Christian canon.

Many in the Catholic community are overjoyed. Pål Johannes Nes, co-founder of EWTN Norway, told CNA: "For the first time, we can now have a Catholic canon in our own language. This is a major and significant event. This is also a very important element in the re-evangelisation of Norway toward 2030 through Mission 2030, which EWTN Norway together with the Diocese of Trondheim are working on."

"It is also a great joy for me to be able to read the Bible to my children in Norwegian," he added.

The project also stands out for its effort to embrace Norway's linguistic diversity, offering translations in both of the country's official written languages, Bokmål and Nynorsk. This initiative ensures wider accessibility and ac-

Bible News

knowledges Norway's rich linguistic heritage.

"The fact is that the Norwegian Bible Society has sponsored a lot of editions of the Bible for the use of the Catholic Church. . . but not in Norway," Øyma noted, highlighting the ecumenical spirit that guided this historic collaboration. The collaboration between the Catholic Diocese of Oslo and the Bible Society paved the way for this publication, emphasising a united Christian mission over denominational divides.

Reflecting on the significance of this edition, Øyma shared: "The most important thing has been to witness the growing awareness in the Norwegian Bible Society that a Catholic edition of the Bible ought to be a self-evident thing." This sentiment underscores the project's role in fostering a more inclusive understanding of Christian Scripture across denominational lines.

The edition's launch on March 15 is anticipated to enhance the spiritual life of Norwegian Catholics and serve as a cultural landmark, showcasing the contributions of Norwegian authors to the richness of biblical literature.

"It is a way of saying that we belong here, we are a part of the cultural and Christian landscape," Øyma added, underscoring the broader significance of this publication within Norway's religious and cultural context.

Expressing linguistic inclusivity, ecumenical collaboration, and cultural enrichment, the new Catholic Bible edition promises to be a source of pride and a beacon of unity for Norway's Christian community, inviting deeper engagement with holy Scripture.

A saint's journey from Italy

by NEVIL GIBSON

Many will know the difficulty of persuading a die-hard non-churchgoer to attend a Mass or service.

It's the same with filmmakers who want to attract a secular audience to an overtly religious movie. This is usually done by putting the emphasis on some other aspect of the story, such as an historical event or popular genre.

Angel Studios, based in Mormon-dominated Utah, began as a video service that filtered its selection so families could show any movie without having to worry about their children seeing explicit material.

It has since moved into production of its own titles, hitting a bonanza last year with *Sound of Freedom*, a thriller about Christians running a mission that rescues children from sex traffickers in Colombia.

Angel's latest production, *Cabrini* (Rialto Distribution), has the same director, Alejandro Gomez Monteverde, and screenwriter, Rod Barr. It boasts enough quality acting and production values to satisfy the most discerning audience.

It also has a familiar dramatic formula that pits a driven individual against the system, despite the odds. The twist is that the individual happens to be an Italian nun, who took on both the Vatican and New York City to build a global mission dedicated to relieving poverty by providing education, healthcare, and productive employment.

Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini (Cristiana Dell'Anna) is depicted as ambitious and persistent in pursuing her goal of establishing her own missionary order. Her efforts finally win over Pope Leo XIII, who rejected her suggestion of an orphanage in China as too



Cristiana Dell'Anna stars in a scene from the movie *Cabrini*. (Photo: OSV News/Angel Studios)

Movie Review

modest for her stated goals.

Instead, in 1889, he allowed her small group of sisters to travel to New York to cater for Italian immigrants living in the slum conditions of Lower Manhattan's Five Points. Naturally, they are not as welcome as they expected. Antipathy to the Italian community was running high at City Hall and in the Church.

The Irish archbishop, Michael Corrigan (David Morse), had been rebuked by the Vatican over the treatment of the Italians, as he wanted to keep on side politically with the New York mayor, a fictional character played with gravitas by John Lithgow.

In a provocative move, she sets up a mission in a respectable neighbourhood that reacts by giving her larger premises in the countryside.

After a few more victories and many other setbacks, including a blatant act of arson, Mother Cabrini finally gets most of her way, winning praise for her dogged form of feminism rather than her religious beliefs. When the mayor

reaches an accord with her, after she employs an investigative journalist who undermines his political support, he patronisingly states: "It's too bad you are not a man. You would have been an excellent man."

Her response alone to this comment makes the movie worth seeing, though it's devoid of Mother Cabrini's public record of strong statements in support of her Catholic faith. While numerous supporting characters, and their various tribulations, bloat a repetitive plot well past two hours, the quality camerawork and visual compositions are a delight, as is the soundtrack.

Mother Cabrini's order, the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, spread across the United States to Europe, Latin America, and China, fulfilling Pope Leo's prophecy that her ambition was unlimited. She was canonised in 1946 by Pope Pius XII as the first American saint, 28 years after her death in 1917.

Rating: Mature audiences. 145 minutes.

CLIPS

Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire (Columbia/Sony)

Forty years on, the Ghostbusters franchise looked well past its use-by date. Three sequels failed to excite audiences. But this hasn't deterred Jason Reitman, son of Ivan Reitman, who directed the original and its 1989 sequel. Reitman directed *Ghostbusters: Afterlife* (2021) and handed the latest directing job to Gil Kenan (*Monster House*). Both create a script that involves a rejigged second-generation family, now led by Paul Rudd and Carrie Coon, who are housed in the original fire station with the locked-down ghosts. Bill Murray and Dan Ackroyd, among others, drop in from the original movie, as a new evil force is released with powers to freeze the planet. Thanks to computer magic, these are effective in small doses, but they lack credible threat at the global level. This leaves the entertainment value dependent on some new characters, better graphics, and a lingering taste of nostalgia. Rating: Parental guidance advised. 115 minutes.



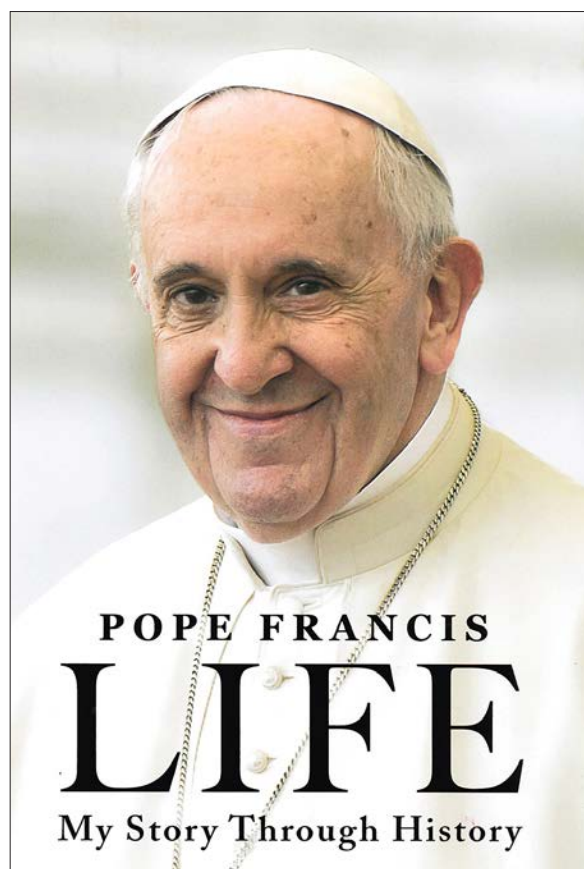
Let the Dance Begin (Empieza Baile) (Limelight)

This minor gem from Argentina needs no polishing. It is hard to improve on a triangular drama about two famous but retired tango dancers, who are reunited under false pretences in Buenos Aires. They embark on a road trip in an old and battered Kombi they used to tour in. Margarita (Mercedes Moran) lives in obscurity in a rundown suburb, while the well-heeled Carlos (Dario Grandinetti) flies in from Madrid for a funeral. The third figure is their inseparable friend Pichuquito (Jorge Marralle), now Margarita's partner, who joins the search in the back blocks of Mendoza for the grown-up son that Margarita gave up in favour of her career. Rating: R13. 99 minutes.

The Outfit (Netflix)

This Universal production failed a cinema release a few years ago but is ideally suited to the small screen. All the action takes place in a Chicago tailor's shop and could just as well be a stage play. But writer-director Graham Moore (*The Imitation Game*), a Chicagoite, is not bound by convention and plots a night of criminal intrigue that is more reminiscent of Alfred Hitchcock than Agatha Christie. Mark Rylance plays the shop owner ("I'm a cutter not a tailor") whose premises are used as a safe place by rival mobsters in the 1950s. They value dapper dress, but their criminal intentions are less well executed. Meanwhile, the seemingly innocent cutter and his assistant (Zoey Deutch) easily exploit the weaknesses of those whose trigger fingers are faster than their brains. An excellent thriller that thoroughly uses the talents of Rylance (*Bridge of Spies*) to surpass expectations. Rating: R13. 105 minutes.

Pope, in new book, says he has not considered resigning



VATICAN CITY (CNS) — A pope's ministry is meant to last his lifetime, Pope Francis said, and, at least until now, he has not considered resigning.

However, he wrote in a new book, if he were seriously impaired, he would resign, but unlike the late Pope Benedict XVI, he would use the title "bishop of Rome emeritus" rather than pope emeritus and he would live at Rome's Basilica of St Mary Major "to serve as a confessor and give Communion to the sick" rather than live at the Vatican.

Pope Francis' reflections on his life and his future are included in a new book, *Life: My Story Through History*, written with Italian journalist Fabio Marchese Ragona. The book was scheduled for a global release by HarperCollins on March 19, but the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* published excerpts on March 14.

The excerpts included Pope Francis saying he knows critics complain about his leadership and how he has changed the papacy, but "if I looked into everything that was said and written about me, I wouldn't have time to do anything else and I would need a weekly session with a psychologist!"

Corriere della Sera used as a headline, "There are those in the Vatican who hoped I would die," in quotation marks, although those words do not appear in the text.

He did say, however, that when he was hospitalised, he had a lot of time for prayer and reflection, but "others were more interested in politics, in campaigning for votes, almost considering a new conclave."

Books

“Thanks be to God, I enjoy good health, and as I have said, there are many projects to bring to fruition, God willing.”

— Pope Francis

Such speculation and manoeuvring should not unsettle people, he told Ragona. "Relax, it's human, there's nothing shocking about it," he said. "When the Pope is in the hospital, there are many things to think about, and some people will speculate for their own purposes or to earn some money from the press."

"Fortunately, I have never thought of resigning, despite moments of difficulty," he added.

"Some people may have hoped that sooner or later, perhaps after a stay in the hospital, I might make an announcement of that kind, but there is no risk of it: thanks be to God, I enjoy good health, and as I have said, there are many projects to bring to fruition, God willing," Pope Francis said.

Family Matters

Helen Luxford



New beginnings

We sometimes get the chance for new beginnings in life. Sometimes these are of our making and sometimes they seem forced on us. New jobs, new schools, new houses. Some new beginnings are more dramatic than others. For children every new school year is a new beginning with new teachers and new classmates, and they are usually well settled by this time of year. Easter is the pinnacle season in the Catholic Church. For us it is all about redemption and the transformative power of faith. Hope is a central tenet of our faith. Hope in forgiveness and resurrection.

Any new beginning requires faith and trust. Jesus was crucified and buried and rose from the dead on the third day, triumphing over sin and death. This miracle signifies God's ultimate victory over evil and offers believers the assurance of eternal life. In our Catholic theology, Jesus's Resurrection is a testament to the divinity of Jesus and the fulfilment of God's redemptive plan for humanity. Easter reminds us of the transformative power of Christ's Resurrection in the lives of the believers. Jesus emerged from the tomb, and we Catholics believe that Easter heralds a season of spiritual rebirth and renewal. The Easter journey is a time for us as individuals to reflect on our faith journey to seek forgiveness for past transgressions and to embrace the promise of new life in Christ.

The Easter Vigil is the most solemn liturgy of the Catholic Church to symbolise this spiritual awakening as believers participate in

the rituals of light, water and the proclamation of the Resurrection. Your church will no doubt be welcoming some new members to the Church who have been preparing through Lent. Through his death and Resurrection, Jesus offers the opportunity to be reconciled with God. Salvation and reconciliation are central to the Easter journey and going to reconciliation is an important part of the Lenten journey to Easter. Easter is the culmination of the salvation plan of God as it is through Easter that humanity is redeemed and restored to communion with the divine. Jesus' Resurrection provides us with Christian hope and assures us that through faith in Christ we can all overcome sin and death.

Easter is a time for the communal body of Christ to celebrate as the mystical body of Christ. We can reflect on how Easter marks the beginning of the early Christian community and the spreading of the Gospel message throughout the world. This gives us all a change to recommit ourselves to living out the teachings of Jesus and to embodying the values of love, compassion and justice. When we have a new beginning, it can vary as to when or how it comes up about our Catholic faith. It can be a difficult or somewhat

scary conversation in the modern world as people often have a negative take on the Catholic Church.

There is a lot of symbolism around Easter — eggs and lambs and lilies — all of which carry rich symbolism with the themes of rebirth, purity, and sacrifice. Each family will have its own set of festive rituals and customs including attending Easter Mass and sharing a meal with family and friends. For those of us experiencing challenges and adversity, Easter can be a source of inspiration and encouragement. The Resurrection assures us that God is always present amidst suffering and that new life can emerge from moments of darkness. The Easter message of hope reminds us all that no obstacle is insurmountable in the light of Christ's victory over death.



John 11:25: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.'

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.

Papal Prayer

The Pope's universal prayer intention for April: For the Role of Women

This month's prayer intention is "that the dignity and richness of women be recognised in all cultures, and for an end to the discrimination they suffer in various parts of the world."



40 YEARS AGO

STUDY DOCUMENT WELL

The National Commission for the Laity wants all Catholic lay people to inform themselves accurately about the convention (United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women).

It is unanimous in urging them strongly to study the document, and adds that copies are available free from the Human Rights Commission, an Auckland member of the lay body, Mrs Pat Lythe, told *Zealandia*.

"The convention does not legally bind New Zealand to any particular commitment. In fact, this country has already on its statutes most of the articles of the convention."

Mrs Lythe said any subsequent articles New Zealand might wish to make would be considered by Parliament in the usual way.

"The only implication for New Zealand is internationally and this in the same way as the other UN conventions to which we are already a signatory.

"This convention is also to be

read in conjunction with the existing UN conventions, in particular the Convention on Civil and Political Rights."

Mrs Lythe said the present convention has a detailed preamble which is a vital limiting factor in defining the subsequent articles as each is to be read subject to the preamble.

"An important aspect of the convention is that it is not an 'all or nothing' document, as parties to it can elect not to be bound by individual clauses."

She said members of the Laity Commission noted that at the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO) world conference last June, the convention received the unanimous support of the 91 countries represented.

"Is there any point in New Zealand ratifying the convention? This is a valid question for New Zealand as basic human rights and fundamental freedoms are already enjoyed by New Zealand women."

— *Zealandia*, March 25, 1984

CAPTION CONTEST

Write the best caption for this photo and win a \$30 Woolworths voucher. Email your ideas by Friday, April 19 to design@nzcatholic.org.nz, subject 'Caption Contest 682'. Or post to NZ Catholic, PO Box 147000, Ponsonby, Auckland 1144. Please include your postal address.



The winner of the Caption Contest from issue 680 (below right) was — **Paul McKee, Christchurch.**

Other suggestions were:

"A tough day to be a firefighter in Africa." — **R.C Small, Palmerston North.**

Elephant: "I have great Faith!" — **Nancy Hill, Wainuiomata.**

"Elephants can fly!" — **Rosanne Wills, Auckland.**

"It seems I have got the wrong trunk." — **Russell Watt, Auckland.**

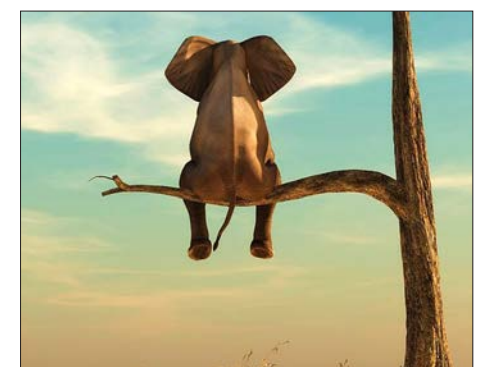
"My keeper said I need some space!" — **Joan Leonard, Auckland.**

"A photo of the extremely rare elephant bird." — **Patricia Jackson, Auckland.**

Elephant: "When you take 'trunk' literally!" — **Agnes Maria Telse, Auckland.**

"... then they said to me 'If only pigs could fly'. To this day I have no idea what they meant!" — **Chris Stoddard, Auckland.**

"Just watch me jump down." — **Margaret Ingram, Hawera.**



"I'm the new branch manager"

Controversial Divine Mercy advert on bus not hurting anybody says advertiser

by MINA AMSO

A Catholic organisation behind a controversial public advert of a Divine Mercy image said it hadn't received any calls from people objecting.

This comes after reports of the advertisement being seen on the back of e-buses in Nelson, sparking controversy and approaches to councillors.

The director trustee of Divine Mercy, Pat Barrett, said none of the groups who objected to the adverts, nor councillors, rang him directly.

"No, I am a bit surprised. I was actually going to ring them and then it's gone off my radar. I was just going to suss out where they're at with it and what was happening. I had correspondence with the advertising company, and they were aware of it, but they didn't see any problems. They hadn't been contacted with anything regarding the ads."

He believed it was his right to advertise religious images.

"If it doesn't breach any guidelines. It's not an objectionable image. While some might feel uncomfortable with it, I think there's lots more things that appear in the media that are very objectionable."

He said he's glad people feel discomfort rather than neutral.

"There's Jesus right in front of you behind the bus and you know some issue going on in your own life or some unforgiveness and Jesus is there, even as a practising Catholic that can be uncomfortable."

Other concerns were posed around "if they put that up, what else might they put up?"

"I thought that was a strange one really. I don't know where they're coming from. There just seems to be an immediate reaction to the fact that they didn't like it. I thought that was a weak argument."

He said it's not like putting up a woman in lingerie calling people to be Christian, that would be objectionable. He said the media company they worked with reviewed the image and words and message and were happy.

Barrett has been in this Catholic apostolate for around two years as a volunteer, owing to his own conversion experience in Medugorje in the 1990s. He works at promoting the message and devotion of Divine Mercy and Divine Mercy Sunday through advertising, books and prayer cards.

The entire operation is run by volunteers and donations, he said. Each e-bus advertisement costs around \$800 a month, plus set up costs of around \$500. The cost constraints dictate how long those ads go up, but they will continue for three to four months during Christmas and Easter.

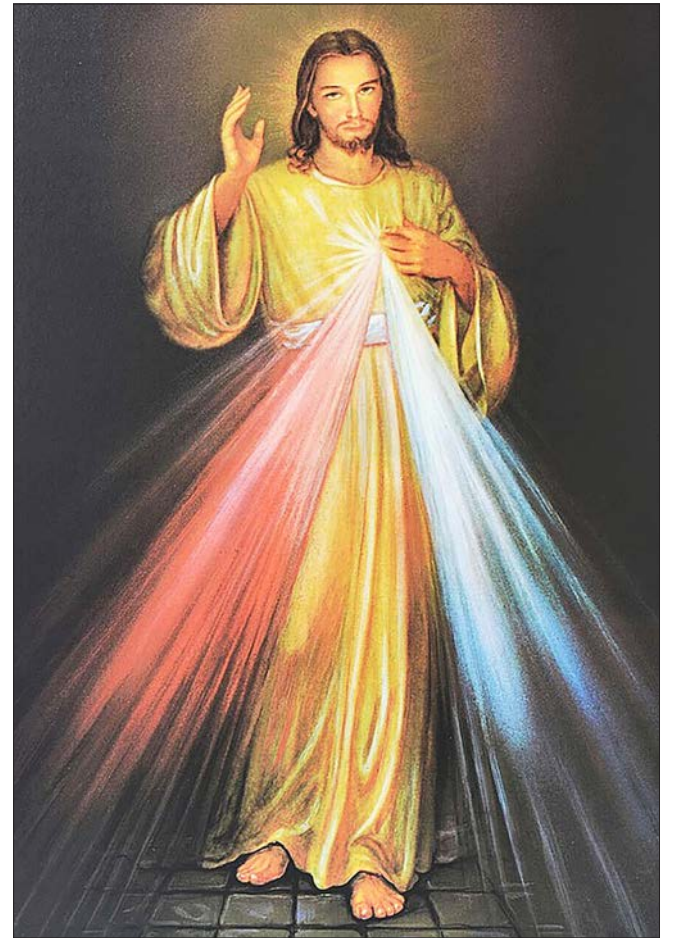
Divine Mercy was advertised in various media over the years including television, the press, *Women's Weekly* magazine, signage at airports, greeting gates, electronic billboards and on the back of buses. People sitting to watch a movie in theatres would suddenly see Divine Mercy Jesus with voice-over singing "Jesus I trust in You".

"There was mostly stunned silence. As you can imagine, you're watching a movie and suddenly Jesus appears on the screen. Exhorting you to convert so to speak. The conversations stop dead," he said.

The electrician and photojournalist said there's been a mixed response from the ads over the years.

"It's been quite interesting to watch over close to 30 years of advertising in the media around New Zealand."

"Acceptance of religious messages on buses in particular is shrinking nationally which is very sad," he said.



Polish painter Adolf Hyla's version of the Divine Mercy image has been recognised and is used throughout the Catholic Church. (Photo: Wikipedia)

French crew delivered from southern storm after praying to Blessed Virgin

by PETER OWENS

For many years, devotion to the Blessed Virgin was a major factor in Catholic life. In recent years, along with other factors, it has diminished, especially among younger members of the faithful. Indeed, there is a strong and growing strain of secularism in our national life. Nevertheless, Our Lady of the Assumption is the national patron of our country, and she has paid a low-key but vital part in the growth of this nation.

Sometimes this has been little known because she has manifested herself in remote places or with remote people. One of these is recorded not in any religious journal, but in the secular media of this nation and in quite a spectacular fashion.

Back in June 1904, the steel-hulled French barque *Boieldieu*, sailed from Sydney to Falmouth, England, with a cargo of 27,316 sacks of wheat for the British market shipped by John Bell and Company Limited of Sydney.

There was a strong market for this grain and the shippers were seeking a good price. What is interesting is that the crew from Captain Boisson downwards were all practising Catholics.

At the start of the voyage, all went well. Then disaster struck. It is well-known that the Southern Ocean can be vicious in winter and the barque was hit by a violent storm. All the ship's sails were torn from its masts and on June 28, its rudder was ripped from its mountings. Efforts to replace the rudder were useless and a strong gale drove the now totally uncontrolled vessel not towards the equator, but south — towards the Antarctic continent.

By the beginning of July 1904, the ship was being driven before the wind off the West Coast of New Zealand. However, it was well off the recognised shipping lanes and despite flying a distress flag, encountered no other vessel. In fact, it was driven as far south as 37 degrees. All looked lost. It seemed



Steel-hulled French barque *Boieldieu*

nothing could save the ship or its crew. It was well below Stewart Island and being driven south — headlong.

Captain Boisson believed all was lost and made a momentous and critical decision. He mustered the entire crew, including the officers and told them he believed they were all doomed. However, he suggested that the only hope of survival was to entrust themselves to the care of the Blessed Virgin. To that end and with the support of the entire crew, he announced they would institute an immediate novena seeking the intercession of Our Lady.

The captain also vowed that if the ship and its crew were spared as a result of the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, they would all make a public pro-

cession to the nearest Catholic Church where they docked and make a contribution to its resources. He also vowed he would present that church with a picture of the *Boieldieu* to record its deliverance.

The entire crew agreed and began the novena at once, with recitation of the rosary and the singing of *Ave Stella Maris* (the ancient and popular hymn acclaiming Mary as Queen of the Seas). It was towards the end of July and after the recitation of the novena for two days something unusual happened.

The gale force winds the driving seas calmed. According to Captain Boisson the vessel turned around as if by an unseen hand. Still rudderless, it was driven north and several days later stopped just off the heads of Lyttelton Harbour near Christchurch, New Zealand. Still without a rudder and with a mere jury rig of sails, the ship's distress signal was seen by the local tug and the *Boieldieu* was towed into the inner harbour at Lyttelton.

The captain was as good as his word. Contact having been made with the local Catholic church, the people of the small marine-focussed town was astonished by the sight of the entire crew of the ship processing from the wharf to St Joseph's Church on the hill above the wharf. They were all singing *Ave Stella Maris*.

The crew attended a special thanksgiving Mass at the church and the local parishioners conducted an "evening" for them.

That is not all. The entire crew, captain, officers and seamen, presented the church with a large painting of the *Boieldieu* and paid for a brass plaque inscribed "Reconnaissance a Marie" which in English means, in memory of Our Lady's assistance. They also donated a full set of Mass vestments to St Joseph's Church (Lyttelton) before the ship resumed its voyage to Falmouth, England.

The church and other Catholic land in Lyttelton has since been sold to finance the new Catholic Cathedral in Christchurch.

Carmel College preserves and rededicates a rare 19th century homestead

by MINA AMSO

Nestled on the edge of the serene Lake Pupuke in Milford in Auckland lies Carmel College — a Catholic secondary school for girls, boasting a rich history, with links dating back to Ireland in mid-19th century.

At present, the school celebrates and remembers that history, boldly taking on a project that would bring a new sense of renewal to its heritage.

The project is centred on renewing a pre-1900s building on the school site that was originally known as The Shakespeare Residence. It's a rare survivor, a remnant of what's left from the historic lake front villas that were built in the late 19th century.

Believed to have been one of the earliest residences near the lake, the building became a convent to house the Sisters of Mercy who would later play a major role in the history of Carmel College.

Nga Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa, the Sisters of Mercy made their way from Ireland in the late 1800s, arriving to the North Shore just over 100 years ago. Eager to get their hands busy serving the people of New Zealand, they decided to purchase the residence from a wealthy well-known Catholic family at the time.

The now dated Mt Carmel Homestead and Chapel would become the subject of a restoration project in 2018. Mrs Karen Mitchell, associate principal at Carmel College, said the project had reinforced Carmel's world-wide links and history.

"I love it. I think it's lovely to have it on site. I think it's a unique building and as a school it's amazing to have something that's so old and it gives you that continuity."

Apart from Takapuna Grammar School on the North Shore, there aren't many schools with buildings that date back that far. It's one of the earliest titles and concrete buildings on the North Shore, she said.

There were two reasons for the redevelopment.

"One was that the number of sisters was obviously decreasing and so it was probably quite a big building for one person to be living in it. Also, it's a heritage building. It would have been very hard to heat and to keep up to date," said Mrs Mitchell.

"Things were quite old in the previous building, and it needed an earthquake strengthening also."

The building was recorded as an archaeological site, as it was associated with pre-1900 activity.

Dame Sister Pauline Engel, the school's third principal, and Sr Beverly Parkinson were the last two nuns who lived on site. Sr Pauline passed away in 2017. Sr Beverly moved out of the convent and into St Mary's community in New Street in Ponsonby towards the end of 2018.

"It started with the conservation plan in 2018, and then we had quite a lot of discussions about what was going to be left and how the process was going to look. The actual construction time was about 18 months, maybe more than that. It was quite slow be-



The newly renovated chapel and homestead, with Carmel College associate principal Karen Mitchell

cause it was through 2020/2021 time.

"Then there were the other parts of the builds that were demolished, negotiating how and when we would do it. You had to have certain things done when students weren't at school.

"2019 was mostly about negotiating what was going to be in the plan, what was going to be left, what was appropriate to take down. What we got left is the shell of the original house with the flooring, and the ceiling."

All the windows had to be taken out and re-fitted and re-furnished. A lot of the work done was made inside the walls and flooring, including earthquake strengthening, said Mrs Mitchell.

Some things that were in the chapel before were donated back to the school, including an original wooden chair and a tabernacle of the Blessed Sacrament. The building's original fireplaces and chimneys were kept and restored. The carpet was removed to reveal the original wooden flooring.

It took three and a half years to complete, with the cost of the renovation work being paid for by the McAuley Trust.

Up until the redevelopment, the school didn't have a chapel on site.

The newly renovated homestead has the original chapel and rooms that existed in 1922 when it was first purchased.

All sitting spaces and the bedroom have been renovated into offices, with a brand-new kitchen and bathroom.

Over the years the convent was renovated and expanded several times. A large brick accommodation wing was added in 1957 to accommodate the increasing number of sisters who taught at the newly established Carmel College. All the additions were removed during the restoration.

The building was officially handed over and gifted by the Sisters of Mercy to the school in September 2022. It was re-dedicated in 2023, with a special Mass and blessings celebrated by Fr Mark Napa, of St Joseph's parish.

"We had a quiet celebration of the length of time that the whole building had been owned by the sisters. It was a very special day," said Mrs Mitchell.

The chapel gets used every week for the Liturgy of the Word.



Fireplaces and chimneys were kept intact



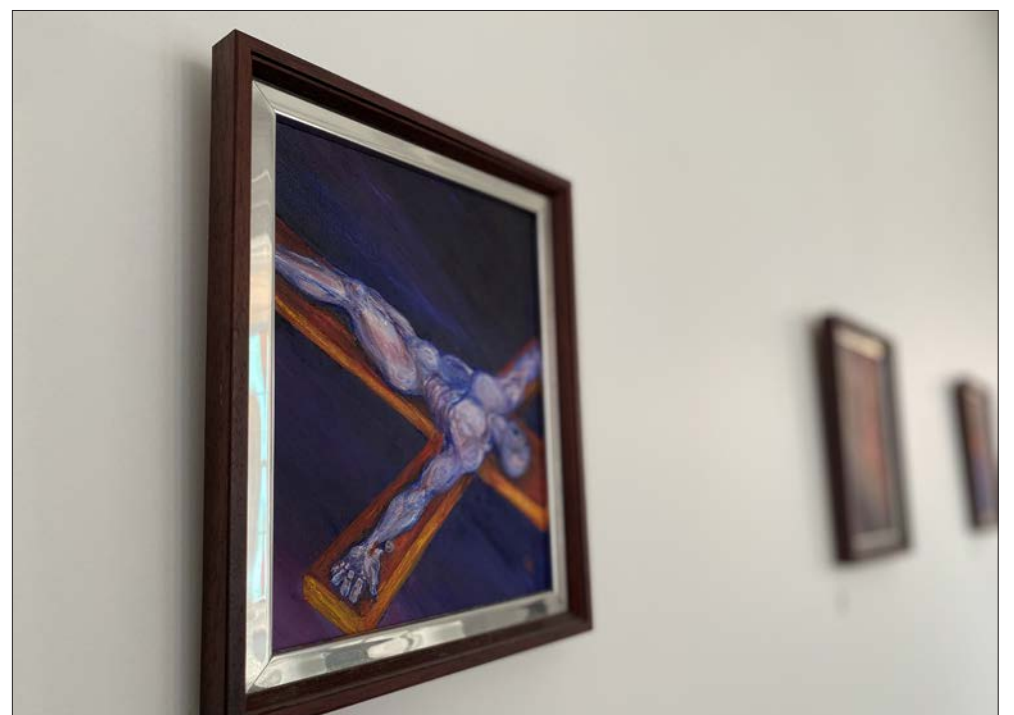
The front entrance



The original tabernacle



The chapel seats 30 people



A display of the original chapel art



Participants of the Stations of the Cross on Tamaki Drive, Auckland on 16 March. (Photo courtesy of Auaha Media)

Hundreds of Christians join Stations of the Cross for Gaza

by SCOTT PAREKOWHAI

About 200 people joined a 41km Stations of the Cross around Auckland on March 16, representing the length of the Gaza Strip. Led by Christians for Peace in Palestine, the kaupapa welcomed people of all or no faiths to engage in peaceful and prayerful solidarity alongside Palestinian whānau.

Pakuranga Deacon Chris Sullivan and his wife, Ana Maria, participated in the walk which started at 6am from Te Mīhana Māori — Church of the Holy Sepulchre, returning at 7.30pm. It took 13 and a half hours to complete the journey.

The Christian-led pilgrimage followed the 14 Stations of the Cross with prayer at each stop.

“At this desperate moment for the people of Gaza, where 70 percent or more of homes have been destroyed, children are dying of starvation, and still Israel threatens to invade Rafah, which can only cause more tragic destruction and loss of life, my wife and I felt called to ‘put our bodies on the line’ to stand with the people of Gaza, who are suffering as Christ suffered,” Deacon Sullivan said.

“Christ himself is suffering in and with the people of Gaza, and he calls us to do what we can to stop the war and provide the humanitarian aid so urgently needed, which Israel’s government is cruelly restricting,” he said.

Aotearoa Christians for Peace in Palestine, which organised the event, said it was an incredible experience to witness and be a part of.

It was part of the Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage held in 145 cities around the world, including Christchurch, Wellington, and Whanganui. Its core convictions are:

- Jesus’ way of healing-justice via nonviolent-enemy-love.
- Standing against hatred of any kind, including antisemitism, Islamophobia and racism.
- Nonviolent solidarity, not neutrality.
- Seeking to be led by, and work with, Palestinian Christians.

“We experienced a strong sense of the presence of Jesus with us, the joy of working together in Christian unity, sharing our food as we stopped, and had many Spirit-inspired conversations about our shared faith,” Deacon Sullivan said.