

NZ Catholic

Special Lockdown Digital Issue – September 1, 2021

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'PUBLICATION OF THE YEAR' - ARPA AWARDS 2020

A message from the editor

As was the case in March and April last year, *NZ Catholic* cannot be printed and distributed during Covid-19 alert level 4. Many similar publications, such as weekly or fortnightly community papers or magazines, have been similarly affected.

The difference this year is that part of New Zealand moved to alert level 3 on August 31, but a significant part of the country remained at alert level 4. Before sending out this issue, we had not received advice from authorities as to whether we could print and distribute to all subscribers under such conditions. We believe it is not viable to print *NZ Catholic* and distribute only to those subscribers at level 3 or lower, and not to subscribers in level 4. Deliveries of the printed version of *NZ Catholic* to subscribers will therefore resume once the whole nation is at alert level 3 or lower. Distribution to parishes will resume when the whole country has returned to alert level 1.

(The previous issue of *NZ Catholic* [dated August 21] was printed and distributed before the country moved into alert level 4, so subscribers did receive this.)

Until we can print for all our subscribers, we are continuing to produce and distribute free digital editions of *NZ Catholic*. These are being sent to most parishes and to people who request it. Links to the free digital paper will be posted to *NZ Catholic's* website and will be posted on our facebook page. Free editions do not count against subscriptions.

When we are able to print and distribute to subscribers, we plan to run several of the stories that appeared in the digital editions as archive stories, so that our print subscribers do not miss too much.

I hope you enjoy this digital edition of *NZ Catholic*, which has been produced by the newspaper's staff, working from our homes.

— Michael Otto, Editor

Christchurch contingency plan for level 2 Masses

by ROWENA OREJANA

Christchurch diocese has put in place a contingency plan that will allow people to go to Mass for whenever their region goes into Covid-19 alert level 2.

Bishop's Pastoral Office director Mike Stopforth put the plan in place after talking to priests of the bigger parishes and Archbishop Paul Martin, SM, apostolic administrator of the diocese.

The plan was put together before the country was put in alert level 4 last month.

"Previously, during Covid alert level changes, we have had an online booking system available for larger parishes who need to manage the num-

bers of people attending Mass to a maximum of 100 to abide by the Government rules," Mr Stopforth said.

"We have successfully been able to do this, and this has meant Sunday Mass has been able to continue under alert level 2."

Mr Stopforth said that, when the Government decides to change alert levels, the changes are implemented quickly. The last time New Zealand went to alert level 2, Masses throughout the diocese had to be cancelled due to the short notice of the announcement.

The plan called for parishes to provide set times for Masses to be celebrated on Saturday evening / Sunday.

"These would then be published as soon as an alert level change happens, so we don't need to check with parishes about the plans they have for Mass," he said.

Once an announcement of a change to alert level 2 is made, "we can activate the online registration within about 10 minutes", he explained. "We would still need to be a couple of days before Sunday to allow time for people to be able to register."

Those who do not have internet access can call the parish to register.

"The purpose of the plan is to enable people to attend Sunday Mass, if at all possible, under the circumstances with Covid," he said.



The artwork at Te Tomairangi Marae before the lockdown (Photo: Damien Walker: Studio of St Philomena)

Te Ara a Maria hiko currently on hold

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

A special Marian artwork, "E Hāta Maria, e ta matua wahine o te Atua (Holy Mary, Mother of God)", unveiled and blessed at St Mary of the Angels church in Wellington on August 15, was received by whanau at Te Tomairangi Marae in Invercargill shortly afterwards.

In a facebook post on August 19, Dunedin Bishop Michael Dooley said that the Te Ara a Maria hiko was "currently on hold because of lockdown".

"Thanks so much to the whanau there [at the

marae] who are looking after her [the artwork] so well. As in any hiko/pilgrimage/journey in life there are always bumps in the road and unexpected delays, but we still know our God is with us," Bishop Dooley wrote.

Bishop Dooley promised an update on when the hiko would resume. In the first days of the hiko, it was planned that the artwork, by Christchurch artist Damien Walker, would be taken to Verdon College in Invercargill, to Bluff, Riverton, Gore and to St Mary's Basilica in Invercargill. *NZ Catholic* understands it did spend some time at the basilica.

NZCatholic

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Mandatory sign in or scan in at churches

by MICHAEL OTTO

A New Zealand canon lawyer does not see any problems arising with people entering a Catholic church to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation having to scan in to an app or sign in to a manual record as mandated by the Government.

Msgr Brendan Daly, judicial vicar of the Tribunal of the Catholic Church in New Zealand, told *NZ Catholic* that people enter a church for a variety of reasons, including to pray, to attend Mass, or for the celebration of any of the sacraments.

"The fact that people record an entry to the church does not mean they are receiving the sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation," Msgr Daly said.

"In any case, the seal of confession applies to what sins the penitent confesses, not that they have actually gone to confession."

His comments came after Covid-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins announced that mandatory record-keeping is being introduced for busy places and large gatherings to ensure the Government can contact-trace quickly in the event of a Covid-19 outbreak.

Everyone over the age of 12 is to keep a record at such locations, and this will apply at all alert levels. Those responsible for non-exempt businesses and events — including faith-based services — will need to ensure people keep a record when they visit. The new requirement will come into effect seven days after the next alert level change.

Such mandatory record keeping did apply to faith-based services and other social gatherings at alert level 2. Now it will apply at all alert levels.

Fines for breaches under current law vary between \$300 to \$1000, but Mr Hipkins said the Government is reviewing the penalties, and any change would require legislation to be put through Parliament, *Radio New Zealand* reported.

Supermarkets and other retail outlets will reportedly be exempt from the change, as the compliance burden would be too onerous, especially for small businesses, Mr Hipkins said, as reported by the *New Zealand Herald*.

Some representatives from the hospitality industry have told media that they are not pleased at the compliance burden they will have to shoulder.

Record-keeping can be done by scanning a QR code into the NZ Covid Tracer App on a smartphone, or by entering details on a manual record. New Zealand privacy law provisions apply to the information recorded.

In workplaces where records are already kept and people are already required to sign in, like gyms, there won't need to be any change to what is already being done.

Palmerston North cathedral priest Fr Joseph

Grayland told *CathNews NZ* that the speed of the Delta variant outbreak is dramatic, and the cathedral parish will do all it can to aid in contact tracing.

Fr Grayland said that, in his experience, he finds most people already use the current sign-in system.

"I have not seen anybody refuse to sign in when they've been asked, but I have no way of actually knowing whether everybody has signed in or just waved their phone at the QR code," Fr Grayland said.

Fr Grayland told *CathNews NZ* that his parish volunteer greeters are currently not yet equipped to deal with someone who refuses to sign in, and there is little doubt there will be new skills to learn and procedures to follow.

Msgr Daly told *NZ Catholic* that "Catholics have an obligation to be good citizens and to observe all civil laws that are not contrary to divine law".

"This obligation exists in charity and justice. Loving one's neighbour includes doing one's best to protect others from contracting Covid 19 and

suffering from ill health. Canon 223 states "§1 In exercising their rights, Christ's faithful, both individually and in associations, must take account of the common good of the Church, as well as the rights of others and their own duties to others. §2 Ecclesiastical authority is entitled to regulate, in view of the common good, the exercise of rights which are proper to Christ's faithful."

Msgr Daly added that New Zealand's bishops "may have to give directions about dealing with people who refuse to sign in, but I don't expect this to be an issue".

Other priests spoken to by *NZ Catholic* said that the mandatory record-keeping could mean some people are queuing to do this after the Mass has started, especially if there is a large congregation at alert level 1. People might, therefore, be advised to arrive early, so as not to miss the start of Mass.

Another idea was including QR codes in parish notices so people could scan them in their seats at some point. People could be reminded to scan or sign in after Mass too, if they had not already done so.

'Big challenge' ahead for Masses

by MICHAEL OTTO

The administrator of the Cathedral of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Hamilton has said the Government's move to require mandatory record-keeping at all Covid-19 alert levels for busy places and events is a "significant change" and will be a "big challenge".

People are used to arriving for Mass without "signing in", wrote Fr Darren McFarlane in a cathedral facebook post on August 29.

"We are exploring ways to make this easier on you, but it is going to be difficult. It is essential that, if you have a phone, make sure you have downloaded the Government's Covid Tracer App," he wrote.

On the science media centre website, Auckland University research fellow Dr Andrew Chen said that places where

people have to scan in or sign in should have ballot box arrangements for people who are not using the app, rather than clipboards, where others can see people's information and their privacy can be breached.

"With the ballot box, individuals write their details on a small slip of paper, and then drop them into a box (like an election box) so that other members of the public cannot easily access them," Dr Chen wrote.

"Venues can then clear the box once a day, putting the slips of paper into a bag with the date on it in case they are needed by contact tracers later on, or otherwise discarding them after 60 days. The Government has a ballot box template available online."

Fr McFarlane wrote that, when the move is made to alert level 2, and congregations of

up to 100 are allowed, with social distancing and other requirements, the cathedral parish will resume its online booking system for Sunday Masses.

"This system is not perfect," he said. "Often people would book a space and then not turn up, or others would book a place at all five Masses because they were not sure which one they wanted to go to."

"This meant others were deprived of a spot at Mass. Still others would simply just turn up at the doors hoping to get in for Mass, and then become frustrated and even angry when they could not."

"You can help those who struggle with technology by helping them book online when we get to Level 2."

Fr McFarlane also encouraged people to get vaccinated.

Catholic schools and churches among locations of interest

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

Catholic schools and churches in Auckland were among hundreds of "locations of interest", which were visited by people with Covid 19, and were listed by health authorities following the outbreak of the delta variant of the virus last month.

The Catholic venues were St Patrick's Cathedral (August 12, 12.15pm - 1.15pm); The Square Gift Store (August 12, 11.45am - 12.55pm); McAuley High School in Otahuhu (August 11, 12, 13, 16, 17); De La Salle College in Mangere (August 13, 16, 17); Rugby game at De La Salle College (August 14, 9am - 12pm); Rosmini College Filipino Night (August 13); St Therese Church Mangere East (August 15, 6.00pm-7.30pm); St John the Evangelist Catholic Preschool in Otara (August 16).

The advice given to people who visited these places at the specified times and dates, who are considered to be close contacts, was to isolate at home for 14 days from date of last exposure and test immediately, and on days 5 and 12 after the last exposure. They were instructed to call the Healthline for what to do next. The people in their immediate household or bubble were considered secondary contacts, and they were instructed to stay at home until the close contact had received a negative day 5 test result. Places of interest were reportedly taken off official lists after 18 days.

Over the course of the lockdown, bishops in New Zealand dioceses have been posting to social media messages of encouragement and support for people.

Some of the sentences in their messages were:

"As people of faith, we are praying for all who are affected by this virus and its ramifications. During these days of lockdown let us continue to pray in our homes and in our families, to read the Scriptures, and ask the intercession of Our Lady as protector of our country for all of us." — Archbishop Paul Martin, SM.

"Loss of work and income are among the burdens that many are bearing, as are loneliness and isolation, and the anxiety that comes from being separated from loved ones, especially in times of

illness or crisis. There may seem no easy answers, but we know there is always the great hope and peace promised by Jesus who assured us that he is always with us, especially in the times when we are worried and anxious. He asks us to lay our burdens on him. I want to assure you all of my love and prayers, whatever your difficulties in these troubled days." — Bishop Patrick Dunn.

Several parishes live-streamed Masses each day, and a Sunday Mass is broadcast on Sunday afternoons at 2pm on Shine TV (Free to air channel 25; Sky channel 201).

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Vinnies answer the call for help during lockdown

by ROWENA OREJANA

Demand for food parcels around the Hamilton diocese went up from 20 to 80 on the first week of the Level 4 lockdown, said St Vincent de Paul Hamilton manager Mike Rolton.

"People who had their hours reduced because of the lockdown have come on board. Students are also coming in to seek help. There is nothing for them to do as most are employed in the hospitality industry," he said.

Mr Rolton said a lot of the new people asking for parcels have no savings as they earn enough only to meet their daily needs.

Luckily, he said, the Vinnies (Hamilton) have enough food stockpiled to meet the demand. On the second day of the lockdown, they were able to distribute around 5800 lunch packs.

"We had a feeling amongst my A-team that we're headed for a lockdown and so we prepared for that," he said. "It's all about logistics. We've thought of the worst-case scenario and prepared for that."

This time, he said, they are better organised.

"We learned from the lockdowns last year. Our systems are all in place. Our staff are all trained, ready to go. All our guys have been vaccinated, including myself," said Mr Rolton.

They have four people on phones and four at the foodbank. As soon as a request for a parcel comes in, the request shows up at the monitors at the food bank. The parcel then gets assembled and ready to be picked up or delivered.

"Everyone knows exactly what to do. I don't have to hold too many hands," he said. "We actually get through to people quicker."

Mr Rolton said safety is a priority, so everyone wears full face mask, and social distancing was extended to two and a half metres.

Mr Rolton said they will have no problem providing food parcels as long as they can get their orders from the supermarkets. He acknowledged that the supermarkets are struggling as well, and he hopes that the stores are able to overcome their difficulties.

"The hardest thing to get is spaghetti and baked beans," he said. Ironically, two years ago, they



Workers with a SVDP vehicle in Hamilton



Mike Rolton

had too much of these canned goods.

Those who seek assistance from Vinnies Hamilton can get in touch with them through all their social media accounts. They can also call them at (07) 847-4044.

They are also accepting only cash donations at the moment. To donate, message them at any of their social media accounts to get their bank details.

■ In the first week of the alert level 4 lockdown, Vinnies Auckland had provided more than 1000 food parcels to families.

And 450 of the food parcels had been delivered to families having to be in isolation, because of alert level 4 rules.

Among those helped by Vinnies Auckland were members of the McAuley High School community.

"Due to the mandatory isolation, many of the families are having a real hard time not being able to go to supermarkets," a post on the Vinnies Auckland facebook page noted on August 22.

An August 24 post stated that Vinnies Auckland envisaged the number of food parcels being provided daily to increase the following week.

Vinnies Auckland thanked all those whose generosity had enabled this service to take place. Among those thanked were New Zealand Food Network, Zespri and North Bakery.

"Vinnies need your help to support more of our aiga (family) in south and west Auckland that have been affected by the lockdown," an August 24 post stated.

Since the lockdown started, Vinnies Auckland has been operating a "non-contact" drive-through foodbank. People have to register and book a time. No drops-in can be accepted. Deliveries go only to households in mandatory isolation.

For more information and to support Vinnies Auckland, visit www.svdpak.org.nz

New Carmelite Sister inspired by St Therese

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

An argument among children overheard by 15-year-old Sisi'uhila Kiu was to eventually bring her from her village in Lapaha, Tonga, to a final commitment in Christchurch as Carmelite Sister Anne Mary of the Assumption.

When she was 15, the young Sisi'uhila overheard children arguing about who was the youngest nun to become a saint. Sisi had never even heard of St Therese. But she thought, I could do that.

In fact, she felt that she wanted to compete with St Therese in this regard.

"I didn't even know she was a Carmelite. But when I entered Carmel and understood how holy she was, I no longer wanted to compete with her!"

Sr Anne Mary made her Solemn Profession on August 15, the Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady.

She grew up in Tonga in a Catholic family, and there was daily Mass and rosary. But her mother died when Sisi'uhila was only one year old. But God compensated, she believes, by letting his mother Mary take over that role.

"God has also blessed me", Sr Anne Mary said, with "a cheerful nature and a very strong will, and that has helped me to continue on through many difficulties, including leaving my family and my country".

Before she entered Carmel, a turning point in Sr Anne Mary's life came when she was considering which religious order to join. One day, when she was praying, a light breeze flipped the pages of a calendar in her room. She saw a picture of Our Lady of Mt Carmel, and she interpreted this as God pointing the way for her.

"After that, I had peace and calm and contacted the Carmelites."

The ten years of formation also had some tough moments, she said.

But her profession day was "the best day of my life. I never felt so free and so happy in my life as on my profession day".

Sr Anne Mary said she loves the silence at Carmel, "even though it's against my nature".

"In fact, it's something of a miracle that I can stop talking some of the time! I love community life among the sisters. In Carmel, I've learned to love having a prayer life. I'm not so good about sharing about God, but I love pondering about him."

At the Mass at the Carmelite Monastery in Hoon Hay on August 15, Fr Rick Loughnan substituted for Archbishop Paul Martin, SM, who was rededicating New Zealand to Our Lady in Wellington.

The principal concelebrants were Fr Line Folaumoeloa from Auckland, and Msgr Brendan Daly. In his homily, Msgr Daly spoke of the witness of



Carmelite Sister Anne Mary of the Assumption after her Solemn Profession

commitment, and also of Pope Francis' call for religious to be persons of prayer, poverty and patience.

Hundreds of supporters and well-wishers packed the Chapel and marquee outside. The border closures meant that Sr Anne Mary's family and friends in Tonga could not travel to the ceremony, but they, along with Carmelite nuns around the region, watched the Mass and ceremony via livestream. Sr Anne Mary's great aunt and other New Zealand-based family members were able to be present.

A Tongan choir sang a capella to lead the music, and Tongan Youth were heavily involved. The livestream is available on the Carmelite Monastery website, and the sisters hope to make a highlights video soon.

There were fervent prayers sent up leading to the ceremony as there was concern regarding lockdowns. The timing was perfect, the sisters believe, as two days later the whole country was once again in lockdown. All at Carmel are very grateful that the Mass could take place.

Goodness and generosity impress top judge

by MICHAEL OTTO

After many years of involvement with the law and justice systems in this country and overseas, former principal district court judge Sir David Carruthers can say that he is still impressed with the strong vein of generosity and kindness which lives in the heart of this country.

This is “never really reflected in the media”, he told the St Michael’s parish, Remuera, AGM, on August 15.

Sir David, who was the guest speaker at the AGM, said he had been asked to speak about faith and justice matters, given his background, which includes working for 34 years as a judge, as well as being a former principal youth court judge, chairman of the New Zealand Parole Board and chairman of the Independent Police Conduct Authority of New Zealand.

Goodness, hope and redemption, even in seemingly hopeless and desperate situations, were themes touched on throughout his talk.

Sir David, who is a parishioner at the Parish of Our Lady of Kapiti at Paraparaumu, is a big fan of restorative justice approaches, and he gave a couple of examples, both involving Christian women who had suffered great personal harm.

The first example concerned a young man who had been imprisoned for murder.

“He had been part of a satanic cult, this young man, years ago, in the South Island. And as part of the cult, he and his friends had kidnapped a young boy and had tortured him in accordance with the tenets of this evil cult, and then they killed him. And after some years in prison, he became a Christian. . . .

“[In] his case, the whole behaviour and outlook had changed. It was a real conversion.”

Sir David said he saw a transcript of a restorative justice hearing some years later.

The sister of the boy who had been killed said to the murderer: “I’ve been terrified of you. I was not able to continue with my life after you had killed my brother. I was at university and I couldn’t continue with my studies, and I haven’t been able to get a permanent job since that time, years now, because I was so terrified that you would get out and you would come looking for us and wreak your revenge [on] us and for what you did to our brother. Terrified, horrified by you, I dreamed about you.

“Then she said, today, I have got rid of that, it has gone. I see you as a person now, I can see you have changed. I no longer have that fear. I can now get on with my life and I will do so. I thank you for talking to us, it has made a difference to me. And then she said, in a way that I don’t think that I would ever be capable of, but I hear so often, she said — I wish you well.”

Sir David said that he had heard the expression “I wish you well” from people “whose lives have been turned upside-down, even destroyed by actions, in a way which I think is absolutely humbling”.

“I’m a very great fan of restorative justice. I think that is Christian work. It puts a human face on suffering, so victims and offenders can see each other as human beings,” he stated.

He recounted another story, along similar lines.

“An elderly man who came before us for release. He was a child sex offender. And he had done everything he could in prison, and he was very well-behaved, as often they are. But there was no place for him to go [as required for parole]. No one wants to have child sex offenders with them or near them, and his family didn’t want him either, for the same reason — three girls.



(From left): Mike Molloy (parish finance council), Jonathan Spencer (pastoral council), Sir David Carruthers, Fr Tony Dunn.

“But one of his daughters came to see us, and she said she wanted him to come home with her. She had three children of her own, this young woman. She said, I have talked to my sisters, and they don’t understand why I want to do this, but I don’t want to remain a victim of my father.

“He did some dreadful things to me, and I can never forget them, but I want to forgive him, she said. We can keep our children safe from him. I want to forgive him and I want to love him and care for him at the end of his life. And, in that way, she said, he will see that he didn’t win and the way he behaved hasn’t won, but what has won, finally, has been love and forgiveness.”

“I found that intensely moving,” Sir David said. “Of course, there are times when that doesn’t happen. But I have heard those stories again and again and again, and it is humbling and heartening to hear that.”

Taking questions after his talk, Sir David agreed that there are cases where there is no repentance, and a restorative justice approach would not be appropriate. It is not the solution to everything. Nonetheless, it is underused, he believes.

Sir David also spoke about the success of the parole system in lowering the chances of reoffending — international studies have shown it is “about five times more successful in preventing reoffending than automatic release at the end of a sentence”, and he spoke about the work Christian people do in prisons and in supporting former prisoners when they are released.

“At the centre of these sometimes desperate lives in prison are Christian men and women working without support, sometimes in dangerous situations, and living under threats, and doing wonderful work for Our Lord in these places. A Catholic nun, who was prison chaplain in Wellington, was one of those who I thought was a saint,” he said.

“I spend a good bit of my time now with overseeing the restructuring of the police force in Victoria, Australia, and I am advisor to the prison riots inquiry at Waikeria, so I am still connected to police and to prisons and connected to the work that I see being done there all the time by Christian men and women.”

But his talk wasn’t all serious reflection. He related several anecdotes about his life in the law (see sidebar), and expressed his admiration for Christian communities and individuals in places like Kiribati, where the chief magistrate is a Catholic nun, and in Rwanda, recovering from brutal civil war.

You must have been a beautiful baby. . . .

This was one of several anecdotes related by Sir David Carruthers about his years in the law and being involved in justice systems:

Things have changed in the judicial diet. There used to be, for example, paternity cases in the family court. Now that is no longer the case because of DNA testing. But what was interesting, from a judge’s point of view, was the way in which, in paternity cases, the applicant would always try and smuggle the baby into court, so the judge could see how similar the baby looked to the respondent. Of course, it is no real evidence, so I ordered them out again. And I remember once sitting in a country court, single storey, I ordered the baby out, and half way during the hearing, someone outside the window lifted the baby up to the window — and they had gone to a little bit of trouble, because they had put the baby in the same sort of suit as the respondent; parted the hair down the middle, put some glasses on — just slightly “touched up” to assist me, which was kind. But, frankly, I thought the baby looked more like the respondent’s lawyer!

Voice for Life conference postponed

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

With the nation going into Covid-19 alert level 4 in mid-August, Voice for Life postponed its conference which was scheduled to be held in Wellington on September 3-4.

A post on Voice for Life’s facebook page on August 24 stated that, with the lockdown,

it was no longer logistically possible to stage the conference at the planned dates.

Among the speakers at the conference were to be former Prime Minister Sir William English, Palliative Care Professor Rod MacLeod and MP Simon O’Connor.

Voice for Life’s post stated that the decision to postpone

was made with “heavy hearts”. Another date for the conference will be decided on “once things have settled down”.

“Thankfully, our conference theme, ‘New Beginnings, Unstoppable Love: NZ’s Pro-Life Future’, will be just as applicable after the lockdown, so we look forward to coming together in due course,” the post stated.

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The Mass and the assembly

“You say I am repeating / Something I have said before. I shall say it again, / Shall I say it again?”

T. S. Eliot wrote these lines in a very different context (or maybe not?), but I take consolation in the fact that even he could become exasperated.

For over two decades I have repeated myself in this paper. But I shall “say it again, / Shall I say it again?”

Every week, every student of every New Zealand Catholic school should be attending Mass at school, during school time.

At a recent parish AGM, a grandmother shyly took the microphone telling us that her granddaughter goes to Mass only at Christmas, Easter and at school. She was concerned that the faith was not being passed on. Her daughter and son-

Dan Stollenwerk

in-law didn't go to Mass. Could the school please offer more Masses?

This grandparent-grandchild connection is becoming ever more prevalent. The reality is that most New Zealand Catholic school students do not attend Mass on Sundays. Nor do their parents. The faith of the students is often linked to the grandparents — who often pay the school fees.

Thus, this grandparent's concern is valid. We've lost a generation of Catholics. How do we evangelise the next?

Of course, the answer to her concern — if I may repeat myself — is that, yes, there should be more school Masses to pass on the faith to her grandchild. In fact, common sense would say that, every week, every student of every New Zealand Catholic school should be attending Mass at school, during school time.

The idea is not novel. And it is in line with the practice of the Church.

And yet, we do not see the practice happening throughout New Zealand at our Catholic schools. The reasons are as staid as they are predictable:

It is said that there aren't enough priests. Sure, there are. Priests today celebrate daily parish Masses for a handful of the faithful. Why not cel-

ebate for 300-plus students? Priorities.

It is said that the students should be coming to Mass on Sundays with their parents. True, but they don't. So how to deal with the situation?

It is said that, if we celebrate Mass at the school, students will not learn to come on weekends. Does this mean that if we don't celebrate Mass at school they will learn to come on weekends?

It is said that we do not want the school to become a parish. (A New Zealand bishop — not my own — once remonstrated with me for suggesting that we might.) So, is the parish not to go out in search of the lost sheep?

It is said that our teachers don't know how to act at Mass; they don't know how to discipline the children. Hmmm.

It is said there is not enough time in the weekly school calendar. Yet there is time for a weekly school assembly?

If there is anything more to be said, I'm willing to listen, but in two decades of listening I've yet to hear a valid excuse.

Let's take the school assembly excuse a bit

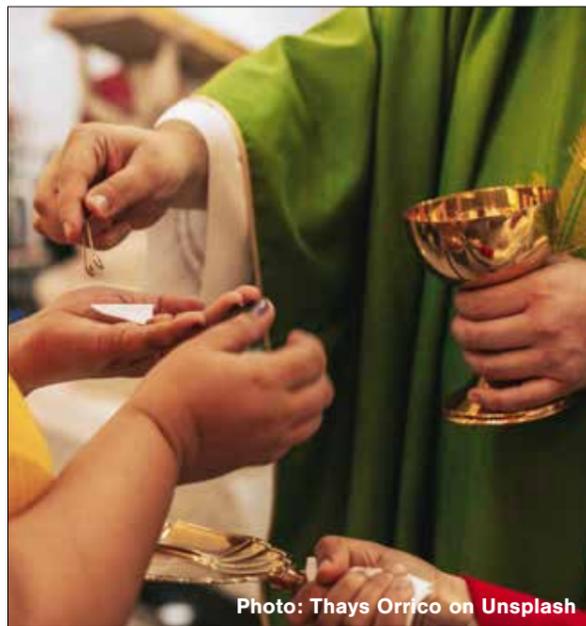


Photo: Thays Orrico on Unsplash

further, because I think here we can see a clear choice. Be there no doubt, school assemblies are rituals — patterned actions and words that both reflect and reinforce structure and meaning, not just in academic routines, but in the students' worldviews, in their very lives.

Now imagine an historian, say 200 years from now, looking back at not one but two generations of deteriorating Church practice in Aotearoa. What might that Church historian say about the fact that the thriving Catholic schools of the early 21st century chose a secular ritual — albeit adorned in Christian prayer — instead of the Church's most sacred ritual rooted in three millennia of tradition, inaugurated by Jesus himself and passed down for 2000 years?

I often despair of seeing how Hollywood understands the power of Catholic symbols and sacraments so much better than Catholics — the cross, the rosary, the tabernacle shot at a unique angle, with artistic shading, in often very traditional settings. As much as we add prayers to our school assemblies, they do not have the mystique and wonder of the sacrament. And school assemblies will certainly never be the source and summit of our faith.

Yet the assemblies persist, and the Mass does not.

To be clear, I have nothing against school assemblies. But I do have something against there being no time for the Mass. The Mass works. It offers Catholic identity. It passes on the faith. Catholics do Mass well. So why are we not evangelising the next generation with weekly Mass?

With many dioceses today rethinking their short- and long-term pastoral goals — consolidating parishes, prioritising funds, assigning clergy — now may also be a good time to place greater value on school Masses.

However the diocesan plans ultimately come to fruition, for the sake of evangelisation, in order to pass on the faith, can we please assemble the resources and personnel needed, such that every week, every student in every Catholic school in New Zealand is able to attend Mass at school, during school time?

Dan Stollenwerk, STD, is head of the faculty of Theology and Philosophy at St Peter's College, Auckland.

Ronald Rolheiser

The fading of forgiveness

In a recent issue of *Comment Magazine*, Timothy Keller, theologian and pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, wrote an insightful essay entitled *The Fading of Forgiveness*, within which he highlights how, more and more, forgiveness is being seen as a weakness and a naïvete.

He begins by pointing to a couple of highly-publicised incidents of forgiveness. In 2015, Dylann Roof shot nine members inside an African-American church in South Carolina, and was publicly forgiven by the relatives of his victims. And in 2006, when a gunman shot ten Amish children in a school room in Pennsylvania, and then killed himself, the Amish community there not only forgave him, they went to visit his family and expressed sympathies to them for their loss. What was the general response? Admiration for extraordinary selflessness and virtue? No, not that. More generally, these instances of forgiveness were judged as naïve fundamentalism and as unhelpful. Why? Why would these instances not be recognised instead, both for what is most noble within humanity and for what is highest within religious virtue?

Keller suggests that there are a number of reasons for this, but he singles out two in particular. We are a “therapeutic culture” (where only our own truth and feelings matter), and a culture that has a “religion without grace” (its vision and virtue go no further than what echoes in our emotions and willpower). Hence, our culture sees forgiveness more negatively than positively. For it, forgiveness allows oppression to maintain its power, and thus permits the cycle of violence and abuse to go on. Like a family refusing to stand up to an alcoholic member, it enables rather than stops

the abuse, and allows a sick situation to continue. Forgiveness, then, is a further injustice to the one who has been violated, and can lead to a form of self-loathing, an acceptance of a humiliation destructive of one's self-image, a further loss of dignity. Moreover, the moral pressure to forgive can be a further burden on the victim, and an easy escape for the perpetrator. Is this logic correct?

From a purely emotional point of view, yes, it feels right; but it is wrong when scrutinised more deeply. First, it is evident that vindictiveness will only produce more vindictiveness. Vindictiveness will never soften a heart and help change it. Only forgiveness (analogous to dialysis) can take violence and hatred out of a relationship. As well, in the words of Martin Luther King, anyone devoid of the power of forgiveness is also devoid of the power of love. Why? Because each of us will get hurt by others, and will hurt others in every one of our relationships. That is the price of community inside human inadequacy. Hence, relationships at every level, personal and social, can only sustain themselves long term if there is forgiveness.

Moreover, with Jesus, forgiveness becomes singularly the most important of all virtues. It decides whether we go to heaven or not. As Jesus tells us, when he gives us the Lord's Prayer, if we cannot forgive others, God will not be able to forgive us. Why? Because the banquet table, eternal community of life, is only open to everyone who is willing to sit down with everyone. God cannot change this. Only we can open our hearts sufficiently to sit down with everyone.

Recently, given some of our ecclesial infighting, various groups have attempted to single out one specific moral issue as a litmus test for

Christian discipleship. For many, this litmus test is abortion; others pick church attendance or some other issue. What might serve as a litmus test for Christian discipleship? Precisely this: the willingness to forgive. Can I forgive someone who has wronged me? Can I forgive someone whom I hate and who hates me? That challenge lies most central in Jesus' teaching.

That being said, it must also be said that forgiveness is not simple or easy. That is why in the Judeo-Christian spirituality of Sabbath, there is a (too-little-known) spirituality of forgiveness. As we know, the command to celebrate Sabbath asks us to honour this cycle in our lives: Work for six days — rest for one day. Work for 7 years — rest for one year. Work of seven times seven (forty-nine) years — have a major rest (sabbatical). Work for a lifetime — and then be on sabbatical for eternity.

Well that is also the cycle for forgiveness. In the spirituality of Sabbath: You may hold a minor grudge for six days — then you need let it go. You may hold a major grudge for seven years — then you need to let it go. You may hold a soul-searing grudge for forty-nine years — then you need to let it go. You may hold a grudge that ruined your life until your deathbed — then you need to let it go. That is the final Christian moral imperative.

Desmond Tutu once said, “without forgiveness there is no future”. True — on both sides of eternity.

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 Follow on Facebook www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser/

Wandering in the lockdown desert

During the 2020 alert level 4 lockdown, when Catholics and other Christians, and indeed members of many other faiths, could not gather for their religious services, a keen sense of loss was felt.

Many a faith leader, in this country and overseas, turned to their Scriptures, to find a word or two of comfort. How were they to see the hand of God in this?

For Catholics, a passage commonly referenced was Psalm 137 verse 4: "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" (They did not

go on to mention the verses later in the Psalm about

Babylon and its children). Assurances were given that, even in this strange land, God was still with his people. In this country, in their bubbles, Catholic people prayed, watched liturgies on screens, read their Bibles and got by. It seemed a strange land indeed, for people so used to the nourishment of the Eucharist.

Now, we are back there again, at least in part. Having been delivered from Covid once, the nation has been in lockdown in various forms again, with talk of bubbles and what we can and cannot do while the delta variant seeps into our community.

So what scriptural passage might be used this time when we are back in this "strange land"? The circumstances have changed since 2020. During the first lockdown, pretty much the entire world was in the same boat. People were being locked down everywhere it seemed. Who can forget the image of the Pope with a monstrance, giving his Urbi et Orbi blessing to a rain-swept and empty St Peter's Square.

But now New Zealanders look at their newsfeeds or TV news bulletins and see crowds at overseas sporting events, and hear stories of borders being opened in many places. The game changer has been vaccination. Covid is still there, but where there has been vaccination, there appears to be less hospitalisation and fewer deaths from this virus.

We are in this for the long haul. So maybe a fitting Scripture reflection might be to turn to the story of the Exodus, when Israel was delivered from evil in Egypt, and received much from God, but was made to wander in the desert for 40 years before the following generation would reach the promised land. (According to the Book of Numbers, being made to wander was an act of mercy by God, following intervention by Moses, after Israel had transgressed.)

In a column last year, Los Angeles auxiliary Bishop Robert Barron, whose writing appears from time to time in this newspaper, stated that the Book of Exodus is concerned "primarily with the manner in which God shapes his people so that they might become a radiant beacon, a city set on a hill. [In] the biblical reading, Israel is indeed chosen, but it is never chosen for its own sake, but rather for all the nations of the world".

"I would say that this formation takes place in three principal stages," Bishop Barron continued. "First, God teaches Israel to trust in his power; secondly, he gives Israel a moral law; and thirdly, he instructs his people in holiness through right praise."

"God doesn't need the ark and the tabernacle and priestly vestments and regular worship, but we do," Bishop Barron said.

"Through the gestures and symbols of its liturgical praise, Israel is brought [in] line with God, ordered to him. The moral law directs our wills to the divine goodness, but the liturgical law directs our minds, our hearts, our emotions, and yes even our bodies to the divine splendour."

As we once again wander in the deserts of our bubbles, and look forward to a promised land of restored freedom and community that is not too far away (hopefully), maybe we can look at our present circumstances as an opportunity for God to form and shape his people again — orienting us further to right conduct, to love of neighbour, and to concern for the common good? And to an even deeper longing for gathering again in community to worship in spirit and truth.

The Habit



Editorial

Letters

Readings

During the weekend of August 15, the Sunday epistle was, in part, quite grotesque reading. The first part was about a woman with the sun for a mantle, with the moon under her feet and a crown of 12 stars about her head etc.. She was about to give birth.

The reading went on to record what the seven serpents (or a dragon in other versions) were positioned to do, that is to eat the baby from the womb of the woman as soon as it was born from its mother. I found this passage obscene, horrific and sickening. In this age of kindness and compassion, this part of the reading is quite unnecessary. It should be deleted.

It could be frightening to younger Mass attendees, and imagine the distress a woman might have when her memory of a bad birthing experience is revived. I think it time this kind of material should be deleted from any Mass readings. Perhaps the liturgy committees could check all future readings for similar imagery and remove or replace it.

On what was supposed to be a day of celebration, such language was hardly uplifting. All the more important because the day was the day of the re-dedication of New Zealand to Our Lady.

C. Wheeler, Rangiora.

■ NZ Catholic invited Te Kupenga Catholic Theo-

logical College Scripture lecturer Fr Kevin Waldie, SM, to respond to this letter. His response is as follows: "When interpreting Revelation, a number of things need to be kept in mind. John's visions offer an insight into God's rule over heaven and earth. They vividly and imaginatively describe the age-old battle between good and evil, in all its grotesque and bizarre forms. Through John, our good God tells us a grand plan is afoot to conquer everything evil. The symbolic language (numbers, days and beasts etc.) indicates that the earthly world is passing away. In the meantime, though, great and glorious things have been achieved for good through figures like the Virgin Mary and her Son. In light of that, John's visions are Good News for the early Church in the 90s CE. At that time, the Roman Empire sorely tested the faith of Christians. So John's symbolic message is empowering and uplifting for every age. And his words declare that God's Kingdom outperforms any earthly Empire."

Prayer

Without communication there is no relationship (and that means blindsiding effective immediately). Without respect there is no love. Without trust there is no reason to continue (and despair can set in).

Forcing people into a mode of worship can feel like an arranged marriage

based on external convenience. If it's a bad fit, and if there is no genuine affection, then it probably won't last, because pretending isn't real.

To use another analogy — human beings are not livestock, to be penned into a corral, and branded with the farmer's own mark. Every person is unique and unrepeatable and not just a number in a herd of animals.

A relationship with Christ is a private and personal matter, and tolerating other forms of spirituality acknowledges the dignity of individual persons and their own personal choice of worship.

Baptised Catholics not only have the right to be individuals, but they also have an obligation to be true to themselves within the Body of Christ, without feeling forced or coerced.

Faith and personal prayer are like electricity; both are invisible, yet they can make impossible things seem possible, especially when connected properly. Prayer is more than a wish, it is the voice of faith directed to God.

Not one size fits all, and hopefully our bishops recognise those realities, and apply them accordingly.

E Smith, Waitakere.

Euthanasia

It is contended that we have a duty to oppose the implementation of the End of Life Choice Act on November 7.

With the passing of the abortion legislation every registered medical practitioner, midwife and nurse practitioner was empow-

ered on March 24, 2020, to perform an abortion up to 20 weeks gestation at the request of the mother, and up to birth if two doctors consider it "appropriate." From November 7, every medical practitioner will be empowered to kill patients with a lethal injection or assist in their suicide in accordance with the EOLCA.

It is the wish of the government that we accept as health services the violent killing of the unborn by abortion and the killing of the vulnerable by euthanasia.

It is the teaching of the Catholic Church that abortion and euthanasia are intrinsically evil. I believe that Catholics have a moral duty to entrust their life and health only to doctors who uphold the sanctity of life ethic, and who are committed to respect the right to life of every human being from conception to natural death.

If we don't we will encourage public acceptance of doctors who are prepared to kill their patients, and ultimately drive doctors who refuse to kill out of the profession.

Ken Orr, Christchurch.

Reminder

Correspondents are reminded of the guidelines for letters to the editor below. We have been receiving some letters that are much longer than 220 words. Letters which are short and to the point have a better chance of being published — without being abridged.

— Editor.

Except for our own editorials, opinions expressed in NZ Catholic do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the newspaper or of its owner, the Bishop of Auckland, unless otherwise indicated.

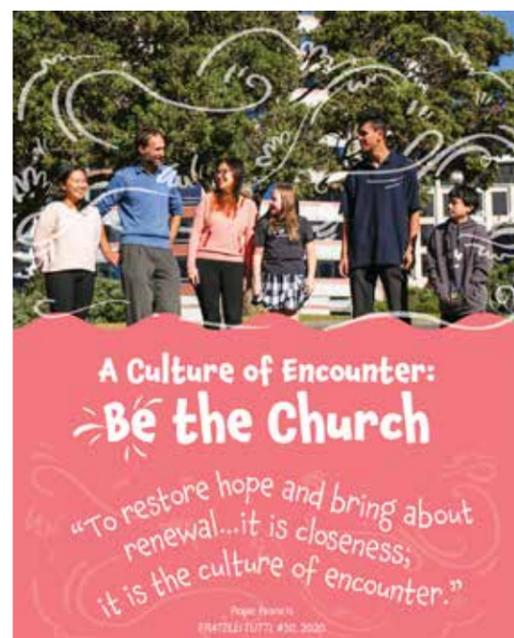
NZ Catholic welcomes readers' letters, although receipt of a letter does not guarantee publication. No correspondence will be entered into concerning publication. Letters should be no longer than 220 words and should be topical, to the point, and include the writer's address and phone number. *Ad hominem*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



What does it mean to **Be the Church**?

Social Justice Week (SJW) 2021 will take place from 12 to 18 September. This year, Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand have produced resources focused on “A Culture of Encounter: Be the Church”. Caritas invites people of all ages to learn about and reflect on what it means to be the Church and how we are called to be God’s hands and feet in our community.

In today’s society, there are many reasons why people can easily get caught within their own bubble and be removed from those around them. The impact of the pandemic, our reliance on technology, a growing culture of individualism and instant gratification are just a few reasons. However, we are called to be God’s hands and feet, and this requires encountering others and sharing God’s transcending and transforming love – bringing the Church to life!



The SJW 2021 resources for parishes will explore some of the themes in Fratelli Tutti which relate to encounter and community. You will be able to find these resources on our website in early August: www.caritas.org.nz/parishes/social-justice-week.

Fratelli Tutti - Pope Francis



*“Called to be God’s hands and feet.”
Kirsten Ayban’s illustration as part
of the school resources.
(Chanel College student).*

In Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, he reflected that social cohesion is being threatened in today’s world and spoke of the importance of cultivating meaningful relationships with each other. He continues this theme in his most recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), where he warns all people that ‘the sense of belonging to a single human family is fading’, and as our world continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic we must not dismiss the sense that we all share a common humanity. Pope Francis challenges us all to restore a sense of closeness and a culture of encounter. He quotes St Francis in calling for “a love that transcends the barriers of geography and distance.” (*Fratelli Tutti*).

With the addition of *Fratelli Tutti*, the body of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) has deepened. Showing the importance for applying Christ’s teaching to the issues of today, CST principles provide the basis for action in the community as we seek to follow Christ’s example. With a focus on fraternity, social friendship, encounter and community, *Fratelli Tutti* explores all of the CST principles that we highlighted in our SJW resources from last year.

To read *Fratelli Tutti*, you can find it on the Vatican’s website: www.vatican.va

Social Justice Week Te Wiki o te Whai Tika



The Catholic Agency for Justice, Peace & Development

School Resources: Highlighting the Beatitudes

The Social Justice Week school resources for 2021 highlight the Beatitudes as we look to live out Christ's teachings within the context of community and caring for one another. Our common humanity requires that we respect and uphold the dignity of each and every human being.

In Matthew 5:1-12, Jesus presents the Beatitudes which are at the very heart of his teachings and encourage people to uphold every person's innate human dignity. The actions and attitudes described in each of the Beatitudes show people how to live their lives and relate to others with tika, pono and aroha.

Catholic school communities throughout Aotearoa New Zealand are invited to join in solidarity and think about how we encounter one another as brothers and sisters and how we can be more like Jesus in living out the Beatitudes.

Most of the physical material available for schools promote the eight Beatitudes found in Matthew 5. There is a wide range of resources including over 50 activities and daily prayers which can easily be used by teachers at all levels.



The school resources are now available online.
A wide range of resources that include over 50 activities and daily prayers can easily be used by teachers at all levels.
These resources can be found on the Caritas website:
www.caritas.org.nz/schools/social-justice-week



Beatitudes cards, as shown above, have been designed for students to use during recommended activities as well as to keep in order to remember Jesus' words. The reverse side of these cards challenge students to use the SEE-THINK-JUDGE-ACT process to choose an action as a social justice response. Stickers, as shown on the left, have been created to support some of the proposed activities and will also help students remember some of the key words and messages from the Beatitudes.

As Social Justice Week takes place at the same time as Te Wiki o te Reo Māori (Māori Language Week) the school resources have been designed to support learning in both English and Te Reo. Key terms are provided in both languages - most noticeably within the stickers and the activities for students to see and use.

Short stories have been created for younger students. These have been designed for teachers to read aloud to help students understand each of the Beatitudes and how they connect to the way we live our lives. The Caritas mascots who were introduced last year for the Catholic social teaching principles are back as the narrators. Students will be captivated by Colin the giraffe, who is a huge fan of the common good, telling the tale of Joan who chooses to stand by a student at her school who doesn't always fit in. Other mascots like DJ the dolphin and Shristi the sloth will entertain students and at the same time help them to see the link between Jesus' words and our choices about how we treat others around us. Creative original artwork by students throughout New Zealand bring these stories to life.

School visits and staff workshops will be taking place in the lead up to Social Justice Week and during the week itself.



Vaccination is an act of love, Pope Francis says in ad campaign

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — When each individual makes a small act of charity, like getting the Covid-19 vaccine, every gesture added together can transform the world, Pope Francis said in a global ad campaign.

“Being vaccinated with vaccines authorised by the competent authorities is an act of love. And contributing to ensure the majority of people are vaccinated is an act of love — love for oneself, love for one’s family and friends, love for all people,” he said in a public service announcement released on August 18 in Rome.

The video message was part of a global effort by the US-based non-partisan, non-profit Ad Council and the Covid Collaborative’s “It’s Up To You” campaign to increase people’s confidence in Covid-19 vaccines by reminding them that the vaccines are safe, effective and save people’s lives.

The Vatican’s Dicastery for Integral Human Development also cooperated with the educational

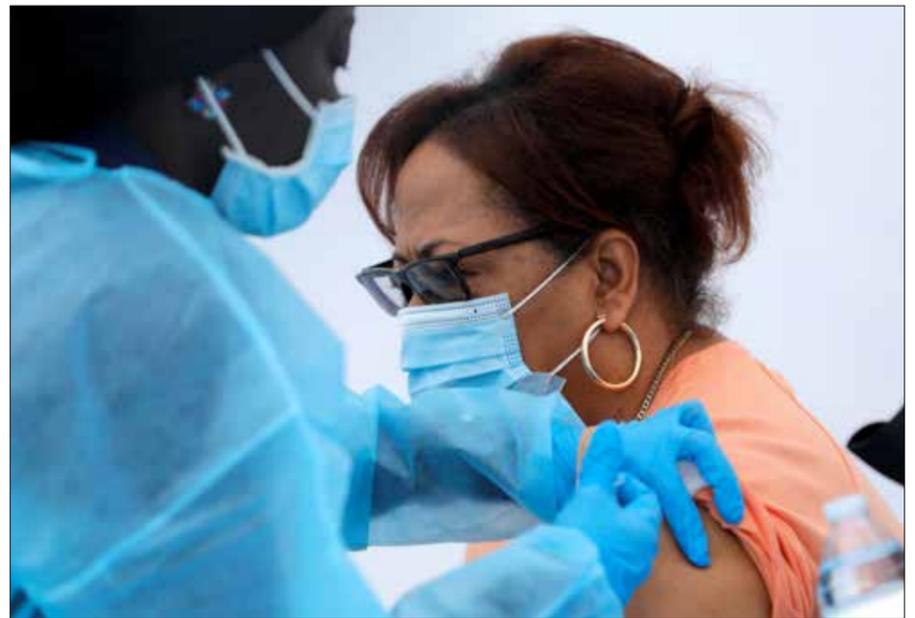
initiative.

The three-minute video in Spanish with English, Spanish and Portuguese subtitles features Pope Francis and six cardinals and archbishops from North and South America. Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, is among them.

The “It’s Up To You” campaign has been inviting “trusted messengers” to deliver “fact-based and life-saving information to populations hesitant about the Covid-19 vaccines, helping them to make informed decisions for themselves and their families”, it said in a joint news release with the Ad Council.

While access to vaccines is a challenge, “confidence in the vaccines also presents a hurdle”, the news release said.

In his message, the Pope said, “Thanks to God and to the work of many, we now have vaccines to protect us from Covid-19. They grant us the hope of ending the pandemic, but only if they are available to all



A resident receives a dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine during a vaccination event for adolescents and adults outside the Bronx Writing Academy school in New York City on June 4, 2021 (CNS photo/Mike Segar, Reuters)

and if we work together.”

Getting inoculated “is an act of love” for oneself, family, friends and all people, he said.

“Love is also social and political” as these individual “small gestures of personal charity” add up, “overflowing” into something universal that is “capable of transforming and improving societies”, he said.

“Vaccination is a simple but profound way of promoting the common good and caring for each other, especially the most vulnerable,” the

Pope said.

“I pray to God that everyone may contribute their own small grain of sand, their own small gesture of love; no matter how small, love is always great. Contribute with these small gestures for a better future. God bless you, and thank you,” he said.

The campaign encouraged people to go to GetVaccineAnswers.org and DeTiDepende.org for more information and answers to questions about the Covid-19 vaccines.

Rediscover the importance of Sunday liturgy: Pope

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis encouraged new courses of action for parishes to help people understand the importance of Sunday Mass and parish ministries, a top Vatican official wrote in a message.

The message was sent on behalf of the Pope on August 23 to the 71st National Liturgical Week, by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state. The meeting, held from August 23-26 in the Italian city of Cremona, brought together pastoral workers, religious and priests to discuss ways to en-

courage the faithful to attend the Sunday liturgy and participate in other liturgical celebrations, rites and the sacraments.

In the written message, the cardinal said the pandemic and its restrictions, which had prevented the faithful from gathering like before, underlined the importance of the liturgy in Christian life.

But, what happened during the pandemic and the difficulty in resuming liturgical activities, he wrote, “confirmed what was already observed at Sunday assemblies on the Italian peninsula, an alarming

indication of the advanced stage of an epochal change”.

It had been noticed, even long before the pandemic, that there has been a shift in how people perceive “time” and “space”, which has had repercussions on the meaning of Sunday for most people and how most people experience community and the family, he said.

For this reason, he wrote, the Sunday liturgy, which should be “the true summit” of all parish activities and the source of energy for missionary life, is “off-balanced”, in terms of which age groups nor-

mally attend, and in terms of the “difficulty in finding a harmonious integration in parish life”.

Cardinal Parolin wrote, “the Holy Father hopes that the National Liturgical Week, with its proposals for reflection and moments of celebration . . . may identify and suggest some liturgical pastoral care guidelines to offer parishes, so that Sunday, the eucharistic assembly, ministries and the rites may emerge from the margins, from which they seem inexorably to be falling, and regain their centrality in the faith and spirituality of believers.”

Vatican orders retired Polish archbishop to life of prayer, penance

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — A retired Polish archbishop has been ordered to lead a life of prayer and penance, which includes a ban on taking part in any public celebrations — both secular and religious, according to Vatican News and international media.

The sanctions against Archbishop Marian Golebiewski, 83, the retired archbishop of Wrocław and a former bishop of Koszalin-Kolobrzeg, came after a Vatican investigation looked into alleged negligence in handling allegations of abuse against minors by priests under his authority. The official announcement was published on the archdiocese’s website on August 21.

Vatican News’ Polish desk reported that the investigation had been conducted regarding reported “omissions” by the archbishop, and followed the provisions laid out by

the Code of Canon Law and Pope Francis’ “Vos Estis Lux Mundi” (“You are the light of the world”), which holds bishops accountable for interfering with, covering up or failing to address abuse accusations in their dioceses.

The investigation covered his period leading the diocese of Koszalin-Kolobrzeg from 1996 to 2004 and the Archdiocese of Wrocław from 2004 to 2013, media reported.

Completing its investigation, the Vatican ordered the retired archbishop to lead a life “in a spirit of penance and prayer”, to no longer attend any ceremonies in public and, as an additional form of penance, to pay an “appropriate amount” of money from his own funds to the St Jozef foundation for the prevention and accompaniment of victims of sexual abuse.

Pope accepts resignation of outspoken Spanish bishop

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of a Spanish bishop who had made controversial statements in favour of Catalan independence.

The Vatican announced the resignation on August 23 of Bishop Xavier Novell Gomà, 52, of Solsona.

Pope Francis appointed Bishop Romà Casanova of Vic apostolic administrator of the diocese, the Vatican said.

In a statement published shortly after the announcement, the Spanish bishops’ conference said Bishop Gomà “freely presented” his resignation to the Pope “for strictly personal reasons”.

He made comments in 2017 after Catalonia’s Parliament voted to unilaterally declare independence from Spain. The declaration prompted then-Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy to invoke an article of Spain’s constitution and dissolve Catalonia’s government.

“It is not fair that we be denied

and impeded the exercise of self-determination,” Bishop Novell wrote in an October, 2017, column on the diocesan website, reported El Confidencial.

The bishop’s statement supporting Catalan independence directly contradicted the opinion of most Spanish bishops, including Cardinal Antonio Cañizares Llovera of Valencia.

In a November, 2017, commentary in *La Razón*, Cardinal Cañizares said it was “morally unacceptable” for nations to “claim independence unilaterally by their own will”.

In interviews with *La Razón*, Cardinal Cañizares said he was “hurt” that many Catalan clergy had backed independence, adding that “No one can claim a Church basis for secessionism”.

“The independence movement has aroused a hatred which didn’t exist, whereas the Church will always work for unity, coexistence and harmony.”

Kiwi priest in Pakistan prays for Afghanistan

by ROWENA OREJANA

A Kiwi priest in Pakistan said they are closely watching what is happening in Afghanistan as it fell into the hands of the Taliban, while praying to God that things there will not be as bad as expected.

Columban priest Fr Daniel O'Connor who lives in Pakistan said they hope the Taliban in Afghanistan "will not return to what they did in past years".

His comments were made before a suicide bomb attack in Kabul on August 26, in which, according to the Pentagon, at least 13 US service members and at least 95 Afghans were killed, with about a dozen others being injured. An extremist Islamic State group was behind the attack, reportedly, and the US responded with a drone strike that killed an IS target.

Fr O'Connor moved to Pakistan as a seminarian in 1983. The St Columban's Mission Society began its mission in Pakistan in 1978.

"We hope and pray for peace, reconciliation, justice, and of God's will to be more present in the people and country of Afghanistan," Fr O'Connor told *NZ Catholic* in an e-mail.

Recalling the past Taliban rule in Afghanistan, Fr O'Connor said "there was heavy loss of life with attacks, including many suicide bombers, on mosques, schools, churches and

other places. This also resulted in much fear in Pakistan".

"We are taking much interest in what is happening in Afghanistan. Hopefully their rule there will not be as bad as what we thought. Statements from them state that they will not rule as they had when in power last time. We will see what transpires," he said.

"Naturally we have much concern for the people and especially the situation of women and children."

After 20 years of war, the Taliban took over the Afghan government and military mid-August shortly after US President Joe Biden announced the withdrawal of American troops in the country. The world was shocked with the swift take-over.

Although Pakistan's political leaders supported the Taliban in the war, The Guardian reported there are concerns that this victory will embolden Islamic militant organisations in Pakistan.

The Catholic News Service reported that the Catholic Church, particularly in the US, has been "involved in the reception and establishment" of those seeking safe haven, and participating in the effort with other faith-based aid groups and organisations such as the International Rescue Committee, said Bill Canny, executive director of Migration and Refugee Services for the US Conference of Catholic Bishops.



Members of Taliban forces gesture as they check a vehicle on a street in Kabul, Afghanistan, on August 16 (CNS Photo: Reuters)

While some of those fleeing are US citizens, many are refugees who don't have family members in the country nor have been in the US before, and left their lives behind at a moment's notice with little beyond what they could carry.

"These are people who have been

persecuted in their countries and they need new homes, their kids need to get into schools, they need to find work," said Canny on August 25.

Faith-based groups, including Catholic organisations, also have been calling on the Biden administration to speed up the evacuations.

Cardinal Dew seeks support for Afghan refugees

By NZ CATHOLIC staff

Cardinal John Dew appealed for help for Afghan refugees who will soon be resettling in Wellington.

The cardinal made the appeal on behalf of the Wellington Catholic Social Services, which is desperately seeking accommodations for the Wellington-bound families.

"Please, can anyone help? Catholic Social Services has been resettling refugees for some time now, and is facing a challenge in resettling Afghan refugees who will soon be coming to Wellington," Cardinal Dew said.

"There are just a few weeks to find them accommodation. Anywhere in Wellington will help — City, Hutt Valley or Porirua, any 1-4-bedroom houses, flats, units that can be rented for at least 6 months and ideally longer," he added.

Control of Afghanistan fell into the hands of the Islamic fundamentalist organisation, the Tal-

iban, after US President Joe Biden announced the withdrawal of US military troops in the country.

Thousands of desperate Afghans are fleeing the country's capital, Kabul, to escape the Taliban.

In a letter to parish secretaries and administrators, Wellington CSS community facilitator Paul Alsford said his organisation is seeking basic furniture and household packs for the families, including bed linen, towels, kitchen utensils etc and pantry items like rice, cooking oils, canned black/kidney beans, tea and coffee.

"Every action, small or large, helps individuals and families fleeing a desperate situation and seeking safety in New Zealand. Together we can assist families to settle well in the Wellington region," he said.

He said donations of furniture and other household items will be picked up when the region is at alert level 2.

"We will be working with the Red Cross to match up donations to families in need," he said.

Those who can assist with any of the items mentioned can call him at 021 754 145 or email: p.alsford@wn-catholicsocialservices.org.nz .

"We know many parishes and people have been wonderfully supportive of the Refugee Resettlement Programme over the last five years, but wanted to acknowledge the urgency of the situation in Afghanistan, hence our call for help," he said.

Pope sends financial support to Haiti

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis will be sending nearly a quarter of a million US dollars to help people in Haiti, who are struggling in the aftermath of a deadly earthquake during a global pandemic.

The Vatican's Dicastery for Integral Human Development said in a communique released on August 24 that the Pope had decided to send "an initial contribution" of US\$235,000 (200,000 euros) to assist the earthquake victims during this "emergency phase", following the magnitude 7.2 earthquake that struck Haiti on August 14.

At least 2200 people died, more than 12,000 others were injured and nearly 53,000 houses were destroyed, according to local authorities.

The donation is meant to be "an immediate expression" of Pope Francis' "feeling of spiritual closeness and paternal encouragement" for the people there.

The money will be distributed — in collaboration with the Vatican's nunciature in Haiti - to those dioceses most affected by the disaster, the dicastery said. It will add to the aid being sent throughout the Catholic Church thanks to efforts led by bishops' conferences and numerous char-

itable organisations.

The dicastery said the Pope had also decided to send an initial emergency contribution of about US\$69,000 to the people of Bangladesh, who were hit by Cyclone Yaas in May. Tidal waves flooded coastal settlements and damaged homes, channels and crops. The saline sea water contaminated ponds and drinking water sources.

The Pope was also sending about US\$120,000 to the people of Vietnam, who are facing serious difficulties because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Papal Prayer

The Pope's universal intention for September:
An environmentally sustainable lifestyle.

We pray that we all will make courageous choices for a simple and environmentally sustainable lifestyle, rejoicing in our young people who are resolutely committed to this.

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Northland rededication

A new rededication prayer for this country was prayed on August 15 at several services in the Hokianga, the cradle of Catholicism in Aotearoa, New Zealand.



Above: The prayer was first prayed at 10am at Totara Point, where Bishop Pompallier dedicated this land to Mary in 1838; and then, at 1pm, there was a Mass and more prayers at Our Lady Assumed into Heaven church in Motukaraka (above right). The parish programme coordinator for Northland, Wiga Autet, said it was very special to recall Bishop Pompallier's intentions and mahi at the very place where he had (a long time ago) entrusted our land and people to Mary's maternal care, to acknowledge all the missionaries and faithful who had kept the faith strong over the years, and see the same hahi and trust in the faces of those gathered here today.



Manawatu rededication

On the Solemnity of the Assumption of The Blessed Virgin Mary, August 15 – a day on which the dedication of Aotearoa New Zealand to Mary, Assumed into Heaven was renewed – a Mass was celebrated at Sacred Heart church, Rongotea, an agricultural hub of the Manawatu. The celebrants were Fr Earl Crotty, SM, and Fr Jack Wiremu Smith. Pictured with the celebrants are some members of the congregation, gathered around the historic Shrine to Our Lady.

Family Matters

Helen Luxford



Lockdown . . . take two

So here we are again — in a level 4 lockdown. As I write this, I don't know what will happen with alert levels going forward. The delta variant of Covid is here and is in the community. My kids were so happy with lockdown. They relish time at home without too much pressure. It's a huge struggle to juggle everyone's needs with schooling, working, household chores like laundry and cleaning and food provision. It's hard to balance the different needs of children too — one who wants to be outside all day, and another who would be inside all day in his room if you let him.

I know that I talk from a place of white privilege. We have two incomes coming in and a warm house with plenty of food. Having said that, even getting to the supermarket is hard in level 4. I went online to get a delivery as soon as I could after the announcement and couldn't secure one for five days. My husband had to brave the supermarkets to keep us stocked up in the interim. I still don't quite understand the obsession with toilet paper! We definitely go through more of this with six people at home more, but not enough to clear out the aisles!

Our kids miss their friends the most. Thankfully, in this day and age of phones and facetime and video calls, we can still keep up social contact. This is especially important for our children to ensure they still feel

connected, and to remind them of life outside of lockdown. Once lockdown ends, school and friends still await, and keeping up this contact will help them successfully transition back. My 10-year-old feels that lockdown is bad because friends can't be seen. I guess, for me, lockdown is actually a break from the insane business of being a working mother of four. I still get out to work, so I don't have the intense sensation of cabin fever that I'm sure some readers have. My 8-year-old is quite philosophical about lockdown — he says "it is sometimes annoying, but overall it is fun in the end".

In the evenings, we are using this time to keep working through our "The New Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism" books. Now that we have our three youngest in secular state educational facilities, it is even more important to keep the faith up at home. This year, we are in between sacramental programmes. It is amazing and encouraging having our oldest contribute to the discussions, and seeing how much they have learnt at school and through sacramental preparation. It is interesting to hear (and correct) some misperceptions or misunderstandings, so these sessions are proving very fruitful.

Screen time remains our biggest challenge at home. With online learning, the children are spending quite a bit of time online, but then they also want to play games online

or on the Xbox. The screen time conflict is definitely magnified in lockdown. Ensuring they are always watching and engaging with appropriate content is a struggle. Even with parental controls and age-related restrictions, I still worry what gets through.

Work is hard in lockdown. I've seen patients really struggling with the social isolation of hospital stays without visitors. The situation is especially poignant for those who are really sick or unwell (they are allowed two visitors at a time), but for those in residential care wanting to visit spouses in the hospital, the residential care facilities are reluctant to let them out in case they bring infection back to the village. It is such a difficult balance to protect people, but also to show compassion and to understand everyone's situation. Please pray for anyone in hospital right now. It is never fun in hospital but being in hospital during a lockdown is really difficult.

Psalm 46: 1-3; "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging."

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.

Damon regains fatherhood

by NEVIL GIBSON

In close to 100 movies since his brief appearance at 18 in teen comedy *Mystic Pizza* (1988), and as an uncredited baseball fan in *Field of Dreams* (1989), Matt Damon has crafted an image as a man of restrained action.

When pushed beyond his limit, he rises to the occasion, whether as the precocious mathematician headed for self-destruction in *Good Will Hunting* (1997), which he co-wrote with Ben Affleck, or in his most famous character, Jason Bourne, the CIA agent with amnesia.

The first three were based on Robert Ludlum novels, starting with *The Bourne Identity* (2002). Bourne and Damon did not feature in the fourth, *The Bourne Legacy* (2012), except in past references as it introduced a new character affected by his actions in *The Bourne Ultimatum* (2007). However, Damon returned for *Jason Bourne* (2016), by which time his former employer is now his enemy.

Damon's other roles indicate a preference for intelligent thrillers, of which my favourites are *The Adjustment Bureau* and *Contagion*, and serious science fiction (*Elysium*, *Interstellar*, *The Martian* and *Downsizing*). Occasionally, he plays the family man (*We Bought a Zoo*), pushes political issues (*Promised Land*, *The Informant!*), and goes against type as Liberace's lover in *Behind the Candelabra*.

In *Stillwater* (eOne), he reverts to a blue-collar, Middle American father, who is well out of his depth as an Oklahoman "roughneck" (oil worker) wanting to free his daughter (Abigail Breslin) from a French jail.

The initial setup draws its inspiration from the protracted case of Amanda Knox, who



Matt Damon and Lilou Siauvaud star in a scene from the film *Stillwater*. (CNS photo/Jessica Forde, courtesy Focus Features)

Movie Review

was twice convicted of her flatmate's murder in Perugia, Italy, in 2007, but was freed eight years later after the real culprit was identified.

The Knox saga spawned half a dozen books, including ones by Knox herself and the victim's father, four documentaries and one movie, Michael Winterbottom's *The Face of an Angel*.

Knox objected to this new one, directed by Tom McCarthy from a screenplay he wrote with Marcus Henry, Thomas Bidegain and Noé Debré.

The latter two are French, giving arthouse credibility to McCarthy's decision to choose the crime-ridden Mediterranean port of Marseille, rather than a picturesque Italian university town. Marseille's reputation was sealed in 2000's *La ville est tranquille*, an ironic title that

belies its no-go zones and other community tensions.

Knox's objections, sight unseen, may have been justified with Breslin's depiction of the victim as entitled and manipulative, with little empathy for her father's plight in a culture and language he doesn't understand.

Fortunately, he is assisted by a local solo mother and actress played by Camille Cottin, also the mother in last year's *Les éblois* (*The Dazzled*) about an extreme Catholic sect. In her eight-year-old daughter (Lilou Siavau), Damon finds the lost fatherhood that his own had denied him.

This romantic angle may be a stretch in a plot-driven drama, but Damon makes it worthwhile.

Rating: Mature audiences. 139 minutes.

CLIPS

Coming Home in the Dark (Monster Pictures)

Three releases this year by first-time Kiwi directors – *Cousins*, *The Justice of Bunny King* and *Juniper* – have compensated their story-telling flaws with excellent acting. This adaptation of an Owen Marshall short story is no exception. The plot loses credibility by adding a backstory to an act of random violence against a family picnicking in a remote rural spot (actually the wild southern Wairarapa, rather than Marshall's Mt Cook). This similarity to a home invasion morphs into a revenge thriller through a convenient coincidence that provides the killers with a motive, and turns an innocent victim into a guilty party. What does work is director James Ashcroft's handling of the suspense scenes and the strong cast, principally the two leads, Daniel Gillies and Erik Thomson. Film buffs may note the resemblance of Matthias Luatutu to Lee Van Cleef. Rating: Restricted to audiences over 16. 93 minutes.

Sweet Girl (Netflix)

Giant Hawaiian-born action hero Jason Momoa (*Aquaman*) shows his softer side as he seeks retribution against a pharmaceutical company that suddenly withdraws a cancer cure that could have saved his wife. The set-up is medically unlikely, given the state of cancer treatment, and the plot becomes more convoluted when Momoa confronts some corporate hitmen (notably, Manuel Garcia Rulfo) and clashes with an ambitious politician (Amy Brenneman). The soft stuff is Momoa's relationship with his daughter, played in her early-to-late teens respectively by Milena Rivero and Isabela Merced. Two-thirds into the plot, there is a sudden twist, turning everything on its head, as father and daughter become hunted prey. It's a daring ploy that doesn't work. But it doesn't detract from the setting in Pittsburgh and its environs in the middle of winter. The city's mix of old and new architecture is spectacular, as are fights on the subway system and the climax in the PNC baseball stadium. First-time director Brian Andrew Mendoza makes the most of these, having worked with Momoa as cinematographer on two other revenge-hunted-man action thrillers, *Braven* (2018) and *Road to Paloma* (2014). Netflix rating: 16+. 110 minutes.

The Last Letter From Your Lover (Netflix)

Those who enjoy old-style romance should not overlook this adaptation of a novel by Jojo Moyes (*Me Before You*). In a change from the book, a journalist (Felicity Jones) doesn't have an affair with a married man, but she does fancy an archivist (Nathan Rizwan), who helps her track down the 1965 love letters between a married but neglected socialite (Shailene Woodley) and a dashing foreign correspondent (Callum Turner). Again, that relationship has a happier ending than Moyes intended as the parallel stories converge over time. Director Augustine Frizzel (*Never Goin' Back*, 2018) makes the most of her cast, particularly Jones, who has the best lines, and the lush costumes and period settings in the Riviera and London. While targeted at a specific audience, this will please all who like a bit of nostalgic soapy melodrama on the home screen. Netflix rating: 13+. 109 minutes.

Understanding this period in history, warts and all

THE CHURCH AND THE MIDDLE AGES (1000-1378): Cathedrals, Crusades and the Papacy in Exile by Steve Weidenkopf. Ave Maria Press (Notre Dame, Indiana, 2020). 192 pp., US \$17.95. Reviewed by DANIEL MULHALL (CNS)

There are many ways to write about history. Some authors present a chronological progression of events, while others offer the "great man" approach in which they tell how specific actors shaped the world.

Some wish to tell a coherent story, to show that, because of this string of events, a climactic outcome was destined to occur, while others present just the facts, allowing the reader to make her or his own decisions about the significance of events.

Steve Weidenkopf in "The Church and the Middle Ages" presents a mostly chronological look at the Catholic Church's role in shaping the years between 1000 and 1378, through the lens of the men and women who played key roles. Because the major emphasis is on the role of the Church, the focus is primarily on Western European events.

Although he has written a short book, Weidenkopf covers a great many important events, including a brief overview of life and worldview of people living during the period covered, the reform of the papacy, the Great Schism between the Eastern and Western branches of Catholicism, the Crusades and the Inquisition.

As books have been written on each of these topics separately, telling their combined stories

well in under 200 pages is a challenge that the author meets, often very well.

This book is part of the publisher's "Reclaiming Catholic History" series, which aims to "bring Church history to life, debunking the myths one era at a time", according to its introduction.

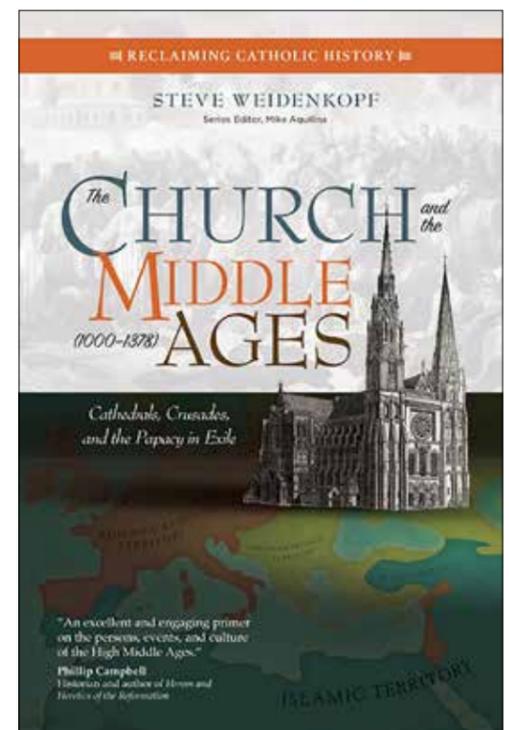
Thus, Weidenkopf includes a "You Be the Judge" feature in each chapter that seeks to clarify the motive for various events. Also included in each chapter is a longer feature on one person who played a significant role. As one might expect from a series that seeks to correct the record, there is a pro-Church bias in how events are portrayed. The Inquisition is even portrayed in a positive light and justified.

A danger in covering so much ground in so few pages is that some topics get little attention, or comments are left unexplained.

For example, while the creation of the great Catholic universities is mentioned, little is said about the almost explosive development of thought that occurs during this period that led to the amazing flourishing that was the Renaissance. Another example appears on page 60 when the author writes about "a gruelling four-month death march" without explanation.

This is an amazing period in the history of the world in which the Catholic Church played a major part. The foundations of the modern world were laid during this period so, to understand what is happening today, it is vital to understand what happened then, warts and all.

For those seeking an introduction to the his-



tory of the medieval period, this book provides an "engaging primer," as the front-cover blurb asserts.

Daniel Mulhall lives in Louisville, Kentucky.

THE CHURCH YEAR

Advent

Christmas

Ordinary Time

Lent

Easter time

Ordinary Time

We are here: ▼ Twenty-third Sunday

Visualising the power of God at work in our world

Scripture

by Fr Kevin Waldie sm

The thoughts expressed by today's biblical authors help us visualise the power of God at work in our world. With this kind of focus, we quickly discern the precious nature of the faith we share.

The voice of Isaiah in the first reading orients us to an understanding of the prophet's role in announcing God's special presence among his people. The imagery he uses captures a vivid sense of what God, in all his goodness, has prepared for those who put their trust in him. The bleak outlook that had dogged Israel is, therefore, due to disappear before their very eyes.

All sorts of afflicted people (and the places

they inhabit) are set for a radical transformation, which will be a visible sign that God is the saviour of the world.

In James today, there is also a visual perspective. Addressing his Christian brothers and sisters, he reminds them that, in their treatment of one another, they should be wary of a certain bias. And that is why James contrasts conflicting attitudes towards the rich and the poor.

In short, since all are children of God's kingdom, it is everyone's responsibility to honour all its members with equal respect and esteem.

The description of Jesus' hands-on ministry

September 5: Twenty-third Sunday of Ordinary Time.

Readings: 1. Isaiah 35:4-7; **Psalm:** 146; 2. James 2:1-5;

Gospel: Mark 7:31-37.

in the Gospel text from Mark is also visually-oriented. The cure of the deaf man is told with incredible detail. Jesus' physical encounter with the man, through touch and spit, is graphic. Yet his command to the man is simple, short and instantly effective. This is a true sign of Jesus' power and saving presence in the midst of the most needy.

These readings sit well together. They draw us in and greatly encourage us as we each fulfil our mission of promoting the Good News of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour.

Zero in on the essence of the faith we profess

In today's texts from Scripture, a series of questions gives us the means to zero in on the essence of the faith we profess.

Again, it is Isaiah who leads the way. His thought-provoking questions highlight the dangerous role of the prophet. For in the act of being God's spokesperson, the prophet encounters all sorts of negative or harmful reactions. But it is Isaiah's commitment to the Lord that speaks volumes here. He is, therefore, a model for us to imitate. In our active promotion of the Good News, we too surely encounter opposition. But it is through the power of Scripture like this that we find the courage to keep on faithfully witnessing to God's Word.

The verses from James relay his classic take on the relationship between faith and works. He is moved to ask how we can separate what we believe from how we live it out. So James says we must respond with whatever practical assistance we can. That is because dutiful care for all our brothers and sisters is integral to our ordinary understanding of what we have been baptised into. Faith and works are therefore inseparable.

Jesus' questions to his disciples in Mark also form part of the understanding we must reach as the Lord's modern-day followers. In particular, being able to respond to the question about Jesus' identity suggests that we must

September 12: Twenty-fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time.

Readings: 1. Isaiah 50:5-9; **Psalm:** 116A; 2. James 2:14-18;

Gospel: Mark 8:27-35.

truly acknowledge the significance of the Lord's life, death and Resurrection. To follow in his footsteps is not an easy task. But it is utterly essential that we commit ourselves wholeheartedly to Jesus the Messiah. And this is a challenge we must habitually accept and execute.

Today's Scripture selections have centred on the call to be active receivers of God's Word. Giving concrete witness to our faith will thus confirm our acceptance of this.

SAINTED GLASS



On September 8, we celebrate the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. I prefer to think of it as Mary's birthday. September 8 is nine months after the feast of Mary's Immaculate Conception, celebrated on December 8. According to tradition, her parents were Sts Joachim and Anne. They offered Mary to God as a consecrated virgin for the rest of her life. Little is known of her childhood, but this beautiful window in St Anne's church, Strathfield, Sydney shows her mother Anne teaching her. The obvious love Anne is showing Mary should be a model for us.

— Glen McCullough

Christian director meets Pope

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — It was quite fitting for a Catholic actor and a Christian director of a new streaming series on the life of Jesus to meet Pope Francis on the feast of St Clare of Assisi, patron saint of televisions and screens.

Jonathan Roumie, who portrays Jesus, and Dallas Jenkins, the series' director, creator and co-writer, were in Rome recently as part of an effort to expand the global reach and revenue of the multiseason, crowd-funded series, "The Chosen".

Jenkins said he told the Pope, "I'm a Protestant, but I'm making a show about Jesus that people of all faiths appreciate". The Pope pointed to the bearded, wavy-haired Roumie next to him, asking astutely, "Is he Jesus?"

After Jenkins said, "Yes," the Pope decided to poke some fun, asking Jenkins, "Are you Judas?" sparking a round of laughter.

The problem with most renditions of biblical accounts, Jenkins said, is that a two- or three-hour film is not a lot of time to do a deep-dive into the characters, backstories, motives, conflicts and context connected with biblical events.

Not only do the characters often come across as "stiff" on screen, he said, "you go from miracle to miracle, Bible verse to Bible verse, and you never get to know anybody Jesus actually impacted".

"From a strictly artistic perspective, that is not really good drama, you need to see change, you want to see a character arc."

"The Chosen" was going to be different, Jenkins said, by looking at Jesus through the eyes of those he chose and changed, and to imagine what their lives and personalities were like and why they made the choices they did.



Catholic actor Jonathan Roumie, who plays Christ in the series *The Chosen*, is pictured in a scene depicting the Sermon on the Mount (CNS Photo)

Chilean Father Felipe Herrera-Espalíat, of the Vatican's Dicastery for Communication, said the series' approach reminds him of the way St Ignatius of Loyola encouraged people to read the Bible and "create the scene in your mind", activate all the senses and engage one's feelings.

The series opened as the largest crowd-funded media project ever, collecting more than \$10 million from more than 19,000 people to make the first season. It has more than 250 million views on an app (thechosen.tv/app), where people can watch for free and people can "pay it forward", donating money to keep the show free for future episodes. There are an additional 10 million views of season one on the show's YouTube channel, which has 1.3 million subscribers.

'It is really Christ who attracts us'

◀ Continued from page 16

Day in Poland in 2016. By the end of that year, he had joined Verbum Spei. He eventually will go to Saltillo, Mexico, where he will begin seminary.

Brother Joseph Smith and Brother Thomas Fransen are both natives of New Zealand and first cousins, although neither of them knew that the other was seriously considering monastic life with Verbum Spei.

In fact, when Brother Thomas arrived at the order's monastery in Luxembourg, he learned that his cousin, Brother Joseph, was already there.

Brother Joseph grew up in Hamilton, New Zealand. His parents are faithful Catholics who home-schooled their children. At about 17, he studied information technology for two years while working in a supermarket. He became a manager at the supermarket, and the company wanted to send him to management training, but he felt drawn to attend Catholic Discipleship College in nearby Auckland to discern a possible call to religious life or priesthood.

One of the teachers at the college was Father Dominique (whom the brothers call Father Dom), a priest who led retreats worldwide, including in India for St. Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity. (Mother Teresa attended his first retreat.) Brother Joseph said he was trying to be open to the call, but was resisting at first. "It was like, 'Whatever you want, Lord, but I don't want it,'" he said.

Over time, the call became clearer, he said. "It's more than a feeling. It's something that doesn't make sense or seem as clear from the start. Naturally, you don't start out wanting to give up everything in the world. But there is definitely an attraction to following Christ, especially when you read the gospels a little deeper, where it says to follow Christ with your whole heart and with your whole life. And so, for me, that was what really kind of pushed me to decide to enter the religious life, with the help of Father Dom and my family."

Brother Thomas also grew up in New Zealand. He has six brothers — one, Fr Isaac Fransen, was recently ordained as a priest in Hamilton. Br Thomas attended the Catholic Discipleship College immediately after high school, but after some time there decided to further his education, studying engineering in the Netherlands.

During his time in the Netherlands, he maintained contact with friends at Catholic Discipleship College and attended retreats at the Verbum Spei monastery in Luxembourg.

"Going on retreats with them showed me the value of the monastic life and how much I really treasured being close to the Brothers."

After his university graduation in 2018, he decided to spend a few weeks with the brothers in Luxembourg before travelling around Europe. However, the few weeks with the brothers turned into months. Even a bachelor's degree in aerospace engineering was not enough to keep him from monastic life.

What did he find so appealing about it? "It's really Christ who attracts us, and this life is a great means to be as close to Christ as we can," he said.

Most of the men ordained priests will eventually return to their home countries, Father Dominique said. "We try to be attentive to the needs of the local Church . . ."

Almost as important to the academic and spiritual formation of the brothers is the opportunity as well for prayer and formation for the local Church community, Father Dominique said.

"We want to be open to whomever wants to come and share their life for one hour or a day or longer. We want to be a place where people can come drink in prayer in fraternal charity, and also be a place to offer spiritual food from the Scriptures," Father Dominique said.

The above are excerpts from a story that originally appeared in the May 14 Idaho Catholic Register in the United States. The text has been updated to account for later publication here. It is republished with permission.

EVENTS

AUCKLAND DIOCESE

Ruakaka: Sunday 14 November, 2021. The Ruakaka Holy Family Catholic Community is celebrating 30 years since moving into the new church in Peter Snell Road, Ruakaka. Mass at 10.30am followed by a shared luncheon and entertainment. Of course, present parishioners and friends are warmly invited to attend, but we are specially reaching out to past members and friends who could be interested in coming along and sharing a few memories. Please contact either; Ray Timmins: 02102788867, email: raydale.timmins@xtra.co.nz or Monica Johnson: 021382401, email: monica.johnson01@gmail.com

TE AWAMUTU

St Patrick's Catholic School, Te Awamutu Centenary
22 October: 12.30pm, Powhiri, classroom tours, mix and mingle. 23 October: 1.30pm, liturgy, speeches, class photos; 5pm, Centenary Mass celebrated by Bishop Steve Lowe; 6.30pm, dinner and dance at the TA Sports Club. For more information and registration details visit www.stpatta.co.nz

ASHBURTON

Sacred Heart College Ashburton's Nor'Westers and Panamas book, documenting the history, will be launched at a reunion on Labour Weekend, 50 years since it closed its doors. The 150-page book is included with the registration for those attending. Late registrations will be accepted. If unable to attend, and interested in early education with the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, you are welcome to order the book by pre-paying \$25 plus p&p. Contacts: Audrey at abjleath@gmail.com Ph: 027 292 4443 or Kath at kath_bryant@hotmail.com Ph: 027 688 6889

WIT'S END

Since lockdown allows times for reading and reflection, here is some humour concerning grammar, the alphabet and punctuation.

The past, the present and the future walked into a bar. It was tense.

The semi-colon said she would never date an apostrophe again. He was too possessive.

My English teacher looked at me and said, "name two pronouns". I said, "Who, Me?"

I'm close friends with 25 letters of the alphabet. I don't know y.

Eight vowels, 11 consonants, an exclamation mark and a comma appeared in court today. They are due to be sentenced next week.

Q: What's the difference between a cat and a comma?

A: One has claws at the end of its paws, and the other is a pause at the end of a clause.

Q: Which word becomes shorter after you add two letters to it?

A: Short

CAPTION CONTEST

Caption contest is taking a break until the COVID-19 national lockdown is over and NZ Catholic can resume publishing and distributing in its regular newsprint format. All entries submitted for Caption Contest 621 will be held until then. We apologise to our regular caption contest contributors for the inconvenience.

The winner of the Caption Contest from issue 620 (right) was **Colleen Hanratty, Levin**.

Some other suggestions were:

"Skeletour!" — **Catherine Parker, Auckland**.

"Unlike others the trio could not stomach another Lockdown." — **Fr Michael Pui, Amberley**.

"Please disembark at the rear of the train unless you are near death's door." — **S. Woodham, Tauranga**.

"Three in one." — **John Britto, Auckland**.

"By heck, what a bunch of numbskulls!!" — **Kevin Davis, Auckland**.

"Please disembark at the rear of the train unless you are near death's door." — **Brian Wilson, Albany**.

"The next stop is Gravesend. Mind the gap." — **S. Maitland, Auckland**.



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Kiwis in the Verbum Spei community, Idaho

by GENE FADNESS

A New Zealander was one of two men from the Verbum Spei community in Boise, Idaho, US, who made their final profession at a Mass celebrated on May 23 in the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist in Boise.

Brother Jonathan Kilkelly made his final vows, while two more New Zealanders, Brother Joseph Smith and Brother Thomas Fransen, made their first vows.

Brother Jonathan had been in Boise since 2019, but the two other Kiwis are relatively new to the growing Verbum Spei community.

Verbum Spei ("Word of Hope") started in Saltillo, Mexico in 2012. The fraternity also has monasteries, or houses of formation in Luxembourg and in the Basque country of Spain. Its house of formation in Boise is the Order's first in North America and first in an English-speaking country.

In July, their retreat centre in Idaho became a full-fledged monastery, with about 12 men discerning monastic life and two others who will live in community with the men as part of the Order's "School of Life", a kind of spiritual gap year for young people seeking direction in their lives.

It is understood two other young men from New Zealand joined the community recently.

The monastery is not cloistered, meaning that faithful from the community may come and join the brothers for Morning and Evening Prayer, Adoration and daily Mass. "Guests are very welcome to come to one of the priests for confession or advice, as well as to come for some days of personal retreat," says a flyer about the Boise monastery.

Father Dominique Faure, the French priest who is the prior for the Boise house, is hoping that the monastery will not only enrich the daily lives of the faithful, but also become a seedbed for vocations. Young men are invited to come and live the monastic life for any period of time, and participate in the study and prayer that is part of the Order's School of Life.



Some of the Brothers of Verbum Spei include, from left, Father Ewald-Johannes Kamphuis, Father Dominique Faure, Brother Thomas Fransen (NZ), Brother Joseph Smith (NZ), Brother Jesús Vargas and Brother Jonathan Kilkelly (NZ). (ICR photo/Gene Fadness)

Men who are considering the monastic life enter into the novitiate by an investiture ceremony, at which time they receive the monastic habit. That begins an 18-month period of discernment after which first vows are taken. Final vows are taken after three more years of study, prayer and participation in monastic life. Most of the brothers who take final vows go on to become religious order priests, but that is not required to continue as a full monastic with the Verbum Spei community.

Brother Jonathan Kilkelly joined Verbum Spei at the end of 2016. He was raised in Rotorua and attended Catholic primary school and was home-schooled during his high school years.

Brother Jonathan spent his gap year at Catholic Discipleship College in New Zealand, where he met Father Dominique, who was teaching there. After completing his studies at CDC, he worked for six months and then went to World Youth

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