

NZCatholic

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Call to reduce rising
cost pressures on state
-integrated schools

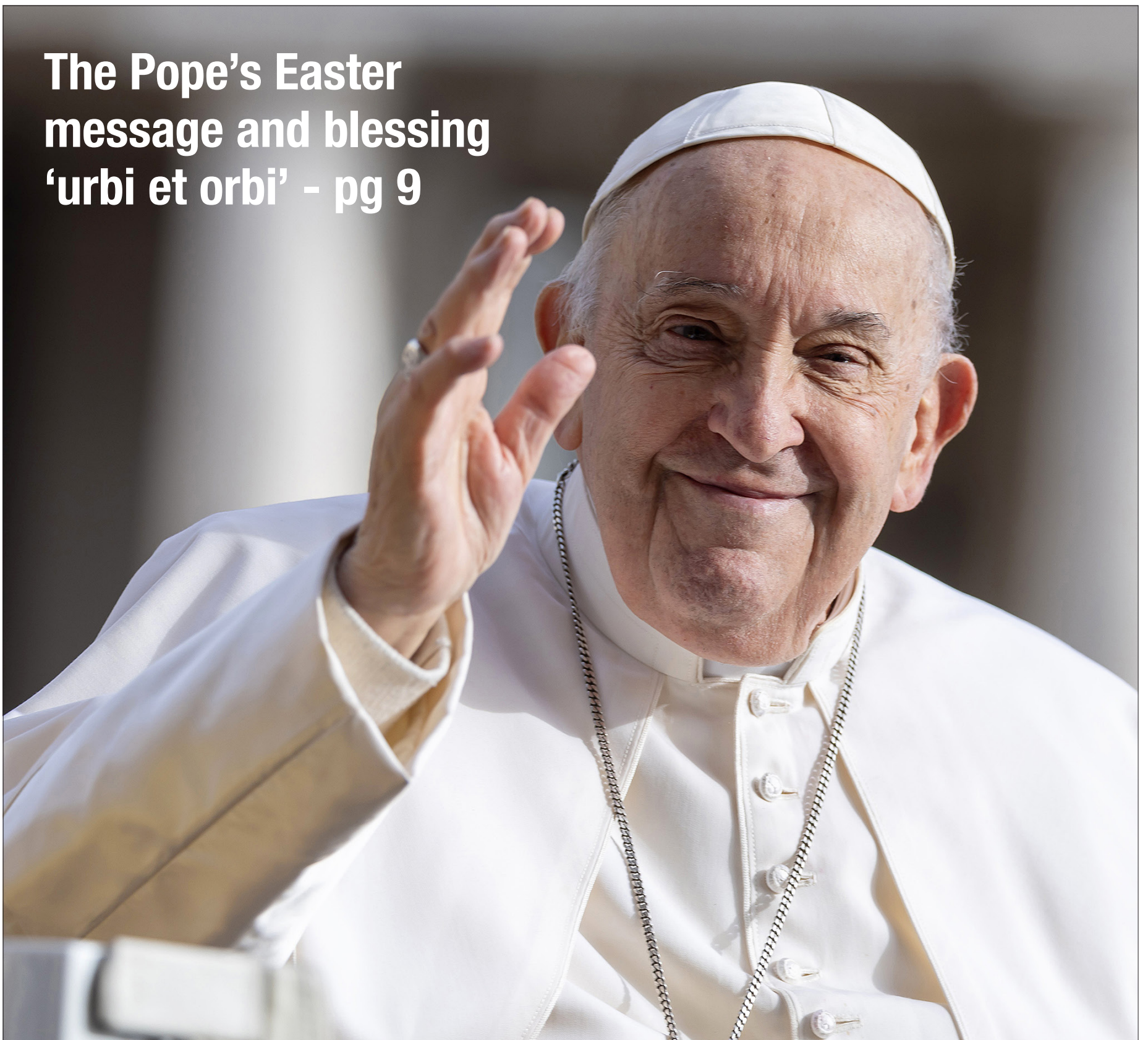
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On the front cover: Pope Francis waves as he rides in the pope-mobile around St Peter's Square at the Vatican before his weekly general audience on April 10, 2024. (CNS photo/Pablo Esparza)

NZCatholic

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- Various groups practicing hard for our upcoming Culture Night.

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Caritas criticises electric car RUCs

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand has criticised a rushed legislative process that saw Road User Charges applied to electric vehicles, and at a reduced rate to plug-in hybrid vehicles.

In a submission to Parliament's Transport and Infrastructure Select Committee on the Road User Charges (Light Electric RUC Vehicles) Amendment Bill, Caritas noted that the bill had its first reading in Parliament on March 5, and submissions closed on March 7.

"Rushed lawmaking is generally a bad way to proceed, as it limits public scrutiny and input which can help improve the quality of law-making," the Caritas submission noted.

Owners of light electric vehicles (EVs) have been exempt (since 2009) from purchasing RUC licences to encourage people to purchase EVs, the submission stated.

But the bill, which was passed into law by Parliament on March 28 with the support of National, Labour, New Zealand First and ACT MPs, means that EV owners will pay \$76 per 1000km driven — the same as diesel vehicles — and plug-in hybrid owners \$38 — down from the \$42 that had been proposed — on a pre-pay basis, Radio New Zealand reported.

In its submission, Caritas proposed that "any removal of the RUC exemption be deferred for at least two more years, pending a higher level of hybrid and EV uptake in New Zealand. Such an improvement in the NZ vehicle stock would help to reduce the number of petrol vehicles operating on NZ roads".

Caritas stated that it is calling for policies which reduce use of fossil fuels, nationally and internationally, and promote sustainable energy sources. "Therefore, we oppose the bill being implemented at this time, as it will serve to discourage the fledgling adoption of hybrid electric vehicles in



Photo: Unsplash

this country."

The Caritas submission noted that there had been significant uptake of EVs late last year. "Changes in government regulations around the so-called 'ute tax', a tax that increased the prices of diesel- and petrol-powered cars and decreased the prices of electrics, has led to what is most likely a short-term rush."

Nonetheless, "New Zealand has made some real progress since the introduction of RUC exemptions for EV and hybrid vehicles. However, we still have a long way to go. Our vehicle fleet is currently [composed] of: BEV (Battery Electric) 1.7 per cent; PHEV (Plug-in Hybrid Electric) 0.7 per cent; Hybrid 5.8 per cent; Petrol 70.5 per cent; Diesel 21.3 per cent."

CLCANZ alarmed by current Government discourse on Māori language and treaty

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

Members of the Catholic Church's Congregational Leaders Conference of Aotearoa New Zealand [CLCANZ] — representing Catholic religious orders — are concerned at the current political discourse regarding policies of the country's coalition government on issues related to Māori language and the Treaty of Waitangi.

CLCANZ members have issued a public statement on this subject: The text of the statement is as follows:

"Te Tiriti o Waitangi was the foundational document of Aotearoa, with Bishop Pompallier present at the gathering. It

had the flavour of a covenant, a sacred agreement. It was between the British Colonial Office, then, and the Government, today, and Māori. Any ongoing conversations today should involve members from both parties.

"We, the Congregational Leaders Conference of Aotearoa New Zealand [CLCANZ], are alarmed at the rhetoric around curbing Māori language, and attempting to rewrite the principles of the Treaty.

"This is not a time to remain silent and unmoved. This current coalition government appears to be continuing a litany of broken promises to Māori, the indigenous peoples of our country.

"We stand in protest at the attitude of the present coalition

government in disestablishing the bicultural relationship between Māori and the Crown, and destroying many efforts made over significant years.

"We commit ourselves to learning more about our responsibilities living in a bicultural milieu."

Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions RNDM, Divine Word Missionaries SVD, Dominican Sisters OP, Franciscan Friars OFM, Little Sisters of the Assumption LSA,

Marist Sisters SM, Nga Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy of New Zealand RSM, Sisters of the Good Shepherd RGS, Society of St Columban SSC, Sisters of Compassion

Team of safeguarding reviewers appointed

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

A team of safeguarding reviewers has been appointed by the National Office for Professional Standards (NOPS) to progress external safeguarding reviews of Catholic organisations.

The team includes four former Catholic school principals; Jane Hahn, Linda McQuade, Colleen Gleeson and Pamela Arthurs. They comprise a review team including Siobhan Dilly (former NZCBC executive officer) and Jonathan Sankey (Professional Standards Manager with the Marist Brothers).

NOPS undertakes reviews of all Catholic dioceses, religious congregations and national organisations or agencies in this country, on behalf of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference (NZCBC) and the Congregational Leaders Conference Aotearoa New Zealand (CLCANZ). This requires

meeting with and reviewing the practices, protocols and policies of about 90 organisations of all sizes every three years.

"The review's purpose is to ensure the safety of all children and vulnerable adults in our Catholic community," said Virginia Noonan, NOPS director. "The review supports best safeguarding practices by acknowledging and celebrating practices that are working well, and identifying effective strategies to develop. It provides a vehicle for working together positively to support our Church's zero tolerance for harm."

Recent feedback from one Catholic organisation described the review as "a new experience for us. It has been a big and invaluable learning curve which has been sincerely appreciated".

Inquiries about this work may be directed to safeguarding@nops.org.nz

Call to reduce upward pressure on state-integrated school attendance dues

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

The Association of Proprietors of Integrated Schools is calling for education sector changes to ease the upward pressure on attendance dues.

In a briefing paper prepared ahead of a scheduled meeting with Associate Education Minister David Seymour last month, APIS stated that it is looking to the Crown to “provide Policy Two funding annually in line with the capital provision for state schools, so that the full burden of establishing integrated schools is not carried by parents and families”.

Policy Two funding may be provided by the Ministry of Education towards the costs of building new classrooms in an existing integrated school (usually related to roll growth), or in a new integrated school.

In the briefing paper, APIS acknowledged the support of previous Governments in “releasing Policy Two funds to the state-integrated sector, but these funds have become very limited since 2017”.

“As a result, attendance dues have, in some cases, risen, increasing the financial pressure on parents in our sector as proprietors face the full cost of funding new schools and roll growth classrooms and facilities. Policy Two funds budgeted by the Crown in recent years have been minimal, at a time when the cost of building a classroom is approximately \$600,000 - \$700,000. The level of this financial support is a significant issue for the sector.”

The briefing paper also stated that “APIS is keen to negotiate with the Government regarding the cost of insuring

integrated spaces”.

“Insurance costs are another factor that is putting upward pressure on attendance dues, with areas such as Wellington particularly affected,” the paper stated.

“The charge on a Catholic secondary student in Wellington for insurance within attendance dues is about \$350 per student, and [is] climbing quickly (insurance costs have risen by 50 per cent in the last two years).

“In 2023, the Catholic network spread the total cost of insurance across the country, so that all parents pay roughly the same for insurance costs within attendance dues. This is an example of a common good model where everyone contributes for the benefit of those impacted the most, such as parents from Wellington. Most proprietors in APIS do not have the ability to pool costs in this way to mitigate the challenge on parents.”

There are 94,348 students enrolled in state-integrated schools, the paper noted.

APIS represents 11.3 per cent (percentage has remained similar over the last decade) of students in the New Zealand schooling system. Of these, 66,149 students are from the Catholic Schooling Network, and 28,199 are from other state-integrated schools representing a range of special character, including Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Adventist, Jewish, Muslim, Steiner, Montessori, and non-denominational Christian schools.

The APIS briefing paper argued that state-integrated schools should receive funds for insuring school buildings through the operational

grant from the Ministry of Education.

“Proprietors of state-integrated schools provide land and infrastructure to the state to support the provision of education in New Zealand, and view insurance as an operational cost similar to utilities such as power and gas.

“Alternatively, APIS would be interested in looking at the possibility of whether state-integrated schools could be covered within the state school insurance scheme run by the MoE, or gain acceptance by the Minister to use similar risk strategies used by the Ministry of Education in insuring state schools.”

Given the significance of state-integrated schools to the wider education sector, APIS stated its desire to “work alongside the Government and the Ministry of Education to establish new schools in areas of demographic growth, so that the network of integrated schools is able to support state education provision, while enabling parents to have the choice of

education within a particular special character”.

“The growing mosaic of ethnic and cultural diversity, especially in the nation’s major cities, is fuelling this demand, and our state-integrated schools represented by APIS play a key role in meeting the needs of this diverse population.”

Therefore, APIS “would like to see the Ministry of Education actively provide proprietors with a stronger level of participation in the Ministry’s network planning processes”. APIS called for a stronger level of participation for proprietors in decision-making in this regard.

APIS also called for “reduction of barriers to state-integrated roll growth where there is an expressed need”.

In the briefing paper, APIS expressed its gratitude for “the support of a number of Ministers of Education over previous decades”, adding that “the association is motivated to continue to build these relationships into the future”.



Easter trading up for debate again in Parliament

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

The ongoing debate over Easter trading will be rejoined in Parliament after a member’s bill aiming to remove restrictions was drawn from the ballot.

According to a report on TVNZ, the bill from ACT MP Cameron Luxton will allow businesses that want to trade on Good Friday and Easter Sunday to do so. But the bill retains existing employee protections that apply to Easter Sunday, and extends these protections to Good Friday.

Prime Minister Christopher Luxon had previously expressed his personal

support for changing Easter trading laws. But such a change was not in the 36-point action list published by the Government recently.

A bill from ACT MP Chris Baillie last year to remove restriction on trading and selling alcohol on Good Friday and Easter Sunday, was defeated in Parliament at its first reading by 81-37.

Among those voting for the bill were 27 National Party MPs, including Mr Luxon. Six National MPs voted against the bill. Labour and the Green Party members voted against the bill.

Over the years, the Catholic Church has consistently opposed further eas-

ing of restrictions on Easter trading.

In 2015, media reported a Caritas representative saying, “there is a range of activities that take place at Easter because most New Zealand workers are guaranteed time off work – including church activities, but also sports tournaments, school reunions, hui, unveilings, and other marae gatherings”.

In a TVNZ interview at Easter this year, Auckland Bishop Stephen Lowe expressed his dismay that this debate was resurfacing.

“It’s coming up every year, it’s coming up every holiday break, but often what we’re forgetting about are

people and families,” Bishop Lowe said.

The Shop Trading Hours Amendment Act 2016 enabled local councils to adopt policies to permit more shops to open for trade on Easter Sunday.

Currently, there are trading restrictions on Good Friday, Easter Sunday, ANZAC Day (up to 1pm) and Christmas Day. A law change in 2001 allowed garden centres to open on Easter Sunday.

The current law allows shops selling certain types of goods (examples include cafes, dairies and service stations) to remain open on restricted trading days.

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Bible Society in NZ closes stores and office

by ROWENA OREJANA

Bible Society New Zealand closed its office in Wellington, as well as three of its Manna stores located in Mt Roskill (Auckland), Whangarei and Nelson at the end of March. The group has relocated its centralised head office to Auckland.

In a statement, group chief executive officer Neels Janse van Rensburg said that the move was taken due to "the dynamic challenges that the

economic climate presents".

He said the decision acknowledged that "sustaining these retail operations has been financially challenging for some time".

Three other stores in Invercargill, Gore and Hawkes Bay will be shut down on May 31.

"These decisions have resulted from long and prayerful consideration. We recognise the profound impact on our team members affected by these changes and the communities

we serve, and carry this responsibility with the utmost empathy and understanding. Making these changes has become a challenging yet inevitable step to ensure the continued vitality of our mission," he said.

Mr Janse van Rensburg said that Bible Society New Zealand will continue to operate through e-commerce and fulfilment centres, as he asked for continued support from their clients.

He also invited those "who share the same vision" and would like to

acquire any of their Manna stores to contact Bible Society New Zealand.

"Your involvement could be crucial in preserving the essence of these community spaces, albeit Bible Society New Zealand can no longer financially sustain these operations," he said.

On behalf of the group, Mr Janse van Rensburg thanked their members, partners and communities "who have been the heartbeat of Bible Society New Zealand".

Keynote speakers at Education Convention

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

A range of international and local speakers will support and challenge attendees at the 2024 Catholic Education Convention in Wellington in June.

According to the convention website (www.cathedconvention.co.nz), the theme of the gathering is: "T hono Whakapono: Together, one faith community".

Four keynote speakers are listed on the website. They are Tim Wilson, executive director of the Maxim Institute, Manuel Beazley, vicar for Maori in Auckland diocese, Dr Sandra Cullen, Associate Professor of Religious Education and Head of the School of Human Development at Dublin City University in Ireland, and Joe Paprocki, DMin, the national consultant for faith formation for Loyola Press in the US.

According to the conference website, Dr Cullen teaches "a variety of modules under the broad headings of religious education and pastoral ministry at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and supervises PhD research in religious education and related areas."

As director of the ICRE (Irish Centre for Religious Education), Sandra has a public profile in engagement with policy developments in RE, supporting teaching and learning in RE in a variety of contexts, and building international research networks. She has been keynote speaker at a number of national and international conferences and symposia. Sandra serves as a trustee of CEIST

(Catholic Education in Schools Trust), and has recently completed her term of office on the Catholic Education Services Committee, a committee of the Irish Episcopal Conference. Sandra is a board member of EFTRE (European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education) and is on the editorial board of the Journal of Religious Education".

Dr Paprocki "has been in pastoral ministry for [more than] 40 years, has authored [more than] 20 books (including his most recent, *8 Steps to Energise Your Faith*), and presented in [more than] 150 dioceses in North America. Joe received his Masters Degree from the Institute of Pastoral Studies (Loyola University of Chicago), and his Doctor of Ministry Degree from the University of St. Mary of the Lake (Mundelein Seminary). Joe blogs about his catechetical experiences and insights at www.catechistsjourney.com".

The convention will be at the TSB Bank Arena



Dr Sandra Cullen and Joe Paprocki, DMin. (Photos: www.cathedconvention.co.nz)

and Shed 6 in Wellington from June 19-21.

Early bird registrations close on May 5, and standard registrations open on May 6.

Resources ahead of Jubilee Year 2025

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference has created a special online page of resources for parishes and individuals to use, as we walk together towards Jubilee 2025 — Pilgrims of Hope.

Pope Francis has declared 2025 as a year of Jubilee with the theme "Pilgrims of Hope", giving voice to his desire for the year to foster a greater sense of global sisterhood and brotherhood, solidarity with the poor, and caring for the environment.

Internationally, preparations for Jubilee 2025 are underway. The Vatican's Dicastery for Evangelisation has prepared supporting resources, and has asked local bishops' conferences to promote and distribute these, as well as to collaborate in the preparation of local opportunities. In response, the NZCBC has created an indexed webpage dedicated to Jubilee 2025. It contains background information, links to online resources, and links to other websites for a broader coverage.

The page is at www.catholic.org.nz/about-us/jubilee-year-2025/

All parishes are encouraged to learn the newly-composed hymn, as well as incorporating the Jubilee Prayer in their gatherings. Both are among

the many resources on the NZCBC Jubilee webpage.

The page will be updated regularly. Everyone is invited to explore the contents, and become familiar with what is planned for the Jubilee. This includes advice and guidance for people planning to travel to Italy next year for the pilgrimage, which is part of the year.

During 2024, the focus for the People of God is on prayer and study. In 2025 the focus shifts to the People of God making a Pilgrimage of Hope.

There'll be more details about the Jubilee Year when Pope Francis publishes his special papal bull on the subject, expected on May 9. The papal bull will also be published on the Jubilee webpage.

Each diocese will be invited separately to identify representatives to meet with the jubilee national delegate, currently Catherine Gibbs, to develop local responses to this event.



The logo chosen by the Vatican for the Holy Year 2025



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Progress on Southland college plan

by PETER OWENS

The limited statutory manager of St Peter's College in Gore, Nicola Hornsey, has stated that she is pleased to report that there has been significant progress on an intervention plan for the school, with the responsibility for the special character of the school being returned to the college board of trustees.

In a review document, Ms Hornsey also reported that, of the nine Education Review Office

statements of effective governance set out in the intervention plan, drawn up after the limited statutory management was imposed last year, two of them have now been met.

She noted that the board had improved its effectiveness of governance and stewardship.

Referring to returning responsibility for the special character of the school to the board, *The Otago Daily Times* reported Ms Hornsey saying, 'this is a credit to the staff and board'.

In her review, Ms Hornsey stated that there will be an emphasis on the remaining seven statements of effective governance, and that there will be a further review in March, 2025. If all goes well the college should then be re-instated to full administration.

Former principal John Hogue has been appointed to the board as one of the proprietor's representatives. He was subsequently elected as chair of the board.

Zecharia’s Journey: A Divine Encounter

In a world filled with noise and chaos, Zecharia Mathew’s journey stands out as a testament to faith, love, and purpose. As a first-year seminarian in the Diocese of Auckland, he shares his vocation story.

A Divine Encounter, Zecharia’s journey began in 2007 when he received his first Holy Communion. The experience left an indelible mark on his young heart. “I want to be able to bring Jesus from heaven down to earth and give Him personally to others,” he recalls. That desire, like a quiet flame, continued to burn within him. Through his studies at Liston College, Zecharia faced other aspirations. Becoming a doctor or a professional football player tempted him, but deep down, he knew he was called to something greater. “I was never actually good at football,” he smiles, “but my heart was elsewhere.”

In 2017, during his final year of school, Zecharia underwent a profound conversion experience. His love for God intensified, and he felt drawn to a life of service. Leaving behind familiar shores, he joined the Franciscan Capuchins — a religious order committed to humility, simplicity, and compassion. Zachariah’s journey took him from New Zealand to the Philippines. There, he deepened his understanding of his Catholic faith. Three years of formation prepared him for a life dedicated to God and humanity. But it was in India, shortly after taking his first vows Zachariah’s heart underwent a transformation. During moments of prayer and discernment, he realised something profound. “I am super selfish,” he admits, “but in the best way possible.” His selfishness had a unique twist—he wanted to serve only in New Zealand. “I don’t want to serve anywhere else in the world except here in New Zealand. This is my home. This is the country that I love. You guys are the people that I want to serve.”



“I don’t want to serve anywhere else in the world except here in New Zealand. This is my home. This is the country that I love. You guys are the people that I want to serve.”

Back in New Zealand, Zecharia continues to follow his vocation to the priesthood, and encourages all men who feel they have a vocation to do the same. “If you have a vocation, chase after it and try your best. At the end of the day if you are not at peace with your decision then leave, no one is forcing you to stay. Yet you will have the satisfaction in knowing you gave it your all.”

Our seminarians at Holy Cross Seminary are tomorrow’s priests, bishops and cardinals. In his 2024 appeal, Bishop Steve Lowe requests your prayers for vocations to the priesthood. Additionally, he seeks financial support to assist Zecharia and his fellow seminarian’s as they continue their journey towards ordination. If you can, please prayerfully consider a donation to the appeal.

Bishop’s Appeal 2024



Supporting Auckland Seminarians



On Sunday 21 April we celebrate Good Shepherd Sunday also known as Vocations Sunday. In his appeal Bishop Steve Lowe asks us to take a moment to offer your support to our seven Auckland seminarians studying towards their priestly vocations at Holy Cross Seminary. Your gift is one of the best ways to positively influence the future of the Church here in Auckland.

Your gift to the appeal ensures that our newly formed priests will be well-equipped to serve the faithful throughout their lives. If you are able to donate, please prayerfully consider a donation in support of our future priests.

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Waugh revisited: The American epoch in the Catholic Church after 75 years

In 1947, English novelist Evelyn Waugh made the first of his three visits to the United States. The trip was ostensibly for the purpose of negotiating the film rights to Waugh's most famous novel, "Brideshead Revisited". The effort was a monumental failure because, Waugh complained, no one in Hollywood understood the book. He concluded that this was consistent with his general bewilderment about American culture.

After this visit, he wrote perhaps the most wickedly satirical of his long line of such novels, "The Loved One", a brutally hilarious caricature of Hol-

Kenneth Craycraft

lywood through the lens of the funeral industry. The novel was the fruit of, and proxy for, Waugh's distaste for all things American.

His second visit, in 1948, was significantly more pleasant for Waugh (and his hosts). This time, his purpose was to tour Catholic America, trying to get a sense of the state of the Church in the US. On this trek, Waugh met with such prominent Catholics as Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day and novelist J.F. Powers.

The literary product after this journey was more conciliatory and circumspect than the prior. In a 1949 issue of "Life" magazine, Waugh published "The American Epoch in the Catholic Church". This 75th anniversary year is an opportunity to reintroduce this classic essay, which can be found in a collection of Waugh's non-fiction "The Essays, Articles and Reviews" (Little Brown & Co., 1984).

The "American Epoch" is a meditation on the paradoxical predicament of the Church in the US. The Catholic Church is by far the largest single religious organisation in the country, but Catholics represent only about 25 per cent of the American population. Moreover, Catholics have been viewed with suspicion in American public life.

These phenomena are related to the relatively late arrival of Catholics to the new world. Beginning in about the middle of the 19th century, large waves of Catholic immigrants started arriving from Europe. Other than (arguably), the Irish, these were predominantly non-English speaking migrants, from Italy, Germany, Poland, and other historically Catholic countries. Thus, Catholics arrived as both linguistic and religious aliens.

And they arrived in a country whose moral and political values are also foreign to a Catholic vision. As Waugh rightly notes, American moral sentiments are shaped by the political theory that forms the United States. America, he explains, "is a child of the late-eighteenth century 'enlightenment'". The liberal political theory at the heart of America "has persisted through all the changes of her history, and penetrated into every part of her life".

Much of this theory is at tension with Catholic impulses, if not contradictory to them. "The individual qualities that are regarded as . . . characteristic of Americans," he explains, "are unsympathetic to the habits of the Church." These include, among other things, the American "revolt against traditional authority", a "suspicion of titles . . . and ceremony", and the "dislike of dogmas that divide good citizens". Americans, he continues, "love

. . . the generalities which unite them".

The result, of course, is that American moral and political culture cuts against the grain of distinctive Catholic theological and moral teaching. If Catholics will not embrace American generalities, they will not be accepted as good citizens. Thus, to be good Americans, we have tended to set aside the particularity of Catholic faith and practice, embracing the "generalities" of American liberalism. Which, of course, means that Catholicism becomes absorbed into Americanism.

Thus, about 100 years after the antebellum immigration wave, Waugh observed that "Catholicism is not something alien and opposed to the American spirit, but an essential part of it". The desire to fit in has led to an "enervating toleration", by which Catholic distinctiveness is dissolved into American vagueness. "Good citizenship," he concludes, "has come to mean mere amenability to the demands of the government." And it is considered the "highest virtue".

Despite these tendencies, Waugh ends "The American Epoch" on a somewhat hopeful note. Yes, Americanism is corrosive of Catholic witness. The Catholic "knows that the history of the Church is one of conflict". But, "the Catholic holds certain territories that he can never surrender to the temporal power". Whether or not those territories had been surrendered in 1949, the 75th anniversary of the essay is an opportune time to revisit his observations as a measure of the present — to ask whether the time has been lost or redeemed?

Kenneth Craycraft is an associate professor of moral theology at Mount St Mary's Seminary and School of Theology in Cincinnati. (OSV News).

Ronald Rolheiser

God's silence in the face of evil

Theologians sometimes try to express the meaning of Jesus' Resurrection in one sentence: In the Resurrection, God vindicated Jesus, his life, his message, and his fidelity. What does that mean?

Jesus entered our world preaching faith, love, and forgiveness, but the world didn't accept that. Instead, it crucified him, and by that seemingly shamed his message. We see this most clearly on the cross when Jesus is taunted, mocked, and challenged: If you are the son of God, come down from there! If your message is true, let God verify that right now! If your fidelity is more than plain stubbornness and human ignorance, then why are you dying in shame?

What was God's response to those taunts? Seemingly nothing, no commentary, no defence, no apologetics, no counter challenge, just silence. Jesus dies in silence. Neither he nor the God he believed in tried to fill that excruciating void with any consoling words or explanations challenging people to look at the bigger picture, or to look at the brighter side of things. None of that. Just silence.

Jesus died in silence, inside God's silence and inside the world's incomprehension. And we can let ourselves be scandalised by that silence, just as we can let ourselves be scandalised by the seeming triumph of evil, pain, and suffering in our world. God's seeming silence in the face of evil and death can forever scandalise us: in the Jewish holocaust, in ethnic genocides, in brutal and senseless wars, in the earthquakes and tsunamis which kill thousands of people and devastate whole countries, in the deaths of countless people taken out of this life by cancer and by violence, in how unfair that life can be sometimes, and in the casual manner that those without conscience can rape whole areas of life seemingly without consequence. Where is God in all of this? What's God's answer?

God's answer is the Resurrection, the Resurrection of Jesus, and the perennial resurrection of

goodness within life itself. But resurrection is not necessarily rescue. God doesn't necessarily rescue us from the effects of evil, nor even from death. Evil does what it does, natural disasters are what they are, and those without conscience can rape even as they are feeding off life's sacred fire. Normally, God doesn't intervene. The parting of the Red Sea isn't a weekly occurrence. God lets his loved ones suffer and die, just as Jesus let his dear friend Lazarus die,

“The Resurrection asks us to believe what Gandhi affirmed; namely, that in the end evil will not have the last word. It will fail. Good will eventually triumph.

and God let Jesus die. God redeems, raises us up afterwards, in a deeper, more lasting vindication. Moreover, the truth of that statement can even be tested empirically.

Despite every appearance to the contrary at times, in the end, love does triumph over hatred. Peace does triumph over chaos. Forgiveness does triumph over bitterness. Hope does triumph over cynicism. Fidelity does triumph over despair. Virtue does triumph over sin. Conscience does triumph over callousness. Life does triumph over death, and good does triumph over evil, always. Mohandas K. Gandhi once wrote: "When I despair, I remember that, all through history, the way of truth and love has always won. There have been murderers and tyrants, and for a time they seem invincible. But in the end they always fall. Think of it, always."

The Resurrection, most forcibly, makes that

point. In the end, God has the last word. The Resurrection of Jesus is that last word. From the ashes of shame, of seeming defeat, failure, and death, a new, deeper, and eternal life perennially bursts forth. Our faith begins at the very point where it seems it should end, in God's seeming silence in the face of evil.

And what does this ask of us?

First, simply that we trust in the truth of the Resurrection. The Resurrection asks us to believe what Gandhi affirmed; namely, that in the end evil will not have the last word. It will fail. Good will eventually triumph.

More concretely, it asks us to roll the dice on trust and truth; namely, trusting that what Jesus taught is true. Virtue is not naïve, even when it is shamed. Sin and cynicism are naïve, even when they appear to triumph. Those who genuflect before God and others in conscience will find meaning and joy, even when they are deprived of some of the world's pleasures. Those who drink in and manipulate sacred energy without conscience will not find meaning in life, even when they taste pleasure. Those who live in honesty, no matter the cost, will find freedom. Those who lie and rationalise will find themselves imprisoned in self-hate. Those who live in trust will find love. God's silence can be trusted, even when we die inside of it.

We need to remain faithful in love, forgiveness, and conscience, despite everything that suggests they are naïve. They will bring us to what is deepest inside of life. Ultimately, God vindicates virtue. God vindicates love. God vindicates conscience. God vindicates forgiveness. God vindicates fidelity. Ultimately, God vindicated Jesus, and will vindicate us too if we remain faithful.

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

Feeling at home in Christian 'ethos'

Editorial

Another Easter weekend has come and gone in New Zealand with the usual issues — traffic jams, politicians making noise about Easter trading laws and Church figures responding, and people asking how to buy the best hot cross buns.

Overseas, there was media coverage of famous atheist Richard Dawkins saying that he sees himself as a “cultural Christian”.

Although he is not a believer, Dawkins has declared that he loves hymns and Christmas carols, and feels “at home in the Christian ethos”.

But Christianity is more than an “ethos”. This newspaper pointed this out in an editorial three years ago, citing N.T. Wright, Anglican bishop and author of “The Resurrection of the Son of God”. It bears repeating.

In an article in the Guardian several years ago, Wright stated: “. . . Christianity isn’t just a moral philosophy or a pathway of spirituality, however much many in late western culture (including in the church) have tried to belittle it by treating it as such. Of course, sceptics want Christianity to be ‘simply a moral philosophy’. That’s not nearly so challenging as what it actually is.”

Wright continued, “Just as Christian faith is far more than a moral philosophy or spiritual pathway (though it includes both, as it were, en passant), so it is more than a ‘how to get saved’ teaching, backed up by a dodgy ‘miracle’. Christian faith declares that, in and through Jesus, the creator of the world launched his plan to rescue the world from the decaying and corrupting force of evil itself. This was (if it was anything at all) an event which brought about a new state of affairs, albeit often in a hidden and paradoxical way (as Jesus kept on saying): the “kingdom of God”, that is, the sovereign, rescuing rule of the creator, breaking in to creation. If this stuff didn’t happen, then Christianity is based on a mistake. You can’t rescue it by turning it into a philosophy.”

After noting that sceptics were just as common in the ancient world as in the modern one, Wright went on to say “of course, we all know that dead people don’t rise. Actually, the early Christians knew that too. . . . [but] they claimed that Jesus had, as it were, gone through death and out the other side into a new form of physicality, for which there was no previous example, and of which there remains no subsequent example. They knew, as well as we do, how outrageous that was, but they found themselves compelled to say it. As one of the more sceptical of today’s scholars has put it, ‘It seems that they were doing their best to describe an event for which they didn’t have the right language’.”

Jesus’ Resurrection “isn’t an extra thing, bolted on to the outside of a moral philosophy”, Wright added.

“It is the launching-pad for God’s new creation. ‘Christian spirituality’ is learning to live in that new creation. ‘Christian ethics’ is learning to let the power of that new creation shape your life. A Christian political theology is discovering what it means that, through the Resurrection, Jesus is the world’s true Lord.”

“Ridiculous? Of course. It was in 35AD, and it is today. But, actually, it makes sense — historically, culturally, philosophically and even, dare I say, politically.”

Wishing all our readers a blessed, happy and safe Easter season.



The Habit



Letters

Children 1

The situation Helen Luxford (Taking children to Mass — NZ Catholic, March 24) describes, of older adults showing intolerance, is unfortunate.

Those adults are probably of my generation (aged 60-70+), and it may be that we were quieter in church as children because we had far fewer things to stimulate our senses (such as TV, video games), so we were more easily absorbed by the liturgy, perhaps.

I was raised as an Anglican, but I do remember following the liturgical ritual attentively, and also studying the pictures on the church walls of Bible stories I’d heard at Sunday School. I can still see the wounded man draped over the Good Samaritan’s donkey in my mind’s eye! I don’t remember ever being bored.

It behoves us older adults to be thankful that there are children at Mass because they are the future — if they will stay! And we are still on the journey to God with plenty yet to learn. It is not too late to cultivate tolerance and patience!

It is sad that Helen finds parishes shrinking in numbers — that can’t be the case everywhere. My own parish used to be half-full of older adults a while back, but is now

nearly full even for the Saturday vigil Mass, with people of all generations and plenty of children. Thanks be to God!

Some of the little kids pass the time outside running around on the concrete area in front of the church. Yes, they are noisy, but with the doors shut it’s easy to tune them out. Many parents take crying babies out into the foyer. Churches could provide spaces indoors or outdoors for children to burn off their energy.

Alison Hale, Christchurch.

Children 2

I always enjoy Helen Luxford’s column (“Family Matters”) and was particularly taken by her column in issue 681 on taking children to Mass.

I sympathise with her challenge in getting older children to church. Sunday morning Mass at 9am was becoming the cause of much tension with my teenagers, and we were regularly late for church. When we switched to the Saturday vigil, it was the kids chasing me to be ready for Mass, and we had no more Mass-related tension. Maybe this would be worth a try?

I also sympathise with Helen’s experience of intolerant Mass-goers who

can’t cope with the distraction of younger children. Our eldest son (now 23) has always attended Mass with us, even though he is autistic and is often quite disruptive.

Just about everyone accepts his behaviour. As for those who don’t, I just think they need to listen to the message more carefully! Keep taking the kids, Helen, and pray for the mean-spirited minority among us.

Scott Davidson, Newlands, Wellington.

Children 3

Discussion in NZ Catholic about children at Mass brings back memories for me. I have seen all sorts of behaviour over the years — ranging from very good to very cantankerous. I’ve also seen a variety of parental responses, ranging from placation to remonstrance to threats of corporal punishment.

In years gone by, the threat of the latter was occasionally carried out if the behaviour did not improve. Now such punishment is theoretically illegal — so remonstrance and placation are the modern options. If they don’t work, then removal to the crying room or carpark is, and has been, a move of last resort for some.

One response by a priest that has stayed with me down the years happened when I was a student. Fr E.R. Simmons was celebrating a Mass, and

a baby cried throughout the homily. Fr Simmons said — well, let’s remember that babies are part of the People of God too, and that babies do what babies do. He asked us to give thanks for the gift of life. This was a wise and pastoral response.

S. Maitland, Auckland.

Terms

The time has come for positions in parishes and the positions of bishop, pope, . . . to have a fixed term. Ours presently are to submit resignations when they reach 75 or 80 if voting for a new pope.

The New Zealand Church does not appraise any of its priests on an annual basis. Nor does it have a parish profile so that the skill sets of a possible appointee will match the needs of the parish. There is nothing professional about diocesan appointments in New Zealand.

Likewise, the NZCBC has mainly appointees who have formerly been security cleared for appointment to the national seminary. So, when a vacancy occurs, this prior clearance makes the exercise by Rome an easy outcome.

Institutions are ponderous . . . How long can the Church survive by maintaining this method of management?

Julian Wagg, Otaki.

■ Abridged — Editor.

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Easter observed in some smaller parishes

Some Good Friday and Easter scenes from some of the smaller parishes in Auckland diocese – Coromandel and Hauraki Plains parishes and Kerikeri parish.



Good Friday – Reading of the Passion at St Paschal's church, Ngatea, on Good Friday



Fr Tony King Archer with the Easter Candle at Kerikeri



Veneration of the cross at St Paschal's church, Ngatea, on Good Friday



The Easter fire at the vigil at Holy Family church in Kerikeri



Celebrant and congregation at Easter Sunday Mass at St Colman's church, Coromandel



Massgoers leave after Easter Sunday Mass at St Colman's church, Coromandel



Pope Francis greets the crowd after delivering his Easter message and blessing 'urbi et orbi' (to the city and the world) from the central balcony of St Peter's Basilica on March 31 (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

At Easter, Pope asks Christ to 'roll away' the stones of war worldwide

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Just as Jesus removed the stone that sealed his tomb on the morning of the Resurrection, on Easter, Christ alone “has the power to roll away the stones that block the path to life”, and which trap humanity in war and injustice, Pope Francis said.

Through his Resurrection, Jesus opens “those doors that continually we shut with the wars spreading throughout the world”, Francis said, after celebrating Easter Mass in St Peter's Square on March 31. “Only the risen Christ, by granting us the forgiveness of our sins, opens the way for a renewed world.”

Seated on the balcony of St Peter's Basilica, the Pope asked the risen Christ to bring peace in Israel, Palestine and Ukraine, and a host of other conflict-ridden regions in the world.

“In calling for respect for the principles of international law, I express my hope for a general exchange of all prisoners between Russia and Ukraine,” he said. “All for the sake of all!”

Pope Francis then appealed to the international community to ensure access of humanitarian aid to Gaza, and called for the “prompt release” of hostages taken during Hamas' attack on Israel on October 7, as well as “an immediate cease-fire in the strip”.

“War is always an absurdity, war is always a defeat,” he said, asking that the “strengthening winds of war” do not reach Europe and the Mediterranean. “Let us not yield to the logic of weapons and re-arming. Peace is never made with arms, but with outstretched hands and open hearts.”

Easter Mass in the flower-laden square began with the singing of the “alleluia,” traditionally absent from liturgical celebrations during Lent, as part of the rite of “Resurrexit” in which an icon of Jesus is presented to the pope to recall St Peter's witness to Christ's Resurrection.

As is traditional, the Pope did not give a homily during the morning Mass, but bowed his head and observed several minutes of silent reflection after the chanting of the Gospel in both Latin and Greek.

Although the Vatican said that Pope Francis stayed home from a Way of the Cross service at Rome's Colosseum on March 29 “to conserve his health” for the Easter vigil and Mass, the Pope appeared in high spirits while greeting cardinals and bishops after the Mass. He spent considerable time riding the popemobile among the faithful, smiling

and waving to the throngs of visitors in St Peter's Square, and lining the long avenue approaching the Vatican.

■ Thousands

The Vatican said that some 30,000 people attended the Pope's morning Mass and, by noon, there were approximately 60,000 people inside and around St Peter's Square for his Easter message and blessing “urbi et orbi” (to the city and the world).

Stopping only occasionally to clear his throat, Pope Francis read the entirety of his Easter message, and prayed for peace in several conflict hotspots around the world, including Syria, Lebanon, Haiti, Myanmar, Sudan, Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

He also prayed for the Rohingya — a persecuted, predominantly Muslim, ethnic group residing largely in Myanmar — who he said are “beset by a grave humanitarian crisis”.

The Pope praised the Western Balkan region's steps toward European integration, urging the region to embrace its ethnic, cultural and confessional differences, as well as the peace negotiations taking place between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

“May the risen Christ open a path of hope to all

those who in other parts of the world are suffering from violence, conflict, food insecurity, and the effects of climate change. May he grant consolation to the victims of terrorism in all its forms,” he prayed, asking visitors to “pray for all those who have lost their lives, and implore the repentance and conversion of the perpetrators of those crimes”.

On Easter, which Pope Francis said celebrates the life given to humanity through the Resurrection of God's Son, he lamented “how much the precious gift of life is despised” today.

“How many children cannot even be born?” he asked. “How many die of hunger and are deprived of essential care, or are victims of abuse and violence? How many lives are made objects of trafficking for the increasing commerce in human beings?”

“On the day when Christ has set us free from the slavery of death, I appeal to all who have political responsibilities to spare no efforts in combatting the scourge of human trafficking, by working tirelessly to dismantle the networks of exploitation and to bring freedom to those who are their victims,” he said.

Pope Francis also asked that the light of the risen Christ “shine upon migrants and on all those who are passing through a period of economic difficulty” as a source of consolation and hope.

“May Christ guide all persons of goodwill to unite themselves in solidarity, in order to address together the many challenges which loom over the poorest families in their search for a better life and happiness,” he said, praying that the light of the Resurrection “illumine our minds and convert our hearts, and make us aware of the value of every human life, which must be welcomed, protected and loved.”



A statue of St Peter frames the flowers decorating St Peter's Square during Pope Francis' celebration of Easter Mass at the Vatican on March 31 (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

Universal safeguarding framework published

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors has reaffirmed the requirement that every diocese, Catholic religious order and institution in the world have clear safeguarding guidelines and procedures, and that they are publicly accessible.

The commission's "Universal Guidelines Framework" also insists that "all reports of sexual abuse should be reported to the civil authorities", and that the local Church maintains evidence that they have cooperated with civil authorities in investigating and responding to the allegations.

The pontifical commission began drafting the framework in 2022, invited comments on various drafts, including by members of the public through its website, and approved the framework for distribution during its plenary meeting from March 5-8.

"Given the vastly different cultural contexts in which safeguarding policies and procedures are required to operate, the commission will engage in a targeted series of pilot programs to evaluate their effectiveness, especially in those parts of the Church that have little experience of implementing and

evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding guidelines," the commission said in a statement, published with the framework, on April 5.

While being sensitive to local cultural differences, the commission said, "the zero-tolerance approach to abuse" must be maintained.

Many of the guidelines in the framework — like child protection screening and training for all Church workers — are standard in many countries that have dealt publicly with the clerical sexual abuse crisis, but they still are not universally followed.

Bishops and religious superiors, it said, should have "professional support in screening candidates for seminary/formation programmes, and before ordination/profession of vows".

That responsibility, the commission said, includes asking if "the applicant or candidate has previously withdrawn, or been exited from, another seminary or formation programme".

Dioceses, seminaries and religious orders must have "a system in place to assess the safeguarding credentials — good standing — and manage the movement of all seminarians, clergy, religious and lay ministers between

different seminaries, formation programs, other Church entities — especially across international borders", it said.

The framework also calls on dioceses and religious orders to assign mentors to all newly-ordained clergy and newly professed religious for a period of at least five years, and mentors for clergy and religious arriving from other countries for at least two years, particularly to help familiarise them with aspects of the local culture involving respect for another person, and what are commonly called "boundary issues".

"Both physical and online risks" must be "assessed and managed within the provision of ministry", the framework said, especially considering risks arising from: "one-to-one interactions between an adult and a child; ministries such as counselling, home visits, outreach, one-to-one tuition, the sacrament of reconciliation, spiritual direction and mentoring; potential physical contact between the penitent and the confessor where the sacrament of reconciliation is celebrated; (and) one-to-one interactions with vulnerable adults".

When hiring personnel, the frame-

work said, each position should be assessed "for the expected level of contact with children and/or vulnerable adults, and appropriate safeguarding recruitment procedures are implemented", including background checks.

As the Catholic Church continues to discuss the definition of "vulnerable adult", and to understand what constitutes abuse versus a consensual sexual relationship, the framework said that the policies must acknowledge that, when allegations are made, "power imbalances may exist between the complainant and respondent", and those policies should be sensitive to the imbalance.

The framework includes an eight-page glossary of terms, and lists under the heading of "vulnerable adult" not only people with cognitive impairments, but also those who "have suffered previous abuse", or who "in receiving a ministry are subject to a power imbalance".

The power imbalance, it said, can be a result of the relationship, for example, between an "employer and employee, teacher and student, coach and athlete, parent or guardian and child, clergy/ religious and parishioner".

Record Easter Vigil baptisms in France reflect longer trend

PARIS (OSV News) — More than 12,000 people, both adults and adolescents, were baptised in France at Easter — a record number in the country that is experiencing what many Church leaders have called an accelerated "de-Christianisation".

Requests for adult baptisms have been on the rise in France for the past 10 years. In a report released just before Easter, representatives from the French bishops' conference pointed out that the trend is present in almost all of the dioceses in France.

According to the report, 7135 adults were to receive the sacrament of baptism during the Easter Vigil - a number that totalled 31 per cent more than in 2023. While in 2023, 23 per cent of newly-baptised were between the ages of 18 and 25, that number had risen to 36 per cent in 2024.

In addition, more than 5000 teenagers aged 11 to 17 were baptised this Easter — 50 per cent more than in 2023. To accommodate these numbers, new teams of catechists had to

be formed to help the catechumens prepare for entry into the church.

"In today's French society, 80 per cent of young people have not received any religious education," Father Vincent Breynaert, director of the national Youth and Vocations Service, explained in the report presented on March 27. "They have very few preconceived ideas about the Church. What those asking for baptism have in common is that they had a spiritual experience and a personal encounter with Christ," he wrote.

"Some say they were touched by the beauty of a liturgy (they happened to attend), the soothing silence of a church, a testimony of a friend," Father Breynaert said. "They are thirsty for formation, reference points, fraternity, and a sense of belonging."

The influx of catechumens, even if a record one, is far from sufficient to compensate for the drop in the number of infant baptisms, which continues to decline.



Seminary celebrates numbers

Seminarians and leaders of the Nigerian Bigard Memorial Seminary in Enugu are pictured on March 1, 2024 during the 24th matriculation ceremony for the philosophy department. The Bigard Seminary is celebrating its 100th birthday in 2024. Officials say the sheer statistics warrant a big celebration: the institution has 780 clerics — a number not seen in years in seminaries across Europe and the Americas. (OSV News photo/courtesy Bigard Memorial Seminary)

Could new hate speech law in Scotland target Christians?

EDINBURGH, Scotland (OSV News) — Church leaders have expressed concern that some passages in the Bible or the Catechism of the Catholic Church could be deemed offensive under Scotland's new Hate Crime and Public Order Act, and that "vexatious" complaints under the law are now likely.

The Hate Crime and Public Order Act that came into force on April 1 creates a new offence of "possessing inflammatory material", which in the judgement of a police officer could "stir up hatred" on the grounds of age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity.

During the pre-legislative scrutiny

phase in the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, members of the Scottish bishops' conference expressed deep reservations.

In a 2020 submission to the Justice Committee where the then-draft law was being discussed, the prelates warned that any new law must be "carefully weighed against fundamental freedoms, such as the right to free speech, freedom of expression, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion".

The Director of the Catholic Parliamentary Office Anthony Horan insisted that "whilst acknowledging that stirring up of hatred is morally wrong and is supporting moves to

discourage and condemn such behaviour, the bishops have expressed concerns about the lack of clarity around definitions, and a potentially low threshold for committing an offence, which they fear, could lead to a 'deluge of vexatious claims'".

"A new offence of possessing inflammatory material could even render material such as the Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church . . . inflammatory," he said.

Horan added that "the Catholic Church's understanding of the human person, including the belief that sex and gender are not fluid and changeable, could fall foul of the new law.

"Allowing for respectful debate means avoiding censorship, and accepting the divergent views and multitude of arguments inhabiting society," he said.

On April 1, best-selling author J.K. Rowling invited police to arrest her if they believe she has committed an offence. On social media, she refused to describe biological men who now identify as female, as women. On the social media site X, formerly Twitter, the Scottish-based writer said that "freedom of speech and belief" was at an end if accurate description of biological sex was outlawed.

Police later said that Rowling's posts were not criminal.

Vatican says abortion, surrogacy, war, poverty are attacks on human dignity

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Being a Christian means defending human dignity and that includes opposing abortion, the death penalty, gender transition surgery, war, sexual abuse and human trafficking, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith said in a new document.

“We cannot separate faith from the defence of human dignity, evangelisation from the promotion of a dignified life and spirituality from a commitment to the dignity of every human being,” Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, dicastery prefect, wrote in the document’s opening section.

The declaration, “Dignitas Infinita” (“Infinite Dignity”), was released at the Vatican on April 8. It was approved by Pope Francis.

Cardinal Fernández wrote that, “the document before us reflects the gravity and centrality of the theme of dignity in Christian thought.”

The declaration noted that the Second Vatican Council’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World also listed attacks on human dignity as ranging from abortion and euthanasia to “sub-human living conditions” and “degrading working conditions.”

Members of the doctrinal dicastery included the death penalty among violations of “the inalienable dignity of every person, regardless of the circumstances”, and called for the respect of the dignity of people who are incarcerated.

The declaration denounced discrimination against LGBTQ+ people and particularly situations in which people are “imprisoned, tortured and even deprived of the good of life solely because of their sexual orientation”.

■ Gender theory

But it also condemned “gender theory” as “extremely dangerous since it cancels differences in its claim to make everyone equal”.

Gender theory, it said, tries “to deny the greatest possible difference that exists between living beings: sexual difference”.

The Catholic Church, the declaration said, teaches that “human life in all its dimensions, both physical and spiritual, is a gift from God. This gift is to be accepted with gratitude and placed at the service of the good”.

Quoting Pope Francis’ exhortation “Amoris La-

etitia”, the declaration said gender ideology “envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family”.

Dicastery members said it is true that there is a difference between biological sex and the roles and behaviours that a given society or culture assigns to a male or female, but the fact that some of those notions of what it means to be a woman or a man are culturally influenced, does not mean there are no differences between biological males and biological females.

“Therefore,” they said, “all attempts to obscure reference to the ineliminable sexual difference between man and woman are to be rejected.”

Again quoting Pope Francis’ exhortation, the declaration said, “We cannot separate the masculine and the feminine from God’s work of creation, which is prior to all our decisions and experiences, and where biological elements exist which are impossible to ignore.”

“Any sex-change intervention, as a rule, risks threatening the unique dignity the person has received from the moment of conception,” it said. However, the declaration clarified that “this is not to exclude the possibility that a person with genital abnormalities that are already evident at birth or that develop later may choose to receive the assistance of healthcare professionals to resolve these abnormalities”.

Members of the dicastery also warned about the implications of changing language about human dignity, citing for example those who propose the expressions “personal dignity” or “the rights of the person” instead of “human dignity”.

In many cases, they said, the proposal understands “a ‘person’ to be only ‘one who is capable of reasoning.’ They then argue that dignity and rights are deduced from the individual’s capacity for knowledge and freedom, which not all humans possess. Thus, according to them, the unborn child would not have personal dignity, nor would the older person who is dependent upon others, nor would an individual with mental disabilities”.

The Catholic Church, on the contrary, “insists that the dignity of every human person, precisely because it is intrinsic, remains in all circumstances”.

The acceptance of abortion, it said, “is a telling sign of an extremely dangerous crisis of the moral

sense, which is becoming more and more incapable of distinguishing between good and evil, even when the fundamental right to life is at stake”.

“Procured abortion is the deliberate and direct killing, by whatever means it is carried out, of a human being in the initial phase of his or her existence, extending from conception to birth,” it said.

■ Surrogacy

The document also repeated Pope Francis’ call for a global ban on surrogacy, which, he said, is “a grave violation of the dignity of the woman and the child, based on the exploitation of situations of the mother’s material needs”.

Surrogacy, it said, transforms a couple’s legitimate desire to have a child into “a ‘right to a child’ that fails to respect the dignity of that child as the recipient of the gift of life”.

Extreme poverty, the marginalisation of people with disabilities, violent online attacks and war also violate human dignity, the document said.

While recognising the right of nations to defend themselves against an aggressor, the document insisted armed conflicts “will not solve problems, but only increase them. This point is even more critical in our time when it has become commonplace for so many innocent civilians to perish beyond the confines of a battlefield”.

On the issue of migrants and refugees, the dicastery members said that while “no one will ever openly deny that they are human beings”, many migration policies and popular attitudes toward migrants “can show that we consider them less worthy, less important, less human”.

The promotion of euthanasia and assisted suicide, it said, “utilises a mistaken understanding of human dignity to turn the concept of dignity against life itself”.

The declaration said, “Certainly, the dignity of those who are critically or terminally ill calls for all suitable and necessary efforts to alleviate their suffering through appropriate palliative care and by avoiding aggressive treatments or disproportionate medical procedures”, but it also insisted, “suffering does not cause the sick to lose their dignity, which is intrinsically and inalienably their own”.

‘Patriarch of the West’ reappears as papal title in Vatican yearbook

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The 2024 edition of the Vatican yearbook has inserted “Patriarch of the West” as one of the historical titles of the pope.

In 2006, Pope Benedict XVI dropped “Patriarch of the West” from his official titles listed in the *Annuario Pontificio*, the Vatican yearbook. Vatican officials at the time said the title was removed because it was theologically imprecise and historically obsolete.

In 2019, Pope Francis had all the remaining titles, except for “Bishop of Rome”, moved to another page, and in the 2020 edition of the *Annuario* they were listed as “historic titles”.

The titles labelled historic were: “Vicar of Jesus Christ. Successor of the Prince of the Apostles. Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church. Primate of Italy. Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Province of Rome. Sovereign of Vatican City State. Servant of the Servants of God.”

The 2024 *Annuario*, which went on sale in early April, inserted “Patriarch of the West” after “Supreme Pontiff of the Universal

Church”.

As of April 11, the Vatican press office said it had no explanation for the change.

Before Pope Benedict dropped “Patriarch of the West”, the last time the list of titles was changed was with St Paul VI’s 1969 edition of the *Annuario*, which added the title “servant of the servants of God”, and deleted the phrase “gloriously reigning”.

When Pope Benedict dropped the title “Patriarch of the West”, the then-Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity issued a statement, which said, “The title ‘Patriarch of the West’ was adopted in the year 642 by Pope Theodore. Thereafter it appeared only occasionally and did not have a clear meaning. It flourished in the 16th and 17th centuries in the context of a general increase in the pope’s titles and appeared for the first time in the *Annuario Pontificio* in 1863”.

While patriarchates have always been tied to a specific location and jurisdiction over it, “the term ‘West’ currently refers to a cultural context not limited only

to Western Europe, but including North America, Australia and New Zealand, thus differentiating itself from other cultural contexts,” the pontifical council said. “If we wished to give the term ‘West’ a meaning applicable to ecclesiastical juridical language, it could be understood only in reference to the Latin Church.”

“In this way, the title ‘Patriarch of the West’ would describe the bishop of Rome’s special relationship with the Latin Church and could express the special jurisdiction he has over her.”

Members of the synod of bishops of the Ecumenical Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople expressed concern over the decision, however.

In a June, 2006, statement, the chief secretary of the synod said dropping “Patriarch of the West” while retaining the titles “Vicar of Jesus Christ” and “Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church” is “perceived as implying a universal jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome over the entire Church, which is something the Orthodox have never accepted”.

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THE CHURCH YEAR

We are here ▼ 4th Sunday of Easter

Advent	Christmas	Ordinary Time	Lent	Eastertime	Ordinary Time
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Words open us up to the wonders of our Easter faith

Scripture

by Fr Kevin Waldie SM

When we reflect on the content of these biblical texts, we come to see how certain words open us up to the wonders of our Easter faith. For it is in each author's choice of specific revealing words that we acutely discern the insights of the early Christian community.

Luke, in Acts, leads us to understand Peter's speech as a sharply focused piece of teaching on the enduring presence of the crucified and risen Jesus within our world. There is here a real sense of the healing and saving forces at work among members of the early Church. The goodness of God and Jesus is to the fore, and is given explicit

meaning by a Greek word that means both heal and save. The result of this word game reveals that salvation is not some abstract idea, but is rather a powerful force at work to map out a good and healthy future.

In the second reading, the Johannine author succinctly presents the revealed reality that we are children of God. And because that is our identity, we are to live out our present existence knowing that we are loved in the most extraordinary way. The goal of our lives is therefore sketched for us, and our divinely willed destiny is decreed.

April 21: Fourth Sunday of Easter. **Readings:** 1. Acts 4:8-12; **Psalm:** 118; 2. 1 John 3:1-2; **Gospel:** John 10:11-18.

When, in John's Gospel, Jesus, the good shepherd, today announces our future, he declares that it is his will and the Father's will that we be a united flock, led to pastures good and satisfying. With the Lord's leadership an assured fact, we must feel ourselves blessed to share in the resurrected life and its power for everyone.

Inspired by these readings, their focus and faith dimension are a true source of encouragement and empowerment. The Easter message that we hear is indeed one to be welcomed and cherished.

We are Easter people chosen to carry out an urgent mission

In today's Holy Scriptures, it is clear that we are richly blessed on account of the gift of faith, and all that it moves us to ponder and put into action.

When Paul appears in these verses from Acts, we grasp what his Damascus Road experience caused him to become — that is, a mightily-empowered proclaimer of the Good News about the risen Jesus. The boldness with which he took up this call underlines his grace-filled mission, and its impact upon many people across the expanse of the Roman empire. So as faith in the risen Christ increased, far and wide, the extraordinary growth of the early Church became something of a phenomenon.

The mission that we are all obliged to pursue is clearly to the fore in the text from First John. And, also like Paul in Acts, it is with boldness that every Christian believer is encouraged to set about actively revealing the love of God and one another. This is a work that must acknowledge both the Son of God Jesus Christ and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. So, what these words advocate is a community of believers who wholeheartedly commit themselves to doing what God has commanded.

Today in John's Gospel we hear another of the famous "I am" sayings. The image of the vine and the branches is a powerful one, communicating a simple yet profound message about the human

April 28: Fifth Sunday of Easter. **Readings:** 1. Acts 9:26-31; **Psalm:** 22; 2. 1 John 3:18-24; **Gospel:** John 15:1-8.

in the presence of the divine. And because of that, much fruit is foreseen, benefiting the wider community. This beautiful imagery immediately makes its purpose abundantly clear.

By means of these readings, we easily find ourselves caught up in the wondrous power of the Word of God. They alert us to the fact that we are Easter people chosen to carry out an urgent mission.

SAINTED GLASS



The writing in John's Gospel is like my wife's knitting — there are so many different threads that somehow make a whole. The Gospel on Sunday, April 28, is like that — Jesus proclaims that he is the true vine, and that his Father is the vinedresser. But there are so many aspects to it that I can't pick any one in particular. This half window from St Paul's Cathedral, Wellington, somehow conveys what John is trying to convey. It just leaves me thankful that I am part of the vine. How about you? — Glen McCullough

Trump's Holy Week sale of branded Bibles prompts concern

WASHINGTON (OS News) — Former President Donald Trump selling branded Bibles should give Christians cause for concern, some Catholic scholars told OSV News. But one suggested that humour may be the best response.

Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee, recently announced plans to sell the \$60 "God Bless the USA Bible", in partnership with country singer Lee Greenwood. That Bible contains a King James Version translation — the modern iteration of which is primarily used by Protestants — as well as handwritten lyrics to Greenwood's ballad "God Bless the USA", and founding documents including the US Constitution and Declaration of Independence.

The website for the branded Bible states that it is "the only Bible endorsed by President Trump!"

"We must make America pray again," Trump said in a video posted on March 26 on Truth Social, his social media platform. In that video, Trump said, "religion and Christianity are the biggest things missing from this country".

"I truly believe that we need to bring them back, and we have to bring them back fast. I think it's one of the biggest problems we have," he said.

The announcement was met with criticism.

Robert Schmuhl, professor emeritus of American studies at the University of Notre Dame, who critically observes the modern American presidency, told OSV News that "there's a certain incongruity and a strange marriage of 'church and state' in this blatant merchandising of the Bible".

"Combining Holy Scripture with founding texts of America is not something that creators of the United States would have had in mind at the end of the 18th century," Schmuhl said.

Bible News

But Darren Dochuk, a Notre Dame professor of history who studies the intersections of religion and politics, told OSV News that "while it is unusual for a former president to be so blatant in their attempt to win over religious-minded voting blocs by brandishing articles and symbols of faith as proof of their legitimacy, Trump's Bible strategy represents a long-standing tradition among politicians to sell religion for political gain".

"Keeping voters animated — charged — by highlighting how far the nation has slipped away from God, and by offering hope for a better future by way of collective embrace of biblical principles, metaphors and myths, is an age-old strategy," Dochuk said. "Trump has mastered it, but also applied it in an unusually flagrant manner."

The website indicates that Trump, not his campaign, will profit from any sales.



Former President Donald Trump in a screenshot from a video announcing he plans to sell US\$60 "God Bless the USA Bible" during Holy Week (OSV News photo)

Doubling down on demons

by NEVIL GIBSON

An American novice, knowing little or no Italian, arrives in Rome to enter a convent. Bad things happen. This is not unusual for a movie plot, but releasing two concurrently is an untypical coincidence.

The similarities don't end there. Both involve the young women becoming pregnant in circumstances that cannot be explained in normal terms.

The people running the convents, including priests and religious orders, flout the Church's teachings, though this may be disguised as necessary to counter secularism.

The starring roles in both movies are faces not previously associated with horror stories, though the action within cloistered walls, accompanied by suitably religious music, ornate settings and liturgical trimmings, is familiar.

If you haven't guessed, *The First Omen* (20th Century Studios) is a blockbuster prequel to the *Omen* series launched in 1976 about a demonic orphan, Damien, who is adopted by an unsuspecting American couple, played by Gregory Peck and Lee Remick.

The second is *Immaculate* (Rialto), a lower budget effort that packs a punch well above its grade. Both are aimed at the same market, and with troubled pregnancies at their centre, are not recommended for sensitive audiences.

The First Omen easily compares with its predecessors (as well as *Rosemary's Baby*) in delivering its ghoulish goods, although it takes a while to warm up. The first half sees the novice (Nell Tiger Free) making friends with the other rebellious types, who are subject to bullying. They even sneak out to some of Rome's nightclubs before taking their vows. Soon after, the plot introduces its first jump scares.



Nell Tiger Free in *The First Omen* (OSV News photo/Moris Puccio, 20th Century Fox)

Movie Review

Big names are also on hand: The convent's orphanage for girls is run by Sonia Braga, while a cardinal (Bill Nighy) and a credible priest (Ralph Ineson) take a keen interest in activities. Believe me, these go well beyond expectations.

First-time director Arkasha Stevenson, working from an original script by her co-writers Keith Thomas and Tim Smith, have a deep legacy to draw on, and don't disappoint.

The idea that claims of the Church's declining relevance in an age of secularism can only be countered by an Antichrist is irresistible to those steeped in the *Omen*'s history of the supernatural.

By comparison, the convent in *Immaculate* is initially more inviting to Sydney Sweeney (*Reality, Anyone But You*) in yet another starring role that should

bring her bigger things. Director Michael Mohan has less to work with in Andrew Lobel's screenplay compared with *Omen*, but skips the pleasantries to get the plot under way with some demonic possession and an apparent suicide.

Except for Sweeney and Mohan, the cast and production crew are Italian. This means that much is left unclear, due to the mix of languages and some yawning credibility gaps. Sweeney's "miraculous" conception transforms her into a virgin bride that echoes the best and worst of the genre.

While the outcome is different from *Omen*, and much of the potential impact is unrealised, Sweeney carries her burden without difficulty.

Ratings: *The First Omen*, R16, 119 minutes. *Immaculate*, R16, 89 minutes.

CLIPS

The Boys in the Boat (Amazon Studios/MGM)

Director George Clooney stays on course throughout this nostalgic evocation of the American rowing eights who won a gold medal at the Berlin Olympics in 1936. Daniel James Brown's 2013 book provided everything needed to place this achievement in the political and social class environment of the Depression and the rise of Nazi Germany. The hard-scrabble rowers from Washington State University had triumphed over their well-heeled Ivy League rivals from the East, and then beat the fancied German and European teams. One observer comments, "Rowing is more poetry than sport", which sums up the approach of coach Al Uckbrickson (Joel Edgerton). While the bigger issues provide a colourful background, most of the drama focuses on turning underdogs into champions. Few will complain about a romantic subplot, the role of money, and a team of unknown players. Clooney knows what makes a feel-good movie, and no one will feel cheated. Rating: Mature audiences. 123 minutes.

Scoop (Netflix)

The behind-the-scenes background to Prince Andrew's infamous BBC interview in 2019 about his relationship with disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein is almost as dramatic as what transpired on the screen. The fatal conceit of the Buckingham Palace media advisers, and the prince's delusion in his own indestructibility, created one of television's greatest self-implosions. Director Philip Martin sticks closely to the book by Sam McAlister, who was the junior producer (Billie Piper) for *Newsnight* that made it happen. Her persistence and use of past contacts, including a New York paparazzo photographer, enabled her to breach the palace's fortress when news broke of Epstein's death in prison while facing sex trafficking charges. Although told from McAlister's point of view, it's the heavyweights who count: Rufus Sewell as Andrew, Keeley Hawes as his chief aide, and Gillian Anderson as interviewer Emily Maitlis. Dramatisations of real events are tricky when they are already well known, but this example shows it can be done to better effect than the cleverest documentaries. Rating: Mature audiences. 102 minutes.

Red Mole: A Romance (Occasional Productions)

The above observation about dramatisations versus documentaries applies to this uniquely New Zealand production about charismatic poet, cabaret performer and street theatre artist Alan Brunton. Along with partner Sally Rodwell and others, including Deborah Hunt, he created a counterculture phenomenon that wowed radical student audiences in Wellington and Auckland in the 1970s, before the group moved to New York. On the local scene, their politics and uninhibited performances rivalled the global impact of *Hair* and *Oh! Calcutta!* But despite a promising start, *Red Mole* failed to survive on the off-Broadway scene. Director Annie Goldson and on-screen narrator Ruby Brunton (daughter of Rodwell and Brunton) have used existing footage and interviews with those who are still alive. Sadly, Brunton and Rodwell died prematurely in 2002 and 2006, respectively. The full story is yet to be told, and the obvious choice would be a Netflix-style dramatisation that would stand alongside others about memorable entertainers. Rating: Exempt. 88 minutes.

An invitation to order, love and beatitude

CHASTITY: Reconciliation of the Senses, by Erik Varden, OCSO, Bloomsbury Continuum, 2023, 176 pages. Reviewed by CARL E. OLSEN (OSV News)

The Norwegian bishop and Trappist monk Erik Varden, still shy of 50, has established himself as a spiritual writer, retreat leader, and prelate of the highest order.

Having read Bishop Varden's three most recent books — "The Shattering of Loneliness: On Christian Remembrance" (2018), "Entering the Twofold Mystery: On Christian Conversion" (2022), and "Chastity: Reconciliation of the Senses" (2023) — I am deeply impressed by the scholarship, clarity and beauty of his thought and writing. His knowledge and love of Scripture and the Fathers of the Church are obvious. He apparently is a polyglot, and he draws upon a remarkable array of examples from literature, music and art.

Most impressive, however, is the deep serenity and the love of Christ that permeates his books. He asks hard questions and engages with

difficulties with a winsome honesty and humility, always grounded in a contemplative perspective rooted in prayer and liturgy.

Chastity is misunderstood badly, and so Bishop Varden spends time delving into the etymology, showing that the "purity" of chastity is not merely a matter of morals, but of a robust and self-aware anthropology. It "is a marker of integrity, of a personality whose parts are assembled in harmonious completeness".

But chastity is also, and ultimately, eschatological: "To be chaste in this life is to attune oneself to celestial life . . . and "the Christian life is life oriented towards beatitude." This essential theme continues throughout, including in an excellent section on "Order and Disorder".

The right ordering is relational and covenantal; it helps situate sexuality within the drama of salvation in this life. Bishop Varden observes that chastity "is not a denial of sex", but "an orientation of sexuality, of the whole vital instinct, towards a desired

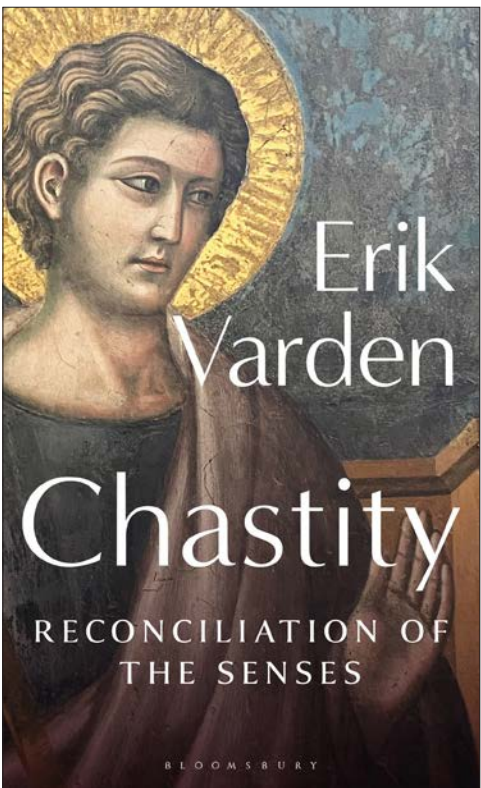
Book Review

finality".

The book includes sections on what it means to be male and female, Genesis and creation, eros and death, and observations on the close relationship between monasticism and marriage (a relationship emphasised more overtly in Eastern Christian spirituality). One of numerous strengths of this book is its insight into sexuality and love. A point made several times in various ways is that love is only true when it is properly ordered; it won't do to simply appeal, with sentimental glibness, to "love is love", while ignoring the source and fulfilment of our deepest needs and desires.

Rich with wisdom and deeply challenging, "Chastity" is a book for everyone, a relatively short but robust reflection on essential truths, rendered with serenity and hope.

Carl E. Olson is editor of Catholic World Report



FAMILY MATTERS

Helen Luxford



The mystery of suffering: why do bad things happen to good people?

Suffering is an inescapable part of the human experience, and it often seems to strike indiscriminately, leaving us grappling with the question: Why do bad things happen to good people? We've been struggling with this very question in the past week as we deal with an accident in our household that triggered from good intentions . . . our eldest hurrying to school to make an appointment — he was hit by a car crossing the road outside school.

It's a universal truth, to witness individuals of strong character and kind hearts facing trials that seem unfair when you consider the good things they do. Whether it's illness, loss, or injustice, these adversities do not discriminate, affecting the just and unjust alike. This paradox can shake one's faith, leading to profound spiritual and existential crises. Even though it's not a core concept, aren't we owed a little good karma?

From a theological perspective, the Book of Job is perhaps the earliest and most poignant exploration of this dilemma. Job, a righteous man, endures immense suffering despite his unwavering faithfulness to God. His story teaches us that suffering is not a punishment for sin nor a direct consequence of our actions. Instead, it's a part of the mysterious divine plan, one that we, with our limited

understanding, struggle to comprehend.

In the Christian tradition, suffering is also seen as a means of spiritual growth. It can be a crucible that refines our character, teaching us empathy, resilience, and a deeper appreciation for life's blessings. There's no greater example of this than that of Jesus Christ himself in the Easter mysteries that we've recently shared - an innocent sufferer whose pain and sacrifice were meant for a greater good.

Moreover, the presence of suffering calls upon the better angels of our nature. It inspires acts of compassion, solidarity, and love. When we rally around those in pain, we embody the very essence of community and family. We become the hands and feet of a loving God in a world that is often harsh and unforgiving.

Philosophically, some argue that, without the presence of evil or suffering, we wouldn't be able to recognise or appreciate the good. It's the contrast between darkness and light that allows us to discern and value virtue, love, and beauty. This duality is woven into the fabric of our existence, and is a driving force behind our pursuit of justice and the betterment of society.

In the face of suffering, we are also reminded of the importance of free will. The capacity to choose between right and wrong is the most precious gift from God; unfortunately, some choose paths that lead to the suffering

of others. This, too, is part of the complex interplay of life's experiences.

Ultimately, the question of why bad things happen to good people is fundamentally the wrong question to be asked, based on a limited human perception of "fairness". What we do have is the ability to respond to suffering with love, kindness, and a commitment to alleviate pain wherever we can. In doing so, we affirm the inherent goodness in people, and the strength of the human spirit.

As we reflect on this profound question in this Easter season, let us find solace in the bonds of family and community. Let us draw strength from our faith, and the enduring hope that, even in the midst of suffering, there is the potential for growth, transformation, and a deeper connection to the divine.

Romans 5:3-5: "Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."

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.

EVENTS

AUCKLAND

Wednesday 24th April 2024, St Josephs Church, Orakei: Catholic Women's League Orakei is organising a charity event for the Palestinian People, working with Caritas Aotearoa NZ, a talk by Professor Stephen Hoadley, from University of Auckland who will speak on the topic: Middle East conflicts and Geopolitical Shifts (includes the Israel-Hamas conflict.) It will be held at St Joseph's Church Orakei, 16 Breton Place, Orakei with Mass at 10.30am, after Mass it is morning tea in the hall and the speaker will talk by 11.30am and we will finish with a fabulous lunch and sweet treats. Ring Tina Raines for more information and cost on 021 940 950/09-5212499 or email: tinaraines2703@gmail.com

40 YEARS AGO

YOUNG CATHOLICS TURNING TO DRUGS

The Catholic Church in this country has been urged to find out why so many of its young people are apparently becoming drug addicts.

Figures just released by the Odyssey House drug treatment centre in Auckland show that half the addicts in its care are Catholics.

The only residential centre in the region catering exclusively for young, hardened addicts, Odyssey House presently has over 60 people in treatment — some 30 of them Catholic or from Catholic backgrounds.

Odyssey programme director, Mr Ray Braithwaite, said he had no real idea as to why the proportion of Catholic addicts was so high, although he had noted many of them suffered from what he saw as excessive guilt.

"While I am not qualified to say if the fault lies with the Catholic system, I believe it could possibly stem from the home or the school," Mr Braithwaite said.

He felt the Church needed to take

a serious look at the problem.

His call was supported by Catholic Social Services Auckland director Fr Sydney Marriot, who found the Odyssey House statistic "frightening", and said he intended to follow the matter up.

"The Church needs to look at what's lacking in people's lives that makes them turn to drugs in the first place.

"The figure seems to reflect the high proportion of young Catholics getting involved in religious cults," said Fr Marriot.

The Church seemed to be failing its young people somewhere, and he would like to know why young Catholics "with so much going for them, turn to drugs".

Odyssey House board member and psychiatric consultant to the programme, Dr Fraser McDonald, agreed the high percentage of young Catholics in treatment suggested a problem the Church needed to face seriously.

— *Zealandia*, April 8, 1984

CAPTION CONTEST



Write the best caption for this photo and win a \$30 Countdown voucher. Email your ideas by Friday, May 3 to design@nzcatholic.org.nz, subject 'Caption Contest 683'. Or post to NZ Catholic, PO Box 147000, Ponsonby, Auckland 1144. Please include your postal address.

The winner of the Caption Contest from issue 681 (below right) was — **Maria B, Te Aroha.**

Other suggestions were:

"My mother taught me to steer clear of selfies but I was shoulder tapped for this one!" — **Kieran Fenn, Onehunga.**

"Here we go, Bovine Sunday." — **Eugene Leone, Christchurch.**

"The camoora loves you baby." — **R.C. Small, Palmerston North.**

"I can't take our selfie unless you stop moooving!" — **Linda Jennings, Auckland.**

"This looks like a lot of bull to me." — **Russell Watt, Auckland.**



Instagram-a-bull

"Excuse me mate, but it's rather chilly, so you should heifer jersey on!" — **Ellen Fowles, Palmerston North.**

Lest We Forget



Seeing the scorched earth of Hiroshima

by MICHAEL OTTO

With the success of the movie *Oppenheimer* at the 2024 Oscars — seven awards, including best picture — the dropping of the atomic weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki has again been topical. In a sense, it has always been topical. A recent example was the citing by Bishop John Adams of the stand taken by Catholic philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe on the topic, and her ethical argument against the use of such weapons.

Some 19 years ago, I was fortunate enough to have a conversation with a Kiwi returned serviceman who had witnessed the devastation at Hiroshima first hand.

My encounter with this man did not start auspiciously.

My editor at the newspaper in South Auckland called me into his office and said, “go down to the Manurewa RSA and find an ANZAC Day story”.

I arranged to meet the then-ANZAC Day convener at the Manurewa RSA. After exchanging pleasantries, I asked Keith Dawson, who served in a maintenance unit in the Royal New Zealand Air Force, what he had done in World War II. He responded by saying that he had been at an airstrip in the Solomon Islands. He had dug latrines. I asked if he had seen the enemy. He said that he once saw a plane on the horizon. Then, I asked him if he had fired a gun in anger. It turns out that he used to shoot rats running along the top of buildings.

Thinking that this interview was not proving terribly fruitful, I asked him what he had done after the war. He replied that he had been in Japan with the New Zealand occupying force, known as “J-Force”, and had visited Hiroshima in 1947, some 18 months after the bomb. Thus started the real interview.

Seeing the devastation changed Mr Dawson’s attitude to the bomb. As I reported all those years ago, he told me that, “when I was in the Pacific, I thought that it [the bomb] was great, because it would save us all that [fighting]”.

“But once you get up there, you have to change your mind.”

“There were probably only five or six buildings still in a reasonable state in the centre of Hiroshima. And there were five or six buildings



Above: The Manukau Courier article in 2005.

Left: Photo of what became later the Hiroshima Peace Memorial among the ruins of buildings in Hiroshima, in early October, 1945. (Photo: Shigeo Hayashi/Wikimedia Commons)

across the river. Only one was in a usable state. The rest were just tangled steel. It was scorched earth. There were no flowers or vegetation.”

Then Mr Dawson, who did not admit to any religious belief in the interview, described a strange sight.

“Beside the river, where the mangled bridges were, was a church . . . there were no walls standing, but I knew it was a Christian church because the Madonna and child were standing in the middle, unharmed, on a plinth.

“It was hard to believe that she was just standing there in a blue robe with Jesus in a shawl. It looked strange amid such devastation.”

Mr Dawson said that people were just starting to move back into Hiroshima in 1947.

“People were starting to build little shanties, and small street markets were starting to spring up.” The people were in a very poor state, he said.

At the end of the interview, Mr Dawson, who

worked as a builder after the war, said he would never forget Hiroshima. He added that he had no time for atomic weapons.

“The more they can do without them, the better,” he said.

Early this month, the Holy See’s Permanent Observer to the United Nations reiterated the Holy See’s call urging all states to join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), thereby “contributing to the replacement of a negative conception of security with a positive one”, Vatican News reported.

Archbishop Gabriele Caccia renewed the Holy See’s unceasing “call for arms to be silenced”, and for the path of gradual but complete disarmament to be resolutely pursued, insisting that “peace is built, not with weapons, but through patient listening, dialogue and cooperation, which remain the only means worthy of the human person in resolving differences”.



Scenes from the Easter Vigil Mass at St Anne’s Parish, Manurewa

Thousands at Easter Triduum liturgies in Manurewa

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

Thousands attended Easter Triduum liturgies at St Anne’s parish in Manurewa this year. Fitting more than 2000 people into a 600-seat church presented something of a challenge on Good Friday.

Manurewa parish accommodated this, with the assistance of parking wardens, health and safety personnel, the liturgy committee under the leadership of Philip Cortesi, and good will. People sat on pews

in the church, chairs were set out in the parish hall and lounge, the atrium, the outdoor forecourt and portico, and there was also seating sitting on the grass area under the shade of the trees.

There was closed circuit TV viewing available in indoor areas, and a sound-speaker system for those outdoors.

After the liturgy, three large wooden crosses were erected on the front of property, streetside, with a purple banner attached to the main one. The purple

banner was exchanged for a white one on Easter Sunday. This was a witness to the Manurewa community that this was a special time for Catholics. There were positive comments, and many motorists have stopped to silently pray and venerate the Cross.

The Vigil on Holy Saturday saw 26 new Catholics baptised in the parish. Confirmation followed. Again, the congregation overflowed, with crowds accommodated in the parish hall — as happened at all the Easter Sunday Masses.

Walking the distance – in solidarity with Gaza

by MARTIN de JONG

Catholics from various parts of the Wellington archdiocese were among about 200 people who joined various stages of a Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage in Wellington on Holy Thursday. The pilgrimage was the final one of 145 Lenten pilgrimages across the globe, each walking a distance equivalent to the length of Gaza, and calling for a ceasefire in the Gaza war and immediate flow of aid.

The Wellington pilgrimage was organised by Aotearoa Christians for Peace in Palestine and Common Grace Aotearoa, and had about 50-100 people on the road at any one time. Beginning at 6am from Taita Rock in the middle of the Hutt Valley, it combined prayer and politics on a journey took in Parliament and the American and Israeli embassies. A one-hour stretch beyond the Wellington central area was walked in silence.

The 41-kilometre journey ended with an iftar meal, breaking the Ramadan fast for that day, with the Muslim community at the Wellington Islamic Centre at Kilbirnie. Imam for the Mosque, Sheik Mohammad Zewada, welcomed those who had come from “all walks of life” as “the real New Zealanders”, sharing the suffering of those suffering far away. “I consider all of you as members of one human family,” he said, and it was a duty to protect the human rights of every human being.

The kaupapa (purpose) of the pilgrimage continues to fundraise for healthcare in Gaza, and encourages people to urge the government to grant emergency visas for Gazans with family in New Zealand. For more information: www.common-grace.nz/gazapilgrimages

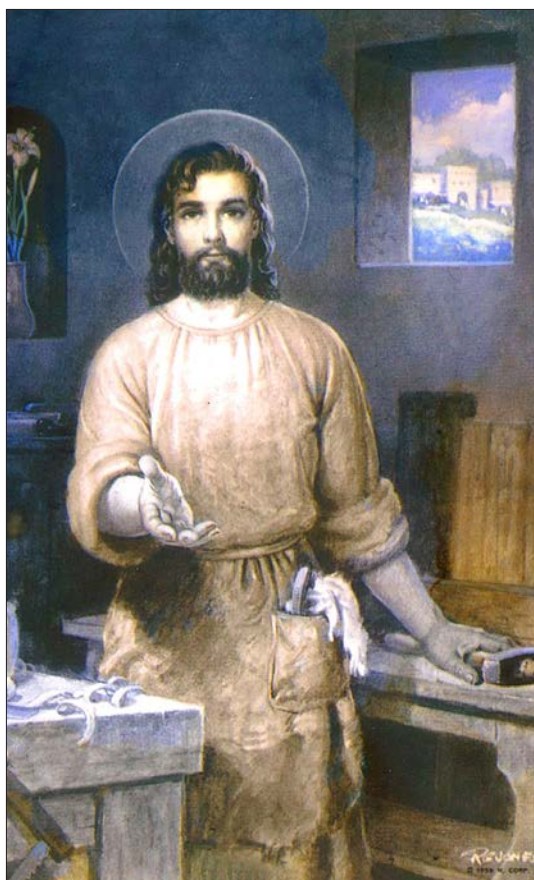


Above: Vicar-general for the Wellington Archdiocese Msgr Gerard Burns led the liturgy outside the Israeli embassy. The liturgy included Scripture from Isaiah 58: 1-8 where the prophet calls on people to live justly, to not treat others with violence, and to become builders of houses so that their light will shine before people.

Right: At Parliament, the pilgrimage joined other groups to handover a petition and open letter calling for a ceasefire and an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories – among other things.



A Prayer to St. Joseph the Worker



Joseph, by the work of your hands and the sweat of your brow, you supported Jesus and Mary, and had the Son of God as your fellow worker. Teach us to work as you did with patience and perseverance.

Teach us to see Christ in our fellow workers, and may we be charitable to all. Grant us to look upon work with the eyes of faith, so we will recognise in it our share of God's own creative activity and take pride in it.

When it is pleasant and productive, remind us to give thanks to God, and when it is burdensome, teach us to offer it to God in reparation for our sins and the sins of all the world.

St. Joseph, pray with us for our families.

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

– Judy Chandler Jones

Je683

Caritas joins NGOs in pleading for humanitarian law in Gaza

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand has joined with other NGOs in the Council for International Development to push the New Zealand Government to urge all parties involved in the Holy Land conflict to uphold international humanitarian law.

In the joint statement, Caritas CEO Mena Antonio highlighted the great need for action, saying – “Approximately 1.5 million civilians are currently sheltering in Rafah. The crowded conditions mean hundreds of thousands of civilians are directly in the line of fire, risking death, serious injury, and lasting trauma. This is abhorrent and unacceptable.”

The statement noted that the escalating conflict not only poses immediate threats to civilian lives but also jeopardises the delivery of essential humanitarian aid. Tearfund CEO Ian McInnes emphasised, “An offensive could sever the lifeline of humanitarian supplies to Gaza's civilian population. There are no alternative routes for immediate aid delivery. The only aid available will likely be cut off as soon as any military offensive begins.

This must not happen.”

The statement added that the looming indications of famine in northern Gaza further exacerbate the humanitarian crisis. The preventable suffering of innocent civilians and the obstruction of aid access is a “moral outrage” according to United Nations Secretary General Antonio Gutierrez and underscores the urgent need for intervention to avert further catastrophe, the statement continued.

Support was expressed for Prime Minister Christopher Luxon's previous call for a ceasefire, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Winston Peters' announcement of a further \$2 million to the United Nations 2720 mechanism for Gaza was labelled “commendable”.

“Continued and intensified support from the Government is necessary to address the crisis, including diplomatic efforts to uphold international humanitarian law and ensure unfettered aid delivery. We urge the Government to leverage all available resources to push for an immediate cessation of hostilities, unhindered aid delivery, and the end of arms sales to all sides involved in the conflict.”

Patricia Flynn turns 100

by ROWENA OREJANA

Easter Sunday turned out to be the “perfect day” to celebrate former Featherston borough council mayoress, schoolteacher and fundraiser, and honorary secretary of the Fell Locomotive Museum, Patricia Flynn’s 100th birthday.

Mrs Flynn, whose actual birthday was on April 1, had served the community of Featherston for some 60 years, and was recognised with a Queen’s Service Medal in 2009.

She was presented with a huge bouquet of flowers after the Mass, and an afternoon tea was served at the ANZAC Hall.

“We went home for a cuppa and headed up to the Anzac Hall, where mum has attended many balls and functions throughout the years. The hall was decorated with balloons, table runners and flowers by our family. A delicious afternoon tea was served, which was attended by 150 friends and family,” Mrs Flynn’s daughter Maggie said.

The acting mayor of South Wairarapa District Council, Melissa Sadler-Futter, spoke, and acknowledged Mrs Flynn’s role and commitment to the community as mayoress of the former Featherston Borough Council 1968-1974.

Mrs Flynn’s involvement in the parish and the school started in the 1950s when, as a pregnant mother, she was tapped to become a member of the then-newly-formed Home and School Association of St Teresa’s School.

“Mum felt enormous pressure as a young wife and mother to step up to assist the two nuns coping with 100 pupils in two rooms. They were unable to pay a full salary. The conditions were rough — an ancient dark building which needed repiling, and [with] rats to contend with,” Maggie said.

Mrs Flynn raised funds for the school, and was also the school’s first lay teacher.

In an article Mrs Flynn wrote for the church’s centenary in 1981, she recalled worrying about her reception as the first lay teacher.

“I needn’t have worried,” she said in the article,



Patricia Flynn

“and was soon reassured when one little boy took my hand and said he wished that I could come to the school in the afternoons as well.”

Mrs Flynn wrote a book, “A Life Well Lived”, which was published last year.

In the book, she recounted stories about her life during the Great Depression, as well as the hardships brought by the Second World War, where she was compulsorily “manpowered” twice. Manpower regulations came into force in the beginning of 1942, when civilians were made to work wherever the Government directed.

Mrs Flynn was involved in competitive rifle shooting, and was a “rail buff”. With her family, she was present at the opening of the Rimutaka tunnel, and she served at the locomotive museum for some 30 years.

At the afternoon tea, Irish songs were sung by Mrs Flynn’s church friend Mary Clark. Mrs Flynn’s younger brother, Fr Frank Twiss, SM, also shared stories about their childhood. Songs from the 1940s to the 1960s were played, and they watched a slideshow of family photos on a large-screen TV.



Patricia Flynn with her family, including Fr Frank Twiss, SM