

CWL members put  
on walking shoes  
for a good cause

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Pope says Paris  
archbishop hounded  
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## Traffic Light Check



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under traffic  
light system  
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On the front cover: Geraldine Slovak shows her vaccine pass to Phil Eves, one of three checkers on the 10am Sunday Mass at Star of the Sea parish in Marlborough on December 5. Photo: Cathie Bell.

NZCatholic

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St Dominic's Catholic College

- Year 7 to 10 Advent liturgies being held only in form classes this year due to H & S requirements.
  - St Dominic's Catholic College was second overall from 2,047 schools worldwide in the ANZ Mathematics Championships.
  - Second overall in New Zealand out of 511 schools.
- www.stdoms.ac.nz



Toys at a previous SVdP initiative in Wellington

SVdP sets up Christmas toy shop

by ROWENA OREJANA

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Wellington is partnering with the Wellington City Mission to put up a Christmas toyshop for their clients this year.

SVdP communications and marketing development manager Millie Lambess said they are thankful to be able to work with the city mission, which has a bigger reach in terms of resources and donations.

"This year, with restraints on resources, we were a bit worried about how we will be able to run the toyshop again," she said.

Teaming up with the city mission means "we will be able to support both their clients and our current base clients as well".

Ms Lambess said that, with Christmas coming up, they were worried about the additional stress on their already stretched resources.

"This time around, compared to last year's lockdown, people are much more tired and just that kind of build up for years now of uncertainty has definitely put a lot of strain on social services in general," she said.

"Our foodbank, in particular, which is usually the first point of contact for people, . . . is still operating at a much higher capacity than before the lockdown or before the pandemic started."

She said that, after the first lockdown last year, the demand for food rose by 30 to 40 per cent and hasn't dropped since.

"Everything [has been] maintained at a higher level, even as lockdown sort of came and went. The long-term effects on mental health, the stress on families and on a lot more older people, retirees . . . is just exacerbated by the cost of living. It's just pushed people out. People don't have that safety net as they once had," she explained.

Ms Lambess said the cost of living is huge, and there is not a lot of cash lying around, especially during the holidays.

"Gifts are a luxury for many, so we're really happy we are able to do the toyshop again," she said. She noted, however, that this year they are forced to limit the access to the toyshop to their clients only, as well those of the city mission.

Because of the financial strain that Covid causes, as well as the closure of churches and parishes due to Covid protocols, there had been a drop in direct donations, she said.

"This could mean that they (donors) don't have that capacity anymore, which we totally understand because I think it has hit all areas of society in the past year. We've definitely seen a reduction," she added.

Clients are asked to book an appointment. There will be no walk-ins.

"We have very strict adherence to Covid protocols to ensure it is a warm, safe space, because a lot of the people we will be working with will be classed

in those vulnerable groups in society. We are making sure people can feel they can trust the space when they come in," she said.

The toyshop will run from December 8 to December 23.

Ms Lambess said donations can be dropped off to their Welfare and Support office at 207 Riddiford Street.

"Alternatively, if people can make a cash donation, just make sure they say 'Christmas Shop'. That's quite good, because it means half-way through, if we've got cash donations and we see that we don't have enough teenage gifts, we can use those cash donations to purchase gifts appropriate for the age group," she said.

Ms Lambess also said food is "always something that is needed".

"We'll be working with [the] city mission again. We're working on our foodbank, but they will also be supporting our families with Christmas day hampers," she said.

Ms Lambess said the idea of the toyshop is not only for the children to get gifts but for parents and caregivers to have "the feeling that they are able to give the gifts" to their children.

"The good thing about the toyshop is, it's a fun thing. With so much doom and gloom going on, this is a nice way to end the year: giving the experience to the clients of dignity and choice over what gift to give to their children."

Mass celebrated together after long lockdown

by MICHAEL OTTO

On the second Sunday of Advent, several parishes in Auckland had Sunday Masses celebrations for the first time since August, after the nation moved to the new Covid-19 protection framework, otherwise known as the "traffic light" system.

Auckland, and several other North Island districts, are in the red setting, which means 100 people can be present at gatherings where vaccine passes are used for entry. Where no vaccine passes are used, the maximum number who can be at a gathering in red is 25. Workers and volunteers do not count for these totals.

Some Auckland parishes arranged to have vaccine pass Masses on Sundays, with a no-vaccine pass Mass on a weekday. But St Joseph's parish in Takapuna made the most of its layout and facilities by making spaces available for vaccine pass and no-vaccine pass gatherings simultaneously.

One hundred people using vaccine passes for entry could gather in the main church, and another 100 with vaccine passes in the hall under the church. Any extras could go to a lawn area. At the same time, a small number of people not using vaccine passes could use a lounge area. At each Mass, a video link was provided to people not in the main church. Holy Communion was able to be brought to people in these areas.

According to the "Covid-19 Protection Framework — Guidelines for places of worship", "if you have multiple defined spaces in a venue, you can operate multiple activities at once, but separate groups cannot intermingle."

And taking Holy Communion from the main church to the other spaces at the venue is also permitted too. Advice from the Covid-Response Group at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet was that "a worker can move from one gathering in a defined space to another gathering in a defined space. A worker with a My Vaccine Pass can move between a gathering of people with My Vaccine Passes and a gathering not using My Vaccine Passes, but an unvaccinated worker cannot go into a gathering space that is using My Vaccine Pass."

Takapuna parish priest Msgr David Tonks told NZ Catholic that the space for people not using the vaccine pass was not used much. Only two people used it for a Saturday morning Mass, and it was not occupied for the Sunday Masses.

"Someone said to me that, if they were unvaccinated, they would probably look for a Mass [without vaccine passes]," Msgr Tonks said.

He said the average attendance at the Sunday Masses was about 120, which meant that the hall area for people with vaccine passes had a few people at some of the Masses. The numbers were well down on the usual Sunday attendance, he said, probably about half the normal attendance. But the parish plans to keep making these spaces available as long as Auckland is in the red setting, he added.

All in all, the first Sunday under the traffic light system went "smoothly", Msgr Tonks said. The Mass times were changed to allow 45 minutes between Masses for people to check in against a register, and to have vaccine passes checked and to scan QR codes, but the parish could probably have kept the usual 30 minute spacing between Masses and operated quite well, he said.

Homily

In his homily at the early Sunday morning Mass on December 5, Msgr Tonks recounted a recent incident with "traffic lights", in order to help illustrate God's loving action and presence in our lives "I am very grateful to be here this morning, because I almost wasn't," Msgr Tonks said.

"On Friday morning, I was out for my usual morning walk, and I stood at a pedestrian crossing until the light changed green.

"Do you know anything about traffic lights at the moment?" he asked the congregation, which responded with laughter.



People carry out the required checks and scans before a Mass at St Joseph's church in Takapuna

"And [I] stepped out on the pedestrian crossing to cross, and as I did, I felt this hand across my chest pushing me back, and I thought, what's this? The next moment, a cyclist who I think mistook a red traffic light for a green one, whizzed past my nose and just about bowled me over. He'd obviously jumped the red light. And he passed me by, and he said, oh sorry. Well, thank God he is still alive and thank God I am still alive."

"But you know you sort of look back on these little things like that and you think, I've got a God who is looking after me. And I don't think I am the only one. . . ."

Msgr Tonks also spoke about a phone call he received, as an example of God's care for him. "When it was announced that we were going to go into a red traffic light, I had a phone call from my hairdresser, saying I'm starting to take appointments, would you like one? And I thought, well, God has been working in him as well, I needed it."

NZ Catholic understands at least two other parishes in Auckland diocese celebrated Sunday Masses with congregations in indoor and outdoor defined spaces simultaneously.

But some Auckland parishes did not provide Sunday parishes under the red setting. Some are providing weekday Masses only or are delaying opening.

One example of the latter was St Patrick's Cathedral, which was not open on the weekend of December 4-5. Up to 3000 people attend Sunday Masses at the cathedral each weekend in normal times. The December 5 cathedral newsletter stated: "We are currently working through what is required by the Government and the diocese under the new Covid framework, and hope to be open as soon as possible."

In Hamilton, the Cathedral of the Blessed Virgin Mary scheduled three Sunday Masses on December 4-5 where no vaccine passes were required for entry — with a limit of up to 50 people under the orange setting. Two Sunday Masses where vaccine passes were required took place. At the start of the 10.30am Mass, cathedral administrator Fr Darren McFarlane welcomed those who had come back to Mass for the first time in a while because of the limitations. "Thank you for the whole checking-in process and all that kind of thing," he said.

Guidelines in Palmerston North diocese asked for patience in transitioning to the new system.



A screenshot of Msgr David Tonks preaching a homily on December 5

"The parish will already know those who are struggling with the vaccine mandates and newly-introduced requirements. This requires targeted communication to those ones especially, so they know that every effort is being made to ensure that the needs and positions of all have, and are, being considered and catered for as the parish resource allows."

In Wellington archdiocese, Cardinal John Dew issued instructions and guidelines, including what steps a parish should take to ensure security and safety.

Other measures on the first weekend of the new Covid protection framework included venue cleaning requirements, facemask-wearing by workers and volunteers, and registration in either diocesan or parish systems, where these were provided, ahead of Mass attendance.

On November 30, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet met on Zoom with more than 300 faith leaders to discuss guidelines for places of worship.

The Government is scheduled to review the traffic light settings on December 13.

■ Traffic light orange Masses in Marlborough, page 20.

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Sat. 26 Feb. 7pm	Dinner/Dance	Alexandra Park
Sun. 27 Feb. 10am	Centennial Mass	Parish Church
Sun. 27 Feb. 12pm	Centennial Photographs	Parish Hall
Sun. 27 Feb. 12pm onwards	Family BYO Lunch	School Grounds

Registrations for these events are now open on the parish website <https://epsomcatholic.org.nz/centennial/>

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# Teen White Fern from Baradene wins further honour

by MICHAEL OTTO

The last few years have been a whirlwind journey for Baradene College cricketer Frances Jonas, with her being selected for the New Zealand White Ferns 50-over team, playing against England on the international stage, and now being named the 2021 Collegesport Auckland Young Sportswoman of the Year.

Frances, 17, who is a left-arm spin bowler, has been a member of many successful sides in recent times — the Baradene College 1st XI, which won the College Sport Auckland Premier competition, the Cornwall club women's premier team, and the Auckland Hearts, which made a semi-final of the T20 Super Smash competition and a final of the 50-over Hallyburton Johnston Shield. Frances was reportedly only 15 years old when she was first selected for the Hearts.

According to her Collegesport citation, she was also selected to play for the New Zealand U19 Women's team and for the New Zealand XI to play warm up games against England. She took two wickets against England in these games. She was then selected for the New Zealand White Ferns 50-over squad to play England, and bowled a maiden over in her first six deliveries in her international debut.

She was also selected in the New Zealand women's Twenty20 squad to play Australia earlier this year.

Speaking to TVNZ's Breakfast programme on November 26, Frances said it was an honour to receive the Collegesport award, and to be in the company of past award winners such as Dame Valerie Adams and Lydia Ko, both Olympic medallists.

"It is such an honour, I am so happy," Frances said.

According to a Newsroom article last year, she started playing cricket at Cornwall when she was aged six, playing with and against boys, and moved to the hard ball version when she was aged 10. Her spin bowling really developed when she received coaching in this art in Year 7 at Baradene.

Previously recognised as the Young Cricketer of the Year at the Auckland Cricket awards, she was also one of the recipients of a New Zealand Cricket development contract for the 2021/2022 season. This means she gets \$7500 to attend high performance camps, and play in two domestic competitions, Newsroom reported.

Frances is looking forward to taking a "gap year" in 2022, having finished her time at Baradene.

She told Breakfast she would use the time "just to focus on cricket and



Frances Jonas (Photo: Photosport/New Zealand Cricket)

work a bit, just have a break".

Praised by commentators for her maturity and calmness under pressure, she looks to have a bright future on the sporting field. The Women's Cricket World Cup, to be played in Aotearoa New Zealand, is only a few months away.

But for the last few years, she has had to juggle sport and study commitments, with the disruption of the pandemic thrown in as well.

Frances told Breakfast that playing international cricket this year

meant she had a bit of catching up to do in terms of schoolwork.

"It was pretty difficult at the start of the year, because I was away for a while, so I did miss out on quite a bit, but my teachers were great, they all helped me so much to catch back up. I managed to pass the year, so I thank all my teachers for helping me through with everything," she said.

Speaking on a video on the Baradene College website, principal Sandy Pasley expressed her pride in Frances's achievements.

"It is just an amazing result," Mrs Pasley said. "Well done Fran, and well done to the sports faculty who supported her here. Well done to the teachers, who encouraged her and looked after her, especially congratulations to her parents and her coaches. It is really tremendous."

It is the first time that a Baradene College student has won the top Collegesport award since the awards started in 1991.

Mrs Pasley also expressed pride in Baradene having 11 finalists and seven winners in their codes at Collegesport awards.

Three of the finalists for the overall sportswoman award were from Baradene, with Penelope Salmon (athletics and orienteering) and Elyse Tse (tennis) alongside Frances on the shortlist.

# Whole-of-Government approach for school engagement

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

A committee of Auckland diocese's Justice and Peace Commission has called for a whole-of-government approach to measures to encourage school engagement by students.

Commission executive secretary Peter Garrick spoke to Parliament's Education and Workforce Committee on September 30. The JPC's Education and Workforce Select Committee had made a submission to the select committee's inquiry into student attendance.

Mr Garrick pointed out that attendance issues in New Zealand schools pre-date the current difficulties that schools are experiencing during the various Covid lockdowns.

"In fact, the Ministry of Education's Student Attendance Survey Term 2 2019 showed that 'regular attendance' (absent no more than 1 day a fortnight) at New Zealand schools has declined from 70 per cent in 2015 to an astonishing 58 per cent in 2019," Mr Garrick said.

Declines in regular attendance

was even greater in primary than secondary schools, with the largest drop in years 1 to 8 and among Maori and Pacific students, Mr Garrick added. "In addition, irregular, moderate and chronic absence rates have also accelerated since 2015," he said.

The written submission outlined the New Zealand and overseas research that shows a direct connection between school attendance and student learning. "The evidence is overwhelming," Mr Garrick said. "The more students are absent from school the less they learn."

International assessments have shown significant declines in the performance by New Zealand students in subjects like reading, maths and science in recent years. As well as time given to core subjects and the way they are taught, the JPC committee submission stated that this trend has "a lot to do with the significant decline in school attendance in New Zealand over the 2015-19 period".

Mr Garrick said that the 2015-2019 period has also seen "a significant increase in the cost of housing,

decreased home ownership, and a resulting increased mobility of families exacerbated by New Zealand's slowness to adopt measures to support security of tenure for tenants".

Studies have shown that moving frequently, particularly to new school areas, can have a negative effect on students' school attendance, engagement and achievement, Mr Garrick said.

"School attendance is not just an isolated 'problem'," he said, but should be seen as part of wider social problems that Governments do have levers to do something about. He praised recent measures around increasing public housing supply and increasing security for tenants, but said that more is needed.

The submission also criticised a 2013 move to contract out attendance services to "external, grossly underfunded regional 'Attendance Services' across large numbers of schools", rather than funding schools themselves to effectively monitor their own students' school attendance.

"The evidence is strong that this

change has had a profound effect on the decline of student attendance," Mr Garrick said. "It is surely time to return to a school-based system that has served us well in the past."

The submission urged the select committee to recommend that, as part of their overall teacher allocation, "all schools be allocated a fully-funded attendance officer/pastoral carer who is solely responsible for identifying any issues which may result in absenteeism".

Other areas touched on by the submission included expulsions, suspensions and stand-downs, as well as the provision of alternative school options.

Among the other recommendations made in the submission was that all schools be required to have a comprehensive and practical attendance policy.

The submission also called for "a whole-of-government approach to issues such as affordability of housing, and stable rental situations that increase family stability, and provide an environment that encourages school engagement".

# Praise in Parliament for Auckland parish

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

An Auckland parish has been praised in Parliament for its work in a community vaccination event.

Christ the King parish in Owhiraka was mentioned by Mt Roskill MP Michael Wood in a general debate on November 17.

"I think of our leaders from our Christ the King Catholic church on Richardson Road in my electorate, who worked with local business leaders to encourage the community to

come in for a vaccination event last week, who provided support, who provided incentives, and who reached out in the very best traditions of the Christian faith to keep communities safe," said Mr Wood, who is also Minister of Transport.

Mr Wood, who is an Anglican, also praised a previous community event in his electorate, "where our Pacific community, across faith leaders, school leaders, and community leaders, came together to vaccinate nearly 300 people at

our local Wesley community centre — people who may have been hard to reach, people who may have been subject to misinformation, people who needed help and support and advice to get in there and to be safe from Covid-19. Our community came together and did that".

He also praised the "1.7 million members of my city, who have just displayed extraordinary fortitude. It has been tough mentally, it has been tough emotionally, and tough spiritually . . ."

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# 2843kms walked to help victims of trafficking

by SUSAN DICKSON

The Vietnam-China border is 1445 km long. This border is a known area for human trafficking, as women and children are often trafficked into China to be sold as brides or enter other situations of exploitation.

The challenge for a group of Catholic women from Aotearoa New Zealand was to form a group to collectively walk 1445 km during October, with the aim of raising money for Hagar Vietnam, and their transforming work with women who have been trafficked to China or survived other forms of severe abuse.

The team all had different fitness levels and schedules, but the goal was to travel this significant distance together, raise awareness about those who do travel it, and match our steps with sponsorship dollars.

Team CWL Hagar 1445 Walking Challenge was made up of 25 Catholic Women's League members from across the country, and four friends. They ended up smashing this challenge, having collectively walked 2843.37 kilometres, and raising a staggering \$7740 between them. The walkers encouraged each other by sharing photos and updates of their progress online and via email.

All the ladies' efforts were inspirational. One team member clocked up 430 km, three other members walked over 200 km each, and five women did over 100 km each. Ninety-two-year-old Mary walked 29 km during the first three weeks before a cold kept her indoors. Eighty-nine-year-old Kathryn averaged 2.7km for each of her walks, clocking up an inspirational 70km. She admitted to being a bit tired the following week!

The team was overwhelmed by the amazing support. The donations came from family and friends, with whom the cause and the team's dedication resonated. With their help, Team CWL 1445 can enable Hagar Vietnam to make a real difference to the lives of vulnerable women.

Hagar NZ sent the following feedback: "(We) [c]annot express to each of you how incredibly meaningful and life changing this money is. We are so grateful."

The fighting of human trafficking, abuse and



Walker Mary Goudie, 92



Carole Hoult from Upper Hutt (left) and Wellington archdiocesan CWL president Susan Lloyd out and about

exploitation of women has been a major theme of WUCWO, the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations.

For some years now, Catholic Women's League of Aotearoa NZ has been committed to raising awareness of human trafficking, both here in New Zealand and overseas. To find out more about the fight against the trafficking of humans, look up Talitha Kum online using Google.

To find out more about the work of Hagar visit [www.hagar.org.nz/](http://www.hagar.org.nz/)

Susan Dickson is national president of Catholic Women's League Aotearoa NZ



Walkers CWLANZ national president Susan Dickson (left) and 89-year-old Kathryn McKendry



Frances Chaplow from Mangatarata, Ngatea, walks with children of a friend

# Cathedra past recovery but replica to be made



Bishop Grimes's damaged chair

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

A replica is to be made of the first "cathedra" in Christchurch diocese, after the original one was badly damaged in the 2011 earthquake.

Among the items displayed last month by Christchurch diocese archivist Triona Doocey, during an "Explore Your Archive" series on facebook, was Bishop John Grimes's chair, which had been in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament.

In a facebook post on November 28, Mrs Doocey said the chair was "way out of budget to repair".

So a decision has been taken to leave the chair itself broken — "as a way of telling our earthquake story — broken, but still beautiful".

Mrs Doocey added: "But my very talented and tolerant husband is making a replica of the chair to show what it should look like, using wood salvaged from the deconstructed cathedral."

"The project will take some time, but watch this space to see how it progresses."

Earlier this year, the remains of Bishop Grimes, and those of Bishops Edward Joyce and John Cunneen, were disinterred from the cathedral demolition site and were placed at a purpose-built, temporary mausoleum at the Carmelite monastery on Halswell Road.

Bishop Grimes was Bishop of Christchurch from 1887 to 1915. The Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament opened in 1905.

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## More parishes than priests

The situation of more parishes than priests speeds towards us.

The shift from the current parish priest model of sole decision-maker to joint leadership with laity will require simultaneously that we "unlearn" that Baptism is the "done" sacrament when we were babies, and that it's not clergy first and laity second.

"The baptismal life is the fundamental human vocation, and all must exercise the priesthood received at baptism. Ministry is at the service of this", says Cardinal Marc Ouellet, chief organiser of the upcoming theological conference titled "toward a fundamental theology of the priesthood", initiated by Pope Francis for February, 2022. "The ordained ministry isn't about belonging to the 'ecclesiastical power'", the cardinal stated.

Going back to baptism and the priesthood of all believers "isn't just a fashion, it's the basis for all Christian life", said Michelina Tenace,



### Sue Seconi

organising assistant to this conference.

These years ahead will be of huge change. But not dissimilar to those unexpected times when we receive traumatic news. Suddenly our lives are turned upside down. Hindsight can reveal that, in amongst the anxiety and chaos, we were, in fact, taken out from our comfort zones to see the bigger picture of God's involving presence.

This has been the maturing story of the Church as well.

Not even 100 years old, the early Church was forced to make a decision in amongst mayhem. Can non-Jews become Christians? Yes, said the leaders. "God does not have favourites. But that anybody of any nationality who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:35)

Putting aside the arguments on both sides of the issue associated with the Lutheran Reformation, the Church returned to the fact that she must be a living experience and that Scripture is essential for spiritual growth.

The Second Vatican Council was to cut back

the externals to realise once again that she is a grain planted in the world, and not a diamond to be admired in a high-end jewellery shop.

We are capable of being reshaped by life's circumstances.

Working towards shared leadership will require parishioners coming together over and over with their priest and bishop or apostolic administrators. Not so much to make a decision, but to enable God's Holy Spirit to open the way forward from within.

Jesus' presence amongst us is a constant. We are not abandoned.

When an ordained says "Your sins are forgiven" (John 20:23-24), and "this is my Body, this is my Blood", (1 Corinthians 11:24), it is Jesus who speaks.

Spiritual gifts — charisms of God's Holy Spirit — enable us to minister and build up our faith communities to be full of life and joy. And not just for ourselves, but inclusive to those desiring to belong to us.

Recognising spiritual gifts requires us to look

at each other in deeper ways, since often gifts are gifted to those without the skills we usually look for. Gifted beyond those go-to people and obvious choices.

Post-menopausal Sarah being told by God that she will become pregnant with Isaac. (Genesis 18: 9-15)

Moses' (Exodus 2:11-32) stutter wasn't an obstacle for him to negotiate with the mighty narcissistic Pharaoh.

Samuel (1 Samuel 3) was just a kid, but led the successful defence against the attacking Philistines.

Jesus selecting Peter to head the Church, when weeks prior he disassociated himself from the Lord. (Matthew 16:18)

Lydia (Acts 16) who believed in many gods, professed that Jesus is Lord, and she went onto become an effective evangelist.

Susanna (Luke 8:2) who was healed of an evil spirit ended up boldly proclaiming Jesus Risen!

Why ask a parishioner to proclaim the Scriptures when they get tongue-tied? But I am. Why ask a parishioner to write articles with a poor grip of the basic English grammar? But I am. Why ask a parishioner to pray with another when they're hopeless at impromptu prayer? But I am.

Pope Francis, in his document titled *Antiquum Ministerium* (Institution of the Ministry of Catechist), released in Rome in May, 2021, says developing lay ministry isn't an effort to clericalise laypeople.

As I see it, if an ordained man believes himself to be superior to lay people and it's called clericalisation, then lay people can use spiritual gifts to gain self-importance as well. Both ordained people and lay people can be tempted into using spiritual gifts as if they were their own possession. Ministry is about service! — mature service that is!

"The New Zealand Catholic Bishops have endorsed the concepts of co-responsibility and lay leadership," wrote Bishop Stephen Lowe, the vice-president and secretary of the New Zealand Bishops Conference — Te Huinga a ngā Pīkopa Katorika o Aotearoa to me on June 3, 2021.

Sue Seconi is a parishioner at The Catholic Parish of Whanganui — Te Pārihi Katorika Ki Whanganui

### Ronald Rolheiser

## Dealing with emotional paralysis

Our greatest strength is often our greatest weakness. Sensitivity is a gift but, as any sensitive person will tell you, that gift can be a mixed blessing. Sometimes a thick, calloused skin can save you from a lot of suffering, particularly from heartache.

The popular spiritual writer Henri Nouwen was a highly-sensitive person. That was both his gift and his curse. He suffered a lot because of his sensitivity. For instance, several times he fell hopelessly in love with someone but, because he was a vowed celibate and because those deep feelings were not mutual, he was left alone in that obsession, frustrated, emotionally paralysed. These obsessive feelings so overpowered him that (to his honesty and to his credit) he sought clinical help. By his own admission, those were the darkest and most painful periods in his life.

There are many like him in this world and there is someone like him inside everyone who is highly sensitive. Indeed, one of Nouwen's heroes was the famed Dutch painter, Vincent Van Gogh, who suffered from acute over-sensitivity for much of his life and, at one point, suffering from an emotional obsession in love, cut off one of his ears and sent it to the person with whom he was obsessed. Another person who Nouwen idolised was the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, whose personal loneliness deeply coloured his religious and philosophical writings. It's no accident that so many highly creative persons (artists, writers, performers) are often caught in the grip of emotional obsession. I suspect that this is true for all of us to some degree.

What's to be done when some emotional obsession literally paralyses us?

I have twice posed this question to psycholo-

gists. In the first instance, it was to the renowned Dutch psychologist Antone Vergote. I twice had the privilege of being in his classroom and, in one of those classes, I asked him this question. How do you help a person who is so paralysed by some heartache or other pain that it leaves him or her suicidal? His response was humble. He began by saying this is singularly the most difficult situation we will ever deal with, inside ourselves, inside our families and friendships, and inside pastoral and counselling situations. He admitted that psychology was still grappling with what a helpful response might be, and suggested that we might find some enlightening perspectives by reading the great novelists.

Then he offered this: emotional obsession is a form of over-concentration, a fixation that holds us in its grip until we somehow break its spell. What can be helpful (if anything can be helpful) is distraction, anything that can take that person's mind off its fixation. This may sound crass, especially when our perennial religious counsel has been "take your troubles to the chapel". Shouldn't prayer be the answer? Yes, it should, but that too has its dangers. If you are in the paralysing grip of an obsession, alone in a chapel might be the last place you need to be. Alone and emotionally paralysed, the darkness might well overpower you. In our darkest moments, it's the incarnate God, the human touch of God through the care of someone, which constitutes the real chapel to which we need to go.

The second psychologist to whom I posed this question added this piece of advice. "Never stay in this kind of darkness alone." Indeed, never enter it alone. Be with somebody — a friend, a mentor, a doctor, a guide, a fellow-sufferer,

anyone. I remember an occasion some years ago when a young man came to me in the grips of this kind of obsession, and suggested that what he wanted to do was to drive off by himself into the mountains, rent a cabin, and "think this through". I strongly advised him that it was the last thing he should do, in that being alone and isolated with his obsession would be dangerous. What he needed, I suggested, were things that could distract him — his work, his friends, his routines, his normal escapes.

Not everyone is Jesus who went into the darkness of his crucifixion alone. Except, except, he wasn't alone. He was with his Father. If we trust our faith strongly enough to know that, respective of anything, we will know that God is there for us, then we can risk entering the darkness alone. Then we can take our emotional paralysis to the chapel and to remote cabins in the mountains. However, if we fear how our wounded selves might render us helpless and suicidal, we will want to hold fast to the hand of a trusted friend and look for any kind of distraction that can break the obsession paralysing us.

On one of those occasions when Henri Nouwen had checked himself into a clinic for depression, he wrote a book, *The Inner Voice of Love*, to share how eventually he did cope. What he ultimately learned is that our hearts are greater than our wounds; but we don't always know that in the darkness.

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

## A communion of persons

### Editorial

Predictably enough, the Christian faith of new National Party leader Christopher Luxon has been the subject of media scrutiny. Already, he has complained that his faith has been misrepresented and portrayed negatively.

There has been a predictable media examination of his positions and voting record on issues such as euthanasia, conversion therapy and abortion (the reportedly "pivoted" on safe areas, after changes to a bill were recommended at select committee, and has reportedly said that the abortion issue has been settled by Parliament).

Such scrutiny by media is understandable. Voters have a right to know the positions of political figures. But these issues are not the only ones that matter to Christians. The Catholic Church in this country has repeatedly stated its concerns on issues such as housing, poverty, prisons, climate change, and many more.

It is very early days in Mr Luxon's time as party leader. In due course, it will be for voters to assess the policies that are put forward under his leadership.

Mr Luxon has said that he believes that politics and faith should be separate. In their 2020 election statement, the New Zealand bishops stated that it is not their role to tell people who to vote for. The bishops stated that they are "called to assist in forming consciences in the light of the Gospel", not to replace consciences. "It is our role to guide people to look to the well-being of everyone in our political decision-making — especially the most vulnerable — as well as the well-being of our planet," the bishops wrote in 2020. It is to be hoped that Mr Luxon will be open to listening to communications like this.

Concerning his personal faith. Mr Luxon told *NewstalkZB* that he had been raised Catholic, and this involved the Sisters of Mercy in Christchurch. He would later attend Baptist, Presbyterian, Anglican and other churches. Now he is "non-demonstrational". Mr Luxon said that he has not actually attended a church for five or six years (whatever one makes of his so-called links with the "Fellowship of the Upper Room").

All Christians, including Mr Luxon, are on their own faith journey, and this can have many twists and turns. But if his current position is taken at face value, with him being a person who holds Christian beliefs, but who does not attend a church, that is not the ideal.

Last year, Pope Francis reportedly warned that one of the outcomes of the pandemic, when worship was by online means, was the danger that people could start living their relationship with God "for just myself, detached from the people of God".

But Jesus' disciples always lived their relationship with the Lord as a community — they gathered "at the table, a sign of community. It was always with the sacrament, with bread", the Pope said.

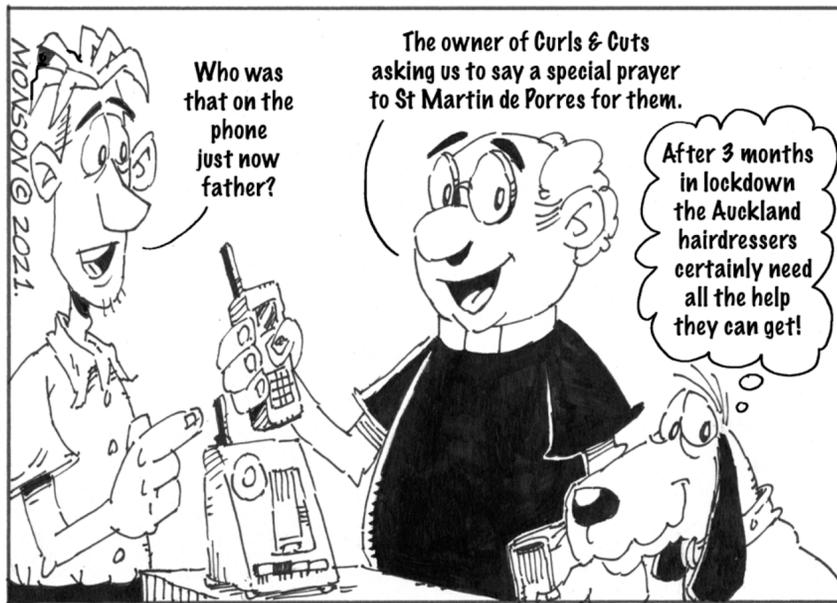
As a 2018 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith letter stated, "Both the individualistic and the merely interior visions of salvation contradict the sacramental economy through which God wants to save the human person".

The letter, titled "Placuit Deo", stated that "the salvation that God offers us is not achieved with our own individual efforts alone . . . Rather, salvation is found in the relationships that are born from the incarnation of Son of God, and that form the communion of the Church. Because the grace that Christ gives us is not a merely interior salvation . . . and introduces us into concrete relationships that he himself has lived, the Church is a visible community.

"In her we touch the flesh of Jesus, especially in our poorest and most suffering brothers and sisters. Hence, the salvific mediation of the Church, 'the universal sacrament of salvation', assures us that salvation does not consist in the self-realisation of the isolated individual, nor in an interior fusion of the individual with the divine. Rather, salvation consists in being incorporated into a communion of persons that participates in the communion of the Trinity."

Let us pray for Mr Luxon in his new role, and for all politicians in our country.

### The Habit



### Letters

#### Eucharist

During lockdown, I enjoyed reading works by the eminent twentieth-century theologian Yves Congar, particularly on how, until the Middle Ages, the whole worshipping assembly, not just the priest, was understood to actively offer the Eucharist in union with Christ. Vatican II is restoring this understanding, but it's taking time.

The US bishops' document on the Eucharist (*NZ Catholic*, Nov. 28) shows how possible it is to bypass the full eucharistic event, and focus predominantly on the Eucharist as Holy Communion — what it is and how people receive it — and not on what the Eucharist as sacrifice is and how the whole assembly offers it.

The document touches on the people's liturgical words and actions, but overlooks the deeper reality of the whole assembly's offering of the Eucharist. Post-pandemic catechesis on the Mass in our country needs to include this crucial aspect of eucharistic theology.

After so many online/TV Masses, the assembly's rightful priestly role in offering the Eucharist calls for renewed emphasis. The synod is teaching us that each Church member counts, not just the ordained. This is founded on our baptism. It is expressed in the eucharistic celebration, where ordained people and lay

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### Spiritual

people together share in the Church's sacramental offering to God. This can help deepen our appreciation of Eucharist as Communion.

Pat Brady,  
Orakei.

#### Rural

Rural parishes were once the powerhouse of New Zealand Catholicism. Vocations and finance from the country districts flowed to it. But currently, rural parishes have been side-lined while dioceses meet the needs of city populations.

Few administrators have any perception of extra-ordinary social and economic change in farming districts.

In half a generation, dominant land use has switched to dairying. Its milk platforms are manned by new settlers from India, Philippines, etc.. The majority are Catholics.

But Catholicism fails to provide adequate pastoral, devotional, or cultural care. So, the non-traditional church has evangelised with striking success, for example Breakthrough (Oamaru) Connect Calvary, Community. A portion of the next generation is being lost.

Stephen Clark,  
Manila, Philippines.  
■ Abridged — Editor.

Childhood sacramental programmes often end with confirmation, and then there is often little direction towards spiritual growth in our Church. No wonder so many men are taken captive by sin, addictions or boredom.

Most ancient cultures brought their men to maturity through training of the body, mind and Spirit, through a process of initiation and fellowship. Like the Spartan "agoge" prepared young men to become warriors, we need to fill this gap or the souls of our men will become flabby, weak, desensitised and deadened.

Earlier this year I embarked on a journey, a 90-day spiritual exercise, developed by the Church in America, called *Exodus 90*. It includes prayer, Scripture, moderate ascetic practices, and ideally fellowship with a group of like-minded men within the parish.

These components are not pharisaical rules and obligations for their own sake, but rather tools God uses to deliver, strengthen and equip us for a new life with him. A new life in the freedom of the Spirit is both available and wonderful; but you will have to fight for it.

John Kleinsman  
Director — the  
Nathaniel Centre

#### Cell lines

Your correspondent, Chris Tobin (*NZ Catholic* Nov. 28), criticises the New Zealand bishops and

the Nathaniel Centre for Bioethics for not identifying the link between the cell lines used for testing the Pfizer vaccine and abortion. His criticism is unwarranted.

I first wrote about this link for *NZ Catholic* in an article published May 27, 2020. Rev. Dr Kevin McGovern and Kerri Anne Brussen wrote an extensive piece on it in Issue 61 of the Nathaniel Report (August, 2020), available on our website.

Rev. Dr Graham O'Brien and I produced a detailed article — "Notes on Covid-19 Vaccines and the moral implications of their manufacture" — also available on the Nathaniel Centre website.

Cardinal John is quoted on this question in a January 15, 2021 press release on the NZCBC website. Further, the link is explained on the NZCBC Covid-19 vaccination campaign webpage: [www.get-vaccinated-catholic.co.nz](http://www.get-vaccinated-catholic.co.nz). In providing moral advice on the link, we follow the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Both Pope Francis and Pope Benedict have received the Covid-19 vaccines.

John Kleinsman  
Director — the  
Nathaniel Centre

#### Online parish?

I gather from a friend across the ditch that Brisbane archdiocese is setting up a dedicated "online parish" because of the numbers "practising" this way. Something to consider here, maybe?

John Cowen,  
Te Atatu, Auckland.

**NZ Catholic welcomes readers' letters, although receipt of a letter does not guarantee publication. No correspondence will be entered into concerning publication.** Letters should be no longer than 220 words and should be topical, to the point, and include the writer's address and phone number. *Ad hominem* attacks are not welcome. Emailed letters should be sent as part of the text message — not as an attachment — to [editor@nzcatholic.org.nz](mailto:editor@nzcatholic.org.nz) and include the writer's physical address. Pseudonyms are not accepted, except by special arrangement.

## The wine of hope

November 7, 2021 passed by like any other day in Aotearoa New Zealand. One of the highlights of the day was probably the magnitude 5.5 earthquake which shook central New Zealand at 4:16pm. But again, isn't this something normal and ordinary in our part of the world?

What many people have missed was a far greater magnitude "earthquake", which was something definitely out of the ordinary. On this day, the End-of-Life Choice Act took effect. November 7 will forever be remembered as the day that euthanasia was legally made available in New Zealand. It is not surprising as to why there are frequent

### John Evangelista

environmental earthquakes in New Zealand, since we know that we are located on the boundary of two of the world's major tectonic plates — the Pacific Plate and the Australian Plate. Likewise, the passing of the End-of-Life Choice Act is not altogether a surprise. Probably this is the culmination of the slow deterioration of the moral fabric of society. In 1980, the divorce law came into effect and threatened the basic unit of society — the family. The overwhelming majority in Parliament who voted for the legalisation of same-sex marriage in 2013 was another "nail in the coffin". Was it really a surprise that the Abortion Legislation Act 2020 permitted the termination of pregnancy for up to 20 weeks of pregnancy and removed abortion from the Crimes Act 1961? Like the all-too-frequent and ordinary minor environmental earthquakes, the devastating effects of the End-of-Life Choice Act of November 7, 2021 was expected and given little importance by many in

New Zealand.

Many have asked if this sequence of events is a failure on the part of the Church. It is definitely a fair question to ask, but probably it would be more prudent not to dwell on the failure, but focus on what needs to be done to "rise from the fall". All of us who form part of the Church would need to reflect personally and collectively on what have we done (or failed to do) so as to be able to move forward and "bring back Christ into the world". The call of Pope Francis to synod and synodality allows us an opportunity to do just that.

Following the events of November 7, the letter "Samaritanus Bonus" of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, approved by Pope Francis in 2020, is a timely reminder of what it means to love when we take care of the sick and the dying. "Love" and "Hope" are precisely the pastoral elements that would provide the wholeness to this otherwise broken and inhumane society.

"The wine of hope" is the specific contribution of the Christian faith in the care of the sick, and refers to the way in which God overcomes evil in the world. In times of suffering, the human person should be able to experience a solidarity and a love that takes on the suffering, offering a sense of life that extends beyond death. All of this has a great social importance: "A society unable to accept the suffering of its members and incapable of helping to share their suffering, and to bear it inwardly through 'com-passion' is a cruel and



John Evangelista

inhuman society'." (Samaritanus Bonus)

Solidarity and love need to be shared and experienced, not only in times of suffering, but should form part of the culture of love within the family, marriage and community. It would be difficult to be authentically "compassionate" if we have not lived love and solidarity at every moment of our lives. A child who has not been shown love and taught solidarity will have a difficult time to show "com-passion" when the time comes when parents are suffering and on the point of death.

As a community, in schools and parishes, we need to share love and show solidarity to everyone, especially those who are in need and vulnerable — not only to the sick and dying, but to the elderly in general, and to those living alone, the disabled, new migrants and those new in the community, those who are bereaved, and all those who are suffering both physical and

moral pain.

Mere words and preaching are not sufficient. We must start extending our hand, offering our shoulder so that others' burdens will be lightened, not only at the moment of suffering and death, but at all times. Many times, it could just be an attentive and listening ear that would suffice to show "com-passion". Just like the early Christians, may others be able to say, "see how they love one another".

Dr John Evangelista is a medical doctor and practising counsellor. He studied theology and is currently the Dean of Te Kupenga — Catholic Theological College.

carry the urgency and purity which it had for those who fought for their embodiment in public life. As a result, it is easy to take for granted the representative framework of society, the equality and solidarity we enjoy relative to many nations, and the privilege of a relatively united nation. When the words that enshrine implicit values are tainted by bad attitudes and behaviour, the result can be a cynicism and apathy which makes institutions vulnerable.

If these values are important, as they are, and their hold on society needs to be renewed, it will not be enough to repeat the words that name them, to heighten the rhetoric and to impose the symbols associated with them. That will only focus attention on the gap between the rhetoric and the tainted behaviour associated with them. It will seed further cynicism. It is better to commend such values by seeking simple words that commend them, while exposing the behaviour and attitudes that taint them, and demanding coherence between rhetoric and behaviour. This reknitting of good relationships and the words that describe them is a slow and painstaking process, as the Catholics among us are finding on many fronts with our language.

It is also important to identify and celebrate actions that represent the coherence between claimed values and consequent behaviour. Politicians, church ministers and others in public life who take responsibility for behaviour inconsistent with their positions, apologise simply and without reservation, and resign their positions if appropriate, should be commended for their commitment to the values. They should not be regarded as mugs, ostracised for their sins or mocked for their failure to tough it out. Conscientious objectors and whistle blowers who call out behaviour by representatives of government inconsistent with values should also be protected and praised, not prosecuted. They embody patriotism and democracy and purify the language that their critics taint.

Democracy is not going down the drain. But it is always at risk of being chucked into the gutter.

Andrew Hamilton, SJ, is consulting editor of Eureka Street. These are excerpts from an article which was originally published at [www.eurekastreet.com.au](http://www.eurekastreet.com.au) it is republished here with permission.

## Is democracy going down the drain?

There is much discussion about the future of democracy, freedom and other aspects of liberal institutions. . . .

[Do] ideas like freedom, democracy, public service and public accountability have the force that they once had, when they inspired a costly struggle against autocracy? They also prompt reflection on why they might have lost that force and how they might regain it. In my view, it is inevitable that inspiring ideas and words are hollowed out by the human failure to embody them in practice. As a result, they become tainted with hypocrisy. The language then becomes uninspiring and loses its force to unify people. It needs to be renewed by costly and conspicuous manifestations of virtue.

The fate of Christian words certainly reflects this process. One of the most sacred words to describe the Christian life is charity. In its origins it embodies the response to the warm, self-sacrificing, universal and astonishing love of God for each human being. Yet its evisceration can be seen in the popular saying, 'She (or it) is as cold as charity'. The origin of this phrase lies in Jesus' prediction of a time when people's charity will grow cold. But in its later usage the coldness is seen to mark charity itself. It characterises people who act out of duty, but without feeling. They may speak of charity as their motivation, but their behaviour reveals hypocrisy or brutality.

This corruption affects especially words originally denoting a tender care for people. Places that offered protection to people in need were called asylums. The word came to represent harsh places to which people were despatched in order to protect the general populace. Similarly, places for people who were mentally ill were named after Bethlehem, the place where Jesus was born and cared for by angels. The word was shortened to bedlam, a place of disorder where devilish behaviour abounded.

The same loss of a high and inspiring meaning and its corruption into something unattractive is more general. We may think of penitentiary, originally conceived as a place where people could turn their lives around, and now synonymous with a harsh and punitive prison. Other Christian words that have often taken on a pejorative connotation are conversion, discipline, pious, pure,

correction, submission and humble.

In each of these cases values which were initially strong, positive and humanitarian were later perceived as insipid, authoritarian or even toxic. The change reflected the perception by others of the actual behaviour and attitudes of people and institutions who claimed the values embodied in the words. Penitentiaries and correction facilities became places of punishment in which forced conformity with regulation was identified with conversion. "Pious" became associated with immaturity, "conversion" with fanaticism, "purity" with fear of sexuality, and "submission"

### Andrew Hamilton

with enslavement. These associations, of course, reflected in part the prejudiced judgement by outsiders. They also reflected, however, the ways in which Christians' actions contradicted their words. The force for good of the tradition was lost, and its key words became stripped of their power to engage a community.

This history has implications for our current situation. When reflecting on the continuing hold of ideas like democracy, politics, patriotism, freedom and honour, we should ask first about the associations these words have come to have. Democracy is generally seen as an ideal to be praised, but in practice is identified with politics. This has a pejorative taint. It is associated with dissimulation, manipulation, back-room and sweetheart deals, remote from the national interest, public service and citizens' daily lives. Freedom is also an ideal, but is often limited to individual freedom of choice, with no entailment to the good of the society or a social bond. Patriotism is often identified with uncritical support for my country right or wrong, and for national alliances and rituals.

Although these associations have not demolished the claims that the corresponding values have on society, they have weakened them by identifying them with venal, self-interested, sometimes corrupt, selfish and bombastic attitudes and behaviour. Appeal to them does not

## 'It's been a real privilege to be a priest': Msgr Walker

by JEFF DILLON

Staying positive and being happy have proven to be good principles to live by, according to Dunedin priest Msgr Vincent Walker as he reached two major milestones in 2021.

For not only has he achieved 65 years of ordained priesthood, but he also turned 90 years old in early December. Before he was ordained he spent 4 years at Holy Name Seminary in Christchurch and 6 years at Holy Cross Seminary in Mosgiel. So, 75 years of his life have been devoted to training for, and carrying out, priestly ministry.

Born in Lawrence, Central Otago on December 6, 1931, he was raised in a family of nine children. His father had lost his first wife in the 1918 flu epidemic and remarried in 2020. When Vince was born, he had three half-sisters and a couple of older brothers. It was the Depression, and life was tough, but he enjoyed his childhood.

Msgr Walker mentioned that Ted Fahey was ordained in Lawrence close to when he (Msgr Walker) was born. It was then decided that baby Vince would be the first person that Fr Fahey baptised, with people hoping that the baby might grow up to be a priest. So it was to be.

A move to Milton was soon followed by a move to Dunedin, and he started his schooling properly at Christian Brothers junior school and went through to Form 3 level. As a fourth-former in 1947 he headed to the new minor seminary, as he felt a strong call to priesthood. His mother had certainly been praying for one of her sons to be a priest, so her prayers were answered. Initially his father was not so keen. He wanted Vince to join the railways as his two older brothers had. However, he eventually warmed to the prospect as he met some of his son's fellow students and other priests. In fact, he survived a severe heart attack that could have been fatal a year before the ordination, but lived on with the hope of seeing his son become a priest.

After his ordination in 1956, Fr Walker served as a curate at St Patrick's, Georgetown, Invercargill, where one of his duties was driving a school bus bringing children from the country to the parish school and return, which was a round trip of 160 kms. After four years he headed to Ranfurly for some rural experience. He became involved with the open borstal at Waipiata, and celebrating Mass



Msgr Vincent Walker beside his much cherished Chilean farewell present

for the Catholic boys there. Mass was compulsory at 6.30 am Saturday morning, and he could not believe how well behaved the boys were. Many wanted to make their first Communion, and he had to instruct them. "Some of them even cried when they had to leave the place . . . the first time they had experienced love and care and respect. It was sad to hear their stories of the neglect and abuse they had suffered," Msgr Walker said.

In 1965, he became the first New Zealand priest to be involved in a programme of assisting Columbian priests in South America. After a preliminary training period in Peru, he was sent to a parish in Santiago, Chile. He spent five years there. "It was a wonderful experience", he said. He was made parish priest while there. On his coffee table today, he has a small photo album containing photos of his farewell Mass and celebration. Inside his house entrance on the wall he affectionately displays one of his farewell gifts - a wooden figure of Christ carved by a poor Chilean, who sold his wares while sitting in the gutter.

In 1970, Msgr Walker returned to New Zealand and was appointed to Balclutha. After a short period there, he was shifted to Nightcaps in 1972,

which he thoroughly enjoyed. He built a new church there and was later moved to Mosgiel, where he stayed until 1990. Then he went to Holy Name in Dunedin North, and became vicar-general in 1995. He was asked to remain as vicar-general by Bishop Campbell after Bishop Boyle retired, and Msgr Walker retained that role until, at 80, he asked to step down. In December 1996, he was made a Prelate of Honour (with the title "Monsignor") by St John Paul II.

During his time as a priest, he had often hoped to become a hospital chaplain. That opportunity became a reality, and he spent about four years as a chaplain at nearby Dunedin Hospital. The experience weighed heavily on him, dealing with the sad situations, so he was relieved when that role was passed on to another. He remained at Holy Name until he retired in 2005 at nearly 75.

Msgr Walker also had other overseas experiences. He went to Newark, New Jersey, USA, in 1985 to be trained in the implementation of the Renew programme, which was to be used in the Dunedin diocese and throughout New Zealand. He found that he was warmly welcomed and treated to great hospitality for the two months there. In 1999, he undertook a personal "retreat" to the Holy Land to take part in what is termed the Fifth Gospel programme for six months. However, the outbreak of hostilities between Palestine and Israel led to the decision to cease the course half-way through.

Throughout his priestly life Msgr Walker sought to engage in the wider community, whether that was by joining the local bowls club or Lions or Rotary.

"It's been an interesting life", he said. "It's been a real privilege to be a priest". He recalled that, when he was ordained, his mother had said to him, "Vince, please be happy", as she had knowledge of some unhappy clergy. So that became his aim . . . "to be at one with yourself and God . . . to be happy in ourselves we have to be in good relationships with ourselves and with others".

He considered that it was important to be positive and to be happy. You ought to set goals for yourself and for the parish if you are the parish priest, who is like the coach of the team, he said.

Msgr Walker has great faith in God, but he would love to see a great many more people respond in faith today to God's action and presence in the world.

## Jubilees of ordination celebrated in Palmerston North

The annual diocesan Mass for those celebrating jubilees of presbyteral ordination in the Diocese of Palmerston North this year was held at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit on November 30.

The Mass was celebrated with Bishop Peter Cullinane presiding and with Cardinal John Dew, Bishop Owen Dolan, Fr Craig Butler, Monsignor Brian Walsh and many other clergy in the diocese concelebrating.

The five jubilees that were celebrated were Bishop Peter Cullinane (60 years), Fr David Moore, SM (60 years), Fr Arthur Toothill, SM (50 years), Fr Marcus Francis (20 years) and Fr Manoj Mathew, IC (10

years). Not all these were in attendance at the Mass. Fr Kevin Dobbyn, FMS, who is celebrating 50 years of religious profession this year, was also present for the celebration.

During his homily, Bishop Cullinane said that "jubilees of ordination are times for remembering".

He shared two stories from his own life that for him highlight the giftedness of God's presence in our lives. One of these stories was about a visit he had as bishop to St Joseph's School in Dannevirke, the school he had attended. He had told the students gathered about how his grandmother made it possible for him to

attend school, despite the long journey required every day. Bishop Cullinane said, "the lesson in this story for all of us is to listen to our grandparents because we never quite know what God might be wanting to say". The bishop spoke of how, many years after his ordination, he was told that, while a friend was visiting his grandmother when she was unwell, she had said that she was certain that the young Peter would be a priest.

Bishop Cullinane said that the "communion of saints is where we go for our remembering. Our personal histories are in them, our belonging is in them, our identity is in them".

Finally, he spoke on behalf of all priests, especially those celebrating Jubilees, saying that "what has enabled us to carry on . . . and empowered us in our ministry . . . is the people that we serve in the parishes. It is in their faith and hopes and love and sacrifices and joys and sorrows and struggles that we meet our own calling, and find ourselves lifted up, as if on eagle's wings."

"The occasion of Jubilee is an occasion of remembering and therefore a time of giving thanks." With that in mind, Bishop Cullinane finished by asking all of the priests gathered to join him in acknowledging their indebtedness to the people to whom they have served, and by whom they have been nurtured. He said, "I refer therefore to the whole consecrated, saintly, motley, lovely, People of God".

By Diocese Of Palmerston North Communications Team ([communications@pndiocese.org.nz](mailto:communications@pndiocese.org.nz))



Jubilarians with Cardinal John Dew (Apostolic Administrator) and Fr Craig Butler (Local Administrator) (From left to right) Back: Fr Manoj Mathew, IC, Fr Arthur Toothill, SM, Fr Butler, Cardinal John Dew; Front: Fr David Moore, SM, and Bishop Peter Cullinane. (Photo: Diocese of Palmerston North)

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# Redefinition of obedience needed to stop spiritual abuse

by ROWENA OREJANA

There is a need to redefine "obedience", especially in the context of religious life, to put an end to spiritual abuse in the Catholic Church.

Speaking at a Zoom event put together on November 29 by an international organisation Voice for Faith, Te Kupenga theologian and lecturer Dr Rocio Figueroa said spiritual abuse is hard to see, because it is not physical.

"The problem lies in how we define and understand violence. In popular culture, the term violence is usually linked to an act of force. If we only understand violence in this narrow way, as an act of force, it would be very difficult to comprehend the significance of spiritual violence or spiritual abuse," she said.

Spiritual abuse, said Dr Figueroa, "is the violation of a person's spiritual freedom by a leader who misuses their religious power".

"In our religious communities, we have seen many religious women are suffering spiritual abuse, and it has never been addressed," she said.

Dr Figueroa is currently working with Otago University Professor David Toombs on a qualitative study with ex-nuns who are victims of spiritual abuse involving the Peruvian community Siervas del Plan de Dios (Servants of God's Plan). This community was founded by Luis Fernando Figari, founder of Sodalicio Christianae Vitae, who is accused of sexual abuse, abuse of power, and psychological abuse of members of the community. In 2017, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life ordered that Figari be "prohibited from contacting, in any way, persons belonging to the Sodalitium Christianae Vitae, and in no way have any direct personal contact with them." He was formally expelled from the SCV in 2019.

Dr Figueroa said the former nuns gave examples of abuse like not being able to complain of tiredness, being forced to go down dark stairs "to overcome fear", handwashing a superior's underwear, and even doing university assignments for the superior.

The nun who was ordered to take the darkened stairway ultimately fell down, and had to have 15

surgical procedures. However, she was told not to question the order and that the accident was allowed by God.

"In these examples, we can see that religious obedience has been understood as the expectation that one would not only follow the orders of a superior, but completely abandon one's will and intellect. But this concept is the standard in religious life," she said.

"Perfectae Caritatis of the Second Vatican Council affirms, 'in professing obedience, religious offer the full surrender of their own will as a sacrifice of themselves to God... subject themselves in faith to their superiors who hold the place of God'."

Dr Figueroa said spiritual violence becomes structural when tradition is involved, and rules and regulations are not questioned.

"For me, the tradition of religious life regarding obedience is a structural spiritual violence. If our tradition affirms that we must obey superiors because they represent God, we have a problematic equation. That is why we need to redefine obedience, because the vow of obedience is to God... not to an authority that looks to their own interests," she stressed.

Dr Figueroa said that victims of spiritual abuse possess a "formative inherent bias" that made it impossible for them to recognise the abuse.

"Why did these nuns allow it to happen? They could not see the full reality of their own experience," she explained. "They were saying, by tradition, they were obeying God. That it was a sacrifice, that it was a giving up because they interpreted abuse as an act of obedience to God himself."

Dr Figueroa said that violence, according to American philosophy professor Newton Garver, should be defined, not just as use of force, but in terms of the verb "violate".

She said there are two kinds of right that can be violated: the right to our body and the right to our dignity as a person.

"The problem is while physical violence can be seen, spiritual abuse or spiritual violence is not clear in plain sight and can be perpetrated without being addressed. The second problem is, up until now, the ones who have interpreted the Gospel, the

values and the experiences of faith as Catholics, officially have always been men," she observed.

Dr Figueroa expressed disappointment with the response of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith to a letter of one of the former nuns of the Servants of God's Plan, when asked about what actions the Vatican has taken.

"For the good of all and for the good of the Church, the same authorities have been asked to act, overcome, and correct the improper and incorrect aspects that were found in the government, in the formation, and in the verification of possible acts of abuse of power, of psychological violence, or manipulation of the conscience," wrote Sr Carmen Ros Nortés, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith undersecretary, in a letter dated October 25, 2021.

"It's such a weak answer," Dr Figueroa said. "It's like, 'ok, we will talk to them (Servants of God's Plan).' But they (Vatican congregation) weren't talking about the systemic problem. They cannot see it because they are in the system."

She said that, while studies have been developed in other churches, "little has been done in the Catholic context".

"Things have to change," she said.

### From Perfectae Caritatis 14.

*Superiors, as those who are to give an account of the souls entrusted to them (Hebrews 13:17), should fulfil their office in a way responsive to God's will. They should exercise their authority out of a spirit of service to the brethren, expressing in this way the love with which God loves their subjects. They should govern these as sons of God, respecting their human dignity. In this way, they make it easier for them to subordinate their wills. They should be particularly careful to respect their subjects' liberty in the matters of sacramental confession and the direction of conscience. Subjects should be brought to the point where they will cooperate with an active and responsible obedience, in undertaking new tasks and in carrying those already undertaken. And so superiors should gladly listen to their subjects and foster harmony among them for the good of the community and the Church, provided that thereby their own authority to decide and command what has to be done is not harmed.*

# Book tries to lift veil on abuse within women's religious communities

by CINDY WOODEN

ROME (CNS) — "I understood we were all like dogs. They told us to sit and we sat, to get up and we got up, to roll over and we rolled over," said an Australia-born religious identified only as "Sister Elizabeth" in the book, "Veil of Silence".

After 30 years in religious life, she said she realises she, too, had treated younger members of the congregation that way.

"Many still use that abusive behaviour that has been passed down from generation to generation," she told Salvatore Cernuzio, a journalist and author of "Il Velo del Silenzio" ("Veil of Silence"), a book in Italian that was scheduled for publication on November 23.

In an author's note, Cernuzio writes of a surprise meeting with a childhood friend who had joined a cloistered community of nuns; 10 years later, a "tribunal" of older sisters decided she did not have a vocation and sent her packing.

That encounter, he said, came just a few days after *La Civiltà Cattolica* published an article by Jesuit Father Giovanni Cucci, a professor of psychology and philosophy at Rome's Pontifical Gregorian University, calling for greater Church attention to psychological and physical abuse in communities of women religious.

While his childhood friend was

still too upset to talk about her experience, even a year after leaving the convent, Cernuzio wrote, he set out to speak to women willing to share their stories. The book includes interviews with 11 women; one was sexually assaulted by a priest, but was told by her superiors that she must have led him on. The others recount abuses of power and psychological or emotional abuse, mainly through acts of cruelty, humiliation, and a denial of medical or psychological assistance.

Several of them mention how, particularly in the novitiate, they were required to ask permission to do or to have anything — including to take a shower or to have sanitary products during their menstrual cycle.

Sister Aleksandra, who told Cernuzio about being abused by a priest, said she is looking for a way out of her community.

"I don't know where I'll go, I just want to follow Jesus, and it's not possible here. I can't live in this situation any more, and I'm afraid of destroying my physical, psychological and

spiritual health. I hope to find help, maybe from some laypeople, because I know that my congregation doesn't care about me," she said. "As I have heard so many times: the fault is always with the one who leaves."

In the book's introduction, Father Cucci said that the stories of the 11 women have several things in common, but especially the tendency in some more traditional orders to keep the same superior or superiors in office for decades, which can lead them to "confuse their will with the will of God" for the sisters in their community.

They also confuse uniformity with the unity of, or peace within, the community, and treat any form of questioning as, not only a challenge to the superior, but as a rejection of God's will.

The stories, especially that of Sister Aleksandra, also show how slow the Church is to change the way it deals with sexual abuse. "Safeguarding" the good name of the institute is the priority, sacrificing the victim. The abused religious is transferred after being accused of seducing the



# Event focuses on Catholic response to assisted death

by ROWENA OREJANA

Ministering to people who are contemplating assisted suicide or euthanasia can be tricky, but Catholics are called upon to err on the side of mercy and compassion when making a judgement call.

Te Kupenga acting chief executive Dr John Kleinsman and Te Kupenga lecturer and former dean Fr Merv Duffy, SM, stressed this message at an online event called "Catholic Responses to the End-of-Life Choice Act" held on December 1. It was the first of such events hosted by the Catholic educational institution.

The two speakers based their presentation on the letter *Samaritanus Bonus* (Good Samaritan) issued by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2020, and the recently released guidelines by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference.

Fr Duffy likened the accompaniment of people contemplating assisted dying to the journey of the disciples at the foot of the Cross, in that the disciples were clearly against crucifixion, but were there to accompany the Lord.

Dr Kleinsman said that those who

would choose assisted dying are "extremely vulnerable people". He said studies abroad show that some of the underlying reasons why they choose euthanasia include social and financial pressures, neglect by family or caregivers, the idea that they are a burden, as well as other forms of "invisible coercion".

He explained the Vatican letter required "willing persistence", and a "firm decision" on the part of the person seeking assisted death.

He noted these requirements set a very high threshold that the majority of those who are contemplating euthanasia would not likely meet.

"In section 1 part V, *Samaritanus Bonus* acknowledges that requests can arise from anguish and despair, and that guilt can be reduced or completely absent. In the same section, it talks about the fact that personal responsibility can be compromised," Dr Kleinsman said.

Pastors need to be "very, very sure" about a person's disposition if they are considering withholding sacraments for this person.

Fr Duffy said both *Samaritanus Bonus* and the New Zealand bishops' guidelines are "very nuanced" with a lot of "shoulds" and "coulds".

"The NZCB's are more inclined to give the sacraments, and leave the judgement of the soul of the person to God and that individual, rather than putting the onus on the priest," Fr Duffy said.

In the meantime, Dr Kleinsman said that he had been working with a number of Catholic religious organisations who provide care throughout New Zealand.

"They have come up with a pol-

icy and some guidelines. And they will not be referring, or be part of the assessment process or be complicit in... providing the lethal substance, or even offering their premises. They are very, very clear about that," he said.

Dr Kleinsman said that Catholic care providers will have specially-trained staff who will engage with any patient who raises questions about assisted dying.



John Kleinsman



Fr Merv Duffy, SM

# Pro-life groups object to 'safe areas' bill changes

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

A parliamentary select committee has recommended changes to a bill that would seek to enable the creation of "safe areas" within up to 150 metres of specified premises providing abortions, on a case-by-case basis, but pro-life groups have condemned the changes and the bill as a whole.

Parliament's Health Select Committee reported back to Parliament on The Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion (Safe Areas) Amendment Bill, which is a private member's bill of Louisa Wall (Labour). The second reading debate started on November 10.

Voice for Life stated that the revised bill is "nothing more than a direct attack on the pro-life message and convictions, and is yet another attempt to silence any who would stand for truth, equal justice, and the lives of both mother and child".

Voice for Life urged people to contact their MPs with their concerns about this bill, which proposes that a person convicted of engaging in prohibited behaviour within a safe area would be liable for a fine of up to \$1000.

Earlier this year, the Attorney-General stated that aspects of the original bill appeared inconsistent with the right to freedom of expression under the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act.

In particular, he was concerned that the bill would criminalise "communicating" in a way that was objectively emotionally distressing, as originally proposed, the select committee report stated.

In a subsequent report, the Attorney-General stated that proposed changes to a revised draft

bill would limit freedom of expression, but would do so in a way that is demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society, as allowed for in the NZBORA.

The broad phrase "communicating with" has been replaced in the revised draft bill by several new tests, which are all narrower than the original proposal and have some exemptions, the Attorney-General stated.

Certain actions would be prohibited in a defined safe area when they can be easily seen or heard by a person "accessing, providing, or assisting with providing, abortion services". These include:

Advising or persuading such a person defined above to refrain from accessing or providing abortion services, unless the advice or persuasion is by a person who is, with the consent of such a person, accompanying them.

Informing such a person defined above about matters related to the provision of abortion, unless this is done by those involved with the process (and unless the information is provided by a person who is, with the consent of such a person, accompanying them).

Engaging in protest about matters relating to the provision of abortion services.

The Attorney-General's report stated that "communicative activities which cannot be regarded as a 'protest', and might commonly be seen at or nearby a hospital (such as an individual engaging in silent prayer), will not risk being criminalised". They do not come under the definition of protest in the revised draft bill.

The revised draft bill also states that a person must not obstruct another person in a safe area who is approaching, entering, or leaving any building in which "abortion services" are provided.

Making a visual recording in a safe area of another person "accessing, providing, or assisting with providing, abortion services" in a manner that is likely to cause emotional distress to them is also prohibited.

Some select committee members considered that some of the behaviour the bill aims to prohibit would already be covered under existing law.

Another change in the revised bill is that the relevant minister prescribing the safe area would

only need to be satisfied that the establishment of a safe area is "desirable", rather than "necessary". This would speed up the process, and would mean that incidents of harassment at that facility would not have to be proved.

Right to Life noted that the select committee had reported no evidence of women or staff being intimidated or harassed at abortion facilities.

Right to Life also noted that the Health Select Committee received 914 written submissions on the bill. "There was overwhelming opposition to the bill, with 635 submissions opposed and only 175 in support, 103 submissions were considered neutral."

"Why did the select committee completely ignore public opinion and all the evidence against this bill?" Right to Life asked.



Parliament House, Wellington. (Photo: Wikipedia)

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# Pope reflects on modern questions on meaning of life

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The classical Christian understanding of what it means to be human provides a clear affirmation of the sacredness and uniqueness of human life but, to answer new questions posed by modern culture and technology, dialogue and compassion are needed, Pope Francis said.

"The specificity of the human being in the whole of creation, our uniqueness vis-à-vis other animals, and even our relationship with machines, are being questioned. But we cannot confine ourselves just to denial and criticism," the Pope said in a video message on November 23.

Pope Francis was speaking to members of the Pontifical Council for Culture, who were holding their general meeting online, after two rounds of small group meetings to discuss the theme, "Rethinking Anthropology at a Time of Transition".

The discussions focused on the basic question, "What does it mean to be human?" on the way Christians used the Bible, and ancient Greek philosophy to forge answers that held for centuries, and on ways that traditional understanding is being challenged today.

The best response the Church can give, Pope Francis said, is not to lash out at critics, but to

enter into dialogue with them, trying to understand the values they are aiming to promote, and always finding new ways to explain "our presence in the world in the light of the humanist tradition: as a servant of life and not its master, (and) as a builder of the common good with the values of solidarity and compassion".

For Christians, he said, a key component of being human is the search for God, a part of humanism that was particularly challenged in the 1960s.

Today, other questions are gaining more attention, he said. Questions like "What does it mean today to be a man or a woman as complementary persons called to relate to one another? What do the words 'fatherhood' and 'motherhood' mean? And again, what is the specific condition of the human being that makes us unique and unrepeatable compared to machines and even other animal species? What is our transcendent vocation? Where does our call to build social relationships with others come from?"

Now as in the past, the Pope said, "the sacred Scriptures offer us the essential coordinates to outline an anthropology of the human person in relation to God, in the complexity of the relations between men and women, and in the nexus with

the time and the space in which we live".

Christian humanism embraced "a lofty vision of the human person, our origin and ultimate destiny, and our way of living on this earth", he said.

The ongoing value of that approach must be trusted enough to welcome "the contributions of the contemporary humanistic tradition and that of other cultures", the Pope said. "I am thinking, for example, of the holistic vision of Asian cultures, in a search for inner harmony and harmony with creation. Or the solidarity of African cultures, to overcome the excessive individualism typical of Western culture. The anthropology of Latin American peoples is also important, with its lively sense of family and celebration; and also the cultures of indigenous peoples all over the planet".

The key is not to give up a traditional Christian vision of the human person, and especially the essential element of being created by God and for a relationship with God, he said, but learning how to integrate those other visions of what it means to be human into the European vision.

"Now more than ever," Pope Francis said, "the world needs to rediscover the meaning and value of the human being in relation to the challenges we face."

## Titus Brandsma miracle

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis has signed a decree recognising a miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Titus Brandsma, clearing the way for the canonisation of the 20th-century martyr murdered at the Dachau concentration camp.

The Dutch Carmelite friar was sent to Dachau for treason — after defending Jews and press freedom — and was killed with a lethal injection.

Dachau, the notorious Nazi concentration camp in Germany most associated with the genocide of thousands of Jews during World War II, also held more than 2700 clergy with 2400 of them Catholic priests. Blessed Brandsma was sent there after urging editors of the Dutch Catholic press to violate a new law of the Third Reich and not print any Nazi propaganda.

Speaking to the nurse charged with giving him the lethal injection in July 1942, Father Brandsma assured her of her goodness as one of God's children, gave her his rosary beads and encouraged her to pray. The priest's example of love, forgiveness and human dignity led the nurse to return to her Catholic faith after the war, said Dianne Traflet, an assistant professor of pastoral theology at Seton Hall University.

He also denounced Nazism as "a sewer of falsehood that must not be tolerated", Traflet said.



Blessed Titus Brandsma (CNS Photo)



## Pope's team play friendly against Roma

A player from a World Roma Organisation team takes a free kick, while players from the Vatican team, "Fratelli Tutti", form a wall during a friendly soccer match at the Lazio Training Center in Formello near Rome on November 21.

The match was played to promote inclusion, including those in Roma-like communities. The match finished in a 7-7 draw. Proceeds collected from the match went to the

"Kick Out Exclusion" programme, which is sponsored by the Diocese of Rome and aims to involve Roma children in youth soccer clubs.

The Vatican team, "Fratelli Tutti", was formed by Swiss Guards, Vatican employees and their children, as well as priests "who carry out their service in the Secretariat of State, the Roman Curia and the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy", the school for priests who will become Vatican

diplomats.

The team also included three young migrants welcomed by the Sant'Egidio Community, as well as Filippo Montemurri, a Special Olympics athlete with Down syndrome.

The initiative, sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Culture, received support from Pope Francis, who met with both teams on November 20. (CNS photo)

## Attacks on Catholic sites are 'acts of hate', US bishops say

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The October 10 vandalism of Denver's cathedral basilica that resulted in satanic and other "hateful graffiti" being scrawled on its doors, and at least one statue brought to 100 the number of incidents of arson, vandalism and other destruction that have taken place at Catholic sites across the United States since May, 2020.

That month the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for Religious Liberty began tracking such incidents, according to a USCCB news release.

"These incidents of vandalism have ranged from the tragic to the obscene, from the transparent to the inexplicable," the chairmen of the USCCB's religious liberty and domestic policy committees said in a joint statement included in the release.

"There remains much we do not know about this phenomenon, but at a minimum, they underscore that our society is in sore need of God's grace," they said, calling on the nation's elected officials "to step forward and condemn these attacks". "In all cases, we must reach out

to the perpetrators with prayer and forgiveness," said Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, chairman of the Committee for Religious Liberty, and Archbishop Paul Coakley of Oklahoma City, chairman of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development.

"Where the motive was retribution for some past fault of ours, we must reconcile; where misunderstanding of our teachings has caused anger toward us, we must offer clarity; but this destruction must stop. This is not the way," they said. "We thank our law enforcement

for investigating these incidents and taking appropriate steps to prevent further harm," Cardinal Dolan and Archbishop Coakley said. "We appeal to community members for help as well. These are not mere property crimes — this is the degradation of visible representations of our Catholic faith. These are acts of hate."

In response to such attacks, the Committee for Religious Liberty launched the "Beauty Heals" project, featuring videos from various dioceses discussing the significance of sacred art.

# Pope says Paris archbishop hounded out by gossip

ABOARD THE PAPAL FLIGHT TO ROME (CNS) — Pope Francis told reporters that he accepted the resignation of Archbishop Michel Aupetit of Paris because the archbishop's reputation had been destroyed, making it impossible for him to continue leading the French archdiocese.

"There was a failure on his part, a violation of the Sixth Commandment, but not a complete violation, because it involved little caresses and massages that he gave his secretary. That's the accusation," the Pope responded on December 6 when asked by a French reporter.

The archbishop had said he offered to step down to avoid "becoming a source of divisions", and the Pope accepted his resignation on December 2.

The French archbishop's actions were "sinful", the Pope said, "but it's not among the most serious sins. The most serious sins are not sins of the flesh", but sins like pride and hatred, especially when committed by those who pretend to be "angelic".

Too many people today pretend that they are sinless and almost demand that their bishops are, too, when "we are all sinners", the Pope said.

"But when the gossip increases and increases to the point that it takes away a person's reputation, he can no longer govern," the Pope said. "He lost his reputation not because of his sin, which was a sin — like that of (St) Peter, mine, yours, sins — but because of the gossiping."

"A man whose reputation has been destroyed so publicly cannot govern," the Pope repeated.

Pope Francis spent just over 30



Pope Francis answers questions from journalists aboard his flight from Athens, Greece, to Rome on December 6 (CNS Photo)

minutes responding to questions from reporters on his flight to Rome from Athens at the end of a five-day trip that took him to Cyprus and Greece.

The Pope said he asked for forgiveness from Orthodox Archbishop Chrysostomos II of Cyprus and Orthodox Archbishop Ieronymos II of Athens and all Greece for the times Catholics had mistreated their Orthodox brothers and sisters, and he asked for God's pardon for the ways Catholics had contributed to Christian divisions.

"God never tires of forgiving us," the Pope said. "It is we who tire of asking [for] forgiveness."

Pope Francis also told the reporters he had a meeting planned later in December with Metropolitan Hilarion

of Volokolamsk, head of external relations for the Russian Orthodox Church. The Pope said he hoped that meeting would lead to an encounter soon between him and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow.

Arriving in Athens on December 4, Pope Francis paid tribute to Greece as the cradle of Western civilisation and warned, "we are witnessing a retreat from democracy".

A reporter on the flight back to Rome asked him to be more explicit.

He responded that he sees two main threats to democracy in the modern world: populist politicians who foster an excessively narrow notion of "the people" and "the homeland" — leaving too many citizens out of the democratic process — and

a push for a global "empire" where national values, cultures and traditions would be sacrificed or "watered down" in a search for unity that could easily become uniformity.

On the question of immigration, Pope Francis told reporters, "today it is the fashion to put up walls and barbed wire and concertina wire to impede migration".

Asked particularly about the anti-migration policies of several East European countries, the Pope said, "The first thing I'd say if I had one of these government leaders in front of me is, 'But think about how it was when you were migrants, and no one would let you in. You wanted to flee from your country and now you're building walls?'"

"This is painful, because those who build walls lose a sense of their own history", because many of them "were enslaved by another country".

However, he said, managing migration flows is part of a government's responsibility, and it must be realistic about the resources it has to welcome, protect, promote and integrate newcomers.

While some European countries truly are hard-pressed, he said, the other nations of the European Union must come to their aid, not only sending money, but welcoming their fair share of the people in search of safety and a better life.

And, he said, when it is impossible to accept someone in Europe who has paid traffickers everything he or she has for a place in a boat, they must be "accompanied" back to their nation of origin, not simply pushed back to where they boarded boats.

## Vatican announces Pope will bring migrants from Cyprus to Italy

NICOSIA, Cyprus (CNS) — After Pope Francis denounced putting up "barbed wire" to keep out migrants, and the practice of pushing boats back to countries where they face conditions similar to a "lager", the Vatican announced he would help move a dozen migrants from Cyprus to Italy before Christmas.

"As a sign of the Holy Father's concern for migrant families and individuals, the apostolic trip to Cyprus will be accompanied in the coming weeks by a humanitarian gesture of welcoming about 12 refugees, some of whom the Pope greeted this evening at the end of his ecumenical prayer with migrants," said Matteo Bruni, director of the Vatican press office.

At the prayer service on December 3, the Pope said that the government of Cyprus should not be blamed for knowing that it cannot welcome and resettle the thousands of migrants and asylum-seekers that have reached its shores. The country currently has the highest percentage of migrants of any country in the European Union.

The government of Cyprus had said that the Pope would make arrangements for the transfer of 50 migrants, including two from Cameroon, who have been living since May in a tent on the UN-patrolled green line that serves as a buffer zone between the country's mainly Greek Cypriot south and the mainly Turkish Cypriot north.

Bruni said that promising to bring a dozen migrants to Italy in the next few weeks does not rule out more fol-

lowing later. In fact, news agencies were reporting that the others would follow in January and February.

The transfer of the 12, he said, "will be made possible thanks to an agreement between the (Vatican) Secretariat of State, Italian and Cypriot authorities, in collaboration with the Section for Migrants and Refugees of the Holy See and the Community of Sant'Egidio".

The lay Catholic Community of Sant'Egidio, the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy, the Waldensian Church and, more recently, the Italian bishops' conference and Caritas Italy, have signed a "humanitarian corridor" agreement with the Italian internal affairs ministry.

The ministry issues humanitarian visas to vulnerable migrants and refugees, who are identified by the church groups and supported by them as they begin a new life in Italy. The support includes housing and food, but also Italian language lessons and introductions to Italian culture and social life.

The 12 Syrian refugees the Pope took on the plane with him to Rome from the Greek island of Lesbos in 2016 entered Italy under the programme, and are still being followed by the Sant'Egidio Community, although the adults are working and the children are in school.

From February, 2016, to late November, the programme brought more than 4200 people to Italy, Sant'Egidio said. Similar arrangements have been made with the governments of other European countries.

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Family Matters

Helen Luxford



Uncertainty

We've been in uncertain times for more than 18 months now. Humans, as a rule, don't like uncertainty. We want control. We want to make plans. Some people handle uncertainty better than others, but most of us have our limits. Put fear and uncertainty together and we have a recipe for disaster. There are inherent uncertainties in life, which are more apparent depending on our stage in life. None of us know the date of our death. Most mothers don't know the exact date of their child's birth (elective caesareans, of course, excluded!). Right now, we don't have the same level of assumed certainty going forward that we are used to.

The Holy Family had times of uncertainty in their lives. They left their home when Jesus was young to avoid him being slaughtered. That must have been an extremely frightening time. Joseph and Mary continued to show deep faith and trust in their God following the instructions in a dream to flee to Egypt. I can't imagine having to flee countries with a newborn — I did have to seek shelter with our first baby when he was only 3 weeks old at my parents' house — which was near-by — and that was hard enough. My husband had gone down to the Hawkes Bay for his grandad's funeral. I wasn't able to travel. Only hours after he left, there was a power cut, and the power provider was unable to

say how long the power would be out for, but rightly predicted it would be prolonged! That experience was bad enough, but nowhere near as traumatic as what Mary went through. The Holy Family only returned to their homeland when Herod died.

As this global pandemic continues, we are surrounded by uncertainty, and for the first time many people I talk to aren't sure what they will do for Christmas, New Year, and summer in general. Everyone is nervous of what the freedoms granted will bring — and will they be taken away? What if you make plans and then get Covid or are told to self-isolate when exposed to a case of Covid? When will we get back to normal? Reports from people in the UK imply that they treat Covid like the cold now that they have reasonable vaccination rates. They also have more widespread testing options available that can be done at home as needed.

Throughout this uncertainty, Jesus remains the same, our Lord God remains the same, Mary Mother of God remains the same. We have the same Catholic apostolic faith. This can provide us with the stability that we need. We haven't had access to the sacraments here in Auckland since mid-August, but that is set to change as I write this. We will all be looking forward to receiving Eucharist again and receiving the sacrament of

reconciliation. There are many references in the Scriptures to dealing with worry and uncertainty, and the fear that is inherently connected to these anxieties. In the Old Testament, in Deuteronomy 31:6, we are told "Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you." In the New Testament, in Matthew 10:31, we are told to "Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows". Prayer is so important to keep us focused on our faith and to be able to get by, so that we don't get overwhelmed by the uncertainty. At the same time, it is normal and natural at this time to feel stressed and anxious. I am heartened by the knowledge that this pandemic will end. We don't know when or how, but it will end. We all need to stick together and keep moving in faith in the meantime.

1 Peter 5: 6-7; "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that, at the proper time, he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you."

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.

Fresh bid at interpreting Herbert's saga

by JOHN MULDERIG

NEW YORK (CNS) — The gripping sci-fi epic *Dune* (Warner Bros.) arrives on screen with a notable real-life backstory.

The 1965 novel by Frank Herbert on which it's based is considered a classic of the genre — and may be its best-selling title of all time. Director David Lynch's 1984 adaptation, on the other hand, was both a critical and box-office disaster.

It may have taken some courage, then, for the person at the new version's helm (and co-writer), Denis Villeneuve, to make a fresh bid at interpreting Herbert's saga. Happily, he succeeds, thanks in large part to characters with whom it's easy to sympathise, and to a tone in the script, which Villeneuve penned with Jon Spaihts and Eric Roth, that mostly manages to convey a sense of gravity without indulging in self-importance.

The plot centres on Paul Atréides (Timothée Chalamet). The heir to a powerful dynasty of intergalactic warriors, Paul also may be the messiah figure foretold in various prophecies.

After the ruler of the empire, to which Paul and his family belong, appoints his father, Duke Leto (Oscar Isaac), governor of the titular world — a desert planet rich in a highly-prized spice — the forces the duke commands get caught up in a battle for control of its population and resources. Their principal opposition comes from a rival clan, the villainous Harkonnen.

As the struggle unfolds, Paul seeks to emulate his sage and enlightened dad. But his priestess mother, Lady Jessica (Rebecca Ferguson), steers him toward a more mysterious destiny.

Combining elements of a



Zendaya and Timothée Chalamet star in a scene from the movie *Dune* (CNS Photo/Warner Bros.)

Movie Review

costume drama, an against-the-odds quest and a parable about imperialism, the movie features a complex religious mythos requiring careful reflection on the part of viewers. There are hints, for instance, that the empire is vaguely Christian — some of its officials wear outfits reminiscent of liturgical vestments — while the inhabitants of Dune, aka Arrakis, seem quasi-Muslim.

As for the spiritual role Paul may eventually assume, it appears to align more closely with a combative military and political saviour than with the suffering servant spoken of by Isaiah and highlighted in the New Testament. Paul and his mom — who, we learn, is Duke Leto's concubine, not his wife — also share an occult ability

to overcome other people's free will.

Parents will probably find *Dune* acceptable for those older adolescents capable of sorting through such material. Like their elders, teen moviegoers will appreciate the straightforward dramatic appeal of Paul's coming-of-age story, while perhaps being inclined to let its slightly dicey transcendental elements slide.

The film contains non-scriptural beliefs, much stylised but sometimes intense violence, cohabitation, partial nudity, brief sexual references, a few mild oaths and at least one crude term.

Rating: M-Violence. 155 minutes.

John Mulderig is on the staff of Catholic News Service.

CLIPS

Eternals (Disney)

Director and co-writer Chloé Zhao's big but empty Marvel Comics adaptation follows a n ensemble of alien superheroes (most prominently Gemma Chan and Richard Madden) dispatched to Earth by a higher power (voice of David Kaye) thousands of years ago to protect humans from marauding monsters. After discovering in the present day that the purpose of their mission is not what they have always believed it to be, they face a moral dilemma based, in part, on the connection they have formed with humanity. While some of this sci-fi adventure's values are on-target and the banter in the dialogue draws the occasional laugh, neither the emotional ins-and-outs among the principals, nor the somewhat puerile battles in which they zap dinosaur-like predators with beams and balls of energy, are likely to engage many. Rating: M – Violence. 156 minutes. (CNS)

No Time to Die (MGM/United Artists)

Trickery vies with trust in Daniel Craig's fifth big-screen outing as Ian Fleming's iconic spy James Bond. As Agent 007 experiences romantic complications in his relationship with his latest girlfriend (Lea Seydoux), he also has to contend with the schemes of two villains (Rami Malek and Christoph Waltz), a rift between the British and American intelligence authorities, a dark secret being harboured by his boss (Ralph Fiennes) and competition from a younger operative (Lashana Lynch). While the once-notoriously promiscuous protagonist now yearns for a stable home life, a couple of situations in which he exacts revenge on his enemies, together with the dramatically powerful, but morally-problematic, conclusion of director Cary Joji Fukunaga's world-traversing saga, muddy the ethical waters. So this long, sprawling, action-packed and unapologetically escapist fantasy demands careful discernment on the part of those viewers inclined to look below its glossy surface. Rating: M – violence and offensive language. (CNS)

Ron's Gone Wrong (20th Century)

Endearing animated comedy in which a socially-isolated middle schooler (voice of Jack Dylan Grazer) yearns for the robot toy that has become a status symbol among his classmates. But, when he receives one as a birthday gift from his cash-strapped, widowed Dad (voice of Ed Helms) and Bulgarian immigrant grandmother (voice of Olivia Colman), it turns out to be a damaged model (voice of Zach Galifianakis) that he initially spurns. As he learns to appreciate the affection and sunny good nature underlying the eccentricities of his quirky new companion, co-directors Sarah Smith, Jean-Philippe Vine and Octavio E. Rodriguez's film, which Smith co-wrote with Peter Baynham, wreaks entertaining chaos, while sending positive messages about friendship, altruism, and the need to resist both peer pressure and mindless consumerism. Rating: PG. 107 minutes. (CNS)

The time to act, and to act together, is now, Pope says in new book

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Despite the disappointing outcome of the COP26 summit on climate change, Pope Francis said he knows it is not too late for humanity to act to combat environment destruction and increasing poverty.

The ecological crisis, the social crisis of poverty and exclusion, and the health care crisis provoked by the Covid-19 pandemic, are calling out "for us to change gear, to change bad habits in order to be able to dream, co-create, and act together to realise just and equitable futures", the Pope wrote in the preface to the *Laudato Si' Reader*.

The book, available in print and as a free e-book from the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, includes the preface from Pope Francis, a message from António Guterres, secretary-general of the United Nations, and reflections by dozens of people involved in Catholic environmental, peace or charitable agencies, ambassadors, scientists, academics, young people, farmers and indigenous people.

The reader, published on November 23, comes just over six years after the publication of Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home*.

In his preface, Pope Francis wrote that the pandemic makes it clearer than ever that "it is time to develop a new form of universal solidarity that is grounded in fraternity, love and mutual understanding: one that values people over profit, one that seeks new ways to understand development and progress. And so, it is my hope and prayer that we do not come out of this crisis the same way we entered it!"

With so many young people so committed to fighting climate change, and advocating for a more human way of organising social and economic life, he said, "we must listen to them with open hearts. We must follow their lead, for they are wise beyond their years".

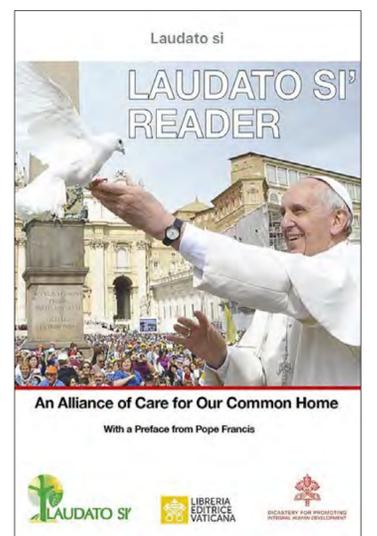
"This is a moment to dream big, to rethink our priorities — what we value, what we want, what we seek — and re-plan our future, committing to act in our daily life on what we have dreamed of," the Pope wrote. "The time to act, and to act together, is now!"

In his message, Guterres wrote that people tend to overlook "the spiritual dimensions of the work of the United Nations", but the values that it promotes — "peace, justice, equality, the dignity and worth of the human person — echo the teachings of the world's religious traditions, and summon us all to reduce human suffering".

The message of Pope Francis' encyclical is even more compelling today, he said. "Climate change has accelerated, giving the world a new normal of fires, floods and storms of epic proportions. The Covid-19 pandemic has been a "Humanity is waging war on nature," he said, but "nature always strikes back — and is doing so with gathering fury and force."

"Making peace with nature must be a priority for the 21st century," Guterres wrote, and while that is an "epic policy test", it is even more "a moral test".

"This is a moment of truth," he said. "If we persist with the old ways of inequality, injustice, hatred and heedless dominion over the Earth, we face disaster. Just as we need a cease-fire on



traditional battlefields, so must we end our war on nature."

The e-book in English can be downloaded for free at [www.humandevlopment.va/en/news/2021/published-laudato-si-reader.html](http://www.humandevlopment.va/en/news/2021/published-laudato-si-reader.html)

▼ We are here: Third Sunday of Advent

THE CHURCH YEAR

Advent Christmas Ordinary Time Lent Eastertime Ordinary Time

## Each Sunday of Advent helps us increase our sense of expectation

### Scripture

by Fr Kevin Waldie sm

Each Sunday of Advent helps us increase our sense of expectation regarding what we are about to celebrate. And these readings contribute to that aspect of these days.

The prophet Zephaniah sets the tone for this week with his words of great hope for the future. It is particularly notable how his choice of words emphasises the joyful nature of our preparation for the coming annual celebration. As we catch his sense of full-on jubilation, it is important, therefore, to embrace this special season as our opportunity to be truly immersed in the faith that we profess.

When we next turn to the passage from Philippians, we hear Paul encouraging the church at Philippi to be uplifted by belief in the Lord's presence. So, as we pray our way towards this year's Christmas festivities, we too are urged to be filled with that special joy that enlivens us daily. Through the faith we share, we witness before the world that our lives are grounded in a palpable spirit of thankfulness and peace.

In third place today, Luke's Gospel text focuses upon John the Baptist's ministry. For in it we hear how the Baptist wants all to prepare themselves for the Lord's appearing. John shows

**December 12:** Third Sunday of Advent. **Readings:** 1. Zephaniah 3:14-18; **Psalm:** Isaiah 12; 2. Philippians 4:4-7; **Gospel:** Luke 3:10-18.

us how he sees the way ahead. His teaching and actions are all geared so as to anticipate the greatness of what is to be revealed by the more powerful one who is coming. This Gospel moment is then reminding us of the real meaning of the birth we are about to celebrate.

The mood that is filtered through these readings becomes really evident in the precise focus of each one. Together these texts therefore work to heighten our deepening awareness of the great joy that is the Good News of Jesus the Lord's birth.

## Guided by Scripture we find ourselves ready for Christmas

Through the lens of these biblical texts, we gain a real appreciation for the liturgical season that comes to an end this week.

The prophet Micah portrays for us a picture of a future figure whose humble origins will mask the greatness that he will bring to an unsuspecting world. In particular, it is emphasised that the ends of the earth will see and experience a very special presence. And it will be of such a kind that ushers in a challenge to rival any other earthly authority and power. Receiving and understanding Micah's prophetic pronouncement therefore forms part of our final preparations for the fast-approaching festivities.

In our second reading, the author of Hebrews

wants us to grasp the deeply significant nature of the birth and life of Jesus Christ. Simply put, this text directs us to focus upon the human body with which the Lord is born. Thus, the birth becomes a key sign of the Lord's real presence among us. It is also a sign of the Lord powerfully embracing all the facets of our everyday human condition. By this means, we know ourselves rightly prompted and primed to celebrate another Christmas.

Today's familiar scene from Luke's Gospel comes to us with a brevity and sharpness of focus. Traditionally known as the visitation of Mary to Elizabeth, this episode highlights the extraordinary joy that bursts forth in the meet-

**December 19:** Fourth Sunday of Advent. **Readings:** 1. Micah 5:1-4; **Psalm:** 80; 2. Hebrews 10:5-10; **Gospel:** Luke 1:39-44.

ing of these two expectant mothers, one elderly and the other a young virgin. The movement in the womb and the mention of both children yet to be born signal the enormity of what we are soon to celebrate.

In summary, guided by today's biblical authors, we surely find ourselves in a fit state to welcome another Christmas Day. Inspired, therefore, by these Scriptures, we gladly venture forth to proclaim the birth of Christ.

## SAINTED GLASS

During the Annunciation, the angel told Mary that her cousin Elizabeth was expecting a child in her old age. The Gospel readings in the week before Christmas tell of Mary immediately travelling to be with Elizabeth, followed by Elizabeth's reaction when Mary arrived.

This window in St Mary's, Concord, Sydney, shows the scene, with an elderly Elizabeth on her knees and focused on the child in Mary's womb. The figure in the background is probably Zechariah.

I love the words Elizabeth spoke, and often find myself singing the Magnificat "My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour".

— Glen McCullough



## New York billboard will promote, celebrate 'Bible in a Year' podcast

WASHINGTON (CNS) — A billboard will go up in New York's Times Square during Christmas and New Year to promote and celebrate the popular podcast "The Bible in a Year", but more is in store for the programme that topped the charts shortly after its debut in January.

An all-new Spanish-language version of the daily podcast — La Biblia en un año — with original commentary and a new, native-Spanish speaking host, will be launched on January 1.

"The Bible in a Year Retreat" virtual event for listeners will take place from February 18-20. It will have a limited capacity for participants, but is "designed to help Catholics cultivate a lifelong relationship with the Word of God - one that extends far beyond the podcast".

The planned billboard will be unveiled on December 19 in Times Square and will stay up through to January 9. "Through distraction and distress, our culture has lost a hopeful, historical biblical worldview — but by the grace of God this podcast has helped thousands rediscover it," said Father Mike Schmitz, a priest of the Diocese of Duluth, Minnesota, and popular Catholic speaker and author, who hosts the podcast.

According to Ascension, a multimedia Catholic publisher and the podcast's producer, "The Bible in a Year" to date has hit 142 million downloads and 3.3 billion minutes of listening worldwide. It gets 464,000 daily downloads, of which 90 per cent are US-based listeners.

The featured guest on the podcast is Jeff Cavins, a Bible scholar and creator

of the Great Adventure Bible Timeline. Cavins and Father Schmitz created the podcast with the backing of Ascension.

Each episode averages about 23 minutes, and includes Father Schmitz reading through Ascension's entire "Great Adventure Catholic Bible" in 365 episodes, providing commentary, reflection and prayer along the way.

"The Bible in a Year" is available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify and other podcast platforms, and through Hallow, a Catholic prayer app.



An illustration of a future Times Square billboard planned for promoting and celebrating "The Bible in a Year" podcast (CNS Photo)

# Local Diocese News

## Much-loved parish music leader farewelled

by JOHN SHAW

The death occurred recently in Auckland of Tony Vela, an esteemed and much-loved member of the parish community at St Michael's, Remuera. He was 84 years old at the time of his death.

Mr Vela was active in the music ministry in his parishes. He began as a 13-year-old organist at St John the Baptist parish, Parnell, and was a member of the cathedral choir between 1964 and 1974. From 1980, he was closely associated with St Michael's as a choir member, choir-master and organist. With a long and close association with

the Croatian community, Mr Vela conducted a Croatian choir at Christmas services at the cathedral, played the accordion in the tomburica band, and took an active part in performances of the kolo national dance.

A requiem Mass was celebrated at St Michael's on November 23, with Fr Stephen Berecz presiding and with Msgr Bernard Kiely also present. The eulogy was delivered by Michael Vela, who gave an account of his father's family life and business career. Michael Vela spoke of his father's warmth and kindness as a parent and husband. Fr Berecz spoke of Tony's strong faith and commitment, and the generous

way he made himself available to play the organ at many weddings and funerals at St Michael's over the years.

In 2018 Tony Vela was awarded the papal medal Benemerenti in recognition of his major contribution to church music in Auckland. May he rest in peace.

Among the comments under the death notice on the *New Zealand Herald* website was the following from Betty Fitzmaurice: "... [S]o gifted and talented musically — gave so much joy to people through his skills — a compassionate and caring heart. A God-fearing man who I know will rest in peace."



Tony Vela (1937-2021)

## Christchurch welcomes precious taonga



Te Hīkoi Wairua mo Te Ara a Maria, the journey of the precious taonga artwork of Mary Assumed into Heaven, has carried on to Christchurch diocese, where the image has been welcomed with prayers and blessings.



These photos of Ko Hāta Maria, te Matua Wahine o te Atua (Holy Mary, Mother of God), by Damien Walker, were from Christchurch North, Christchurch West and Mid-Canterbury parishes. They were shared on the Catholic Discovery NZ facebook page. The artwork's time in Christchurch diocese will finish on December 11 at the Community of the Beatitudes at the Sanctuary of Fourvière. The annual festival of lights will be celebrated on that day and the Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Novatus Rugambwa will be present. (Photos: Catholic Diocese of Christchurch).



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# Responding to royal commission recommendations and themes

As the work of the Royal Commission into Abuse in Care continues, and ahead of some significant milestones in the process, Te Rōpū Tautoko has sent an information pack to Catholic organisations. (Te Rōpū Tautoko exists to co-ordinate and manage engagement between the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care and the Catholic Church in Aotearoa, represented by the Catholic Bishops and Congregational Leaders of Aotearoa New Zealand.)

According to a brief statement accompanying the material, while much of the engagement has

taken place by those directly involved behind the scenes, this work involves all areas and people in the Church. It is part of a much bigger picture of transforming our Church into a safe and welcoming place for all.

Within the resource sent out, has published a roadmap of actions that cover all areas of change and shows the progress of work and implementation.

Ahead of the conclusions of the Royal Commission, Te Rōpū Tautoko have created a roadmap which outlines all the areas of work that need to

be done across all areas of the Church in order to make improvements, based on statements made during the commission hearings, and in anticipation of the final recommendations. By setting this out now, the Church is working proactively to do what it can now rather than wait for the commission's recommendations. By setting it out this way, Te Rōpū Tautoko make it clear to everyone what areas are needing work, and what the status of the progress of the work is. This provides transparency and accountability to all the changes that are needed.

## ■ Responding

Te Rōpū Tautoko have heard the call from the commission that its work is part of vision to transform care today and into the future.

Te Rōpū Tautoko have also heard the call from survivors and their advocates that the Catholic Church can do something more than wait for the Commission to make recommendations. Acknowledging this, the Bishops and Congregational Leaders (church leaders) have been active in listening to the themes that have arisen from the Commission's work and especially from survivors.

This listening must translate into responding proactively into responses that Church leaders can implement, now. This work informs the ongoing response to the commission through Te Rōpū Tautoko and supports and aligns with any findings and recommendations made by the commissioners. There are actions that Te Rōpū Tautoko propose requiring Church leaders to wait for and reflect on reports and/or recommendations from the commission, to provide the most aligned response possible and avoid doubling up on effort.

Te Rōpū Tautoko eagerly await details of the Commission's Redress Report that will provide recommendations in relation to the future of redress for survivors of abuse in care in Aotearoa. Once this report has been released many of the actions noted below as "On Hold" can be progressed.

While full transformation of care cannot occur until "we turn and squarely face the reality of our dark and uncomfortable shared history", Te Rōpū Tautoko recognise that the commission process will not be "easy nor quick". Therefore, this page sets out the approach and actions that Tautoko calls a roadmap. It is committed to assisting Church leaders implement these actions. They will evolve and be updated as more work is undertaken and commitments to action agreed.

Any actions that are completed will be added to the Implemented section. There will always be more to reflect on and improve, even when a specific task is completed. Therefore, the Implemented section should be seen as an evolving record of progress to date, not the final word on any matter.

There is always work to do, improvements to be made, and a road to be built, even as we walk it.

## ■ Principles of Approach

The bishops and congregational leaders believe that every person has an innate human dignity (te tapu o te tangata), therefore:

- regard all forms of abuse as unacceptable and indefensible
- accept the responsibility to continue to act to stop abuse in the Church
- listen to, learn from, and support survivors
- act swiftly on complaints and follow them through
- ensure action on accountability is followed through for those who are proven responsible for abuse
- support the need for the Inquiry and actively cooperate with the Commission
- commit to ensuring transparency

The following additional principles guide the proposed actions:

Church leaders have been challenged by the processes of the commission to change their approach to matters of addressing complaints of abuse.

Te Rōpū Tautoko aim to support Church leaders achieve:

- Reduced barriers for survivors in making disclosures and accessing redress.

- Engagement with the Commission and Government on the establishment of an independent redress scheme for survivors of abuse in care.
- Increased independence of church entities involved in leading the church's safeguarding and redress process.
- Bishops exercising further leadership for redress outcomes for the whole church; with bishops and congregational leaders continuing to have responsibility for redress on behalf of their respective organisations.
- A review of honorifics, ensuring the church understands the impact on survivors of known abusers holding titles and honours.
- Protocols for responding to allegations of abuse, however allegations arise.

Te Rōpū Tautoko recognise that significant efforts have been and are continually being made to address historical complaints of abuse and safeguarding of children, young people, and vulnerable adults. These efforts have resulted in significant change and improvement over the last 25 years. The National Office of Professional Standards, on behalf of the National Safeguarding and Professional Standards Committee, have a principle of continual review of process to improve outcomes. This work continues and is regularly reviewed.

Te Rōpū Tautoko propose actions to Church leaders offering to support the implementation with those tasked with the work (such as NOPS staff, diocesan staff etc.).

Te Rōpū Tautoko highlight actions that aim to further improve outcomes. Many actions that were raised in earlier commission hearings have already been implemented.

The challenge to all in the Church is to become more and more survivor-informed. This includes understanding the nature of trauma arising from abuse and the life long, intergenerational, and community-wide impact.

## ■ Roadmap of Actions

- Disclosures of Abuse**
  - Increase the promotion of the paths towards making complaints. *Status: Ongoing*
  - Agree on a protocol on handling disclosures made through the Commission. *Status: Partially Complete*
  - Keep a watching brief on any allegations that arise in public forums for investigation. *Status: Ongoing*
- Independent Redress Scheme**
  - Work with church leaders to implement pathways for the probable development of an independent redress scheme. *Status: In progress, pending information from the Commission*
  - Decide on a liaison point for an independent redress scheme. *Status: On Hold (awaiting the Commission's Redress Report)*
- Resourcing**
  - Additional resources provided to NOPS to support survivors making disclosures of abuse. *Status: In progress*
  - Ensure any additional resourcing resulting from Actions are allocated. *Status: In progress*
- Church Authority Processes**
  - Ongoing training from trauma-informed professionals on survivor engagement by church authorities and their staff.

- Status: Ongoing*
  - Consultation on a set of criteria for removal of honorifics. *Status: In Progress*
  - Review of all of facilities, institutions, and publications of any photos or honorifics of known abusers. *Status: In Progress*
  - Best practice guides to be published for use of church authorities in relation to obituaries and funerals of known abusers. *Status: In Progress*
- Research and Educational Material**
  - Engage a research group to create a comprehensive list on the topic of barriers to coming forward and ongoing difficulties with redress processes. *Status: On Hold (awaiting the Commission's Redress Report, where this is expected to be covered)*
  - Develop further material about the independence of the congregations and dioceses and the limits on bishops' powers over congregations. *Status: In Progress*
  - Finalise research, including literature reviews and community research, with a focus on Māori, Pacific, and Disabled people's experiences in Catholic care settings. *Status: In Progress*
- Information Management**
  - Proposals on document management and Privacy Act procedures. *Status: On Hold (awaiting the Commission's Redress Report)*
- APTH Protocol and overall governance of the redress and safeguarding 'system'**
  - Independent review of A Path to Healing. *Status: On Hold (awaiting the Commission's Redress Report)*
  - Increase the independence of groups involved with complaint and safeguarding management. *Status: On Hold (awaiting the Commission's Redress Report)*
  - Development of an 'all of church' model for complaints, safeguarding and professional standards. *Status: On Hold (awaiting the Commission's Redress Report)*
- Implemented Actions**
  - Translation of NOPS materials. See <https://safeguarding.catholic.org.nz/documents-policies/>
  - Survivors only have to share their experiences of abuse once unless survivors want or need to share more information to aid their complaint. Now established practice.
  - Consultations on redress with survivors, advocates, and the commission
  - Church leaders support, in principle, the proposals made to the commission for an independent redress body. Awaiting the commission's detailed recommendations.
  - NOPS continue efforts to liaise with NZ Police policy teams around police procedures in relation to allegations of abuse in Catholic institutions.
  - NOPS has sought, received, and implemented advice on new processes to incorporate the latest directives outlined in Vatican documents *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* (2019) and the *Vademecum* (2020)
  - Workshops on trauma-informed ways of working being offered to key staff involved in redress processes.

# 'Highly respected' diocesan manager farewelled

by ROWENA OREJANA

Papal knight and former Palmerston North diocesan manager Tony Murphy passed away on November 20, 2021. He was 69.

Mr Murphy served as the diocesan general manager for 18 years. Acknowledging his services, he was made a Knight of the Order of St Gregory the Great in May which, in all humility, he "struggled to comprehend" how he deserved that.

A requiem Mass was celebrated at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit on November 24, with Msgr Brian Walsh presiding. The Mass was concelebrated by Cardinal John Dew, Bishops Peter Cullinane and Owen Dolan, Fr Craig Butler, and other priests of Palmerston North diocese.

Before the Mass and at the beginning of his homily, Msgr Walsh acknowledged Mr Murphy's wife Denise and his (Mr Murphy's) family and friends.

In the homily, Msgr Walsh focused on the Scripture readings chosen by the family. He started with Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8, which talked about "the wonderful caring and creating hand of God working through the events of life and time, as in Tony's life".



Tony Murphy

Msgr Walsh spoke about Jesus' victory over sin and death, saying "Tony lives on now, sharing in that great victory" as Mr Murphy trusted in Jesus's promises.

At the conclusion of his homily, Msgr Walsh referred to the words of Jesus to Martha and Mary

at the death of their brother, Lazarus. "I am the Resurrection and the Life... do you believe this? Their response then, and our response now as we farewell and pray for Tony, can surely be, 'yes, Lord, we believe'," he said.

Mr Murphy served under Bishops Cullinane, Dolan, Charles Brennan and Cardinal Dew.

He was also a member of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference finance committee, a committee member for the New Zealand Catholic Insurance Scheme, and an executive chairman for a committee establishing a new Catholic Education Office in Palmerston North.

"He was highly respected by everyone," Msgr Walsh said.

Mr Murphy stepped down from his role as diocesan general manager on January 31, after his cancer diagnosis.

At his investiture as a papal knight on May 11, Mr Murphy said that he was "shocked, very surprised and humbled".

"I got paid for my work and struggled to comprehend how I deserved it when a lot of other people — particularly volunteers — do very good work and aren't recognised," he said then.

Mr Murphy had been involved in many community organisations, including being chairman of the Manawatu Rugby Union from 2005 to 2011.

## PAPAL PRAYER

The Pope's December intention for evangelisation — Catechists. Let us pray for the catechists, summoned to announce the Word of God: may they be its witnesses, with courage and creativity and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

## IN MEMORIAM

**RYAN, Kathleen Vincent and Alan James**  
Of your charity, please remember in your prayers Kathleen, whose anniversary occurs on 14 December (2005), and Alan on 29 December (2017). Lovingly remembered by Shona Mullings, Pauline Pope, Jacqui OP, Laurence, their families, and friends. 'We have loved them in life, let us not forget them in death.' RIP

Wonderful gifts for your friends. . .

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## EVENTS

### AUCKLAND DIOCESE

**NEW DATES: Triple Centenary, Feb. 25-27, 2022.** Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School and the Sisters of Mercy, Epsom, Auckland will be celebrating their centenary. To celebrate our legacy and share in our successes, we invite our parishioners, students, teachers and alumni to attend one or all of the events planned to mark our 100th birthday. Please check our parish website for details on how to register: [epsomcatholic.org.nz](http://epsomcatholic.org.nz)

**RUAKAKA:** The Ruakaka Holy Family Catholic Community celebrates the 30th anniversary of the dedication of our new Church by Bishop Browne on **Sunday the 13th February 2022.** We have changed the format to a family bring-your-own picnic, instead of the shared luncheon, with a sausage sizzle provided and entertainment for young and old. For further information, please contact Ray Timmins: 02102788867, email: [raydale.timmins@xtra.co.nz](mailto:raydale.timmins@xtra.co.nz) or Monica Johnson: 021382401, email: [monica.johnson01@gmail.com](mailto:monica.johnson01@gmail.com)

### TE AWAMUTU

**St Patrick's Catholic School, Te Awamutu Centenary**  
This event has sadly been postponed until 2022. For more information and registration details visit [www.stpatta.co.nz](http://www.stpatta.co.nz)



Pukekohe parish priest Fr Robert Steele celebrates Mass and distributes Communion at an outdoor Mass in the parish carpark near the end of the level 3 lockdown. This Mass was also live-streamed. (Photos: Cheryl Surrey)

## CAPTION CONTEST

Caption Contest is taking a break until the first issue in January, 2022. Thank you to all our participants over 2021. We've received some fabulous entries! The winning entry from Issue 626 (Nov. 28) will be published in next issue (Dec. 26)



"There is time for everything (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Now is the time for laughing."

The winner of the Caption Contest from issue 625 (above) was **Elias Martis, Auckland.**

- Some other suggestions were:
- "Ah! My number one fan club!" — **Joan Leonard, Auckland.**
  - "You mean there's coffee and cake after? None better!" — **Colleen Hanratty, Levin.**
  - "We will sing for you if you are our conductor." — **Russell Watt, Auckland.**
  - "A happy feeling wears a happy face." — **Karen Reid, Auckland.**

## 40 YEARS AGO

### STONE HONOURS SAINTLY MĀORI

A memorial has been unveiled at Jerusalem on the Whanganui River for a man some consider may one day be declared a saint.

Bishop Peter Cullinane led about 400 Catholics from Whanganui and Taranaki to the isolated river community, to rededicate the renovated St Joseph's Church, and to pay tribute to the outstanding service of Manihera (Rure) Keremenata.

Born in 1864, Mr Keremenata was not baptised till 1883. But from then on he attended Mass every day, and his devotion became legendary. Eventually too old and frail to remain at Jerusalem, he spent his final years at the Home of Compassion in Whanganui. He died there in 1967, aged 104.

Māori missionary Father Jim Durning said the memorial was a way the Church could "recognise the outstanding performance of an outstanding layman". Because his life was so exemplary, there are moves among the people of the Whanganui River to begin the lengthy process of having Rure declared a saint.

This was the first time Jerusalem had welcomed Bishop Cullinane, who made the trip despite having a poisoned leg. He was twice challenged before being ceremonially welcomed onto the Jerusalem marae. He celebrated Mass in the historic church and confirmed local children, before unveiling Rure's memorial in the graveyard above the church.

— *Zealandia*, December 13, 1981.

# Marlborough Mass-goers adapt to orange

by CATHIE BELL

Mass-goers in Marlborough seem to have adapted well to the changes to services as New Zealand moved into the Covid-19 Protection Framework, known as the “traffic light” system.

Marlborough is one of the areas that is in “orange”, and this means that Masses have fewer restrictions if those attending Mass use vaccine passes for entry.

Parish representatives were at the doors for services on the Second Sunday of Advent, checking that people attending had scanned in and had their vaccine passes as they entered.

Special services were organised in Blenheim and Kaikoura where vaccine passes were not required for entry, to enable people who are not vaccinated to attend Mass.

This meant that restrictions were still in place, and people had to register their intentions to attend the service earlier in the week. This ensured that numbers stayed under the 50-person limit.

Masses during the week at St Mary’s church in Blenheim are also open to vaccinated and unvaccinated people, so they require registration and social distancing rules as well.

Tina Connor said she was grateful there was an option that enabled her and husband Paul McClean to attend Mass.

Ms Connor, a teacher in Blenheim, has stopped teaching because she is not vaccinated.

Masses that were open to unvaccinated people in Blenheim and



The Mass at 5pm on Sunday, December 5, at Star of the Sea parish in Marlborough

Kaikoura last Sunday had small but devout congregations.

About 10 people attended Mass at Sacred Heart church in Kaikoura, and another 25 at St Mary’s church in Blenheim.

The check-in system appeared to go reasonably smoothly, with most people having registered beforehand.

Several jokes were made about the new “traffic light” system, as Marlborough has no traffic lights in the whole district and its people are not used to the concept.



Tina Connor and husband Paul McClean check in at a special 5pm Sunday Mass where vaccine passes were not required at Star of the Sea parish in Marlborough

## WIT'S END

Planning is underway for buying Christmas presents, so here is some pre-seasonal humour. . .

**A man is taken to court. The judge asks, “What were you charged for?” The man replied, “Doing my Christmas shopping too early.” When the judge asked him how early, he said, “Before the store opened.”**

Why is Christmas shopping a sin? Because the devil is in the retails.

**How is Santa able to get his personal Christmas shopping done so quickly? He gets it right off the elf.**

I went into a toy store to do some early Christmas shopping and asked the assistant, “Where are the Schwarzenegger dolls?” He said, “Aisle B, back.”

**Customer: May I try on that elf costume in the window, please?  
Clerk: No, sir. You’ll have to use the fitting room like everyone else.**

**In the December 26 issue:  
Year in Review  
in pictures**

## Sharing the hope of Christmas with Christian Refugees



In the face of suffering and persecution, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, the numbers of refugees, especially Christian refugees, has spiked.

For close to 75 years the support of Christian refugees has been a major pillar of the work of *Aid to the Church in Need* (ACN). These are our brothers and sisters in faith, born in the same baptism, but unable to live their faith and life freely. **ACN is supporting displaced Catholic families by attending to basic needs such as food and medicine, but these families also hunger for the healing power of the sacraments and the pastoral support of the Church.**

As such, the help we provide is not only material. Our support of priests, sisters, catechists, and **all those working to build up the faith offers true consolation and hope to those in desperate need.** From vehicles for priests and religious to offer pastoral care, to the provision of faith resources, to faith via radio to gifts for children this Christmas. These projects and many like them aim to reach Christian

refugees, so that in this season of waiting for the Christ Child, they too may receive the gift of hope and consolation.

**Can you give a Christmas gift to Christian refugees?**



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