



NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2022

FROM THE PASTORAL DIRECTOR

Living in a Time of Testing

Living in our New Zealand society, and in our Church too, there is a lot of negativity washing about. Around our nation, many families are hurting because of high rents and mounting food bills. Though we are beginning to move out of Covid restrictions, there is still fear and anxiety, especially as deaths from the Omicron variant mount slowly but steadily. All of this fuels a free floating anger arising from the divisions between those who refused vaccination and those who saw such a refusal as selfish and dangerous.

We who are the Body of Christ, the Church, are not immune to these infections. We also carry hurts of our own. Many resented the need to register for Sunday Masses, not being able to sing, and the ongoing amalgamation of parishes.

Glimmers of New Vision

The Church may seem at a low ebb. In my role as sentinel at the CEC, however, I am still surprised and buoyed up by small signs of hope. Each week continues to bring a small but constant trickle of people wanting to become Catholics. Some do so because of a wish to see their children receive the benefits of Catholic education. Not a few in their 40's and 50's are seeking a spiritual foundation for survival in our times.

Such inspirations are often moments of grace, given by God. The Spirit of God continues to blow despite the Church's struggles. As vocations to religious and priestly roles falter, a new opening for the power of the gospel becomes evident in movements such as Evangelion and Divine Restoration, and especially in the new stress on synodality.

Synodality and the Voice of the Laity

The key documents of the Second Vatican Council, the dogmatic Constitution on the Church and the pastoral decree on the Church in the Modern World, sketched a vision of the Church that is becoming more and more relevant and urgent in our age. They underlined the reality that the hierarchy and the clergy are not the Church – but its servants. They are leaders, but servant leaders called to listen to the vision and holiness of the entire body, notably the laity.

This movement of synodality is precisely a search for unity and loving community across the entire body. This can come about only by patient and humble listening by all participants. Differences there must be, but held in balance by respect and humility, and a common search to find God's will. This is deeply needed in a world where divisions between ideologies of the right and of the left,

and rifts between the rich and the poor, are causing rising intolerance and hostility.

Emerging Lay Charisms

One of the signs of the work of the Holy Spirit is the taking up of new roles and possibilities by lay women and men in many dimensions of the Church's life.

Normally our CEC newsletters contain stories from among those who have recently found their way into faith. At this time, however, I have deliberately chosen to highlight two people who felt called to serve in the formation of laity, especially young adults. Their stories illustrate how God calls people

of faith to follow new paths. Ruth was a widow with youngish daughters and Karen a newly graduated social worker when each heard God's call and followed it.

At this time God is still issuing such calls. If it might be yours, dear reader, do not close your mind to it. Likewise, if God puts in your mind a strong sense of someone else close to you who might be ready and open to such a call, then let them hear your voice. It is often in troubled times that the Holy Spirit shows forth the surprising and wonderful creativity of God.

Fr Neil Vaney SM



The Call to Serve at Catholic Discipleship College

Karen Geaney's story...

I think I've always had a missionary heart. As a child, I recall being concerned about people in Africa or South America who might have never heard the Gospel. The Lord blessed me with a deep knowledge of His love when I was very young, and I knew that serving Him in some form and sharing His love with others, was a way of loving Him back. Over time I became more familiar with those Holy Spirit promptings that come your way when you're paying attention.

There is never a wrong time to love, but sometimes those promptings lead you in a certain direction of loving and serving – one that He desires especially for you.

How the Call Came

In November 2008, skimming through a parish newsletter, I came across a job advertisement for 'Residential Team Leader' at the Catholic Discipleship College – a residential Catholic formation programme. I had just finished my master's degree in social work and was certainly on the lookout for a job. As I read the role description it was as if my heart were smiling. Even though, looking at the situation with worldly eyes, it seemed wiser to find a job relevant to the career I had just spent two years studying for, I just knew it was one of those Holy Spirit prompting moments. And although my childhood missionary dreams had always been in foreign settings, I immediately felt drawn to the idea of serving the Lord in local community life.

The idea of it simply wouldn't leave my mind, more than that, it seemed to grow bigger and bigger. Over the few years prior I had attended a couple of Hearts Aflame Summer Schools which had really opened my mind and heart to many of the treasures of the Catholic Church. They had made a major impact on my faith life. I did a little research and found that the Catholic Discipleship College sounded like a 10-month 'Hearts Aflame'. The Holy Spirit knew how to draw me in!

Why I Applied

Of course, I took this to the Lord in prayer, and sensed a resounding joy, and peace - despite all the unknowns. Taking on this role was not simply like taking on a new job. He was asking me to be 'all in' – evenings, weekends, living with the



From left:
1. Outing in 2008.
2. Tramping in Coromandel.
3. Final dinner in Napier.

students day-in and day-out. I knew from previous experience that the Lord is never outdone in generosity – when you go ‘all in’, so does He! Because of this, I knew that in saying ‘yes’ to this opportunity He would be doing far more for me than I would for Him. By the time I was offered the role, every trace of that little worldly voice that wanted to remind me about the need to earn enough money, to start a long-term career, and to focus on something more stable, had disappeared.

From the beginning, acts of faith were required. The college needed students to go ahead, and the Board of Trustees couldn’t guarantee my job until the minimum number of students had applied and been accepted. I so firmly believed that the Lord was calling me to this that I packed up all my belongings and gave up my rented apartment in anticipation of moving into the College residence despite there not being enough applications by Christmas – only weeks before the programme was due to start for the year. I had no doubt more would come, simply because I knew that that was where He wanted me. And they did come... six students applied and were accepted in early January.

What the Role Asked of Me

The opportunity to be part of a team forming Catholics in so many aspects of the faith with an emphasis on deepening their personal relationship with Christ was such a blessing. It was just incredible to me that I had ‘found’ a job where

I could attend daily Mass, pray a daily Holy Hour and the Liturgy of the Hours, live a vibrant Catholic community life, sit in on classes given by lecturers from all over the country, receive regular spiritual direction, and participate in personal prayer ministry, among other things. Living at my place of work wasn’t totally new to me as I had some experience of this from my time with NET ministries, but it was still intense. Despite this, ‘community life’ was the aspect of the college that I was most passionate about. Community life is not always a walk in the park – but it certainly can be a path to holiness if you are open to the Lord using it. Being able to accompany other Catholics seeking to grow in their faith was a privilege and honour that I hope I never took for granted. We were on the journey together. The Catholic Discipleship College very quickly changed from being my workplace to being my home, and the people became my family.

Special Moments

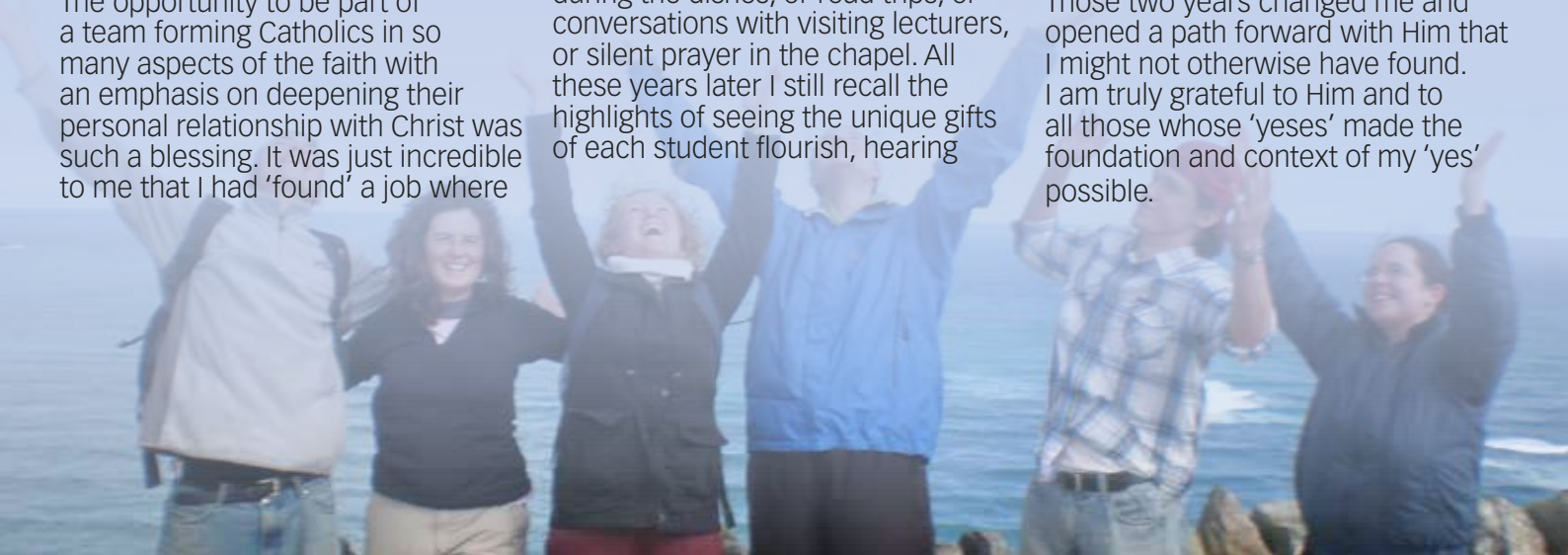
As for my actual tasks – I’m still not exactly sure what they all were – but I was never short of things to do. Many of the special moments were to be found within the small quiet tasks of daily life together – during the dishes, or road trips, or conversations with visiting lecturers, or silent prayer in the chapel. All these years later I still recall the highlights of seeing the unique gifts of each student flourish, hearing

stories over dinner about how the Holy Spirit had spoken to someone during the day, roaring with laughter during community recreation time involving a karaoke machine or rented dance mat, watching the sun rise together on the beach on Easter Sunday morning, and the pride I felt in the students as they stepped out of comfort zones to run outreach and evangelisation programmes in parishes, schools, and social services.

Were there tough times? 100% yes. Did the Lord work in and through those situations? Absolutely!

How it Changed My Life

The Lord took my little (and to be honest, relatively easy) ‘yes’ and poured out superabundant graces upon me through it. During those two years of ministry at the Catholic Discipleship College, not only was I able to serve the Lord, but I had the opportunity to go on my own journey with Him – a journey of inner-healing, a journey of growing in trust and confidence in Him and His plan for my life, a journey of discovering the gifts He had given me, a journey of learning how to listen more deeply to His voice. I came to see and understand that what the Lord could do through me was beyond my human limitations. Those two years changed me and opened a path forward with Him that I might not otherwise have found. I am truly grateful to Him and to all those whose ‘yesses’ made the foundation and context of my ‘yes’ possible.





Ruth Scafers' story...

This "Yes" began on a snowy Canadian afternoon at the John Paul II Bible School in Radway, Alberta, Canada.

It was one of those days and our dear Director, Killian, at lunch asked, "Who wants to go work in New Zealand at the Bible School?" At the time the CDC was a hope and a dream in the making, but we knew of the plan.

My hand shot up and when it did, I felt something happen in my very spirit. It was as though something split; something had changed inside of me.

I hadn't told anyone, but I knew that I had to go and buy large suitcases. I thought that was odd, but one working in the "Vineyard" knows there is no such thing as odd. So you smile and tuck those suitcases in the back of the closet, waiting to see what God has up His sleeve this time.

Well, the call came and the board wanted to do a phone interview at the end of a very long day...I'm talking very long. They got the real deal because my defenses were totally gone, and the rest, as they say, is history.

I had been widowed in August 2004. My daughters had just turned 20 and 18 within days of their dad's death. The thought of being that far away from them after vowing to be both mother and father, made me feel as though I was abandoning them too. That feeling was only put to rest when God assured me that He'd take good care of them for me. Of course He would!

December 28, 2006 found me boarding a plane heading to a new adventure. On the other end of that flight in Auckland were the smiling faces of Fr Neil Vaney, Mark Blackie and Fred and Mary Rose Webb. How could one not know that they were "home" with a welcome like that?

Back during the phone interview, Miriam asked if I'd like to wait and find a flat when I got there. I told her I'd have a little chat with God and she could find me a place to live. When I walked into my home the day I landed, I started to cry because it was perfect. God is good and my heart was at home!

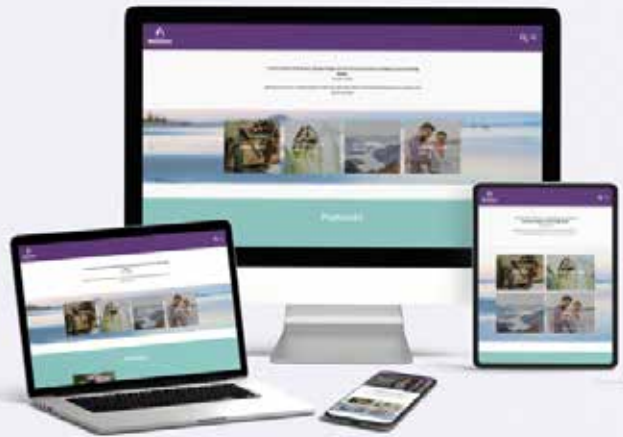
The next month and a half at St Joseph's Centre in Takapuna had us scurrying to create a home for the Catholic Discipleship College, and a lovely home it was.

My new Kiwi family consisted of Fr Neil, Mark, Sr Mary, Jenny, Trish, Michael and my landlords Heather and Christos. God being so good, He allowed my sister Deb to share this experience with me. She was our first registered and first international student. I bought a car and together we explored this beautiful country that I love so much.

An important part of the CDC's program involved inner healing. Our past is where we begin to own the lies that create our present and our future. The lies that: I'm not good enough. I don't deserve... There's no hope for me. I'm too bad, God could never forgive what I've done. I'm unlovable. I'll never be enough. I'm just too much for people. The rape, molestation, must have been my fault, even if I was only a child at the time, right?

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www.catholicdiscovery.nz/spotify

Easter Podcast

Catholic Discovery wants you to talk about Easter, especially with our rangatahi.

Easter is a great opportunity to discuss Jesus with your tamariki, grandchildren and students. Not sure what to say? Or scared of the pātai you may be asked?

We have created a podcast where we answer questions that were put to us by primary school students. Have a listen and then have a chat.

We are delighted to have launched our new website.

Our goal was to create a “welcome mat” that takes the depth and richness of the Church’s teachings to everyone in Aotearoa New Zealand, especially non-Catholics seeking the peace and comfort that faith brings.

The website – www.catholicdiscovery.nz – offers us new tools to reach people interested in the Church. It is an online alternative that builds on printed collateral like our popular booklets.

Catholic Enquiry Centre Pastoral Director, Father Neil Vaney SM, says the website takes a new direction in communicating with non-Catholics.

“The digital age has seen us adapt some of our approaches,” Fr Vaney said. “Our traditional booklets are still popular but modern audiences are hungry for interactive content. We also know that people are looking for spiritual guidance. We have been careful with what we communicate in the website and the language we use. It’s not us just simply saying this is who we are – we want to better highlight the peace, comfort and sense of truth that faith brings.”

The Catholic Discovery website offers information, motivation and prayers for different audiences looking at choices in faith. It presents videos, podcasts, pages and links that offer an introduction to Catholicism.

Catholic Enquiry Centre Engagement Manager, Joe Serci, says it offers easy-to-access information with short articles in plain English.

“Catholic Discovery is a welcome mat to the Church,” he says. “The aim is to provide interesting insights on a variety of topics. People are encouraged to contact the Catholic Enquiry Centre should they want more details on Catholicism and to have an initial discussion with us.

“Globally, the Catholic Church is increasing its focus on digital communication. We know we need to develop and share content that shows the depth and richness we bring as a community.”

Please do visit our new website.
We are building our library of articles, videos and podcasts.

If you’d like to share your story don’t hesitate to contact us at info@catholicenquiry.nz or phone 0800 328 437 to leave a message.



CDC students & staff 2009

All these bad things constantly happen to me because I'm unworthy. God must have made a mistake when He created me.

Those are lies. Lies. When we invite our loving and merciful God into the hurts and traumas of our past, He reveals His truth, the real truth about the pain, from the inside out. In trusting Him with our willingness to go there, He can love us into wholeness and freedom. The privilege of witnessing these moments fills my heart to overflowing and I will cherish them always.

There were little miracles that happened at the CDC as well...like the multiplication of food one lunch time when extra guests arrived. I bet Trish remembers that. The Outreach program, the Prayer meetings, drama workshops, music ministry, acts of service; what a blessing the CDC was and no doubt still is. The effects of 9 months of living in community, of prayer and developing a relationship with the living God, I'm sure, are still being played out in the parishes and families of our alumni.

What a blessing it was to live and work in New Zealand! The hardest part for me was the "homesickness" I felt for about 10 years after coming back to Canada. I truly did leave my heart in New Zealand. May God continue to bless and protect you all, my Kiwi family, and our beloved Aotearoa!



Students & staff - feet washing 2007



Students full of joy!



Fr Neil & CDC Staff 2009



Catholic Discovery is our new way of reaching people interested in our faith. We are using channels like Facebook to tell our story and introduce our community. Please do follow us on facebook CATHOLIC DISCOVERY NZ and share our content as we look to spread the word in a modern context.

We are an initiative of the Catholic Enquiry Centre, who are here to help if you want to be Catholic or if you have questions about faith or belief.



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the Catholic Enquiry Centre
in your Will...*

Your bequest costs nothing now, but in the future
it will help guarantee the work of the CEC.
Why not speak to your lawyer about it?

Form of bequest

I give to the Catholic Enquiry Centre at Wellington
the sum of \$
for its general purposes and I declare that the receipt by
the Director for the time being of the Catholic Enquiry
Centre shall be a sufficient discharge for this gift.