

Fake election statement referred to Electoral Commission 3

Priest describes the hell of re-education camps 4

Marching for Life

Christchurch
March for Life
– pg 3



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Taking on US thinker p5

New Kopua vocation p20

Carmelites' extraordinary outing p8

Living with the beauty of creation p9

Viard House hosts climate faster p14

Wgtn cathedral site blessed p17

On the front cover: A young participant on the March for Life in Christchurch on August 15. (Photo: Mina Amso)

NZCatholic

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Email: admin@nzcatholic.org.nz

Website: www.nzcatholic.org.nz

Publisher: Bishop Patrick Dunn

Editor: Michael Otto **Journalist:** Rowena Orejana

Marketing and Administration: Claudia Cachay

Design & Advertising: Anne Rose

Advertising enquiries contact: design@nzcatholic.org.nz

NZ Catholic is published fortnightly. Subscriptions: One year, \$73; two years, \$135. Overseas airmail extra. The contents of NZ Catholic are copyright and permission to reprint must be obtained in advance. ISSN 1174-0086

Member Australasian Religious Press Association and Australasian Catholic Press Association

Beirut blast triggers funding response

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand is to provide urgently needed funding for Lebanon, amidst apocalyptic scenes from a massive explosion in the port of Beirut on August 4.

The blast killed more than 150 people and injured more than 5000 others. It was so strong that it registered as a 4.5 earthquake and was felt 250 kms away on Cyprus. Windows were blown out of houses and buildings up to 25 km from the port.

"Hospitals and doctors had already been reporting shortages of vital medical supplies such as anaesthesia, medication and sutures before [the] explosion. Amidst these scenes of absolute devastation, we must act . . . Caritas will provide funding to help the Lebanese people in this hour of need," said Julianne Hickey, director of Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand.

At least four hospitals were affected by the blast. St George Hospital, one of the city's largest, was so severely damaged that it had to shut down and transfer patients to other hospitals outside Beirut. Medical staff who survived the blast were treating patients on street sidewalks, using flashlights to work because there was no electricity.

Thousands of families, who were already facing difficult circumstances due to ongoing conflict, economic instability and the Covid-19 pandemic, were affected in the explosion.

"We need to show our solidarity with the poor and vulnerable in Beirut, who are facing so many urgent and severe challenges. We must do what



Smoke rises from the site of an explosion in Beirut (CNS Photo)

we can to ensure that they have the life-saving support they need," said Mrs Hickey.

Caritas Lebanon's youth volunteers and staff are actively assisting. Soon after the blast, they were on site at hospitals assisting the injured. They dispatched a rapid response team. Although their offices were damaged by the blast, Caritas Lebanon remains committed to supporting vulnerable people in the aftermath of this tragic incident.

Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand is sending a solidarity grant from their Peace in the Middle East fund. Anyone who is interested in contributing to the support for Lebanon can donate online at caritas.org.nz or over the phone by calling 0800 22 10 22.

Pope Francis sends aid to Lebanon

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis has sent 250,000 euros to Lebanon to help the Catholic Church and Catholic charitable organisations assist people impacted by the massive explosion on August 4 in Beirut.

The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development said on August 7 that the funds — an "initial" donation — were sent through the Vatican nuncio in Beirut "to meet the needs of the Lebanese church in these moments of difficulty and suffering".

"This donation is intended as a sign of His Holiness' attention and closeness to the affect-

ed population, and of his fatherly closeness to people in serious difficulty," the dicastery's announcement said.

The Vatican office also noted that, immediately after the blast, Caritas Lebanon, Caritas Internationalis and Catholic charity organisations around the world set to work helping everyone in need, providing medical care, shelter, and distributing food and other basic necessities.

The explosion, which killed more than 150 people and injured more than 5000, also destroyed homes, churches, monasteries and other buildings, the dicastery noted.

Holy Land collection scheduled for Sept. 13

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

New Zealand parishes and parishioners are being asked to contribute to a collection for the Holy Land next month, after the collection was transferred from Good Friday because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A letter from the Commissary of the Holy Land for New Zealand, Fr Anthony Malone, OFM, stated that, in February 2020, "Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, the prefect for the Congregation for Oriental Churches, wrote to all commissaries of the Holy Land: 'The care of the Sanctuaries of the Holy Land would be impossible without the collection Pro Terra Sancta, both because they preserve the memory of divine revelation, and because, in those places, the local Christian community finds the foundation of its identity and, thanks to their presence, many of the Christian faithful

find material assistance and education.'"

"However, because of the effects of Covid-19, both internationally and in the Holy Land, the annual Good Friday Collection for the Holy Land was transferred to the Sunday closest to the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, viz., September 13 of this year.

"New Zealanders have always generously supported the Good Friday collection. Our contributions are marked for the maintenance of the Shrine Church in Cana, Galilee, and for 20 university scholarships for Christian students living in the Holy Land.

"Could I ask all parishes and parishioners in New Zealand to contribute to this year's Holy Land Collection on September 13. The Holy Land has always occupied an important place in the heart of the universal Church, as St Paul reminds us." (2 Corinthians 8:9)

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Christchurch March for Life in alert level 2

by MINA AMSO

More than 1000 people took to the streets of Christchurch on a sunny Saturday afternoon (August 15) for the first time to march for life. Men, women and children marched from Cathedral Square to Victoria Square in the CBD, and their message was clear: "Love them both".

Co-organiser Jason Winslade said he was happy and thankful they were able to go ahead, despite the Covid-19 restrictions being put in place.

"Everyone was sitting on the edge of their seats waiting to see what was going to happen on Friday night," he said.

"It was great to see so many people." He said he would have expected to see around 2000 people turn up under alert level 1.

His team complied with level 2 health and safety precautions, including sectioning people off in groups of 100, and leaving a two-metre distance between individuals.

Mr Winslade said this March For Life was "unashamedly and openly Christian", as distinct from others held elsewhere in the country.

There was prayer, Gospel messages were spoken out, and there was some praise and worship.

People of different Christian denominations were present, including Catholics, Anglicans and other Christians.

"The issue of life goes across denominations, its core to humanity. It's a mark of maturity and urgency," Mr Winslade said.

He said the march had a three-fold focus - political, pastoral and being proactive.

Director of LifeNet New Zealand Brendan Malone said he's never seen the prolife movement this "invigorated" in the 16 years he's worked in this movement full-time.

He criticised the current parliamentary system



Some of those on the march display the key message. (Photo: Mina Amso)

for the way it saw the End of Life Choice Act and the Abortion Legislation Act passed into law. He was especially critical of the fact that many MPs were not present in the House to engage with important safety clauses that were proposed for both pieces of legislation. Rather, they gave proxy votes to other MPs.

Openly pro-life Members of Parliament Simon O'Connor and Agnes Loheni were scheduled to be at the march, but could not be there, due to level 3 restrictions in Auckland.

Proactive pregnancy help groups, such as the

John Paul II Centre for Life, were present at the march, and talked about their ministry in helping women who find themselves in a crisis pregnancy.

At the march, there was an emphasis on prayer and fasting being a key element in fighting for the lives of the unborn, and on the importance of providing women facing unplanned or unwanted pregnancies with options for support and care.

Other speakers touched on topics like post-abortion trauma, the pressures placed on young women who are pregnant, and the issue of abortion and disability.

Keep one's eyes fixed on Jesus, says Bishop Lowe in pastoral letter

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

With the onset of increased Covid-19 restrictions, Hamilton Bishop Stephen Lowe has encouraged people not to be afraid, but to instead follow Mary's example and keep one's eyes fixed on Jesus.

In a pastoral letter to the diocese on August 15, Bishop Lowe stated that now, more than ever, we need to deepen our faith and, like Mary, be filled with courage.

He asked for prayers for our country and for the world.

Bishop Lowe said that the Assumption and Pentecost remind us that "God never abandons us".

In a facebook post on August 14, Cardinal John Dew stated that, during the level 4 Covid-19 lockdown, the New Zealand bishops had many requests from people "asking us to consecrate New Zealand to Mary, using the title 'Mary, Queen of the World' or 'The Immaculate Heart of Mary'".

But the cardinal said this country was dedicated to Mary, under her title of the

Assumption, by Bishop Pompallier in 1838.

The movement in alert levels - level 3 for the Auckland region and level 2 for the rest of New Zealand - came into force on August 12.

Cardinal Dew, in a pastoral letter, said churches have proven to be part of the spread of the virus overseas "and we don't want that in New Zealand".

"To be safe, I am suspending all Masses and parish activities which involve gathering until Tuesday, August 18," he said.

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference released a statement outlining the pastoral implications of the government's announcement where parishes are under alert levels 2 and 3.

Similar measures were taken as for the previous periods when these alert levels applied.

Under alert level 2, the decision as to whether Masses could continue was left to dioceses and parishes. A dispensation of attendance at Sunday Mass was applied.

Election deception not on

by ROWENA OREJANA

New Zealand's Catholic bishops have stressed they have not endorsed, and will not endorse, any political party.

The bishops expressed serious concern over a false statement attributed to them, and circulating widely on social media, that claimed they are urging Catholics to vote for the New Conservative political party.

Wellington Cardinal John Dew, vice-president of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference, said they have reported the matter to the Electoral Commission.

"We are in the final stages of preparing our triennial Election Statement for distribution," said Cardinal Dew.

"Our Election Statement will specifically say that it is not our role as bishops to tell people who to vote for."

Cardinal Dew said they have

made clear to all parishes, as well as the New Conservative Party, that the circulating statement is false.

"I am particularly concerned that this false statement purports to say some of these fabrications were made in the name of an employee of a Church entity, who is named in the document. That is truly appalling.

"We have been told by a representative of the New Conservative Party that they do not know who is behind the false statement, and we accept that," Cardinal Dew said.

A fake press release, purportedly from the NZCBC, was picked up by a conservative Catholic blogger and was posted on social media sites.

The blogger's post had since been retracted.

The fake press release misrepresented the Church's position on several topics, including climate change and migration.

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Faith and hope in the hell of 're-education' camps

by MICHAEL OTTO

A classic of Vietnamese "gulag literature", written by an Auckland-based Catholic priest, has been updated, translated into English and republished this year to coincide with the priest's golden jubilee of priestly ordination.

I Must Live by Fr "Andrew" Nguyen Huu Le, is an account of the years he spent in communist re-education camps in Vietnam, from 1976 to 1988. He was arrested for opposing the regime and was caught fleeing the country.

But it is more than a listing of details, incidents and dates — it is also a reflection by the priest on how God's providential love was present throughout, enabling Fr Nguyen to be an instrument of God's love and mercy in many desperate situations. This was a providential love which, in time, enabled him to forgive those who had harmed him. There were even friendships formed, with generosity and kindness shown. It is a testimony to the deep faith of a Catholic priest who refused to be "re-educated" along communist lines.

That said, the book is a harrowing read. There is "baking" heat, with the priest being in a windowless cell with several other men, and the air being so hot that breathing is an exhausting struggle. It is being in a prison — the so-called "Gate of Heaven", near the China border — that was so cold that some men "howled like wolves", before falling asleep from exhaustion. It is being shackled in a punishment cell in "the bottom of hell" at Thanh Cam camp, and having to live for weeks in one's own excrement, cleaning oneself with one's hand and using clothes to clean those hands. It is reeking of the smell of faeces and urine, to the extent that even a fellow priest could not stand being too close. It is being tortured, beaten, starved, nearly dying of thirst, being naked. It is seeing another prisoner's eye cut out. It is hearing of fellow prisoners' plans to eat you. It is seeing a friend beaten to death and having his corpse thrown on top of you, so that you can't breathe.

And for much of this time, there was no end in sight. That was the cruelty of the re-education camps. There were no fixed sentences, which one could count down. There was just the vague promise that, if one was successfully re-educated, one would be released. Hope was a distant country.

But Fr Nguyen's camp dossier had chilling words stamped on papers: "With disposition that cannot be re-educated". This damning statement was why his incarceration was so long.

Fr Nguyen, who spent two years in a refugee camp in Thailand before coming to New Zealand in 1990, at the invitation of Bishop Denis Browne to be chaplain to the Vietnamese community in Auckland, was one of many of his countrymen who endured "re-education". From 1975, some 400,000



Fr Andrew Nguyen Huu Le with his book

people were put through the camps.

Accounts of life and death in these camps have been written over the years, but Fr Nguyen's book, which was first circulated on the Internet and was then published in book form in 2003 in Vietnamese in the USA, became a "best seller ever". It ran to 45,000 copies.

■ Meeting

Fr Nguyen told *NZ Catholic* that the book became much more widely read after publicity in 2004 of his meeting, eight years earlier, with "the guy who killed me" in Thanh Cam camp — Bui Dinh Thi. Thi had been one of the detainees responsible for enforcing camp discipline. A Catholic parishioner, he murdered two men who had been with Fr Nguyen in a failed escape attempt, and he tried to kill the priest too. He beat one of the men (Diep) to death and starved the other one (Vanh) until he died. He dumped the former's body on top of Fr Nguyen.

Among Bui Dinh Thi's many acts of violence against Fr Nguyen was this: "Then the guard seized me, punching my belly, making me fall backwards. Bui Dinh Thi punched me forwards again and so they continued like two soccer players using me as a ball."

In 1996, Fr Nguyen met Thi in the United States and forgave him. The priest showed *NZ Catholic* a photo, which has him holding the hand of his nemesis, with Bui Dinh Thi's family smiling for the camera.

Fr Nguyen told *NZ Catholic* that he asked Thi a question — "why did you try to kill me?"

"We had nothing to do with each other before? . . . I am a priest and you are a parishioner — why have you tried to kill me?"

"He bowed down his head for a while and he said, Father, it is very hard to say. I said that is OK — but if you cannot answer my question, this question will follow me to the grave."

The accounts in Fr Nguyen's book led to Bui Dinh Thi being reported to US authorities. Fr Nguyen was to testify against Thi in court and he was deported back to Vietnam in 2004. But because there was no treaty between the US and Vietnam to enforce this, Bui Dinh Thi reportedly ended up in the Marshall Islands, where he is said to have died in 2011.

Fr Nguyen's years in the camps left him with impaired vision in one eye, with leg injuries which prevent him from walking freely, and with reduced use of one lung. But he doesn't feel bitterness towards the guards and the prisoners who harmed him.

As he explained in the book: "Over a long time, especially the three years writhing at the bottom of hell in the disciplinary cell of Thanh Cam camp from 1979 to 1982, [this] gives me a well-founded stance for saying that, in each person, there are equal parts of good and evil, developing according to the living conditions. . . . In prison, I witnessed

and endured the cruel and malicious actions of a number of prison guards, as well as those of treacherous fellow prisoners. I know that it was partly due to their cruel nature. However, if there was no nurturing and encouragement by the regime, then those actions would not have occurred, or if they did, they would not have reached such degrees of extreme cruelty."

He added: "Never condemn a human being, never destroy a human being but, at any cost, wipe out any repulsive regime that encourages and nurtures hostility among humans. Replace it with a healthy society, so that humans can get to develop their righteousness and integrity."

■ Mission

His time in the camps gave him a renewed appreciation for his mission as a priest. Eventually, he came to hear God's voice telling him there was a mission for him there.

"In Vietnam," he told *NZ Catholic*, "the role of the priest is very important, especially in jail. For a few years, I was the only priest for maybe 1000 prisoners. Most of them are Catholics and they looked at me as the one they hoped to stand for what is right and to be the witness to the love of God in jail."

"I thought — I can't do this. . . but, in jail, the priest is the chosen one, to be the beacon, to strengthen their faith and make them hope and be happy and make them feel they have something to lean on."

Fr Nguyen was able to celebrate Masses from time to time in the camps, as parishioners would smuggle in bread and wine, sometimes disguised as medicine for prisoners. He would teach other prisoners and carried out some baptisms.

As he looks to the future for Vietnam, where the history of the people goes back 4000 years, this history and the character of his people give him hope that communism will not last there forever.

But he acknowledges, with sorrow, that he may never see his homeland again. He once got as close as Thailand, where he "cried a lot".

"I never accepted the communist regime," he said, "so as long as they are still in power, I cannot return home."

"But I live here. My body is here, my heart is in my homeland."

But he does not complain. He is against complaining, as he stated in the book. When the text reached the lowest point in his life, when he was desperately struggling to breathe in a cell so hot it was like an oven, he suddenly addressed the reader: "I would tell everyone that: You don't know you are living in paradise. Never open your mouth to complain."

Fr Nguyen is keen to publish the English translation of the book in New Zealand, if possible, and would welcome approaches from publishers who might be interested. He can be reached at: tpsnguyen@yahoo.com

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Kiwi lecturer takes on US philosopher

by ROWENA OREJANA

How does one engage in a philosophical argument with one of the leading lights of American pragmatism?

In 2006, lecturer in philosophy at Te Kupenga — Catholic Theological College Fr John Owens, SM, set about reading everything he could about American philosopher Richard Rorty. The Kiwi academic ended up publishing a book in 2019.

The book, *Rorty, Religion and Metaphysics* was launched on August 5, at the Catholic Theological College on Ponsonby Road, Auckland.

Fr Merv Duffy, SM, in introducing Fr Owens, said the book is not a “potboiler”, but is “a serious book about deep issues”.

“It’s taken years of research and then years of polishing, until it is a gem of clarity and precision,” Fr Duffy said.

“Those of you accustomed to John Owens’ style of communication may not be surprised to discover that the book we are launching entitled ‘Rorty, Religion and Metaphysics’ is a book about Richard Rorty, religion and metaphysics,” he said.

“The interesting thing about Rorty’s pragmatism, is that it’s a way of seeing the world that abandons both religion and metaphysics, at least as they have been traditionally understood. So, and this is the storyline, John Owens disagrees with Richard Rorty.”

Fr Owens, in explaining in more detail what his book is about, started by saying “metaphysics, and most of religion, start from the belief that there is a way things finally are, and

a final truth about this”.

“If reality is a certain way, we should find out about it and say what it is,” he said.

Rorty’s philosophy, however, rejected metaphysics and religion.

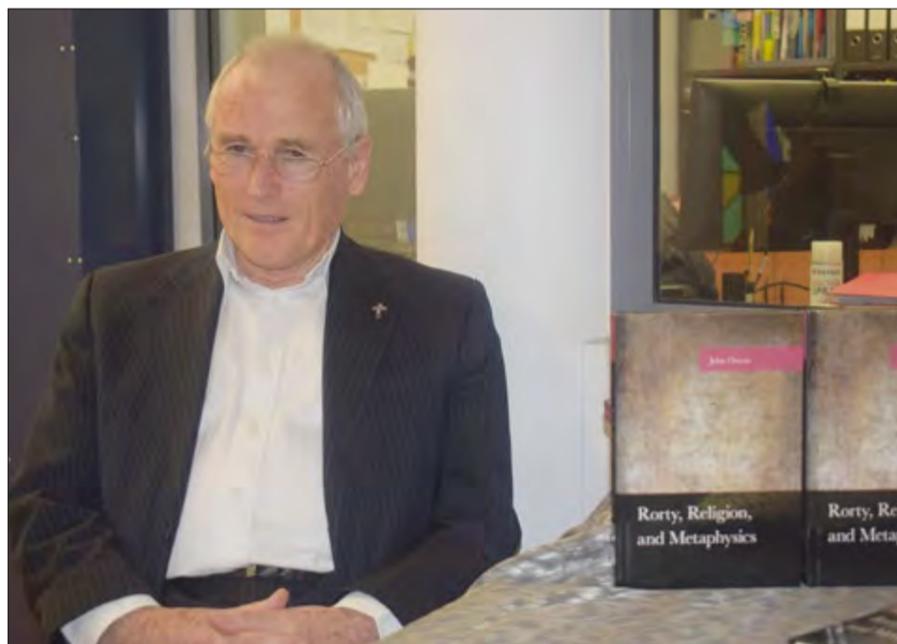
“He (Rorty) came to think that, for all that it dominated Western philosophy, the metaphysical vision never delivered. The arguments for it are always circular. Philosophical harmony never happened. So, we should just get out of the mindset of metaphysics, where we are pointed toward something large and non-human, to which we owe allegiance. We should simply give it up, as one commentator says, in the way we might give up smoking,” explained Fr Owens.

For Rorty, a self-described pragmatist, words are tools, and languages are instruments, that human beings developed to cope with their environment. Some words or vocabularies are not better than others because they more accurately represent the world, but they are better because they work better for our purposes.

“He [Rorty] thinks we should give up questions about corresponding to a final state of affairs, and simply treat our languages as instruments that we develop in order to create and achieve interesting forms of life,” Fr Owens said.

“This runs fundamentally against the Christian view that God made the world through the Word, so that there is an original way that the things of the world are, and our knowledge should first of all try to correspond to the way they are.”

Fr Owens cited the moral example that Rorty used: A child growing up



Fr John Owens, SM, with his book

in a feral state, who is discovered by a community, which then takes the child in and does their best for her. Rorty would say that the child has no dignity of her own, and that the community is not responding to a deep metaphysical reality (her dignity), but simply applying their own vocabulary and traditions in helping her.

Fr Owens said the main argument of his book is that “this will not do”.

“It is not enough to see the world just as the correlates of vocabularies we happen to have developed. Particularly when we deal with another person, they do not appear just in light of a vocabulary of ours, but they somehow demand the use of a

particular vocabulary.

“I think that this encounter with other people first brings us to a sense of reality, the strange conviction that the objects of our mind are not just objects of our mind, but are realities in their own right, that demand a kind of recognition. In Aristotle’s terms they have reality, or *ousia*,” he said.

Fr Duffy said Fr Owens explained Rorty’s theories so well that reviewers of the book recommend it as a good way to understand the American philosopher.

“Evidence of its success is that this book is being accepted for the American Philosophy series,” Fr Duffy said.

Marlborough parish plans to close two churches

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

The Star of the Sea parish in Marlborough is looking at closing down two of its churches following Wellington Cardinal John Dew’s response to the parish’s restructuring proposal.

The move is part of the overall diocesan restructuring that Cardinal John Dew asked of the parishes in February last year.

In an update which appeared in the parish’s newsletter for the weekend of August 8-9, the parishioners were told that Cardinal Dew’s

response included the sale of the Renwick and Havelock churches and land, while retaining Blenheim and Kaikoura’s churches and properties.

The church in Seddon will also be retained, but the adjacent land should be sold.

In Picton, the presbytery and its land can be sold if it is not needed for a multi-purpose centre.

The cardinal also proposed the building of a multi-purpose centre on the school land “with a base for Catholic Social Services and other mission purposes, and with a wor-

ship space of a chapel rather than a church”.

Parish officials said the cardinal is also in favour of gifting or selling the Ward church land to the community trust.

“However, more work needs to be done from a legal and financial perspective to enable this to be a reality, and this will be done as quickly as possible,” they said in the newsletter.

“We acknowledge that a sense of loss and anger for all of us at the thought of some of our Mass centres closing is inevitable, and we will en-

deavour to confirm the timeframes for these as soon as possible. Understanding how to best meet the future pastoral needs of these areas after the closure of the Mass centres will be an important step in the process,” they added.

The cardinal’s response is not a “final decision”, as it would be up to the parish to decide how to proceed with its plan.

The parish leaders said they will not be revisiting their original proposal, but would use Cardinal Dew’s response to their proposal to formulate a new plan.

COVID-19 NATIONAL RECOVERY APPEAL

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“Covid-19 is creating new layers of poverty and need in our community.”

Cardinal John Dew

What Colour was Jesus?

At a time when, all over the world, statues of historical figures are falling, societies face their often painful histories and reconsider how the past — and other neglected histories — should be told.

This iconoclasm — the destruction of icons and monuments — may be painful for some, but it challenges old certainties, not only about the subjects of these statues, but also about societies that were shaped by these men (very few of them were women).

It is inevitable that iconoclastic movements also might misdirect their anger at the wrong subjects — which serves to negate the argument that statues are useful signposts of history.

One such wrong-headed target concerns images of Jesus Christ, which are seen to be Eurocen-

The Southern Cross (SA)

tric. Catholics need not be told that it would be sacrilegious to allow the destruction of images of Jesus in the pursuit of socio-political points.

Any proposition to destroy religious art or icons must be strongly and unequivocally opposed, by people of faith and those of none.

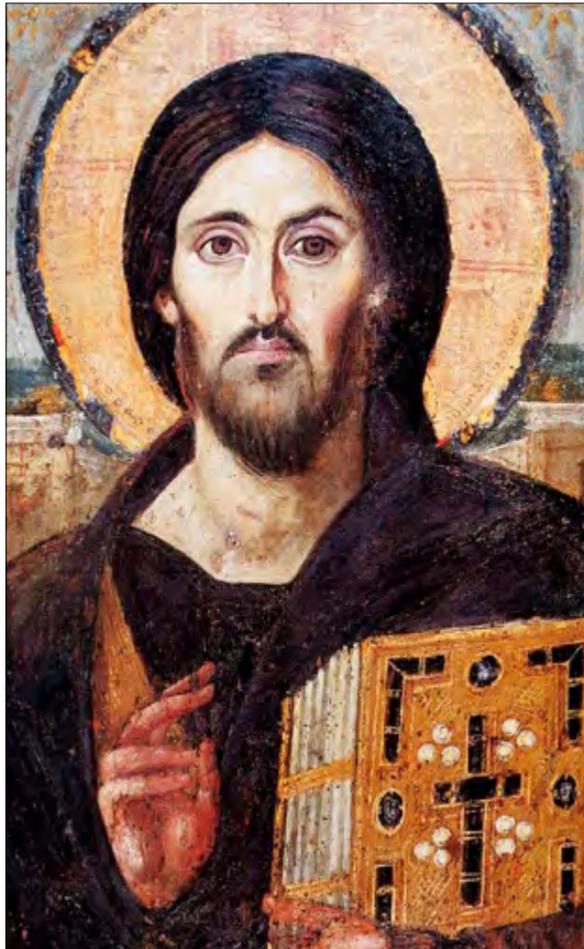
At the same time, however, our objections must be accompanied by an acknowledgment that certain common depictions of Jesus in the likeness of a European man have contributed to a normalisation of white chauvinism.

The argument is summarised in this way: When the normative image of Jesus is that of a white man, it conveys the idea that the historical Jesus was white, with the subliminal message that whites are superior to other races.

Colonialists, and even some missionaries, used European Christian art to communicate such notions of white superiority. Many more missionaries did so without even realising it.

In South African churches, the image of a white Jesus still dominates. Here, as elsewhere, that provokes a counter-assertion that Jesus was, in fact, Black.

For our faith, it does not matter what Jesus looked like. Jesus is the Incarnation, God made



The oldest surviving panel icon of *Christ Pantocrator*, encaustic on panel, c. 6th century, showing the appearance of Jesus that is still immediately recognised today. (Photo: Wikipedia)

flesh. God has no colour, no race, no ethnicity, no caste, no gender. We all are made in God's image, which means God has no image.

And if God has no image, then it is immaterial to our faith what colour, race or ethnicity one might ascribe to Jesus.

But for the purposes of the Incarnation, Jesus

had to occupy a body. In a society where women had no rights, he had to be a man. Physically, he had to have the DNA of the people into whose midst he was born.

For the sake of history, it is safe to say that, ethnically, Jesus was Caucasian, most probably with a dark skin, dark hair and brown eyes. The indigenous Palestinian people of the Holy Land give us a sense of how the people around Jesus looked.

Those who believe that the Shroud of Turin was Jesus' actual burial cloth even have a compelling image of Jesus' physical characteristics.

But because the Gospels don't describe Jesus' physical appearance, or that of his Blessed Mother, artists throughout the centuries have had to use their imagination. And, as Western European art became increasingly dominant, depictions of Jesus and Mary — and even their environment — reflected the characteristics of those people at whom these works of art were aimed.

That was an act of enculturation — the process by which we adapt the symbols and certain practices of our faith to make it relevant to the local cultural contexts. But that art ceased to reflect local cultures when it was exported to missions in colonised territories.

The popularity of modern devotions that emanated from apparitions in Europe — the images of which reflected the visionaries' particular local culture — might have further entrenched the idea of Jesus and Mary as "white".

Of course, there are famous enculturated exceptions, such as Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico, Our Lady of Akita in Japan or the "Jesus Mafa" art project in Cameroon from 1973. But these are few.

"Jesus was Black" should be seen not as a historical observation — it would be an incorrect one — but as an attempt to make him more universal than the general narrative suggests. It is a legitimate pursuit.

Our task now must be to encourage enculturated religious art, and to have the courage to display it in our churches.

An unsigned editorial titled: "What Colour Was Jesus?" which appeared on July 5 on the website of *The Southern Cross*, South Africa's Catholic weekly publication. (CNS)

Ronald Rolheiser

Letting go of false fear

Recently, in a radio interview, I was asked this question: "If you were on your deathbed, what would you want to leave behind as your parting words?" The question momentarily took me aback. What would I want to leave behind as my last words? Not having time for much reflection, I settled on this. I would want to say: "Don't be afraid. Live without fear. Don't be afraid of death. Most of all, don't be afraid of God!"

I'm a cradle Catholic, born to wonderful parents, catechised by some very dedicated teachers, and I've had the privilege of studying theology in some of the best classrooms in the world. Still, it took me 50 years to rid myself of a number of crippling religious fears and to realise that God is the one person of whom you need not be afraid. It's taken me most of my life to believe the words that come from God's mouth more than three hundred times in Scripture, and are the initial words out of the mouth of Jesus whenever he meets someone for the first time after his Resurrection: "Do not be afraid!"

It has been a 50-year journey for me to believe that, to trust it. For most of my life, I've lived in a false fear of God, and of many other things. As a young boy, I had a particular fear of lightning storms, which, in my young mind, demonstrated how fierce and threatening God could be. Thunder and lightning were portents which warned us, religiously, to be fearful. I nursed the same fears about death, wondering where souls went after they died, sometimes looking at a dark horizon after the sun had set and wondering whether people who had died were out there somewhere,

haunted in that endless darkness, still suffering for what they'd had not gotten right in life. I knew that God was love, but that love also held a fierce, frightening, exacting justice.

Those fears went partially underground during my teenage years. I made my decision to enter religious life at the age of 17, and have sometimes wondered if that decision was made freely and not out of false fear. Looking back on it now however, with 50 years of hindsight, I know that it wasn't fear that compelled me, but a genuine sense of being called, of knowing from the influence of my parents and the Ursuline nuns who catechised me, that one's life is not one's own, that one is called to serve. But religious fear remained unhealthily strong within me.

So, what helped me let go of that? This doesn't happen in a day or year; it is the cumulative effect of 50 years of bits and pieces conspiring together. It started with my parents' deaths when I was 22. After watching both my mother and father die, I was no longer afraid of death. It was the first time I wasn't afraid of a dead body, since these bodies were my mother and father, of whom I was not afraid. My fears of God eased gradually every time I tried to meet God with my soul naked in prayer, and came to realise that your hair doesn't turn white when you are completely exposed before God; instead, you become unafraid. My fears lessened, too, as I ministered to others and learned what divine compassion should be, as I studied and taught theology, as two cancer diagnoses forced me to contemplate for real my own mortality, and as a number of colleagues, family, and

friends modelled how one can live more freely.

Intellectually, a number of persons particularly helped me: John Shea helped me realise that God is not a law to be obeyed, but an infinitely empathic energy that wants us to be happy; Robert Moore helped me to believe that God is still looking on us with delight; Charles Taylor helped me to understand that God wants us to flourish; the bitter anti-religious criticism of atheists like Frederick Nietzsche helped me see where my own concept of God and religion needed a massive purification; and an older brother, a missionary priest, kept unsettling my theology with irreverent questions like, what kind of God would want us to be frightened of him? A lot of bits and pieces conspired together.

What's the importance of last words? They can mean a lot or a little. My dad's last words to us were "be careful", but he was referring to our drive home from the hospital in snow and ice. Last words aren't always intended to leave a message; they can be focused on saying goodbye or simply be inaudible sighs of pain and exhaustion; but sometimes they can be your legacy.

Given the opportunity to leave family and friends a few last words, I think that after, I first tried to say a proper goodbye, I'd say this: "Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid of living or of dying. Especially don't be afraid of God."

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, TX. He can be contacted through his website www.ronrolheiser.com Follow on Facebook www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser.

Martyr saints and Covid setback

With all the disruption to parish and family life caused by the movement in Auckland to Covid-19 alert level 3 and the rest of the country to alert level 2 on August 12, it was easy to overlook the liturgical calendar — although many Catholics would have been well aware of the dates.

Especially in Auckland, the move to level 3 gave rise to confusion and fear for some, as the prospect of staying at this level — or even moving to level 4 — for a time seemed a distinct possibility.

The movement in alert levels came between the days when the Church usually celebrates two of its martyrs of modern times — St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein, feast August 9) and St Maximilian Kolbe (feast August 13).

While it is understandable that the re-emergence of community transmission of the virus produces confusion and fear, such times are also times for prayer — and therefore for hope — as Pope Benedict XVI explained in a general audience on August 13, 2008.

Those who pray never lose hope, even when they find themselves in a difficult and even humanly hopeless plight. Sacred Scripture teaches us this and Church history bears witness to this.

In fact, how many examples we could cite of situations in which it was precisely prayer that sustained the journey of saints and of the Christian people!

Among the testimonies of our epoch I would like to mention the examples of two saints whom we are commemorating in these days: Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Edith Stein, whose feast we celebrated on August 9, and Maximilian Mary Kolbe, whom we will commemorate tomorrow, on August 14, the eve of the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Both ended their earthly life with martyrdom in the concentration camp of Auschwitz. Their lives might seem to have been a defeat, but it is precisely in their martyrdom that the brightness of Love, which dispels the gloom of selfishness and hatred, shines forth.

Editorial

The following words are attributed to St Maximilian Kolbe,

who is said to have spoken them when the Nazi persecution was raging: "Hatred is not a creative force: only love is creative."

And heroic proof of his love was the generous offering he made of himself in exchange for a fellow prisoner, an offer that culminated in his death in the starvation bunker on August 14, 1941.

On August 6 the following year, three days before her tragic end, Edith Stein — approaching some sisters in the monastery of Echt, in the Netherlands — said to them: "I am ready for anything. Jesus is also here in our midst. Thus far I have been able to pray very well and I have said with all my heart: 'Ave, Crux, spes unica'. (Hail to the cross, our only hope)" Witnesses who managed to escape the terrible massacre recounted that, while Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, dressed in the Carmelite habit, was making her way, consciously, toward death, she distinguished herself by her conduct full of peace, her serene attitude and her calm behaviour, attentive to the needs of all. Prayer was the secret of this saint, co-patroness of Europe, who, "Even after she found the truth in the peace of the contemplative life, she was to live to the full the mystery of the Cross" (Apostolic Letter Spes Aedificandi).

"Hail Mary!" was the last prayer on the lips of St Maximilian Mary Kolbe, as he offered his arm to the person who was about to kill him with an injection of phenolic acid. It is moving to note how humble and trusting recourse to Our Lady is always a source of courage and serenity. While we prepare to celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption, which is one of the best-loved Marian feasts in the Christian tradition, let us renew our entrustment to her who, from heaven, watches over us with motherly love at every moment. In fact, we say this in the familiar prayer of the Hail Mary, asking her to pray for us "now and at the hour of our death".

The Solemnity of the Assumption is the patronal feast for the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand. May we also have recourse to Our Lady at this time as a source of courage and serenity.

The Habit



Letters

Lord's prayer

Marilyn Elliston (NZ Catholic, August 9) complains about the current English version of the Mass. I suggest that the New Zealand bishops could start by authorising an accurate translation of the Lord's Prayer.

The version in the current Missal says, "Deliver us from evil". But "evil" should be "the Evil One" (i.e. Satan), as in the Jerusalem Bible (Matthew 6:13). The Greek expression used here is the same as at Matthew 13:19, where Jesus explains the Parable of the Sower: The seed on the edge of the path represents the hearer misled by "the Evil One", who "comes and carries off what was sown in his heart".

Every Easter, Catholics renew their baptismal promises by renouncing Satan and all his works. But during the rest of the year we hear little about Satan — perhaps too little. After all, Satan dared to tempt even Jesus himself. We can be sure that he tempts the Church on earth, even at the most senior levels. Certainly, God guides the Church when the Church is willing to be guided; but, on topics where she remains "unteachable", God will not impose a change of heart by force (Matthew 19:8; Mark 10:5).

Our translation of the Lord's Prayer should reflect what Jesus said, and remind us of this Satanic danger every day.

Andrew Carstairs-McCarthy, Christchurch.

Morals

The community should be concerned at the statement of the Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, reported in the *New Zealand Herald*, that ministers having affairs is not necessarily inappropriate. Would the Prime Minister please advise the community when she considers it appropriate for her ministers to fornicate or commit adultery?

Having an affair or committing adultery is always morally reprehensible, offensive and inappropriate. It gives offence to our Creator by violating the sixth commandment of God, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." It damages the persons committing adultery, violates the marriage contract to be faithful to your spouse, gives offence to the spouse and gives scandal to the community.

The community have an absolute right to expect that those who sit in our Parliament or in government are persons of the highest integrity and moral rectitude.

Ken Orr, Christchurch. ■ Abridged — Editor.

Basic belief

"All Lives Matter" is an accurate and succinct statement of basic Chris-

tian belief. It underpins the Catholic Church's opposition to abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment. It is also a guiding principle of the Church's worldwide charitable works.

There was no need for an . . . apology to all and sundry in Master-ton for alleged "hurt and distress" after words describing that fundamental Christian belief appeared on a church noticeboard.

"All Lives Matter" remains a truthful and timely statement. As has been suggested elsewhere, perhaps it should be displayed prominently outside every church in New Zealand.

Denis Fairfax, Plimmerton. ■ Abridged — Editor.

Prayer

I read the article "Some advice on prayer from an old master" by Father Ronald Rolheiser (NZ Catholic, June 28) with interest. Many times, he writes about praying the Our Father.

As Christians, we are told to have a prayerful life. In the Old Testament, Moses prays to the God that gives him strength to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land. In the pilgrimage, God provides manna from the sky and water from the rock. How wonderful is God, for he is the provider.

In the New Testament, Jesus prays to Abba Father, for Abba Father lives in Jesus and Jesus lives

in him. So, we who are the sons and daughters of God, we should also pray to him. The acronym "ASK" denotes ask to receive, seek to find and knock for the door to open.

Praying is conversation with God. We ask God for things to fulfil our needs. It takes time for God to answer prayer, so be patient.

We seek God by reading his Word in the Holy Bible that gives strength and encouragement. We knock at heaven's door, while seeking the kingdom of heaven.

Jackie Chong, Thorndon, Wellington.

Abortion

The lives of our 22-plus Covid dead are to be mourned. They each departed our ranks as "one of us".

Meanwhile, unfortunately there has been another disease, lopping off more than 12,000 people in New Zealand each year, each person being "one of us", with a story never to be told and usually no one to mourn them (except perhaps the mother, later in life). The disease is abortion; it's man-made, costs over \$11 million of our annual health budget, and has invaded the medical field as a culture of death, like an impenetrable fog settling over the conscience of a nation.

Before you vote, did you know that babies can now be aborted up to full-term, 9 months?

Don Brebner, Omokoroa. ■ Abridged — Editor.

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A simple excursion became an exceptional event

by Sr DOROTHEA WILKES, OCD

On Thursday, April 4, 2019, Sr Marietta, Sr Mareta and myself needed to go out to get passport photos at a place in Addington, as we have to keep them updated for identity purposes. All the passports were due to expire this year, and I decided to go with the sisters at the last minute, as it would save another trip out later. One sister had another appointment over Riccarton way at 5.20pm. Our good friend, Joy, picked the three of us up at 4.00pm. Whenever there is a need to leave our monastery enclosure, we go only for that reason and back home again. The following was indeed an unexpected “exceptional exception” to this, which we judged to be justified at the time, due to the gravity of recent events in Christchurch.

After we got our passport photos, we drove across to Riccarton via Hagley Park. Suddenly, we realised we were quite close to the fated mosque where, horrendously, more than 40 people were killed and as many injured while they were at prayer. The gold dome came into view. All the news we had heard and seen crashed in on us as we looked at that dome very differently, indeed as never before. Joy asked us if we would like to drive past. As we got closer, we could see the flowers on the footpath outside, which we had seen in photos. An armed policeman standing guard came into view. Then a second further along. Joy then asked if we would like to get out and have a look. We did. By this time, we were at the gates to the short driveway and we could see people at the doorway of the mosque.

The Muslim man who leads the prayers at the mosque saw us from the doorway and came down to greet us. We felt really drawn to go with his warm invitation to come in, hardly believing what was happening! There was a sense of something wonderful to be able to pay our respects and personally express our love and concern. What an extremely rare privilege for us to be there! And not planned at all.

At the door, we were hailed by a welcoming group of people — Muslim men and women who warmly embraced us as we gave a quick explanation of who we were. We all gelled straight away. Courteously, we were asked to remove our shoes at the door, like Moses, which we did. They had a head scarf for Joy and for some other women there. Some of the men then asked us if we wanted a drink or anything? I asked for some water. This



Al Noor mosque in Christchurch last year (CNS Photo)

was promptly brought to us in seconds — bottles of water for us all.

■ Loving

It was such a loving atmosphere. We told them that we had very much wanted to write a sympathy letter, but couldn't find their address! But here we were to do that — in person — on the way to an appointment! Only God could have possibly arranged all those little details for this to happen.

We were overcome to think we would soon be standing in the very place of such terror and bloodshed, which we had followed closely and prayed so much about. We also watched by link the moving Hagley Park Memorial Service with Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Cat Stevens/Yusuf Islam (a thrill from my old days) — and thousands of people gathered to grieve together and support relatives and friends of the victims.

People crowded around us. It was peaceful and joyful. There were some lovely women too. We so enjoyed talking with them and vice versa. A young lady poignantly told us that her husband was killed and she was three months pregnant. Others spoke of accepting everything and talked of forgiveness etc.. Their quiet serenity spoke volumes. By this time we had entered the prayer room of the mosque.

It was a very moving moment. No words could describe what had happened there. The space was quite large and bare, but homely, and there was only a gray, but warm, lining on the floor before it would be re-carpeted properly. The podium was in place at the front for a speaker, behind which one man had hidden, saving his life. This reminded us that members of a visiting Bangladesh cricket team were impatient to arrive in time to hear preaching that day from that very podium. But they had several annoying hold-ups of a minute here and there along the way, which saved their lives. They arrived to see the most horrifying scenes unfold before their eyes.

■ Tears

As we moved further inside this room, still surrounded by smiling, peaceful people, I felt my tears running down with deepest sorrow and the shock of actually standing in this place. I thought I was dreaming. But I realised I wasn't when I couldn't find my handkerchief. Oh no! How awful. The smiling, kindly prayer leader — in white robes and Muslim cap — actually noticed. He hastened over and sat me down on a white plastic chair. Kneeling in front of me, he gently wiped my eyes with snowy white tissues. Then he carefully dried my face. He asked anxiously “Are you okay now?” And I was thinking — is this really happening? A

Muslim man drying my tears. And we were there to comfort them! It was the most tender, beautiful and unexpected gesture. I was dumbfounded and humbled and felt so silly that I'd forgotten my hanky. I thanked him profusely.

Only a great and humorous God could have possibly engineered such a thing — getting us there and allowing us to experience such a warm-hearted reception! You can imagine us telling the sisters later . . . It was so funny and I don't think I'll ever live it down.

It was now about 5.00pm, which signalled their prayer time. Some seven men, along with my solicitous “carer” stood facing the front of the prayer room. Then the Imam began the haunting prayer chant which filled the room. Another friendly lady beside us, whom we had just met, and who was a Muslim convert, translated the beautiful prayers for us.

By this time, we were watching the clock, having to be at the next place at 5.20pm and we were aware of the traffic. It was quite late for an appointment, which was another extraordinary co-incidence that allowed us all that time at the mosque.

But that wasn't all.

We said goodbye and walked down the short passage to the outside drive, where more things were in store. There were some people there — a man and a woman and a few others who asked if they could interview and film us. We asked what it was for and the like, and it turned out they were a Reuters news team. That was overseas stuff, so we complied — hoping it would all be “off-shore”. Joy stood at our side as the interviewer directed, and they asked questions as we tried to think straight. We were still feeling a bit dazed after such an emotional experience in the mosque — to say the least. However they said our answers were perfect, which seemed like another little miracle in the circumstances.

Now we were really worried about the time and we walked quickly to the car, passing the two policemen, who were still standing patiently with firearms at the ready.

We said a heartfelt thank you to them for their bravery on that fateful day, and also for their long vigils at the mosque. They were very appreciative. Another thing was achieved, which we had so wanted to say.

So ended an amazing afternoon, which was a complete surprise and totally unplanned. Someone far greater than us had already worked out all the details of an event that will be the highlight of our lives for years to come!

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Living with the beauty of creation

by NEIL VANEY

■ Beauty in the Scriptures

Those who reflect on the nature of God consider that our universe proclaims three great truths about its creator, that is, God's goodness, truth and beauty, and that these are echoed in the beauty of our universe and of the earth, which is our home.

Laudato Si' 72 highlights how the psalms exhort us to praise God just as nature does (Ps 136); likewise, we read in Psalm 19, "The heavens are telling the glory of God. One thing I asked of the Lord . . . to behold the beauty of the Lord and look upon his temple." The prophets also spoke of how God's majesty is on view here on earth, for example, in a restored Jerusalem: "You will be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord." (Isaiah 62:3) The books we describe as wisdom literature, such as Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon, are full of such reflections. "Look at the rainbow and praise him who made it; it is exceedingly beautiful in its brightness." (Sirach 43:9-12) Jesus himself continued this sense of God's beauty visible in this world in one of his wisdom sayings, "Consider the lilies; how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these." (Luke 12:22-27)

In *Laudato Si'* 79, Pope Francis points out how our deeper scientific experience now highlights the complexity and beauty of our universe even more clearly; ". . . in this universe, shaped by open and intercommunicating systems, we can discern countless forms of relationship and participation. This leads us to think of the whole as open to God's transcendence, within which it develops. Faith allows us to interpret the meaning and the mysterious beauty of what is unfolding".

■ Hymns of gratitude

Opening our eyes to the beauty of creation leads naturally to praise and gratitude. Pope Francis insists that, when we see how deeply human life is enmeshed in the goodness and beauty of the world, we should be open to "gratitude and graciousness, in recognition that the world is God's loving gift, and that we are called quietly to imitate his generosity in self-sacrifice and good works." (LS 220). The encyclical also states that "each creature reflects something of God and has a message to convey to us". (LS 221) What distinguishes us from other creatures is that we have this sense of beauty and awareness of our duty to preserve this for future generations.

■ The need for ecological conversion

The idea that all of nature is there for human use and is basically an economic asset is so common that, to free us from its shackles, Pope Francis proposes that each of us, and societies in general, need to pass through an "ecological conversion". This would parallel the moral, intellectual and religious conversions previous theologians have highlighted. It would encompass perceptions, values and emotions.



(Photos: Pixabay)

He explains how this attitudinal change is essential for all Christians; "What they all need is an 'ecological conversion', whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in the relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or secondary aspect of our creation." (LS 217)

The Pope also goes on to state that, if the world is going to change, this will involve much more than isolated individuals; it needs community conversion. (LS 219); In this area, we need to heed the importance of the images that fill our screens and imaginations. Because of the intensity of the enhanced images pouring out through a multitude of devices, we are constantly being bombarded by glamorous images of food, clothing, furniture,

cars, etc., urging us to buy, eat or update without any reference to the ability of the earth to sustain this continual assault. The outcome is to reinforce the image of the human as being essentially a consumer.

To fight against such trends, it is critical that we are constantly seeing counter-images — such as natural beauty and landscapes. It is also equally critical that we are able to visit and walk, not too far from where we live, in parks and reserves that give us some sense of the world that existed before its transformation by human need and greed. We also need to revisit and soak up the vision of the great saints and mystics of nature, such as the Celtic saints, Kevin and Brendan, Francis of Assisi, and modern lovers of simplicity and nature such as Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton.

■ Simpler lifestyles

In the face of our consumer-driven world, the Pope also exhorts all of us to ponder if we should move to a simpler lifestyle. (LS 225-26); "Many people today sense a profound imbalance, which drives them to frenetic activity and makes them feel busy, in a constant hurry, which in turn leads them to ride roughshod over everything around them. This too affects how they treat the environment."

Once again Francis places this within the need for a sense of wonder. "If we approach nature and the environment without . . . openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously." (LS 11)

■ Wider dimensions of justice

Pope Francis is under no illusions as to how difficult such a change of direction would be, since it involves not just individuals, but long-held patterns of global economics and cultures, especially in economically advanced nations. Because natural resources have been seen purely as economic assets, this has led to struggles which have "engendered immense inequality, injustice and acts of violence against the majority of humanity, since resources end up in the hands of the first comer or the most powerful". (LS 82); The Pope underlines the need for comprehensive solutions that would take into account human rights, and cultural and spiritual values, not just economic considerations. (LS 139) Adding weight to such an integral solution, he underlines how all of us on the planet today need to imagine and visualise how life will be for generations to come, our children and grandchildren. Will they be faced with survival on a barren and hostile planet, stripped of the beauty of forest, wild beasts and untouched wilderness?

Fr Neil Vaney, SM, is pastoral director of The Catholic Enquiry Centre NZ. This is the third of four reflections by Fr Vaney on *Laudato Si'* published in NZ Catholic this year. The final one will be published in September.



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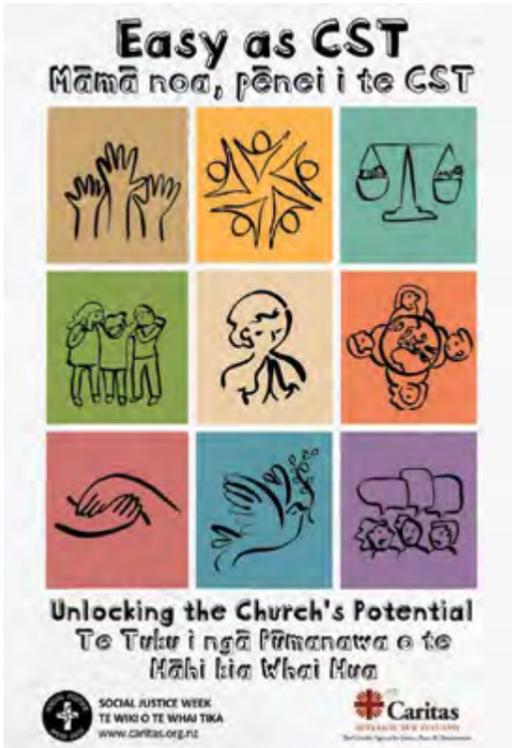
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Te Wiki o te Whai Tika: 6-12 Hēpetema 2020

Easy as CST: Unlocking the Church's Potential



Social Justice Week 2020 will take place from 6 to 12 September. The resources produced by Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand are entitled “Easy as CST: Unlocking the Church’s Potential.” Through these resources, people of all ages are invited to learn about and reflect upon principles of Catholic social teaching (CST) which are set out to help us understand how we can truly live out the Gospel in our day to day lives.

Caritas last produced Social Justice Week resources about CST principles in 2014. At that time, seven principles were explored in detail with accompanying case studies from the work of Caritas and their partners. This year, updated case studies and reflections will be available for nine core CST principles which are intended to provide an overview of the key themes within CST.

Resources for parishes and schools to explore CST during Social Justice Week are available on the Caritas website. Resources include suggestions for liturgies, lessons, daily actions and reflections on CST, as well as videos, bookmarks, and a personality quiz.

Our Social Justice Week resources are available to download for free on the Caritas website:
For parishes/communities: caritas.org.nz/parishes/social-justice-week
For schools: caritas.org.nz/schools/social-justice-week

Where does Catholic social teaching come from?

In the beginning when the world was created, we were made in the image of God, giving each of us human dignity. Christ’s command for us to love God and love our neighbour is exemplified through Catholic social teaching.

In 1891, at the height of the industrial revolution in Europe, there was a great and growing gap between rich and poor. At this time, Pope Leo XIII wrote a letter, *Rerum Novarum*, that focused on the condition of workers and just wages. He emphasised the importance of working for the common good and the role of the state to ensure the wellbeing of all, especially the poorest.

Since that time, Church leaders including Popes and Bishops have written encyclicals (letters) and messages to the Church and wider community. These contain fundamental principles, which the Church believes should underpin a healthy society, politics and economy. They have addressed different social challenges that face our communities, including human life, rights and responsibilities; poverty; refugees, asylum seekers and migrants; environmental justice; indigenous peoples; and international development and peace.

This formal body of writing forms the basis of CST. It draws on the Scriptural traditions of the prophets who spoke out against injustice, and it follows the teachings and example of Christ and the tradition of the early Church leaders and saints. It provides us with key ethical principles and a lens through which we can interpret social issues around us and take action to seek justice. Practicing these CST principles will help to unlock the full potential of the Church.



The Caritas Social Justice Week resources contain a reflection on human dignity from Joshua Chisholm (center), pictured here with Kala Tofilau (left) and Rancel Noquilla (right).

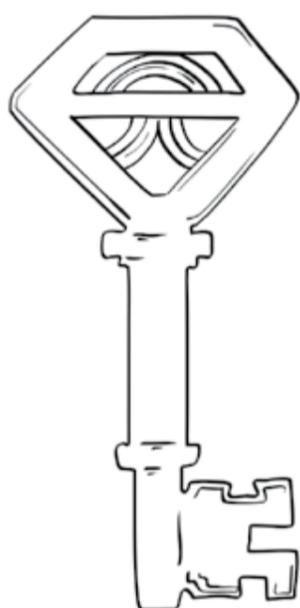


Social Justice Week: 6-12 September 2020

Māmā Noa, Pēnei i te CST: Te Tuku i ngā Pūmanawa o te Hāhi kia Whai Hua

The Caritas resources for Social Justice Week 2020 will focus on the following nine core principles of Catholic social teaching:

<p>Participation - Nāu te Rourou, Nāku te Rourou</p> <p>As human beings, we live in community. We are called to be active members to improve the wellbeing of all people.</p>	<p>Common Good - He Painga mā te Katoa</p> <p>Our actions have an impact on wider society. When we make decisions, we should choose to consider the good of all. It is up to all of us to make a difference.</p>	<p>Distributive Justice - Te Tika ka Tohaina</p> <p>God intended all people to share in the goods of this world. Allocation of resources should ensure that everyone has access to the necessities of life.</p>
<p>Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable - He Whakaaro Nui mō te Hunga Rawakore</p> <p>We must consider the impact of our actions and decisions on the most vulnerable.</p>	<p>Human Dignity - Te Mana i te Tangata</p> <p>Each human life has value that is universal, inviolable and inalienable. This is the central aspect of our Church's social teaching.</p>	<p>Stewardship - Kaitiakitanga</p> <p>Everything in creation is given to us for all people. We must care for the environment, our own talents, and other resources for the benefit of this and future generations.</p>
<p>Solidarity - Whakawhānaungatanga</p> <p>In our connected humanity, we are invited to build relationships and try to understand what life is like for those who are different from us.</p>	<p>Promotion of Peace - Te Whakatairanga i te Rongomārie</p> <p>Peace is the fruit of justice and love and is dependent upon right order among human beings.</p>	<p>Subsidiarity - Mana Whakahaere</p> <p>Decision-making should happen at the most appropriate level, so that all those affected can contribute and have a say to influence the outcome.</p>



Social Justice Week in Schools

The Social Justice Week resources for schools share a title with the parish resources, and were also designed to be used throughout the year as schools teach and highlight different principles of Catholic social teaching.

Along with the unique icons, each CST principle has a unique character and key to help students remember and understand them. These visual elements are woven throughout the school resources.

Other Social Justice Week resources for schools will include short videos, key information pages, prayers, liturgies, activities, case studies and student response templates. The materials are organised by the CST principle on which they are focused, so that all of the relevant activities and information are in one place if a particular principle is the focus of study.

School resources are available to download for free on the Caritas website: caritas.org.nz/schools/social-justice-week.



Vatican says baptisms using modified formula not valid

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Changing the words of the formula for baptism renders the sacrament invalid, said the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Specifically, a baptism administered with the formula “We baptise you . . .” instead of “I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” is not valid because it is the person of Christ, through the minister, who is acting, not the assembly, the congregation said.

The doctrinal congregation’s ruling was published on August 6 as a brief response to questions regarding the validity of baptisms using that modified formula.

The congregation was asked whether a baptism was valid if it had been performed with a formula that seeks to express the “communitarian significance” and participation of the family and those present during the celebration.

For example, it said there have been celebrations administered with the words, “In the name of the father

and of the mother, of the godfather and of the godmother, of the grandparents, of the family members, of the friends, in the name of the community, we baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

A baptism administered with this kind of modified formula is not valid, the congregation said, and the baptisms would have to be redone for those individuals who had been baptised with the improvised wording.

The correct formula in the Rite of the Sacrament of Baptism spoken by the bishop, priest or deacon is: “I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

The doctrinal congregation said modifying “the form of the celebration of a sacrament does not constitute simply a liturgical abuse, like the transgression of a positive norm, but a ‘vulnus’ (wound) inflicted upon the ecclesial communion and the identifiability of Christ’s action, and in the most grave cases

rendering invalid the sacrament itself”.

The changes to the formula seem to have been made to emphasise the communal aspect of baptism and the participation of those present, as well as “to avoid the idea of the concentration of a sacred power in the priest to the detriment of the parents and the community that the formula in the (Roman Rite) might seem to imply”, it said.

Instead, such changes have “debatable pastoral motives” and the formula handed down by tradition remains fundamental because “the sacramental action may not be achieved in its own name, but in the person of Christ, who acts in his Church, and in the name of the Church”, it said.

“Therefore, in the specific case of the sacrament of baptism, not only does the minister not have the authority to modify the sacramental formula to his own liking,” it said, “but neither can he even declare that he is acting on behalf of the parents, godparents, relatives or friends, nor

in the name of the assembly gathered for the celebration.”

“When the minister says, ‘I baptise you . . .’ he does not speak as a functionary who carries out a role entrusted to him, but he enacts, ministerially, the sign-presence of Christ,” it said.

It is really Christ himself who baptises and has the principal role in the event being celebrated, it said.

The temptation to modify the sacramental formula “implies a lack of an understanding of the very nature of the ecclesial ministry that is always at the service of God and his people and not the exercise of a power that goes so far as to manipulate what has been entrusted to the Church in an act that pertains to the tradition,” it said.

The doctrinal statement was signed by Cardinal Luis Ladaria Ferrer, congregation prefect, and Archbishop Giacomo Morandi, congregation secretary. The congregation said Pope Francis “approved these responses” on June 8 and ordered their publication.

Pope Francis baptises twins after successful surgery to separate them

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Their heads encased in white bandages covering the wounds where they had been conjoined, 2-year-old twins named Ervina and Prefina were baptised by Pope Francis on August 6 in the chapel of his residence.

The babies, from the Central Africa Republic, are still hospitalised at the Vatican-owned Bambino Gesù paediatric hospital in Rome, a spokesman said on August 10. But their mother, identified only as Ermine, “really wanted the Pope to baptise them”.

A team of doctors, led by Dr Carlo Marras, chief of neurosurgery at the hospital, performed the final separation surgery on June 5. The hospital held a news conference a month later to announce the successful separation of the conjoined twins and their progressive recovery.

Dr Marras attended the baptism, according to a photograph tweeted by Antoinette Montaigne, a former government official in the Central African Republic and lawyer specialising in children’s rights.

Pope Francis visited a hospital when he went to the Central African Republic in 2015; returning to Rome, he asked the Bambino Gesù Hospital in Rome to begin a project there.

Mariella Enoc, president of the Rome hospital, met Ermine and her newborn twins during a visit to Bangui in July, 2018, as part of the proj-



Twin sisters Ervina and Prefina, who had been joined from the back of the head since birth, are pictured with their mother, Ermine, at the Bambino Gesù hospital in Rome in this photo released on July 8, 2020. (CNS photo)

ect to establish a paediatric medical centre there, the hospital said. The twins and their mother arrived in Rome two months later.

After more than a year of tests and studies, particularly given how many veins the babies shared, they underwent their first surgery in May, 2019; a second operation followed

a month later. New veins and grafts were allowed to grow for a year before the final surgery to separate the girls, who had been joined at the back of the head.

A news release from the hospital on July 7 said, “June 29 — they celebrated their second birthday looking in each other’s eyes”.

Vatican workers tested for Covid

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Vatican employees and workers who have contact with the public are being tested for the antibodies for Covid-19, said the new director of the Vatican department of health and hygiene.

“For now, the study has had good results in that no one has been shown to be a carrier of the antibodies,” said Dr Andrea Arcangeli.

People being tested included Vatican police, members of the Swiss Guard, staff at the Vatican Museums and in the Vatican’s warehouses and shops, said Arcangeli. Their first positive case, a priest, was confirmed by the Vatican on March 6. Arcangeli said the other cases of Vatican employees and residents who tested positive for the coronavirus were all handled by Italian hospitals because the Vatican health clinic is not a hospital and offers only general and specialised tests and outpatient care.

But the health service did do blanket testing of Vatican employees and residents who would have been in contact with the people found to be positive, he added.

The Vatican has said it registered 12 confirmed cases of Covid-19 among employees and residents, regardless of where they were tested. All 12 tested negative by early June.

Pope appoints six women to top roles on Vatican council

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Renewing the membership of the Vatican Council for the Economy, Pope Francis named six women to the previously all-male board that oversees the financial operations of all Vatican offices and entities.

Statutes for the council, approved by the Pope in 2015, say the body will have 15 members: eight cardinals or bishops and seven laypeople, each serving a five-year term.

The original seven lay members were all men with experience in busi-

ness, finance or government.

The six women the Pope named to replace them on August 6 have a similarly high profile and background. The six are: Charlotte Kreuter-Kirchhof, a German professor of law; Marija Kolak, president of Germany’s national association of cooperative banks; Maria Concepcion Osacar Garaicochea, a Spaniard and founding partner of the Azora Group and president of the Board of Azora Capital and Azora Gestion; Eva Castillo Sanz, former

president of Merrill Lynch Spain and Portugal; Ruth Maria Kelly, a former banking executive, former member of Parliament and former secretary of education in Great Britain; and Leslie Jane Ferrar, former treasurer to Prince Charles.

The only lay man named to the council was Alberto Minali, a former executive at Italian insurance companies.

According to Vatican News, Pope Francis renewed German Cardinal Reinhard Marx’s mandate as “car-

dinal coordinator” of the council. The cardinal, who is archbishop of Munich and Freising, also serves on the Pope’s international advisory Council of Cardinals.

According to the statutes, the council is “responsible for supervising the administrative and financial structures and activities of the dicasteries of the Roman Curia, of the institutions connected to or referring to the Holy See and of the administrations” falling under the governorate of Vatican City State.

Pope: Pandemic sheds light on other ‘social diseases’

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The coronavirus pandemic has shed light on other, “more widespread social diseases”, particularly attacks on the God-given human dignity of every person, Pope Francis said.

“The pandemic has highlighted how vulnerable and interconnected we all are. If we do not take care of each other, starting with the least — those who are most affected, including creation — we cannot heal the world,” the Pope said on August 12 at his weekly general audience.

Pope Francis had announced a week earlier that he would begin a series of audience talks about Catholic social teaching, especially in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The audience, which was livestreamed from the library of the

Apostolic Palace, began with a reading from the Book of Genesis: “God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

The dignity of the human person, the Pope said, is the foundation of Catholic social teaching, and all its attempts to apply Gospel values to the way people live and act in the world.

Pope Francis said that, while there are many “heroes” who are caring for others during the pandemic, even at the risk of their own lives, the pandemic also has revealed economic and social systems influenced by a “distorted vision of the person, a gaze that ignores the person’s dignity and relational character” by seeing others as “objects, objects to be used and discarded”.

Such an attitude is contrary to the faith, he said. The Bible clearly teaches that God created every person with “a unique dignity, inviting us into communion with him, with our sisters and brothers (and) with respect for all creation”.

“As disciples of Jesus,” he said, “we do not want to be indifferent or individualistic — two ugly attitudes, which are against harmony. Indifferent, I look the other way. And individualistic, ‘only for me’, looking only at one’s own interests.”

Instead, God created human beings “to be in communion”, the Pope said. “We want to recognise the human dignity of every person, whatever his or her race, language or condition.”

Taking seriously the dignity of

each person, and recognising the God-given gift of creation, should give rise to both a sense of responsibility and a sense of awe, Pope Francis said.

But it also has “serious social, economic and political implications” for those who recognise that responsibility, he said.

Pope Francis urged people to continue working to contain the virus and find a cure, but said that, in the meantime, “faith exhorts us to commit ourselves seriously and actively to combating indifference in the face of violations of human dignity”.

A “culture of indifference”, he said, “accompanies the throwaway culture: things that do not affect me, do not interest me”, and Catholics must counter such attitudes.

Catholic Health Australia asks retailers to stop selling N95 masks

SYDNEY (CNS) — Catholic Health Australia, which manages one in eight hospital beds in Australia, is calling on retailers to stop selling N95 hospital-grade masks to the public, as limited numbers in Australia will be exhausted, with disastrous consequences on the health system.

“These masks are on sale in Chemist Warehouse and Office Warehouse, but hospitals across the country are scrambling to access these life-saving masks,” said James Kemp, director of health policy at Catholic Health Australia.

Like the toilet paper hoarding frenzy witnessed earlier in the year at the onset of the pandemic — which exhausted supplies from shelves — wide-scale retail access to hospital-grade equipment will exhaust essential products from the health industry, where they are needed in emergency and intensive care wards, the association said.

“We are calling on retailers and wholesalers to think twice about sourcing these masks to sell to the public. As we have seen, this pandemic can surge very quickly — we need to make every mask count.”

A P2/N95 mask removes around 95 per cent of all particles that are at least 0.3 microns in diameter; the masks are essential in the fight against Covid-19, which has claimed the lives of thousands of hospital staff around the world.

Catholic Health Australia is encouraging the public to wear masks, but emphasised that national stocks of N95 masks need to be preserved; it said there are many other masks that can protect the public.

“There is real pressure on the supply of these masks. Some hospitals in Victoria are reaching out to health providers in less-affected states to ask if they can access their stocks of N95 masks,” said Kemp.

“The guidelines for wearing a mask in public is that it does not need to be a medical-grade mask, and certainly not an N95. While we all want to protect ourselves and our loved ones, the best way we can do this is to mask up in public, but leave the N95 masks to our clinicians who need them.”

“Covid-19 cases are rising all over the country, and we have to make sure our frontline staff are protected,” he said.

Virus-hit Sydney Catholic school cleared of wrongdoing

SYDNEY (Agencies) — Some 21 cases of Covid-19 had been linked to an independent Opus Dei Catholic senior school in Sydney as of August 14.

Tangara School for Girls in Cherrybrook is closed until August 24 while all students and staff get tested, reported the ABC.

A message on the school’s website on August 12 stated that the school was “professionally deep cleaned last weekend, and there will be additional daily cleaning prior to the return of students”.

“Thank you to the staff and parents who have contacted the school with messages of support. It has been a challenging and emotional period for the whole Tangara family, and we continue to stay focused on the health and wellbeing of our students, families, staff and broader community,” the message continued.

“What matters most is the health of all those affected by Covid-19, and the continuing safety of our school community and the wider community. Your support continues to be overwhelmingly positive and is much appreciated at

this time.”

A *Sydney Morning Herald* article stated that a New South Wales Police spokesperson said an investigation determined “no breaches of Public Health Orders have taken place” in connection with the school.

Police had looked into reports of alleged extracurricular activities that are not allowed under the state’s current rules.

The school community was written to by Tangara principal Rita Sakr, who said the school had observed NSW government guidelines leading up to, during and after lockdown, and had not held extracurricular activities or camps since March.

The ABC also reported that two other Sydney area Catholic girls’ schools — St Vincent’s College at Potts Point and Our Lady of Mercy College at Parramatta — are also closed for cleaning after students tested positive.

Covid-19 forces Knock shrine to close - to discourage crowds

KNOCK, Ireland (CNS) — The Marian shrine at Knock announced on August 10 that, in addition to postponing the popular Knock Novena and pilgrimage because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the shrine and its church would be closed for the August 15 feast of the Assumption of Mary to ensure pilgrims do not arrive anyway.

“Father Richard Gibbons, rector at Knock, has appealed to people not to travel to Knock on 15th August, as the shrine and grounds will be closed in order to prevent large gatherings in the context of Covid-19,” said a statement posted on the shrine’s website.

The feast of the Assumption traditionally is the centrepiece of the Knock Novena, and normally would draw 20,000 pilgrims to the shrine, the statement said. Over the course of the novena

from August 14-22, as many as 150,000 people normally would go to the shrine for prayer and lectures.

“In the light of the current escalation of Covid-19 cases around the country, together with the sheer impossibility of having the resources necessary to deal with the potential of large numbers of people gathering” at the shrine on August 15 and, “extremely conscious of our responsibility for the safety of our parishioners, pilgrims, visitors, staff, volunteers and priests,” Father Gibbons said, the shrine would close at 8pm on August 14 and not reopen until 7am on August 16.

“This decision was taken after detailed discussions with Church and state bodies,” the rector said. “We are appealing to people, therefore, not to travel to Knock for the 15th August”

Leaving the shrine open, he added, would be “ambiguous and cause confusion”.

During the nationwide coronavirus lockdown, the shrine’s livestreamed Masses, and offer of allowing people to virtually light a candle there, proved very popular. For the feast of the Assumption, the shrine said, “Masses will be celebrated online only and behind closed doors” at noon, 3 pm and 7.30pm.

When the strict lockdown in Ireland ended, in late June the Knock shrine began offering Masses with a maximum of 50 people present; the number increased to 100 in July and to 200 on August 4. However, Ireland has been experiencing a growth in Covid-19 infection rates, and some counties — but not County Mayo where Knock is located — have returned to lockdown measures.

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Climate fasters hosted by Viard House in Wgtn

by MARTIN De JONG

Climate activists fasting outside Parliament in Wellington have been hosted for the last two months at Viard House, the residence of Cardinal John Dew and Fr David Dowling, parish priest of the Wellington Cathedral Parish.

Under the banner of "E Tū for our Future/Stand up for our Future", initiated by David Goldsmith of Christchurch, a series of hunger strikers have been holding vigil outside Parliament since July 5, to draw attention to the climate and ecological crisis. The activists say current solutions offered by government fall drastically short of what is required by the science: complete societal transformation, in a fair and just way, is needed within ten years to avoid the worst impacts of the climate emergency.

Mr Goldsmith began his three-week fast on water (supplemented by electrolytes and a light broth at the end of the day) on July 12. He has been inspired by three people - Mahatma Gandhi, who used fasting to draw attention to injustice; Swedish climate protestor Greta Thunberg; and Ollie Langridge, who stood outside Parliament for more than 100 days last year calling for a "climate emergency" to be declared. (That protest morphed into "Fridays for Future" vigils, which continue each Friday lunchtime outside Parliament).

Though Mr Goldsmith has been the key spokesperson, it has not been a solo journey. Friend and fellow activist Tim Musson journeyed with him from Christchurch (by bus and ferry), kept an eye on his health, and fasted himself for four days.

Robin Treadwell from Waiheke Island heard of Mr Goldsmith's plan, and immediately felt drawn to support him. She picked up the fasting mantle from August 3, saying that "desperation" about slow, ineffective action had brought her to this point. "I am hoping that, by making myself vulnerable in doing the hunger strike, I could draw attention to the vulnerability of the life support systems. I fear for the future of my grandchildren, their peers, and all [that] other species will inherit from us."

Sue Boyde from Paraparaumu, north of Wellington, heard of Mr Goldsmith's action and wanted to support him "as a guest in our town". She followed Robin in fasting from August 13. They planned to continue as long as the Covid-19 situation allowed.

The idea emerged at a meeting of climate activists in Christchurch in the middle of last year. Someone said "hunger strike", and it grabbed Mr Goldsmith's attention. "I was actually consumed



(From left) Tim Musson, David Goldsmith, Robin Treadwell, and energy analyst Molly Melhuish on the third day of Mr Goldsmith's fast.

by it," he said. He immediately started planning towards a hunger strike at Parliament. The mother of a Christchurch friend put them in touch with Viard House, where parish priest Fr Dowling and Cardinal Dew have provided accommodation, cooking and cleaning facilities, and a space for meetings.

Fr Dowling said he was impressed by the commitment and example of Mr Goldsmith and his supporters. "They are motivated by deep concern for those who come after us and care for the environment. They are in tune with the thinking of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* by reminding us that the climate is a common good, which belongs to all and is meant for all."

Mr Goldsmith was grateful for the support. "It's just over the road [from Parliament]. It couldn't be more convenient. The accommodation has been wonderful."

Climate change had concerned him for years. While trying to live simply in his personal life, he felt something more needed to be done. He had full support from his partner Julie, with whom he has a deep harmony on trying to live ethically.

"She's just 100 per cent on board with me being here, and I don't think I would be up here without that," he told *NZ Catholic*.

His four-year-old daughter Hana is also a deep motivator.

"We all struggle with denial, because the issue is so huge. It's not just science denial, it's thinking magically about how we might be able to get a solution. There's also this emotional denial, which is what I've struggled with . . . My daughter Hana has been a catalyst for that starting to break open, because [the emotional denial] is a block to doing something, and it's a block to feeling my love. If fear and grief is all frozen up, also my love is all frozen up. With Hana, I can't hold my love back. It just pours out of me, and then: what is the future for Hana?"

Mr Goldsmith continues his action for the climate through vigils in Christchurch, while the climate vigil and fast continues at Parliament - at least to the election - through a range of supporters. Visit <http://etu4future.nz/> for a regular blog post on the group's Parliamentary encounters, and supporting material.



Family Matters

Helen Luxford

We are about to celebrate the last birthday of 2020 in our house. This year has been an odd one for birthday celebrations. We had two birthdays in lockdown and one in level 3 in our household. One was a "big" birthday — we would have had some sort of celebration for it, but now that it seems to have been forgotten, I've suggested that we have a re-do next year. For kids, birthdays are all important. A day where they are the highlight, the special person to be celebrated — and for our kids that includes a party of some sort with friends and, of course, presents.

Presents to me are a minefield. I don't have that gift that some have of being able to pick the perfect present. I'm also very pragmatic, so prefer to give what someone wants or needs and prefer to receive the same. We are in such a consumerist mode in the current modern world, and many of us have too much "stuff". It seems such a waste of money and resources to see many gifts unused and unwanted. This is in stark contrast to the many in our world who have so many real needs for the basics, let alone a fancy Lego set.

With the kids, I feel it's important to ensure that birthdays remain about celebration and quality time, and not about the presents. It's important not to compare or judge presents. We cel-

brate Jesus' birthday on Christmas Day, recognising the gift God gave us all, his only Son. We traditionally give presents to symbolically recognise this gift. Every family deals with this issue differently. Do you just give to the children? Do you come to some arrangement whereby you only have to give to one adult each? This idea of gift-giving is well established with birthdays, and I put that down to an extension of Christmas, so we celebrate Jesus' birthday on December 25, and ours on the day we know we were born.

We all have our own birthday traditions - in some families they are a big deal, others not so much. Some families are all about presents, others not so much. Most of us, as we age, probably don't bother too much with birthdays. They can certainly get out of hand. The cost of holding a party outside of home for a group of kids can be extraordinary. Kids can come to expect that as the norm, and there can certainly be the issue of "keeping up with the Joneses". We like to take the chance to make the birthday person special, for that one day that they are the centre of attention. With four children, we like to make sure they each get at least one day a year to feel like they are the centre of our world.

The important thing, we think, is

to not get caught up in the gifts, to make sure that doesn't take over as the most important part of birthdays. Each birthday means another year under your belt, more challenges overcome, different challenges to look forward to. For some, age means more freedom, whereas at some stages of our life, it means less freedom. There is always change associated with ageing, both good and bad. Some "big" birthdays are seen as milestones, and can be good opportunities to pause and reflect. Birthdays should also be a time to be grateful for what we have. One thing commonly forgotten is being grateful for faith.

Many of us are feeling vulnerable and uncertain in this global pandemic. Let birthdays be a source of joy and love and celebration. Try to keep the focus away from material goods, and instil a grateful attitude for everything, including faith.

John 6:32-33; "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

Helen Luxford is a physician, working part-time. She is a parishioner of St Michael's, Remuera. Together with her husband Michael, they are raising their children in the Catholic Faith and reflecting on the challenges and joys that brings.

Birthdays

Festival hits recurring notes

by NEVIL GIBSON

The annual bounty from the New Zealand International Film Festival contained some recurring themes. This year's offering followed overseas trends of going online because of cinema closures during the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, New Zealand's cinemas are now open, (when this column was written) and a small selection of entries hit the big screen. Habits gained through the lockdown appear to be enduring, as audience numbers remain well below pre-Covid times.

The one festival screening I attended was not full, even though it had seating for only a dozen or so. So, the gamble to charge \$10 or \$12 a time for home viewing would have paid off. Also, the choice was available throughout the country, overcoming the disadvantage of living in places where cinemas are scarce.

The downside of NZIFF20 was the lack of big-name features. But the low cost of choosing from dozens of relatively unknown works made taking a risk worthwhile.

None of the dozen I viewed would make it into a top 10 list in any previous year. But several were standouts.

Two featured mother-daughter relationships in vastly different settings. From France, *The Truth* (*La Verité*) (Palace Films) featured two of its top actresses, Catherine Deneuve and Juliette Binoche, in a show-biz linked story.

This contrasted with the Australian-made *Relic* (Umbrella), a horror film with two equally strong leads, Robyn Nevin and Emily Mortimer. Coincidentally, both films feature bright granddaughters to give a three-generational dimension.

In the former, Deneuve has



Catherine Deneuve and Juliette Binoche in a scene from *The Truth*.

Movie Review

published a memoir that purports to tell the truth about her life. Her screenwriter daughter (Binoche) knows differently, and has flown from the United States with her actor-husband (Ethan Hawke) and their precocious child (Clémentine Grenier) for the book launch.

The conflict over reality and fabrication is played out in a rural estate on the outskirts of Paris and at the Epinay Studios, where Deneuve is in a film. She is giving her director and a young up-and-coming actress (Manon Clavel) a hard time, as they play the same woman at differing stages in her life.

Japanese director Hirokazu Kore-ada (*Shoplifters*) uses this plot device to draw out his characters without need for melodrama.

Relic takes a different route, as Nevin is in an advanced state of dementia, but will not leave her rambling mansion, which

plays a key part in her madness. She resists attempts to force her out by Mortimer and her adult daughter (Bella Heathcote). Like all good horror movies, the scary stuff is best left to the imagination, making this an impressive debut by director Natalie Erika James.

The recurring theme in *Corpus Christi* (Palace Films), from Polish director Jan Komasa, and Scott Teems' *The Quarry* (Rialto), is the impersonation of the lead character. The respective fake priest and preacher follow similar paths to redemption, as they connect with their unknowing congregations. A review of *The Quarry* is in the Clips column, while *Corpus Christi* and other festival highlights will have to wait until they are in wider release.

Ratings: *The Truth* — parental guidance advised. 107 minutes. *Relic* — mature audiences. 89 minutes.

CLIPS

23 Walks (Rialto)

Dog walking has strict rules about etiquette and conversation topics. But when exceptions happen, surprises can happen. That is the premise when German Shepherd owner Dave Johns (*I, Daniel Blake*) meets Alison Steadman (*Gavin & Stacey*) and her Yorkshire Terrier. Both have good reasons to hold back secrets, as their non-dog relationship deepens during their convivial outings in parks outside London. Initially, they don't look suited to each other. But each has a motive to do so, as Johns faces expulsion from his social housing and Steadman is dealing with the downsides of divorce. Writer-director Paul Morrison, in his first film in 10 years, doesn't allow any slackness in dialogue, which keeps the relationship moving as the two well-cast leads adapt to their changing circumstances. A bonus is Steadman singing the 1940s Mexican song *Bésame Mucho*. Rating: Mature audiences. 102 minutes.

This Town (Madman)

Unlike the disciplined structure of *23 Walks*, this unwieldy Kiwi comedy has the virtues and faults of giving everything a go in the hope something works. The plot is about a suspected mass murderer in a rural backwater, where a disgraced cop is keen to dispense justice, whatever the cost. Laboured references are made to the Bain and Thomas cases, though much effort in the physical surroundings and interiors suggest it could be Hicksville, America or Australia. New Zealanders are, by now, familiar with movies that depict their rural cousins as unsophisticated and good only for breaking the rules. This hasn't stopped audiences from lapping up a style of comedy that appeals as much to some as it repels others. Co-writer and director Dave White plays the lead role, backed up by Robyn Malcolm, Rima Te Wiata and Alice May Connolly. Look out for Gabe McDonnell as the gossip magazine editor. Rating: Mature audiences. 91 minutes.

The Quarry (Rialto)

As mentioned in the main article, this moody Texas-set thriller turns an opportunistic killer into a preacher at an Hispanic church near the border with Mexico. A highway has cut the town off the grid, though it has a police force of three, led by Michael Shannon. The real preacher's body is found, and some innocent drug-dealing suspects are rounded up. Meanwhile, the fake preacher (Shea Whigham, *Joker*), who cannot speak Spanish, is packing them in with his no-judgement teachings of redemption. The story is based on a South African novel by Damon Galgut, which is set near the end of the apartheid era. The themes of racial tension and immigration are comfortably transposed, while Shannon brings much-needed credibility to a plot that evolves at the glacial pace. Colombian-born Catalina Sandino Moreno (of TV's *The Affair*) is largely wasted in a minor role as the preacher's translator and a romantic interest for Shannon. Rating: TBA. 98 minutes.

Dead Sea Scrolls help put early Christianity in context

JESUS AND THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS: Revealing the Jewish Roots of Christianity by John Bergsma. Image Books (New York, 2019). 257 pp., US\$25. Reviewed by DAVID GIBSON

One of the last acts of the Jewish community that once inhabited Qumran on the Dead Sea's northwest shore may have been the hiding of its treasured "holy scrolls" in nearby caves upon seeing Roman legions "approaching in the distance". The scrolls were discovered, still in their caves, in 1946-47.

John Bergsma, an expert on the scrolls, is a theology professor at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio.

The Qumranites were Essenes, Bergsma explains. First-century Jewish culture was dominated by three sects, the Sadducees, Pharisees and Essenes, he observes. While Qumran was an all-male community, Israel's Essenes also included women.

Essene communities were present "in all the significant towns and cities of Israel, including Jerusalem", Bergsma says.

He describes how the Dead Sea Scrolls "give us a window into the thought and practice of the Judaism of Jesus' day". The author became convinced the scrolls illuminate many "otherwise confusing or hard to understand" New Testament passages.

For example, he devotes attention to Essenes in Jerusalem and how they may have factored into the time and place of Jesus' Last Supper and thus help explain a "discrepancy in the date of Passover" that has challenged Scripture scholars.

Book Review

"Curious features of the Gospel accounts . . . would be explained if Jesus celebrated the Last Supper in the Essene neighbourhood of Jerusalem", following "the calendar they used", Bergsma suggests.

John the Baptist, eating locusts or wearing camel hair garments, appears less eccentric when the beliefs and practices of Qumran are known, Bergsma suggests. "The circumstantial case that John had contact with the Essenes at Qumran is very strong," he writes.

Bergsma thinks that John and the Qumranites knew each other well.

Bergsma puts forward a scenario that "can't be proven", but that "does fit with all the known facts", in which John "received some or all of his education" at Qumran.

When people asked John how they ought to conduct their lives, he responded: "Whoever has two tunics should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise" (Luke 3:11). Bergsma suggests that in this way John "encouraged the ethic of simplicity and

equality he had learned at Qumran".

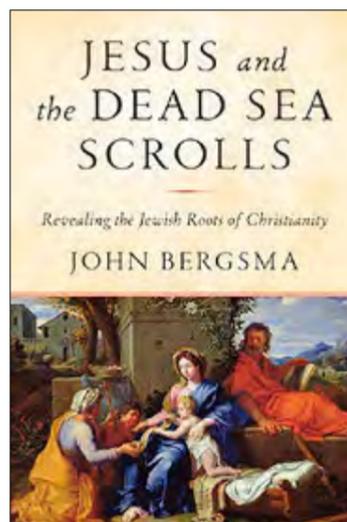
However, the author appears rather certain that John left Qumran or was expelled, perhaps due to his conviction that "God's message of salvation should go out to all the people, not just an elite among Israel". That conviction clashed with Qumranite teaching.

It seems the influence of John the Baptist and his Qumran background extends even further. Bergsma proposes that the sometimes-puzzling Gospel of John "makes sense as the work of the apostle John, who was a disciple of John the Baptist before following Jesus".

"No number of parallels between Christian and Essene literature can explain away the unique and remarkable nature of the person and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth," Bergsma states. The Essenes were not Christianity's "parent movement", he says. The Qumranites and early Christians were "siblings".

A benefit of the Dead Sea Scrolls, in Bergsma's eyes, is the help they provide in making Christianity's origins "more understandable in their ancient historical context".

David Gibson was the founding editor of *Origins*, Catholic News Service's documentary service. He retired in 2007 after holding that post for 36 years.



THE CHURCH YEAR

We are here: ▼ 21st Sunday

Advent

Christmas

Ordinary Time

Lent

Eastertime

Ordinary Time

Praise for God as the giver of all good things

Scripture

by Fr Kevin Waldie sm

August 23: 21st Sunday of Ordinary Time. **Readings:** 1. Isaiah 22:19-23; **Psalm:** 138; 2. Romans 11:33-36; **Gospel:** Matthew 16:13-20.

Occupying the minds of today's biblical authors is the source and role of authority in the community of faith.

In Isaiah, we have verses that, by and large, have proved rather difficult to interpret. But if we see their meaning revealed in the prophet's word choices, then we can perhaps discern part of his thematic concerns. And that pertains to the place and significance of authority in the faith community. The text's orientation to the future indicates that God is the one who gives authority to those whom he chooses. And the key to the house of David is the symbol of that fact.

The person in charge of the key therefore

guarantees ongoing divine guidance of Israel.

Paul's focus in the passage from Romans praises God as the giver of all good things. This perspective derives from divine wisdom and the inspired revelation it brings. There are depths here that are unfathomable, but the insight Paul offers centres us in the thought that we should be constantly mindful of everything the Lord has given us to help us through this life. And the fitting response in this context is to give glory to the God whose good will becomes known to us.

The Gospel exchange between Jesus and Peter is a sign that the assembly of God, the Church,

will be led by chosen individuals invested with the Lord's own authority. Peter's confession of faith in the Lord as Messiah thus prepares for the conferral of power that guarantees Jesus' earthly ministry has a future in and through his disciples. Authority as divine gift is, therefore, signalled in the act of handing over the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

In sum, the Lord's authority continuously revealed in the Church is cause for ongoing acknowledgement of the divine presence with us.

Accept the challenge to be messengers of the Word of God

Working for God's mission of proclaiming his Word lies at the heart of these readings.

Jeremiah is well-remembered because of the burden he constantly senses whenever he preaches the Word he has been divinely commissioned to communicate. Lamenting his vocation in the face of outright rejection, he knows deep within that he must persevere. And so, whenever he is tempted to abandon his mission, he feels an even greater urge to be true to his calling. In these few verses then, the all-powerful Word of God demands to be revealed far and wide.

Also to the fore in Paul's words to the Romans this Sunday is commitment to his mission. His

advice to them takes the form of two directives. The first of these refers to the Christian response we must all make if we are to be true to our identity in Christ. Our charge is to be spiritually resolved to offer ourselves wholeheartedly to the Lord. And, secondly, it is our duty to be radically transformed in mind. This dual effort is thus deemed to be essential for our personal well-being and for the good of the Church's mission.

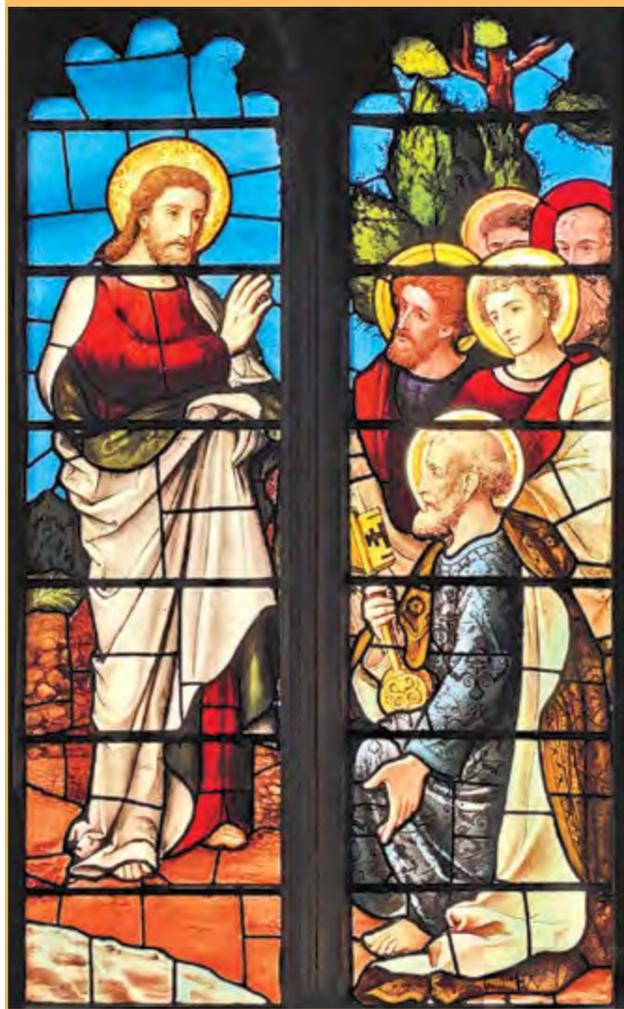
In keeping with what Jeremiah and Paul have expressed today, the Gospel exchange between Jesus and Peter leads to the realisation that all the Lord's followers are called to walk the path of suffering, death and resurrection. Matthew's

August 30: 22nd Sunday of Ordinary Time. **Readings:** 1. Jeremiah 20:7-9; **Psalm:** 63; 2. Romans 12:1-2; **Gospel:** Matthew 16:21-27.

telling of the Passion prediction therefore highlights the enduring significance of true Christian discipleship. Despite seeming to impose a great burden on us, this Gospel moment lays bare the faith we publicly profess week after week.

Taking the essence of these readings to heart means that we must accept the challenge to be messengers of the Word of God in each and every opportunity that presents itself to us.

SAINTED GLASS



The Gospel this Sunday (August 23) finishes with Jesus giving Peter the keys to the kingdom.

This window from Sts Peter and Paul, Lavenham, England shows the scene (thanks to Mike Spring for the photo).

Peter was effectively the first Pope, and we have an unbroken line of succession to Pope Francis today. First, though, they were at Caesarea Philippi, a place that had known many gods in the past.

Jesus asked the disciples who they thought he was. He had been training them for quite a while, so it was important that he tested them. They knew him and passed the test. Do you know Jesus too?

— Glen McCullough

Bible study: a tool for coping

Bible News

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Fr John Kartje, rector of Mundelein Seminary at the University of St Mary of the Lake in Illinois, is hosting an online Bible study this summer called, "Living on the Edge of Chaos: Finding Hope in the Face of Fear".

The current events that have devastated the world have left many confused and hopeless. This Bible study, that now has more than 1500 participants, aims to help that.

The self-guided series can be accessed by signing up at www.usml.edu/chaos, and will be distributed as a series of four weekly email messages. Once they have subscribed online, participants will immediately receive the first session via email and each subsequent session will be sent for the next three weeks on the day they originally signed up.

"Obviously, there's a lot going on in the world these days," said Fr Kartje. "But I teach Scripture, that's just a love of mine; And I often find that there's wisdom in Scripture in a very kind of pragmatic or practical sense that isn't always appreciated."

The goal was to offer a genuine Bible study that examines Scripture, while also analysing how these passages reflect our current experiences and become a tool for coping.

"The stress of uncertainty, you know, the stress of illness, fear, shame and discouragement, all those kinds of emotions and feelings are not unique to our times," said Fr Kartje, a priest of the Chicago archdiocese.

"So, by looking at a series of characters and narratives from the Old

and New Testaments, my hope was [that this] might help people actually see their Bible and see Scripture as a true resource for finding [and] interacting with God in the midst of not only the chaotic situations [at this time], but wherever those kinds of stresses might surface in their life," said Fr Kartje.

"Obviously there are beautiful prayers, powerful psalms and so forth [that], in the midst of chaotic times, somebody might use as a prayer resource," the priest added, "but there's just also all sorts of instances of people dealing with the kinds of things people are dealing with today [in the Bible]."

The study includes audio meditations recorded by Fr Kartje, with accompanying Bible passages, and spiritual exercises designed to inspire reflection.



Fr John Kartje



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Local Diocese News

Cardinal blesses Wellington cathedral project site



Cardinal John Dew, with Msgr Gerard Burns, at the site.



The choirs are sprinkled with holy water

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

Cardinal John Dew blessed the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Sacred Heart site and its construction workers on the morning of August 7, before work started on the \$16.5 million earthquake-strengthening and refurbishing of the building.

The category 1 historic building has been closed since 2018.

Work is able to start on the project thanks to \$8.5 million from the

Government's "shovel-ready" Infrastructure Fund, a \$120,000 grant from the Wellington City Council, as well as \$3.3 million having been raised so far by the Catholic community.

The blessing ceremony took place mainly inside the cathedral chapel because of rain. Cardinal Dew prayed for the safety of those who work on the site.

The choir at the blessing was from the adjacent Sacred Heart Ca-

thedral School and St Mary's College, whose students also read the prayers of the faithful.

Vicar general Msgr Gerard Burns accompanied Cardinal Dew for the blessing.

After the blessing, Cardinal Dew commented on his facebook page that the cathedral "is a sacred place where people have prayed alone and with others for over a century".

"This cathedral of ours is tiny in comparison to the great cathedrals

of the world, but is it ours and it is beautiful, worthy of preservation for future generations. Thank you to all who participated in the blessing ceremony, workers, parishioners, friends, city councillors and many others."

Wellington firm L T McGuinness is the main contractor for the work. This company also did the strengthening and restoration of St Mary of the Angels in Wellington, completed in 2017.

Strong pride in Central Otago town despite name

by PETER OWENS

Despite a modern trend of proposing renaming places or removing statues because of past wrongdoings, there does not seem to be a great appetite among Central Otago Catholics for the renaming of a town which has a name that, in some circles, could be seen as giving offence.

The town of Cromwell was named after the soldier/politician who was one of the prime movers in executing King Charles I and who became the Lord Protector.

After removing Charles I, Cromwell led a punitive expedition to Ireland. He was a brilliant general, but was also an appalling bigot and he had a deep hatred of the Irish and of Roman Catholics. This led to what may be only described as massacres of Irish people at Drogheda and Wexford. Some historians (British)

allege this was an attempt at ethnic cleansing as over about 20,000 people were killed, out of a total Irish population of about 2 million.

This has never been forgotten - wherever Irish people or people of Irish descent settled. Indeed, many of the early settlers of the Cromwell region were Irish goldminers, and it was not long before a flourishing Catholic community arose (1873). It has continued, and the Cromwell people paid a significant sum of money to erect a splendid church designed by F.W. Petre.

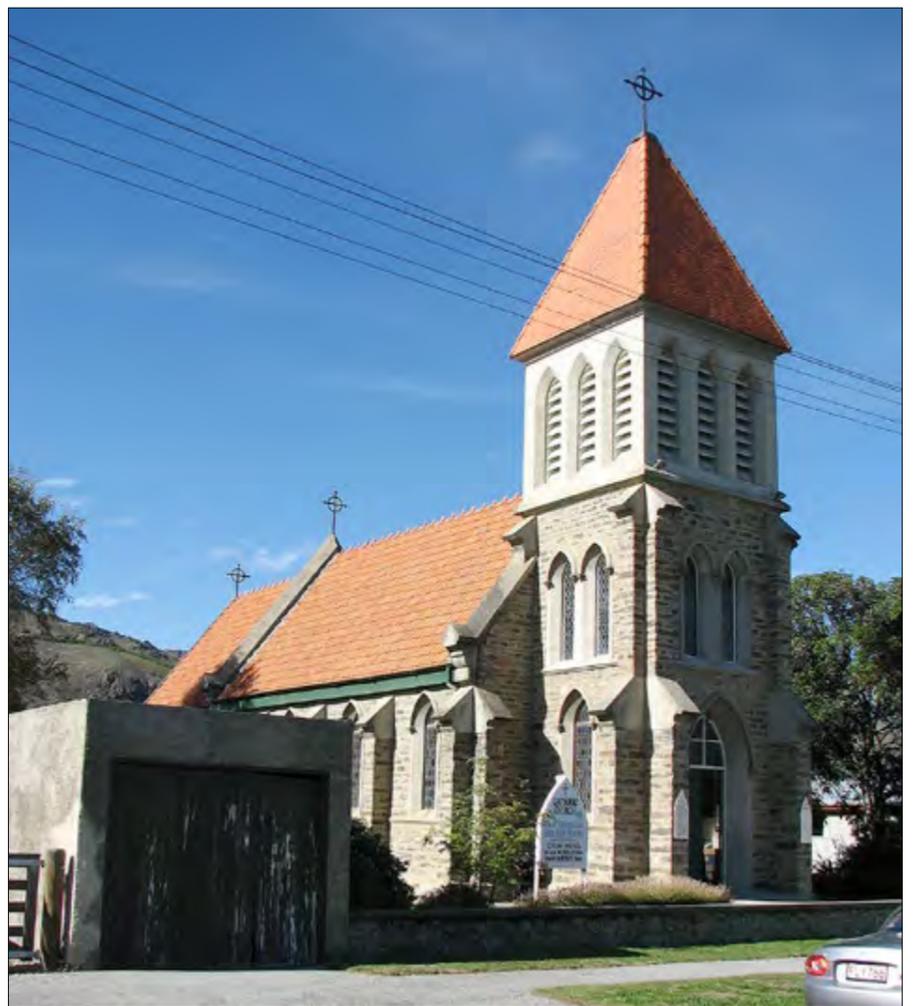
It was blessed and opened on April 18, 1909, and was named "The Church of the Irish Martyrs". And it is now known as the "Church of Mary Immaculate and the Irish Martyrs". The martyrs commemorated in the name of the church were those people in Ireland who were martyred for their faith between 1537 and 1714. There were dozens of people, who have been sanctified in varying degrees, for dying in Ireland for their Roman Catholic faith in these years.

On September 22, 1992, St John Paul II proclaimed a representative group from Ireland as martyrs and beatified them.

The Church flourishes at Cromwell, which has a population of about 5000. It is also the base for the equally flourishing Catholic congregation at Wanaka.

The town is expanding rapidly, along with Queenstown and Wanaka, and about 100 people attend Sunday Mass at the church.

Despite the insult to the Catholic people of naming a town after such a murderous individual as Oliver Cromwell, there has been, according to Fr Flannery, little support for



The Catholic Church of Mary Immaculate and the Irish Martyrs in Cromwell



Father Martin Flannery

a change in the name of the town. There is strong pride in its history and facilities.

The Catholic community is growing rapidly in Cromwell. "The church

is bulging at Christmas and Easter. We might one day need a bigger space, but we'll cross that bridge when we come to it," said Fr Flannery.



Papal Prayer

The Pope's universal prayer intention for August: The Maritime World.
We pray for all those who work and live from the sea, among them sailors, fishermen and their families.

40 YEARS AGO

ENROLMENT PROCESS CAUSES CONCERN

Concern is mounting in some Catholic circles about new enrolment procedures, introduced at Catholic schools in the wake of integration.

The concern is over a certificate which parish priests are now expected to sign, indicating that parents who want to enrol their child at a Catholic school have an "established connection" with the Catholic community.

The certificates, which are starting to appear as parents enrol their children for the new school year, will be required for preferential enrolment at Catholic primary and secondary schools.

The preferential enrolments will account for 95 percent of all pupils at integrated Catholic schools. The other five percent — specified by integration law — will be made up of non-preferential enrolments — pupils whose parents have no "established connection" with the Catholic community.

But priests and parents are now asking just what an "established connection" with a parish means;

and there are wide differences in the answers being offered.

At least one Auckland priest says that he won't be signing the new certificates, which have been issued by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference.

He says that he is not prepared to define what an "established connection" with a Catholic community is, nor to put in writing that anyone has it.

Other priests are saying that the certificates will help to wake Catholic parents up to their religious obligations; but there seems little agreement over what those obligations involve.

One priest told *Zealandia* he thought the request to enrol a child at the parish school was sufficient connection; another said he would expect three months' attendance at Sunday Mass and a willingness to be involved in parish and school affairs.

In the view of another, the use of Catholic schools for their "snob value" was definitely "not on."
— *Zealandia*, August 24, 1980.

CAPTION CONTEST



Write the best caption for this photo and win \$30. Send in your ideas by Tuesday, Sept. 1 to Caption Contest 596, NZ Catholic, PO Box 147000, Ponsonby, Auckland 1144. Or email: design@nzcatholic.org.nz Please include your postal address so that your prize, if you win, can be sent to you.

The winner of the Caption Contest from issue 594, (right) was **Martin Kane, via email.**

Some other suggestions were:
"We're back with the ultimate mid-winter sale!" — **M. Hill, Auckland.**

"Face-to-face connection!" — **Joan Leonard, Auckland.**

"We take our job at the call centre very seriously." — **Trevor 'OFamo'oni, Auckland.**

"We'll have bells ringing in our ears next." — **M-T. Anderson, Upper Hutt.**

"A close call." — **B.G. Gianotti, Auckland.**

"He misinterprets everything I say!" — **Judy Lamb, Whangarei.**

"I'm trialling a new headphone while my husband is facing a new phone system." — **Sr. Mary Scanlon, Christchurch.**

"This is called phoning a head." — **Russell Watt, Auckland.**

"Early attempts at hands-free mobiles." — **John Lewis, Hamilton.**



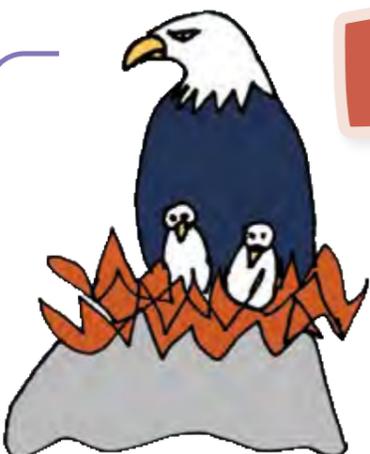
When he asked me to wear his ring, I didn't realise this was what he meant!

I've heard of great pick-up lines I think but this is going a bit far! — **Michael Jarka, Dunedin.**

"Take no notice as they are talking through their heads." — **Gerry Portegys, Tokoroa.**

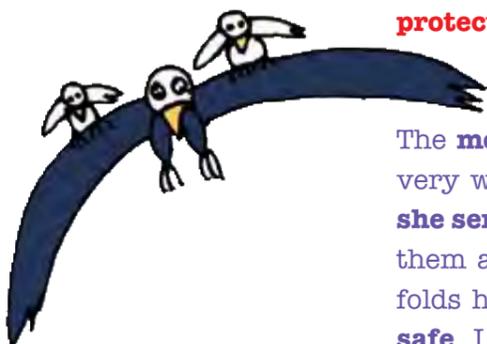
"Maybe I've got my wires crossed, but I'm sure they said we'd be able to hear music better with these headphones." — **Anne Kane, Timaru.**

Kit's Corner



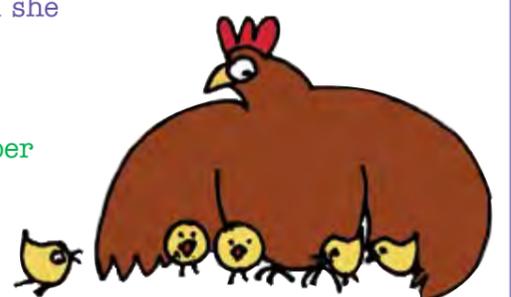
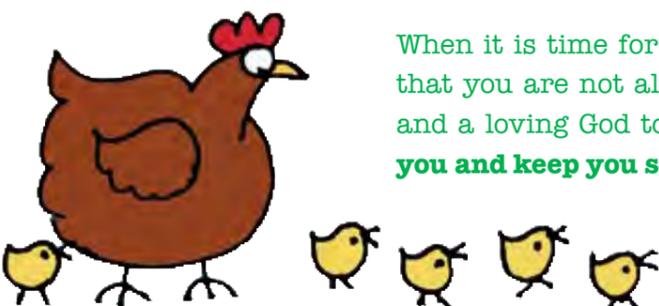
Have you ever watched how **birds** fly? They stretch out their wings and flap them to catch the wind. Sometimes they just float across the sky and the wind holds them up, just like when you float on the water.

The **mother Eagle** builds her nest **way up high** on the edge of a cliff. She looks after her **babies** (eaglets) with great care, making sure they are warm, and she brings them plenty of food. When she knows that her **eaglets are ready** to learn to fly and look after themselves, she does not tell them or show them what to do. She just **pushes them out** of the high, high nest! Then she flies along underneath them to make sure they are okay. As soon as they get tired or scared, she comes up under them and spreads out her wings for them to hop on. She **protects** them and keeps them **safe**. I think God is very clever to think of that!



The **mother hen** builds her nest **on the ground**. She also looks after her babies (chickens) very well. When the mother hen knows her **chickens are ready** to look after themselves, **she sends them off** but stays close by. If they get tired or scared, she hurries to them and holds out her wings for them to scramble under. Then she folds her wings down again. She **protects** them and keeps them **safe**. I think God is very clever to think of that as well!

When it is time for **you** to **try** something **new** or **scary**, remember that you are not all by yourself. You have family and friends and a loving God to keep an eye on you and **protect you and keep you safe**.



Can you learn this verse off by heart? Psalm 91, verse 4:
"God will cover you with his wings; you will be safe in God's care."

TEXT: SUZIE MCCARTHY ART: PATSY NEALON

Is food shopping online better for your budget?

Sorted

Picture yourself walking the aisles at the supermarket, with every label screaming, "Buy me!" It's basically like walking a hallway of ads.

That's no accident, since a supermarket is a highly calibrated, thoroughly tested space designed to persuade you to keep walking through it and buying more stuff as you go. It can wear down your willpower, especially with little ones in tow!

Now we've got what may be the best thing for budgeting in a long while: ordering groceries online, either for delivery or "click and collect".

To get ahead financially over the long term, we need to sort our money in the here and now. Buying food online can help keep your spending plan on track. With the ease of shopping from home, you may also find the headspace to spot bargains and lower-cost options that work well.



Photo: Pixabay

The upside of online food shopping

It's so much easier to stick to your list.

When we're walking through real aisles, there are all sorts of little extras that end up in the cart. That doesn't tend to happen virtually. You can more easily avoid those impulse buys, again without any kid pressure (no lower shelves to tempt them). Best of all, you can save your lists to come back to each week and remake your order effortlessly.

You can keep an eye on your cart total.

Ever see someone walk through the supermarket aisles with a calculator? Only twice have I seen shoppers plugging in numbers as they go. Our brains, for all their power, have a hard time keeping up with how much we're spending. Online, there are no surprise moments at the checkout; you can track exactly where you're at cost-wise.

You can check what's in your pantry.

Scratching your head at the store, wondering if you've already got that item or not? Now it's a simple walk to the pantry with your device to check that you're not overstocking or forgetting anything.

Did we mention the convenience?

You've got options: delivery to your door, or "click and collect". Either way, you have a personal shopper carrying out your orders. If you live

some distance from the store, just the time and petrol savings alone can make delivery worth it.

You might even get upgraded.

When you order something and your shopper finds the store has run out, they will typically replace it with something of the same value or higher. A massive \$16 jar of crunchy peanut butter made it to our house because of this, and we only paid for the \$7 one. Score!

The downside of online supermarkets

Having a personal shopper comes at a cost.

Will you end up spending less this way? With paid delivery, perhaps not so much, but the "click and collect" option helps. Lately, if you bring your own bags to collect, it can even be cheaper.

You can't always get what you want.

Some in-store products may not be available, such as very large items and hot food. In some areas (for example, rurally) the product range can be limited. If the store runs out of an item, and there is no substitute of equal or higher value, you may end up with a product you didn't want. If you were in the store, you'd simply change your meal plan on the fly, but online you don't have this option.

You can't pick your own.

It takes time to get used to not picking indi-

vidual items yourself, not choosing the quality of meats, fish or produce you want. It also takes a bit to get used to the quantities on offer and purchasing by weight. You may think you ordered five carrots, only to find you've received 15!

The specials can be different online.

Some in-store specials may not be available online. That said, they can indeed be the same, or there can even be online-only deals to take advantage of. To spend less, like you would in a store, make sure to search out the specials tab.

Overall, there is much to like about online grocery shopping, with a lot of power at your fingertips. Hopefully, it helps us stick to our spending plans, keeping us on track towards our long-term goals.

By Sorted's Tom Hartmann. For more on sorting your finances and staying safe from scams, visit sorted.org.nz

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Fr Antony Sumich
Mass Times

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday: 7am
 Thursday & Friday: 7pm
 Saturday: 8am; Sunday: 7.30am & 5pm
 (except for first Friday of the month to be held at St Joseph's, Otahuhu)

Confessions: Monday - Thursday: 30 minutes before Mass; Friday, Saturday, Sunday: 1 hour before Mass

Mt St Mary's, 4 Rangiwai Road, Titirangi
Fr Antony Sumich
Mass Times

Sunday: Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament 10.15am; High Mass: 10.30am
 Exposition: Begins after Mass
 Confessions: Begin at 9am
 Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament 24/7
24/7 Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration
Ph: Grace Yuen 0226534062

Kopua blessed by local vocation



Br Jonathan Craven



The monastery chapel external cross

by PALMERSTON NORTH DIOCESE Vocations Team

Kopua is a hidden treasure of the Church in New Zealand. That it is hidden is not by chance. It's a Cistercian monastery, and so seclusion is part of its nature and purpose.

That doesn't mean that Kopua, tucked away in the rolling hills of Tararua, is enclosed. In fact, part of the Cistercian charism is to offer hospitality through the monastery guest house, and all are welcome to the seven times of prayer which punctuate the monks' day.

Kopua (www.kopuamonastery.org.nz) has been enjoying something of a revival in recent years. Parts of the monastery have been rebuilt, in a contemporary rendition of the ancient Cistercian principle of noble simplicity, which extends to the design of all that makes up a monastery. Also, a native tree-planting project now offsets the dairy farming on the fields that make up the property.

With this physical revitalisation, there has also been a welcome increase in the number of monks at Kopua. Notwithstanding visa hurdles, four monks have arrived from the Cistercian monastery on Guimaras Island in the Philippines. Brothers Aelred, Anselm, Gregory and Raphael are all surviving the New Zealand winter, have

happily settled in, and have applied for stability; the monastic equivalent of permanent residency. For them, among the many blessings of Kopua are the deep silence of the countryside and the dark star-lit night skies.

God's providence has brought a further blessing to Kopua in the person of Brother Jonathan Craven. He is a local vocation. Jonathan grew up in Marton and went to Palmerston North Boys' High School, before university, work and time overseas. Recently he "received the habit" (part of it actually, as the black full-length scapular comes further down the formation track). This is a sacred ritual that marks the transition from postulant to novice.

Jonathan has enthusiastically embraced the life of prayer, contemplation, study, manual work and hospitality. He says: "It's been easier than I imagined to enter into the simplicity of the life. In its own way, it's joyful, and the community has helped me in the practical aspects of the life. Thanks be to God, I feel at peace here".

If a travel bubble opens with Australia, Jonathan will continue his novitiate at Tarrawarra Abbey near Melbourne, where there are other novices, before returning to Kopua.

Otherwise, who knows, please God someone may join him in formation here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

'Hope' resource website launched

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

Palmerston North diocese has launched a website called Tūmanako, which provides a variety of articles, videos and resources, all based on the theme of hope.

According to the website, in the context of tūmanako/hope, "we will look back at where we have come from, marking our 40th year as the

Diocese of Palmerston North". "We will explore where we find ourselves now, even in the midst of local and global challenges. And we will invite God to continue to lead us, to reveal to us where we are being called and how we should strive to live.

"It has been a hard year so far, but despite this, Pope Francis encourages us to consider that hope should be the air that we breathe," the website

continued.

On his facebook page, Cardinal John Dew said that "there are many people searching in one way or another for things that will help their spiritual lives and support our communities, so congratulations to the people behind the website for this initiative".

The website is at <https://tumanako.pndiocese.org.nz/>

WIT'S END

A young missionary in Africa was reading his bible in a clearing, when a lion came up and laid down beside him. As he quietly prayed for deliverance, another lion came out of the bush and laid down on his other side. Convinced that this was a test of his faith, he returned to reading his bible. As soon as he did, the two lions pounced on him and devoured him. Moral: Do not try to read between the lions.

One night a lady came home from her weekly prayer meeting, found she was being robbed, and she shouted out, "Acts 2:38: 'Repent and be baptised and your sins will be forgiven.'" The robber quickly gave up and the lady rang the police. While handcuffing the criminal, a policeman said, "Gee mate, you gave up pretty easily. How come you gave up so quickly?" The robber said, "She said she had an axe and two 38's!"

With the General Election being moved to Oct. 17, the bishops' election statement will run in a future issue. - Editor.



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