



# Inform

A PUBLICATION OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOP OF CHRISTCHURCH

ISSUE 145 WINTER 2025

*Habemus  
papam!*



(CNS photo/Vatican Media)

First Christchurch priest  
to meet Pope Leo XIV

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# From Our Bishop

## *A New Dawn for the Church: In Gratitude & Hope*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

The day after Easter Sunday — still glowing with the light of Christ's Resurrection — our beloved shepherd, Pope Francis, was called home to God. In the days that followed, the world seemed to hold its breath with us, united in both grief and a sense of reverence for a saintly man of God. And yet, amidst our mourning and final farewell to Pope Francis, a spirit of joyful anticipation began to stir. As the Church prayed together, we waited in hope — and welcomed with open hearts a new shepherd, Pope Leo XIV. It felt as though God, in His tender providence, had chosen this holiest of weeks — a time already bursting with joy and promise — to pour out even more blessings upon His Church and the world.



*Bishop Michael with the late Pope Francis*

With the passing of Pope Francis and his beautiful funeral — witnessed by the world — we were led into the sacred rhythm of our tradition. The Church gathered, prayed, and waited. And once again, from prayerful discernment, a new shepherd emerged. We now welcome with hope and great joy: Pope Leo XIV.

Born Robert Francis Prevost, O.S.A., our new Shepherd brings with him the heart of a missionary, the wisdom of a scholar, and the soul of a servant. He is the first Bishop of Rome whose native language is English — a powerful reminder of the Church's growing universality and diversity. Raised in a humble home in 1950s Chicago, his vocation was nurtured in the ordinary beauty of parish life and family faith. That God would raise up such a man for this moment reminds us all: He lifts up the lowly and calls whom He wills.

As an Augustinian, Pope Leo has spent his life in service — from the missions of Latin America to the administration of the global Church. Now, called to the Chair of Peter, he steps into a role not of privilege, but of deep responsibility: *Servus servorum Dei*—the servant of the servants of God.

At his installation, Pope Leo XIV spoke words that captured the spirit of his calling: "I was chosen, without any merit of my own, and now, with fear and trembling, I come to you as a brother, who desires to be the servant of your faith and your joy, walking with you on the path of God's love, for He wants us all to be united in one family."

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*Pope Leo XIV processes out of the Sistine Chapel after celebrating his first Mass as pope on May 9, 2025, with the cardinals who elected him. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)*



His words carry the echo of every holy pastor who came before him, and they ring with a freshness and sincerity we so dearly need. And the name he chose — Leo — connects us to a remarkable past. Pope Leo the first, later known as Leo the Great, stood firm in truth and led with courage in a time of turmoil. When Attila the Hun threatened Rome, Leo confronted him not with weapons, but with prayer and unwavering faith. His legacy as a protector, teacher, and unifier shaped the Church for generations. By choosing the name Leo, our Holy Father signals his hope to follow in that noble tradition: to speak with clarity, to lead with compassion, and to serve with courage.

These days have been filled with both tears and thanksgiving. We have said goodbye to a beloved Holy Father, and we have welcomed another — called not by his own choosing, but by God's design. We rejoice in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and now, in that same spirit, we rejoice in this new chapter of our Church.

Viva il Papa! Viva Leo XIV! May his mission be blessed. May his heart be strengthened. And may the whole Church walk with him, united in faith, hope, and love in our eternal shepherd, Jesus Christ, who has risen and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen!

Yours in Christ

+ Michael Gielen  
Bishop of Christchurch



*“We rejoice in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and now, in that same spirit, we rejoice in this new chapter of our Church.”*





## *Nga mihi nui from the editorial desk*

Welcome to Inform Issue 145,  
our winter edition.

Along with our regular features, these pages cover Catholic life in the Christchurch Diocese from April through to June. Fr Michael Pui writes of his recent visit to Rome and being our first Christchurch diocesan priest to meet Pope Leo. In a second ANZAC feature, Fr Brian Fennessy shows how peace can be achieved from New Zealand as well as beyond our shores. In our second feature on Catholic Architect, Francis Petre, Dominic Hassan profiles his beautiful basilicas. In a thoughtful essay, spiritual director, Fr John O'Connor invites us to see Life in the City of God in a maturing spiritual relationship.

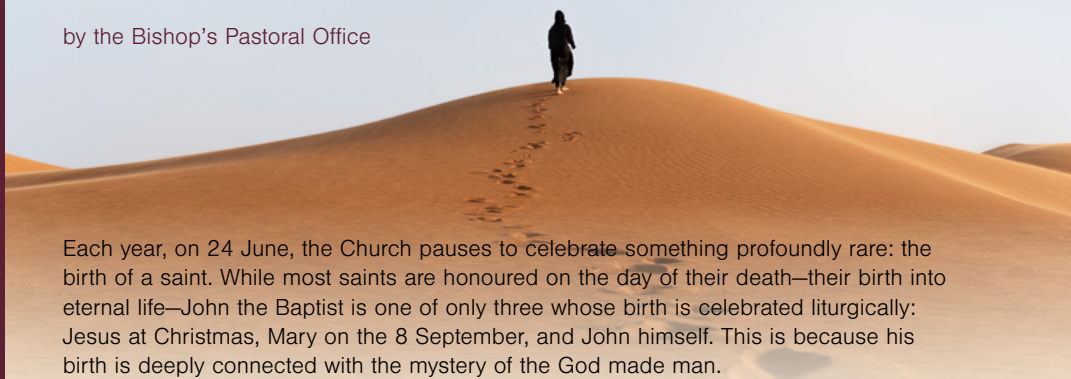
Inform is a great way we can inspire and encourage each other in our faith. As you read it, please pray for God's blessing on all the people and stories covered. Share the link to Inform online [cdoc.nz/inform](http://cdoc.nz/inform) and give copies to those you believe would appreciate reading about Christ's Church in the Christchurch Diocese.

In Christ

**Ken Joblin, Editor**

# *A Light Before the Dawn*

by the Bishop's Pastoral Office



Each year, on 24 June, the Church pauses to celebrate something profoundly rare: the birth of a saint. While most saints are honoured on the day of their death—their birth into eternal life—John the Baptist is one of only three whose birth is celebrated liturgically: Jesus at Christmas, Mary on the 8 September, and John himself. This is because his birth is deeply connected with the mystery of the God made man.

In fact, the Church celebrates John's birth precisely six months before Christmas, a detail drawn from the Gospel of Luke, which notes that Elizabeth was six months pregnant when Mary visited her. This careful symmetry is not just biblical bookkeeping—it also has theological and cosmic significance: as John's birth heralds the light of Christ, so too does his feast mark the beginning of a cosmic turning-point.

24 June falls just after the summer solstice in the Northern Hemisphere—the longest day of the year. From this point forward, the days begin to shorten. It's a quiet astronomical echo of John's own words: "He [Christ] must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). For just as the birthday of St John the Baptist takes place on the date when the days begin to shorten, the birthday of Christ, the true light, takes place when they begin again to lengthen. From his miraculous conception to his bold preaching in the wilderness, John's entire life was a signpost pointing to Christ. Even before he was born, John began his mission of proclamation by leaping in his mother Elizabeth's womb at the presence of Mary and the unborn Christ.

For those of us living in the Southern Hemisphere, this moment carries an added layer of significance. Here, the winter solstice aligns with the rising of the Pleiades cluster. While Matariki marks the beginning of a new year in the Māori calendar, the birth of John the Baptist signals the dawn of a new and definitive era in human history—a turning point from B.C. to A.D., from the old world to the new age of salvation, from shadow to light, from prophecy to fulfillment, from preparation to presence. It is the transition from the old covenant to the new, much like the shift from winter to spring. John the Baptist stands at the threshold of time: the final prophet of the Old Covenant and the first herald of the New.

Here in the Catholic Diocese of Christchurch, the connection is even more personal. St John the Baptist is the patron saint of the diocese, chosen to guide and inspire with his clarity of vision, his humility, and his fiery passion for truth. His voice, crying out in the wilderness, is not just a distant sound, but it continues to be made present in the Mass, calling for hearts to be turned toward Christ: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold who takes away the sins of the world" (cf. John 1:29).

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*"I come as a pilgrim of hope and peace."*

The following is the Homily given by Bishop Michael in St Mary's Pro-Cathedral at our Diocesan Requiem Mass for Pope Francis, 25 April 2025, ANZAC Day

Just one week ago, we stood together at the foot of the Cross. Good Friday—heavy with sorrow, shadowed by suffering. We remembered Jesus, abandoned and broken, taking upon himself the weight of the world's sin. And yet, in that place of darkness, we witnessed something deeply profound: a love that did not run away. A love that embraced suffering. A love that trusted in the Father even when the way forward seemed impossible. Jesus, our Lord, placed his life into the hands of his Father and believed—believed that God still had a plan.

And today, one week later, we stand in the light of the Resurrection. Hope has broken through the darkness. Death was not the end. The stone has been rolled away. In our Gospel today Jesus now sits with his disciples, eating with them, speaking peace to them, restoring them. What once seemed hopeless has now become the foundation of everlasting hope.

It is in that light that we gather today—on this Anzac Day of all days—remembering the sacrifice of many, and now mourning the death of one. We come to commend our beloved Holy Father, Pope Francis, to the mercy and love of God.

Pope Francis, like the Lord he followed, did not run from suffering. He too

embraced the trials of this life. He trusted—often with no clarity of where the path would lead—in the hope that God still had a plan.

I remember vividly being in St Peter's Square the night he was elected. The world waited in silence, and then—there he was. A simple man standing before us. No grand proclamation. No long speech. Just a gentle greeting: "Buona sera... Good evening." And then, astonishingly, he asked us to bless him. The man who had just become the Vicar of Christ on earth—

bowing before the people of God, asking for their prayer.

Not long after that, I met an Argentinian priest who knew him well from Buenos Aires. He was amazed at the transformation of his Cardinal. "What has happened to him?" he asked. "Where is the tired, aging cardinal who was ready for retirement?" Jorge Mario Bergoglio had his plans. He even knew which retirement home he would go to. But as he himself would later say, "God had another plan... and gave me a new lease on life."

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There is no instruction manual for how to be Pope. Instead he took the name and example of a humble friar who gave his life in service of the poor, St Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
and where there is sadness, joy.

Over thirteen years of faithful service Pope Francis allowed the Holy Spirit to lead him, to shape him, and to guide our Church. He lived not by a blueprint but by a trustful openness to God's surprising call.

He became a pilgrim of hope.

An early and striking example of this came shortly after his election. Vatican officials began requesting state visits, diplomatic trips, grand appearances. But Pope Francis had something else in mind. He wanted to go to Lampedusa—a small island off the coast of Sicily, where desperate migrants and refugees from Africa were drowning or being held in refugee camps. The officials said it was impossible. As related by Bishop of Tyler, Greg Kelly, soon after, Air Italia called the Vatican to confirm a curious booking: a man named Jorge Bergoglio had made a booking to Lampedusa. The Vatican officials responded quickly to arrange a more formal booking.

This was the first visit of 53 Papal visits he would make throughout his pontificate. It became a defining moment. He stood before the world and said, "I come as a pilgrim of hope and peace."

Pope Francis lived for 88 years. He experienced hardship in all its forms. He served in the slums of Buenos Aires, washed the feet of prisoners, and called the Church to care for the earth as our



Phil Bell playing Ka Waiata (A hymn to Mary) as a lament to Pope Francis

*“ We need to keep hope alive.  
And we need to give hope ”*

common home. He lived through economic crises, pandemics, and chronic ill health. And yet—he remained full of hope.

In the face of poverty, hatred, war, and despair, Pope Francis never gave up. Speaking on a visit to a war-torn nation in Africa, he said: “We need to keep hope alive. And we need to give hope. Being a pilgrim of hope means choosing not to give in to despair.”

In the last year we have witnessed his strength ebbing away and his body failing him as he struggled, burdened by years of illness and age. In the face of this suffering, Pope Francis has lifted his voice one more time to the world, by proclaiming a Jubilee Year of Hope—a bold cry from a weary shepherd, calling all people to return to the heart of God, the God whose mercy has no limits and whose love never fails.

This ANZAC Day, we also remember the great sacrifices made by others who journeyed into darkness for the sake of light. Who, like Pope Francis, were pilgrims of hope. Their courage, their self-giving, their vision for a better world—it echoes in his legacy.

Like our fallen service men and women gone before us, Pope Francis too has finished his race. The pilgrim has reached his destination. He has walked through this life as a messenger of mercy, a prophet of peace, a man of hope.

In the hope of the resurrection we pray, may our risen Saviour now greet Pope Francis, as we hope He has greeted all who have given their life in service of others: “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master.”

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# Architects for the Cathedral announced

At the beginning of June, Warren and Mahoney were announced as the architects for the new Cathedral. They are one of the country's leading architectural firms and will design the new Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament and the surrounding precinct.

In 2024, Bishop Michael Gielen initiated a national search for an architectural firm to work with the Christchurch Diocese in building our new cathedral, the Mother church of the Diocese.

In making this announcement, Bishop Michael noted that Warren and Mahoney has been a mainstay of Christchurch architecture for decades, working on iconic buildings such as the Christchurch Town Hall, Te Pae Convention Centre, and the Justice Precinct. "We hope — and we expect — that the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament will regain its status as one of the architectural treasures of our city and our nation," Bishop Michael said. "We were fortunate to have significant interest from possible partners for this project. We are confident that Warren and Mahoney will walk with us in building a worthy house of worship, to glorify God and to welcome His people. It will be a place where heaven and earth meet."

Warren and Mahoney will be guided by a design brief, developed through diocesan consultation and refined by an advisory group, representing clergy, religious, laity, and cultural communities. Joseph Hampton, Warren and Mahoney's project leader and himself a member of the Cathedral parish, said that being

called to work on the cathedral project is a great honour and responsibility. "The new Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament and the surrounding precinct is a generational project for our studio and practice," Mr Hampton said. "We look forward to working with the Diocese to shape a vibrant precinct that serves as a beacon of hope and faith, giving back to the wider community for generations."

In addition to the new cathedral, the wider precinct will unite existing education and community functions with administrative offices, parking, and multi-purpose spaces, to create a place of welcome, witness, and worship for current and future generations. This will be the first Catholic cathedral built in New Zealand in more than 120 years. Bishop Michael observed that "It is an historic opportunity and privilege for us to be entrusted with this sacred undertaking."



## Safeguarding Online Course for Ministry Leadership

### *Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand (SCCANZ)*

This course is open to those involved in paid or voluntary Church ministry leadership.

#### Summary of what this online course covers:

- Explores the basis for safeguarding; what has led to the need to identify this aspect of our faith, our Church's expectations around safeguarding and those of our country's legal requirements.
- Takes a closer look at the types and impacts of abuse, some causes of abuse, and pastoral response to abuse.
- How to apply course knowledge in all aspects of ministry in the Church.

A one-day kickstart programme is provided to begin the course:

**Date:** Thursday 4th September

**Time:** 9.30am – 3.30pm

**Venue:** Diocesan Office  
391 Moorhouse Avenue  
Christchurch

**Food:** Morning tea and lunch is provided on the day.

**Cost:** \$150 to complete the course. A supporting tutor is assigned to each student for the duration of the course.

The day is facilitated by a tutor from Te Kupenga – Catholic Theological College. Attendees will be tutored through the first of three modules. What remains of the course following the kickstart day is completed online at attendee's place and space and within a 2-month window of the kickstart date. It is estimated that the total time to complete the course in this format is equivalent to 15 minutes a day over a 2-month period. Certificate on completion.

#### Who do I contact to register and find out more?

Please contact Clodagh Ward  
Christchurch Diocese Safeguarding Officer  
at [cward@cdoc.nz](mailto:cward@cdoc.nz)



# Rome, the Eternal City, and the City of Saints and Sinners

by Fr Michael Pui, 25 May 2025

One of the perks of being the National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS), is that I get a chance each year to meet the Pope. It's the perfect panacea and blessing for the seven days of intense and long deliberations that we National Directors have to endure at our yearly assembly.

The chance of a papal encounter this year was initially thought to be highly improbable, because of Pope Francis' ill health and his eventual death. That improbability changed a few days before I boarded the plane; thanks to a quick conclave and to Pope Leo XIV virtually commencing work immediately, well before the echoes of "Habemus Papam" quietened down around Rome and the world. All of a sudden, on the eve of my departure for Rome, our papal audience came back on the agenda.

Travelling with me on the plane was a couple from Christchurch, ex-parishioners of mine, who are celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary in the Year of Jubilee. Our arrival in Rome was on the eve of the assembly of Directors, and it coincided also with the eve of Pope Leo's XIV's first Wednesday audience at St Peter's. It meant Rome was buzzing with excitement and it felt more crowded than usual. We had less than twenty-four hours to acclimatise and I had half a day to show them around.

The couple wanted to say a prayer at the tomb of Pope Francis and to queue for the tickets for the Wednesday audience. It rained, and despite their wish to travel by taxi, I encouraged them to follow me and take the bus and train, citing it was perfectly safe if they were to be attentive

to their wallets. Rome, after all, is not only the city of the Popes, but also a city of thieves and pick-pockets!

We arrived at the Basilica of St Mary Major to find ourselves at the end of a long queue standing in the rain — and that queue was just to get past the security! Christchurch was also represented by another group, from which came a voice, "Father Michael, Christchurch here...!" as we rushed to get to the back of the long queue. When we finally got into the Basilica, we had only about five seconds to file past the tomb of Pope Francis. It was a deflating experience and it got a bit dramatic when I received a public telling off by a policeman for slowing down the queue, trying twice to take a photo of the couple!

Then, to add insult to injury for the day, on our way home, the couple got pick-pocketed the very minute we boarded the crowded train! The exhausting day had made them less attentive. They lost all their credit cards and cash. Immediately after the theft, several transactions were made within minutes of the theft of their credit-cards — no thanks to 'PayWave'. The hellish nightmare continued for us as they had to make numerous phone calls to cancel the cards and lodge a police report. There was also the matter of how they were to survive in Rome for a week, penniless! Welcome to Rome!

Later in the day we confronted another long queue. It took hours to get the tickets to the Papal Audience that the couple had requested online. It was a good time for a good post mortem of the day. The next morning, we caught up for my

private Mass in the Chapel at C.I.A.M (International Centre for Missionary Animation). At Mass, the saintly couple prayed for the conversion of the thieves, that they find employment and change their ways!

C.I.A.M is located next to St Peter's Basilica on the hill. The couple were too tired to queue up again to enter St Peter's square for the audience, but as I compose this, they were going to queue again for another set of tickets for the next audience on the eve of their departure from Rome! All was not lost, we witnessed the first Wednesday Papal Audience of Leo XIV from C.I.A.M, from where the speeches and prayers were all within audible distance. It was actually a better spot from a photographic perspective.

Just before midday, I farewelled the couple and left for the Assembly of Directors at the Capuchin's College of St Lawrence of Brindisi, whose feast day is the anniversary of my ordination, twenty-five years ago, in the year of the Great Jubilee 2000. I have many times preached that, through the eyes of faith, one sees providences more than coincidences. Yet, even with this vision, I could not help thinking I was about to start my earthly 'purgatory' as the bus snaked through Rome!

The Assembly of Directors opened with a luncheon and concluded in the evening with an address by His Eminence, Cardinal Tagle. He was one of the "papabile" who entered the conclave as a Pope and came out a cardinal. Cardinal Tagle is the Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for





Pope Leo XIV smiles at the conclusion of his inauguration Mass in St Peter's Square at the Vatican May 18, 2025. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)



Fr Michael Pui meets Pope Leo XIV

Evangelisation, making him the Cardinal in charge of the Pontifical Mission. That evening, at the end of his address, I posed the final question from the floor, asking his thoughts about our task to update the Statutes of the PMS; and that the 'draft' Statutes may still contain elements that stifle 'creativity', which Pope Francis asked us to explore in our work.

The next day, we were to join the cardinal in a concelebrated Mass at St Peter's, followed by a Papal audience. Every National Director was looking forward to meeting and greeting the (new) Pope in the Clementine Hall in the Vatican. Several directors turned up with gifts from their homeland. I think, for one or two, it was a cunning plan to increase their time with the Pope and their photo opportunity! I, too, had become older and wiser. This year, I managed to secure the second row of seats! And I had in my hands, my trusty camera and a collection of lenses! While the crowd was settling down, to my surprise, Cardinal Tagle zoomed up to me (pun intended) and thanked me for the question I had asked him the evening

before. We had a brief discussion, after which, we all sat in silence for Pope Leo XIV. The wait felt like an eternity.

Leo XIV entered, greeted by a huge applause. He gave a short address in English and encouraged us in our work and asked us "...to give priority to visiting dioceses, parishes, and communities, and in this way, help the faithful to recognise the fundamental importance of the missions and supporting our brothers and sisters in those areas of our world where the Church is young and growing."

After the speech, there was an air of excitement as the Pope greeted each one of us personally, starting with the Bishops naturally. When I was in line to shake the Pope's hands, behind about ten National Directors, the man in charge told me not to say anything to speed up the occasion. Instead, when the time came, I said to Pope Leo, holding up four fingers; "Your Holiness, it's been nearly forty years since a Pope came to our shores. Please come and visit New Zealand..." If he comes to New Zealand, I am going to claim the credit!

We received a Rosary gift each, but the Pontificate is still new and so the Rosary



His Eminence, Cardinal Tagle

still had Pope Francis' insignia! Maybe next year, I will have another encounter and a new pair with a new insignia. Last year I 'auctioned' the same rosary for funds towards the mission, raising a four-figure sum!

The events in the Eternal City in my last forty-eight hours, from dealing with the things of our broken world to the blessing of meeting Christ's Vicar on earth, all came with the feeling that somehow, amid all that happened, time stood still. Perhaps that is why Rome is called the Eternal City.

Now, for cleansing the fire of seven long days of work... Welcome to Rome indeed!





## Winners of the inaugural design of the Mission Box announced

To encourage students to appreciate and support the Church's work in the missions, Missio-Aotearoa organised a competition to design the 2025 Mission Box. Fr Michael Pui, the Director of Missio-Aotearoa, hopes to make this a yearly event, and was delighted with the entries received. The entries from primary schools "brought a smile to my face," he said.

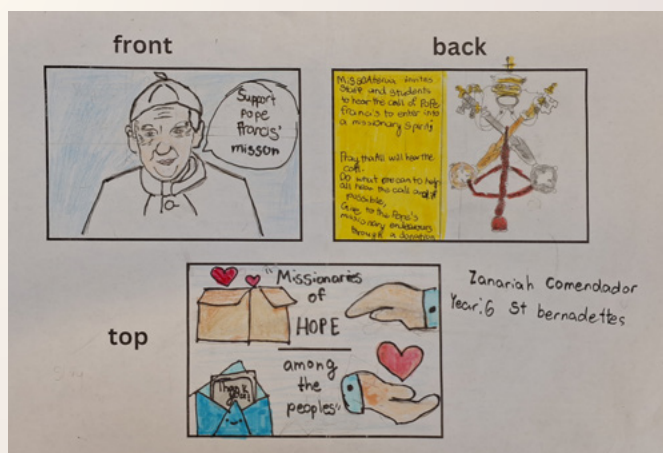
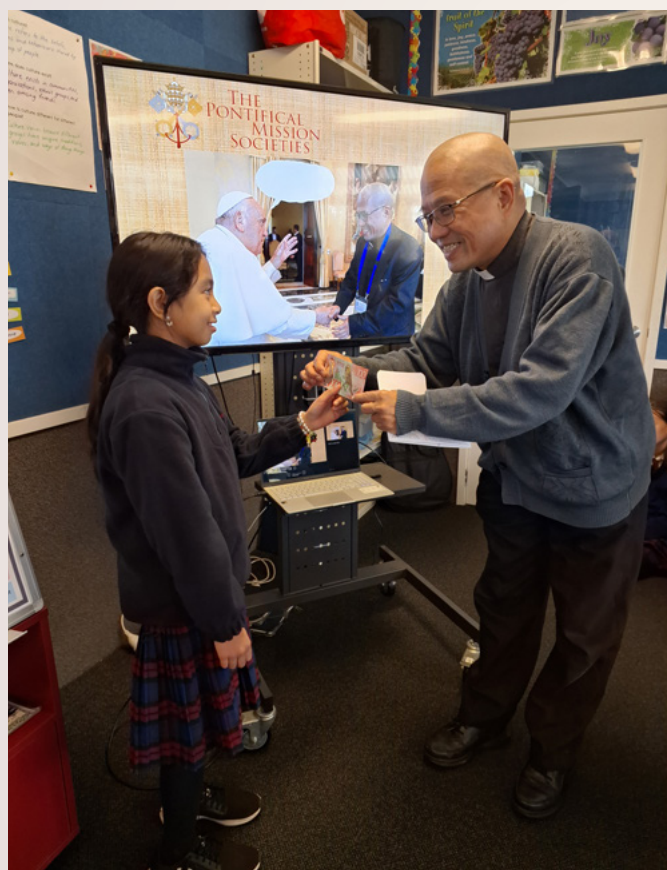
### The winners

**Primary School:** Zanariah Comendador (Year 6), St Bernadette's, Hornby, Christchurch

**Secondary School:** Jamie Barillas, St Ignatius of Loyola Catholic College, Auckland

They won prizes of \$100 and \$150 respectively, accompanied by a certificate. Fr Pui also awarded \$10 for each primary school entry and \$20 for each secondary school entry. The Mission boxes will be sent out to schools later in the year. Fr Pui intends that the Mission boxes will be ready well before Mission Sunday on 19 October, for the Mission Month of October, to serve as a focal point for the spirit of mission; to "faith raise" and to "fund raise". Funds raised go towards the Papal missionary endeavours in supporting people in poorer countries.

The motto for Mission Sunday, picked by Pope Francis for the Jubilee year is; "Missionaries of hope among all people." It is a great reminder that we all need to bring hope to those less fortunate than ourselves.



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## Diocesan Women's Retreat

by Jacinta Nicholls, Retreat Team Leader

In April, around 130 women from throughout the diocese gathered in Marian College for a special retreat, centred on the Jubilee Year theme of Hope. The day began with Mass, celebrated by Bishop Michael, and concluded in the mid-afternoon with a time of prayer. It was a Lenten opportunity to step away from the demands of daily life and enter into a time of

reflection, silence, and spiritual renewal. We were blessed to hear from two inspiring speakers—Sr Lauren of the Cross and Lisa Borkus—who shared powerful testimonies of hope in their own lives and the examples of hope found in the lives of the saints. Valuable small group sharing also gave women the chance to connect more deeply with others from their own parishes.

## Invitation to Men - *from Bishop Michael*

On Friday and Saturday the 25-26 July, the diocese is holding a Diocesan Men's Retreat at Marian College. This is open to men of all ages. The retreat begins Friday at 6.00pm with a social time to build and strengthen connections followed by the first keynote speech by Bishop Michael, and ending with night prayer. Saturday

will begin with 8.00am Adoration and benediction followed by a second keynote and a final Mass. Bishop Michael warmly invites all men to join him as we venture out into the deep - a powerful opportunity to strengthen faith, deepen connections, and journey together in brotherhood. Register today at [WWW.CATHMEN.NZ](http://WWW.CATHMEN.NZ)

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## Pilgrims of Hope Diocesan Jubilee Prayer Conference

Saturday 2 August 2025, Temuka

As we journey through this Jubilee year, the Bishop's Pastoral Office is offering you a one-day conference to be held in Temuka on Saturday 2 August. The theme for the Jubilee year is "Pilgrims of Hope," inspired by the words of St Paul in Romans, "Hope does not disappoint" (Romans 5:5). As Pope Benedict XVI once wrote, "Prayer is the school of Hope" and is the first essential setting for learning hope. The conference will help participants grow in their prayer life, to become pilgrims of hope for the world.

The Saint Mary Mackillop Chapel in Temuka is also a Sacred Jubilee site for the Christchurch Diocese, so we hope many people will take the opportunity to make a pilgrimage and come to this conference.

Bishop Michael will give a keynote presentation. Fr Chris Eaton MGL, originally from Christchurch and well known to many, will also give a keynote speech and a workshop.

The Conference is being held at the Opihi parish in Temuka, using the church, the parish hall, the school, and St Mary Mackillop Centre. It is a one-day conference, from 9.00am, with Mass, and finishing at 5.00pm.

There will be two keynote talks along with two rounds of workshops, on an aspect of prayer. There will also be times of prayer and quiet.

*"Prayer is the  
school of Hope"*



To register visit

[cdoc.nz/news-events/prayer-conference](https://cdoc.nz/news-events/prayer-conference)

For more info, contact Matt O'Connell  
on [moconnell@cdoc.nz](mailto:moconnell@cdoc.nz) or (03) 366-9869.

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# 2025 Jubilee Prayer Book

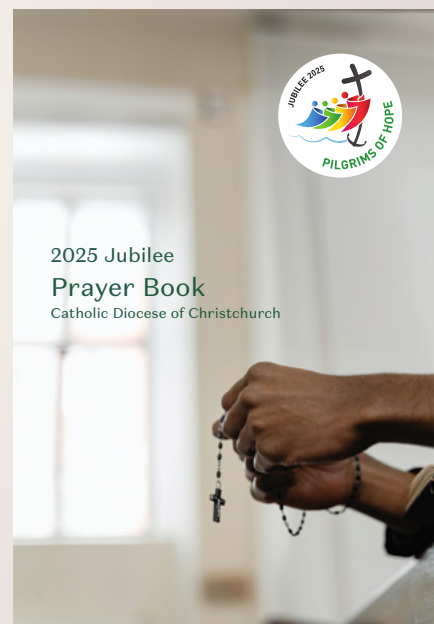
## Catholic Diocese of Christchurch

by Bishop Michael

Pope Francis, announcing the Year of Hope — Spes Non Confundit — proclaimed: "Hope does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5). These are the words of St Paul, who encouraged the Christian community in Rome, reminding them—and us—that hope is the anchor of our faith. As we celebrate this Jubilee, we do so with hearts lifted by this same hope, trusting in God's boundless mercy and love. This prayer book ([bit.ly/jubileeprayerbook](http://bit.ly/jubileeprayerbook)) prepared by the Bishop's Pastoral Office is to accompany you on your spiritual journey throughout the Jubilee Year. One of my favourite saints is St Teresa of Ávila. She is recognised as a great teacher of prayer, and she reminds us: "Prayer is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us" (The Book of Her Life, 8:5).

Through prayer, we open our hearts to God, deepening our relationship with Him and growing in faith and trust. It includes both traditional prayers that have been cherished through the centuries—such as the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Memorare—as well as reflections to inspire personal conversation with the Lord. God desires to commune with us, to listen to us and speak to our heart. I encourage you to use this booklet as an entry into a deeper conversation with the one who loves you the most. "Let us get up, therefore, and set out as pilgrims of hope, because, just as Mary did with St Elizabeth, we too can bring news of joy, and generate new life." (Pope Francis, Message for the 61st World Day of Prayer for Vocations).

I offer you my ongoing prayers and blessings  
— *Ka tuku atu ahau i aku inoi me aku manaakitanga ki a koe i ngā wā katoa.*



## Christchurch Diocesan Jubilee Pilgrimage to Northland

— *places still available*

The Christchurch Diocese is offering a Diocesan 6-day pilgrimage to the sacred places at the very foundation of the Catholic Faith in New Zealand. Pilgrimage is foundational to Jubilee Years — "bearing living witness to the faith professed in every age."

There are a few places left, so please contact tour leader Matt O'Connell for more details at the Diocesan Office on 366-9869 or [moconnell@cdoc.nz](mailto:moconnell@cdoc.nz)

## Youth & Young Adults Festival

A week before Pope Leo XIV welcomes young people to Rome for a Jubilee celebration, Bishop Michael will welcome the young people of Christchurch to celebrate the Jubilee year here.

Based around St Mary's Pro-Cathedral (designated as one of four diocesan pilgrimage sites) and City Church campus, this half day event features catechesis with Bishop Michael, Fr Chris Eaton MGL from Canberra, and worship lead by the CYT band. The event finishes with a diocesan youth Mass in the Pro-Cathedral.

This event is for those in our parishes, colleges, faith communities, and those who aren't. Registrations are open to young people aged 13-35 in the Diocese of Christchurch.





## Pilgrims of Hope: CFC Christchurch Delegates Join First-Ever Couples for Christ Global Conference 2025 in Rome

by Ariel Abalos

The CFC Global Conference 2025 was held in two runs, at Centro Mariapoli, Castel Gandolfo, in Italy. Around 3,000 delegates participated. Six couples from Christchurch and sixteen from Auckland made up the 22-couple delegation representing New Zealand.

There were a number of highlights. On the second day, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle and Cardinal Pablo Virgilio David delivered deeply moving talks on the theme "Pilgrims of Hope", urging couples to remain rooted in Christ, resilient in love, and committed to their mission despite the challenges of today's world. Their words renewed the spirit of the delegates, reinforcing the CFC calling to be messengers of hope. The day concluded with a colorful Cultural Night, where the New Zealand delegation

proudly performed "Tūtira Mai Ngā Iwi" to enthusiastic applause.

A spiritual high point followed on 21 May, when CFC members attended the first public Papal Audience of Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican, followed by Holy Mass. This was a once-in-a-lifetime moment of grace and blessing.

This pilgrimage not only deepened faith and strengthened community bonds, but also re-kindled a shared hope in Christ's mission. As one couple beautifully reflected: "We left Christchurch with hearts ready to serve and returned home more empowered, united and full of hope."



## Santacruzán: Honoring the Virgin Mary and Commemorating the Finding of the Holy Cross

by Joyce Roa

The narthex of St Mary's Pro-Cathedral was awash in colour— young ladies in elaborate gowns in various shades of red, pink, and blue. Sashes across their gowns declared on one "Reyna Constanca" (Queen of Steadfastness), another "Reyna Caridad" (Queen of Charity), another "Reyna Esperanza" (Queen of Hope) and, of course, "Reyna Elena" (Queen Helena). Young children in white also loitered around the narthex—some with white-flowered headbands and others with an angel halo paired with wings.

This event took place on 18 May, as 61 volunteer "queens" and "angels" congregated to celebrate the Philippine Chaplaincy's Santacruzán event. Santacruzán commemorates the discovery of the True Cross by Queen Helena. In the Philippines, the event culminates a whole month of Flores de Mayo (Flowers of May) celebration in honor of the Virgin Mary. Parishes throughout the country open their doors to young people who go to church daily, to offer flowers to the Blessed Virgin.

At the Santacruzán in St Mary's, inclement weather forced the churchgoers inside and the 'queens' and 'angels' paraded around the church and the narthex several times, while Lui Salgado, who organised the Santacruzán, led the recitation of the Holy Rosary.

Fr Rex Ramos is Filipino Chaplain for the Christchurch Diocese. He shared that Santacruzán is also a wonderful celebration of the role of women in the Church. It is a reminder that God has bestowed the highest honour of the human race to a woman, the Blessed Virgin Mary. Meanwhile, for parents who assisted their children to participate, and regular adult attendees who grew up with Flores de Mayo and Santacruzán, it was a taste of home, and a way to hand on the tradition of faith and culture to younger generations.





# A new season for the John Paul II Centre

## Meet Brigid, our new director



Brigid Conroy is our new director. She and her husband moved here from Hamilton. She brings with her years of experience in senior communications roles, as well as pastoral care from her time at the Diocese of Hamilton. Brigid is looking forward to meeting the wonderful people who have been part of our story over the past 20 years, and those who support what we do today.

## We've moved - and we'd love to show you around

You'll now find us at the Christchurch Diocesan Offices, on the corner of Barbadoes and Moorhouse Avenue. Being here means we're more central and enables us to work alongside other diocesan services.

We're settling in, so no regular drop-in hours yet, but we'd love you to visit! Come say hi, browse our library of marriage and family life books (we've got some great titles for sale too), and have a chat about how we can support you.

To arrange a visit; email: [info@jp2.org.nz](mailto:info@jp2.org.nz)

## Save these dates

Check our website for details:

- 19 JUL** Joy-Filled Marriage preparation course for pre-engagement and engaged couples
- 26 JUL** Dio Date Night marriage enrichment event
- 29 AUG** JP2 Race Night annual fundraiser
- 22 OCT** Our 20-year celebration

## Who we are

Life has seasons of joy and seasons of struggle... you don't have to navigate either one alone. We're a Catholic charity serving the people of the Christchurch Diocese. Whether you're preparing for marriage, keen to strengthen your relationship, navigating family life, or healing from loss, we're here to support you through it all.

## Get in touch

@ [info@jp2.org.nz](mailto:info@jp2.org.nz)

 [jp2.org.nz](http://jp2.org.nz)



**JOHN PAUL II  
CENTRE FOR LIFE**  
SUPPORTING LIFE, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

## Hearts Aflame



Hearts Aflame is a ten-day Catholic summer school, held annually in January. It is open to young adults aged 18 to 35.

**2-11 Jan 2026**

Registrations open  
6th July  
[heartsaflame.org.nz](http://heartsaflame.org.nz)

*Lecture at Hearts Aflame, a school of formation in Catholic theology, philosophy, and spirituality, for Catholic young adults*



*Hearts Aflame 2025 participants*





# The Bougainville Peace Talks

## an ANZAC Feature

by Fr Brian Fennessy, Parish Priest of 'Our Lady of the Plains Parish', Selwyn and a former Army Chaplain

### Editor's note:

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the concluding chapters of World War II. In this context, I am especially grateful for a second feature article from former military chaplain and Christchurch diocesan priest, Fr Brian Fennessy. ANZAC Day is now behind us, but other key anniversaries lie ahead this year, including VJ Day, Victory in Japan, and the end of a war which was much closer to our home and involved our people.

In his first article, which we published but weeks before this year's ANZAC Day, Fr Fennessy wrote eloquently of the possibilities for repentance and reconciliation between peoples who had suffered terribly in that war. In this second article, Fr Fennessy brings the reality of conflict between peoples much closer to home. You will need to cast your minds back to 1997 and the conflict between Papua New Guinea and the island of Bougainville, as the latter sought self-determination and unity among its own population. New Zealand was a key player in hosting and brokering pivotal peace talks; which set Bougainville on a path to peace. Father Fennessy sets the scene.

The delegates for the Bougainville Peace Talks arrived at Burnham Military Camp during July 1997. Someone in Wellington realised that a powhiri was important, but they failed to appreciate that the arrival of the delegates would be on a frosty winter's morning. The powhiri was held on the 2/a Battalion Parade Ground; the delegates had only been in New Zealand for a couple of hours, now they had to sit in the cold. While I was leading the prayer, I noticed soldiers giving out blankets, balaclavas, gloves and smocks to the Bougainvilleans. The delegates must have wondered what sort of country they were visiting for their Peace Talks. It was certainly a welcome they would remember.

A significant number of the delegates were Catholic, so there was a good number who joined the St Michael's Chapel community for Sunday mass. They were seated in their groupings: Bougainville Interim Government, Bougainville Transitional Government, Bougainville Revolutionary Army, and The Resistance. It was during the 'Sign of Peace' that the delegates, and the 50 or so regular parishioners of St Michael's, mixed and mingled. It was perhaps the most meaningful and significant 'Sign of Peace' I had shared in. It was an indicator of their intentions to make the most of the Peace Talks.



Fr Emmet McHardy - died 1933, aged 29

It was our regular custom to have a cuppa after Sunday Mass. At the back of the chapel, there was a noticeboard. By chance, one of the posters on the noticeboard was a poster encouraging parishioners to pray for vocations to the priesthood. The poster included a photograph of Fr Emmet McHardy, who had been a missionary in Bougainville from 1929-1932.

Over the cuppa, one of the delegates — his name was Chief Linus — came up to me, pointed to the poster and said "that is Fr McHardy — he baptised me". Somewhat amazed, I replied that many older New Zealand Catholics knew of the life of Fr McHardy and his work in Bougainville. Here at Burnham, at the beginning of the Peace Talks, a significant point of contact had been made.

Many of the delegates appreciated the link between New Zealand and Bougainville, symbolised by the photo of Fr Emmet McHardy. The comment is often made — that 'it's a small world'. Here in Burnham, it was a reality. The photo of Fr Emmet McHardy must have been a sign of blessing for the Catholic delegates, as they commenced the Peace Talks. Over the following Sundays, the delegates took an active part in Sunday Mass — contributing to the music and sharing in the Readings in pidgin.



St Bede's College Chapel



Te Raekura Redcliffs School



Spark Square



Paragon Apartments



Ballantynes Redevelopment

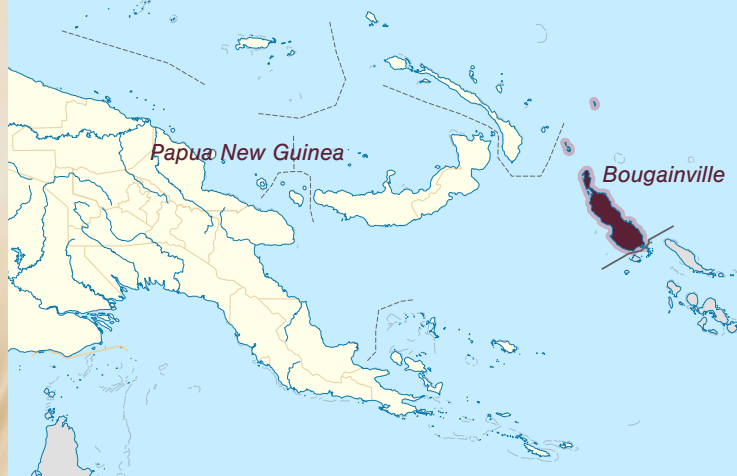


Christ Church Cathedral Reinstatement

**Building Christchurch Landmarks**  
naylorlove.co.nz







Bougainville Peace Talks - at door of St Michael's Chapel, Burnham

(As a young priest, Fr Emmet McHardy had left New Zealand and travelled to Bougainville. Within four years, he had returned to New Zealand, due to TB, and died in 1933 aged 28. After his death, his sister published a book entitled 'Blazing the Trail' which was a collection of his letters, that spoke of the intrepid life of a missionary in Bougainville. Published during 1935, the book was a 'best seller' among the Catholic community.)

At one stage, one of the delegates, Fr Ben His, said that "we are going through a difficult period." In response,

These included educational material and stationery for about 150 children. I often wondered what effect the 'behind the scenes networking' from St Michael's chapel had on the Peace Talks. Their friendship was a visible reminder that those who keep 'the Home Fires Burning' can contribute to the 'Big Picture'.

In September 1997, the young soldiers of the various factions came to Burnham for a second round of Peace Talks. Similar support was given by the parishioners of St Michael's.

for about 1,000 people, in a small town called Piano, near Buin.

After Mass, I accompanied a patrol to his village. Here, in the bush, close to Chief Linus' village, was a wreck of a RNZAF Corsair that crashed during World War II. One could still read the registration on the lee side of the fuselage. The propeller was a feature of the entrance at the local village school. Once again, 'it's a small world'.

The reconciliation and hope, formulated at the Burnham Peace Talks, are enduring. Twenty-eight years later, as we observe Anzac Day and significant military anniversaries arising from World War II, it is worthwhile remembering the contribution of ordinary New Zealanders and the contribution of the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) in enhancing peace in our region of influence. New Zealand can be proud of its contribution, under the leadership of Don McKinnon; I believe the Catholic community of St Michael's Chapel can also be proud of their sharing in these important days.

## *"The reconciliation and hope, formulated at the Burnham Peace Talks, are enduring"*

we commenced weekday Masses, to pray for success. On another occasion, I arranged for another priest, Fr Dan Doyle, who spoke pidgin, to visit Burnham to assist with hearing confessions — a meaningful celebration in the midst of the Peace Talks. By the end of the Peace Talks, its success was witnessed by the delegates and the parishioners being intermingled at Mass; no longer were the delegates in their factions, but as people of Bougainville and the people of God.

The community at St Michael's became involved in the 'unofficial support' of the Peace Talks and advertised throughout Christchurch parishes for clothing, educational, and religious articles. There was a great response over the three weeks, and the gifts were divided among the various communities from Bougainville a few days before the conclusion of the Talks.

After the delegates had returned home, the St Michael's community sent several other 'care packages' to Bougainville.

In 1999, I was fortunate to deploy to Bougainville with the Peace Monitoring Group. During my time in Bougainville, I met many of the delegates from the Burnham Peace Talks, including Chief Linus. I met Chief Linus at Sunday Mass

# JBWere

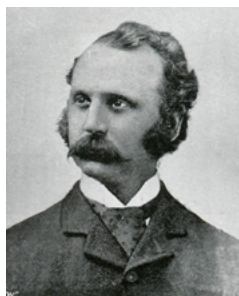
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# Built on Petre

by Dominic Hassan

*In Inform Issue 144, we printed the first of two articles by Christchurch architect, Dominic Hassan, exploring something of the life of Catholic architect, Francis Petre. In this edition, Mr Hassan's second article focuses on Petre's architectural legacy. He outlays the beauty of the most significant of Petre's churches, his six basilicas.*

Anyone familiar with the landmarks of Wellington, Christchurch, Timaru, Waimate, Oamaru, Dunedin, or Invercargill will know something of the legacy of Francis William Petre.

## St Patrick's Basilica, South Dunedin

St Patrick's Basilica, South Dunedin, built 1892-1894, was the first of his basilicas. Petre adopted a simple three-aisled basilica form, with a lofty central nave for the people and a simple octagonal dome above the crossing of nave and transept. Terminating the interior, opposite the nave, was the apse, with the sanctuary with elevated altar and altarpiece painting. Round lunette windows distributed at high level, made for a well-lit interior, throwing into relief the deeply coffered (decorative) pressed metal ceiling. Baroque-inspired features such as scroll buttress details at the front facade, recall the Jesuit churches of counter-reformation Rome.

## St Patrick's Basilica, Oamaru

Another basilica, of the same name, soon followed in Oamaru, beginning in 1893. A study of the neo-classicism of Italy's Andrea Palladio, applied with a certain austerity in the ubiquitous local limestone, this church was to be seminal to Petre's later work. Its lofty dome is situated directly above the apse, admitting filtered daylight to exalt the position of the sanctuary. Set apart by a grand arch, the nave is a formal rectangular chamber, surrounded with closely spaced Corinthian columns, beneath a coffered pressed metal ceiling. Elevated on a hillside, its beautifully proportioned facade presides over the town and coastline lying eastward, with domed bell towers flanking a lofty Corinthian portico. Ambitious as the project was, the parish was committed to its realisation and saw to its completion after 25 years, with the apse and sanctuary dome carried out by MacFie & Hood Architects.

## Metropolitan Cathedral of the Sacred Heart

Petre's next large church, Wellington's Sacred Heart Basilica (now Cathedral), 1899-1901, drew upon his earlier basilica at South Dunedin, this time without a dome but featuring red brick with Oamaru stone details, now painted. Originally its front facade included twin bell towers. These were removed after an earthquake in 1942, rendering the present rather restrained greco-roman appearance. It neighbours the parliamentary complex, but it's great portico turns eastward toward the harbour, overlooking the city. Inside, the hierarchy of sanctuary over nave is clearly defined, with a processional sequence of spaces.

St Patrick's Basilica, South Dunedin



## St Mary's Basilica, Invercargill

Invercargill's St Mary's Basilica, 1904-1905, eschewed restraint. The least basilica-like of his 'basilicas', its centralised Greek cross form is crowned with a towering 37 metre central dome, bestowing pre-eminence upon the building to command public attention, not only along the street and adjoining main trunk rail line, but right across the skyline of the fresh lowland city. Immense arched windows, symmetrically placed, articulate the high sides of this red brick and stucco edifice and with a glorious stained glass rose window above the sanctuary, dominate a plastered column-free interior. High above is the great centrally domed ceiling, itself concealing the elevated dome chamber, uppermost.

## St Patrick's Basilica, Waimate

Petre's answer to Benjamin Mountford's carpenter-gothic Anglican church in Waimate, was a nod to the Venetian renaissance. St Patrick's Basilica, built 1908-1909, marks the street with a lofty central bell tower. Red brick and Oamaru stone are employed with a flourish, accenting a series of arched windows, formed with round stone tracery. The nave is column-free, with his signature coffered ceiling, adjoining an internally domed semi-circular apse to set the sanctuary apart from the nave, all festively detailed.

## Basilica of the Sacred Heart, Timaru

The last of Petre's bigger churches, Timaru's Basilica of the Sacred Heart, built 1910-1911, further explored the festive terracotta and plaster theme. In this example, there are echoes of Byzantium, with a broad dome crowning the roof and admitting daylight through the central aperture of the domed ceiling. The interior is confidently articulated, with a clear hierarchy of spaces, more fluidly connected than at Oamaru. The sanctuary is set apart within a semi-circular apse, with a towering high altar encompassing the tabernacle. Ionic columns mark the four corners of the domed crossing and form a colonnade around the sanctuary. Sacred imagery abounds within the stained-glass windows of the plastered interior. This church was so admired that a replica was later (partially) built in Paddington, Sydney.

St Patrick's Basilica, Oamaru







(clockwise from top) Metropolitan Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, 10 June 2024; St Patrick's, Waimate (26 Sept 2008); Basilica of the Sacred Heart, Timaru, 13 Dec 2018; Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, 7 Jan 2009; St Mary's Basilica Invercargill (credit: jontytravels.com).

## Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Christchurch

Widely recognised as his crowning achievement was the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Christchurch, built 1901-1905. Here, in answer to the Anglican Cathedral's pointed style, Petre delivered a lesson in neo-classical high renaissance architecture, with towering dome, twin bell towers and studied classical orders, in Oamaru limestone. It stood sentinel to Roman Catholicism at the eastern fringe of the Anglo-centric city through the 20th century. Here, as in Oamaru's Basilica, Petre employed an unconventional layout, placing the great dome not above a crossing of the nave, but towering 41m above the cathedral's apse, as it is at Notre Dame in Boulogne-sur-Mer.

The arrangement of the nave drew upon ancient Roman precedents, such as Trajan's Basilica. A two-level interior colonnade, with Corinthian columns supported above Ionic columns, surrounded the rectangular chamber for the congregation, lending a civic ambience. Overhead, an ornate pressed metal ceiling incorporated three interior domes. The sanctuary was reserved at the nave's eastern end behind a triumphal arch, gently daylit by the barely visible great dome, high above. A balcony on the right-hand side of the arch served as the elevated pulpit. Under the great dome, elevated seven steps, the bishop's cathedra (throne) stood with the choir around an ornate round floor mosaic. Beyond this, elevated a further three steps, the semi-circular apse with two-levelled colonnade echoed that of the nave, encompassing the marble high altar and tabernacle structure and terminating the interior spatial sequence. While sparse in pictorial iconography or colour, the cathedral was in form and spatial structure, a powerful icon of the liturgy of its era, written in the language of Neo-classicism.



Renovations in the 1970s saw a free-standing altar placed directly beneath the dome and the high altar structure demolished. Sadly, this treasured building was a casualty of the 2010 – 2011 Canterbury earthquakes, leading, after a period of investigation, to its complete removal ten years later.

As a founder of the Dunedin Institute of Civil Engineers and Architects in 1876 and a Fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Architects upon its foundation in 1905, Francis Petre had helped to shape the profession of architecture in the fledgling nation. His legacy punctuates the townscapes of the South Island, serving as reminders of Roman Catholicism's role in the development of the country. As the colony's and dominion's preeminent Catholic ecclesiastical architect, conversant with engineering and liturgical design, he built upon the aspirations of emancipated British Catholicism, freely blending European architectural traditions with the emerging construction technologies of the late- and post-Victorian eras.

*Dominic Hassan is a registered architect with a special interest in ecclesiastical design, practising in Christchurch.*



# Laudato Si'

## – 10th anniversary marked in May



**LAUDATO SI'**  
**MOVEMENT**  
Catholics for Our Common Home

In May 2015, the encyclical *Laudato si'* (On Care of our Common Home) was published by Pope Francis, urging a comprehensive ecological conversion for the whole world. It emphasises the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

We see this evidenced in the islands of the Pacific, which are affected by the impact of climate change. The document also emphasises the interconnectedness of all creation, and the need for individual and global action to address climate issues, the environment, and advocating for a more sustainable and just future for all.

The Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development recently wrote to all bishops and other church leaders, noting the 10 year anniversary of *Laudato si'*. The document states, "... *Laudato si'* roused us from indifference to the environmental and social crisis of our time; now is the time to take up its legacy and translate it into concrete and courageous action for change. This very significant anniversary therefore becomes an opportunity, first of all, to thank all those who have committed themselves according to their possibilities in the countless projects, trainings, liturgies, political initiatives at various levels, as



well as in the new collaborations built thanks to *Laudato si'*. May these good works continue! They are signs of hope, as the Jubilee Year we are currently experiencing also invites us to reflect. It is also essential to continue the deepening and dissemination of the Church's Magisterium in the area of Integral Ecology. This will make us increasingly able to mourn together with our brothers

and sisters who suffer because of the unjust division of the goods of Creation, serious forms of pollution, violent and repeated environmental disasters, and the consequences of the hoarding of natural resources by certain powers. Yes: mourning, accompanying, consoling, and, together with them, denouncing and striving to heal and reconcile, building processes of justice, reparation, political impact, and therefore, hope. Already taking up the invitation of Pope Francis, is also the new Supreme Pontiff, Leo XIV, who exhorts us to *"take up the voice of the weak, who do not have a voice, with courage and without fear."*



**PEACE WITH CREATION**  
SEASON OF CREATION 2025

The Season of Creation occurs each year and this year it will happen from 1 September to 4 October, with the theme: 'Peace with Creation'. The website [seasonofcreation.org](http://seasonofcreation.org) provides ideas and suggestions for prayer, reflection, and action.

## JOIN THE VINNIES



Young and old, town and country. Vinnies harness the generosity of Aotearoa NZ – whānau, churches, community groups, schools. Get involved and help those who are going through tough times.

**You can join up with your local Vinnies Conference or make a donation to:**  
**Society of St Vincent de Paul**  
**02-0528-0208598-027**

Please use your name and email address as a reference and we will send you a receipt.



*St Patrick's School fundraiser  
– 800 cans donated to the  
Vinnies Annual Food Drive  
in Christchurch.*

[www.svdp.org.nz](http://www.svdp.org.nz)

 Society of St Vincent de Paul New Zealand



**LAUDATO SI'**  
ACTION GROUP WAITAHA

Locally there is a *Laudato si'* group which has been meeting regularly for the past couple of years and has undertaken practical initiatives. Its website is [laudatosi.nz](http://laudatosi.nz) and the wider *Laudato si'* Action Platform: [laudatosiactionplatform.org](http://laudatosiactionplatform.org)



**LAUDATO SI'**  
Action Platform



# Life in the City of God

by Fr John O'Connor: [foodforfaith.org.nz](http://foodforfaith.org.nz), [john@fff.org.nz](mailto:john@fff.org.nz)

I'm writing this article in the glow of Pentecost, praying that we may never allow the colour and energy of this Spirited flame, to be reduced to embers of distant memory. With the disciples who gathered in fear and were then released with irrepressible joy and energy for faith in the fullness of God, I have been asking myself a question which I now offer to you.

Are you happy?

Take a moment to consider the question. Don't think about it too much, or try to come up with a preferred answer. Simply repeat the question two or three times. "Am I happy?" Ask Jesus to reveal your answer to you. "Am I happy?"

*"Too often, we forget that the ultimate goal of healthy human beings is not to be without difficult circumstances"*

Notice the response that comes to mind.

Most often my own response includes a hesitation, perhaps with a condition or two. I might answer "yes", then add a "but": yes, but when my health improves I will be happier. When the relationship is healed, the bills are paid, when the boss gets a transfer, when I get a better job, when I overcome my addiction, then I will be happy! Then I will really be happy.

The problem is that such qualifications render our personal happiness a victim to our own moods, and to the whims, words, and actions of others, as well as to the powers of earthly institutions which may not have our own best interests at heart.

Too often, we forget that the ultimate goal of healthy human beings is not to be without difficult circumstances. Our real

ambition isn't even to avoid life's pattern of oscillation between each problem, obstacle, suffering, and the next.

The deepest desire of the healthy human being is to be loved and to love.

The most profound hunger of the healthy human being is for God.

Our problem is that we have, more often than not, anaesthetised our consciousness of this desire. In our comatose state, we think that consuming more sex, drugs, and rock and roll (as the caricature claims — we can adapt the metaphors to match our own choices) will deliver the depth of happiness we seek.

However, every day, our experience tells us that this is not so.

Instead, when we allow the depth and the urgency of heart-felt and healthy human desires to enter our consciousness, then we become open to and ready for greater maturity in relationship with the divine and therefore, with other people.

In any uncomfortable experience of restlessness, we have an opportunity to recognise and an invitation to move from simple and unquestioning religious obedience, to a more robust and mature relationship with God, within the breadth of the family of faith.

Perhaps our problem is that in such an experience of struggle or suffering, we can feel as though our relationship with the

Church and with God is vulnerable, the threads of connection too fragile, and we might wrongly suspect or (more tragically) judge that we are losing faith. Such pain and anxiety is often perceived as a sign that something is wrong, when in fact, we are experiencing the yearning implanted in every human heart by divine design: the recognition that only God is enough.

Our consciousness of this dis-ease, is evidence that God is already at work in us and is speaking to us.

In short, within our human experience of suffering, we may be experiencing nothing more than the discomfort of growth-pains.

It is important to note that we must not choose or accept suffering as some kind of virtuous endurance or goal. To do so would be masochism, and the one who opts for this path is more proud than pious. What makes a suffering a suffering is precisely that we don't choose it. Unwanted and often unwarranted, it lands on us, and despite our best efforts, it remains, often to run its course.

A second important note is that when I can make a choice to be free of a particular suffering, or if a word or an action can ease the suffering of another, then I must speak or act and lift the burden. To miss this moment denies God an opportunity to unburden a struggling soul.

Understandably, our prayer at times might be a series of requests of God, praying that we will be free from all suffering.

While Jesus can and does act to answer such prayer, a more profound maturity of Christian experience of the divine will appreciate that our deepest desire is to







know the presence and action of Jesus in the midst of our struggles.

In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed that his cup would be taken from him. This prayer was evidently not answered, but then Jesus opened his (and our) path, through the suffering to resurrection, when he added, “not my will but yours be done.”

Perhaps you have noticed this path present in your own life — looking back over your personal high and low points, noticing that your richest experiences of human intimacy and love have been in the times when you may have felt most needy and vulnerable, or to use the language of the great 5th-6th century saint Augustine: within your restlessness.

Augustine appreciated that good religion never contradicts good psychology and good psychology doesn't contradict healthy religion.

While a burdened person might visit a psychologist, seeking freedom from a particular problem, very often the greatest gift of these professional (and often profoundly spiritual) conversations is to discover a previously hidden capacity to live with, through, and beyond the presenting burdens.

The great Augustine develops his reflections in another significant and equally timeless work, “City of God.”

He suggests that the restlessness we feel

tangible and temporary earthly realm, but the closest friends of Jesus will appreciate (because we sense it in our inmost being), that we are not OF this world. Instead, we are created for the abundance of life, both eternally and in the present. This is the realm of the City of God.

When we live here and now with this transcendent perspective, we more easily welcome and recognise the soul-numbing, repetitive pattern of seeking and grasping after transient attractions. In this awakening, we have an option to re-orient ourselves to the broader and life-giving divine perspective, the life which enables happiness to become our default setting.

Augustine was writing soon after the legalisation of Christianity in the early fourth century. We might imagine that back then, Christians would have welcomed the adoption of Christianity as the Religio Publica of the Roman Empire. However, this acceptance saw the loss of Christianity as a simple and organic communion of Christ-centred believers, and a move to a Church as a powerful and worldly organisation, preoccupied with structures, which soon became strictures, distracting disciples from the simplicity of counter-cultural relationship with Jesus Christ, lived in the here and now.

*“From the crisis of today  
the Church of tomorrow will emerge”*

I expect we'll hear a lot more about Augustine throughout the ministry of Pope Leo, a priest in the Religious family of Augustine, whose classic Confessions is widely accepted to be a masterpiece of human, and therefore Catholic psychology.

His best-known line comes in the opening sentences of this work: “You have made us for yourself O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”

is not a flaw in our humanity, but a quality crafted within us by divine design. We are restless because we are naively seeking to contort our minds, bodies, souls, to fit an earthly city, when the depth of our humanity is longing for the City of God, for which we are created.

Yes, the disciples of Jesus are placed IN the world with all its imperfections. Yes, we are called to live and grow IN this

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Naturally, any earthly enterprise requires structural and organisational aspects, but when these city-of-earth dimensions disguise City-of-God priorities (as found in the words and actions of Jesus in the Gospels), the Church risks losing Christ-centred divine discernment, which can vanish under the jurisdiction of human mirages of moralism, legalism, commercialism, and capitalism.

In this tragic collapse, the City of God (which the Church is called to be on earth) soon becomes (to use the image of Pope Francis) nothing more than another Non-Governmental Organisation, alongside a plethora of similarly well-intentioned earthly institutions.

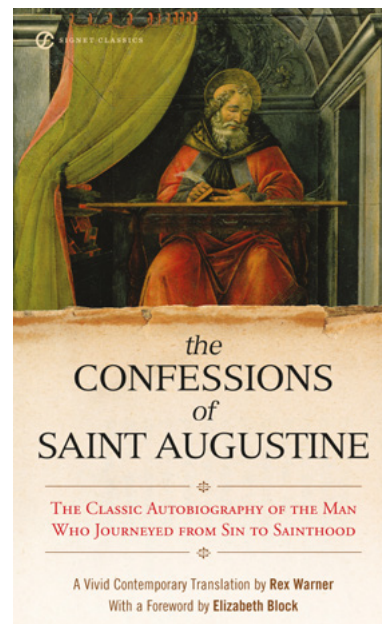
Pope Leo made this same point in his Pentecost Sunday reflection: “It is the way of the Beatitudes, a path that we tread together, between the “already” and the “not yet,” hungering and thirsting for justice, poor in spirit, merciful, meek, pure of heart, men and women of peace. Jesus himself chose this path: to follow it, we have no need of powerful patrons, worldly compromises, or emotional strategies.”

When we adopt the mentalities and modalities of this trap and measure

our success by the capitalist measure of numerical data, our vision becomes narrow and anaemic. We so easily forget that the disciples of Jesus are called by Jesus to be the humble and often hidden leaven in the world, rather than a manipulative lever of earthly power.

A couple of years ago, the Catholic bishops of New Zealand invited Czech priest, philosopher, and theologian Tomáš Halík, to speak at Te Kupenga, the bishops’ Catholic Theological College. In his work, Halík (using the image of a humble and wounded church) reflects: “Mystery, unlike a mere dilemma, cannot be overcome; one must wait patiently at its threshold and persevere in it—must carry it in one’s heart—just as Jesus’ mother did according to the Gospel, and allow it to mature there and lead one in turn to maturity.”

His words echoed the 1969 prophecy of then Fr Joseph Ratzinger “From the crisis of today the Church of tomorrow will emerge — a Church that has lost much. She will become small and will have to start afresh more or less from the beginning. She will no longer be able to inhabit many of the edifices she built in prosperity.”



I’ll leave the last word to the future Benedict XVI, who continued his 1969 reflection with abundant Pentecost hope and happiness: “But I am equally certain about what will remain at the end: not the Church of the political cult, which is dead already, but the Church of faith. It may well no longer be the dominant social power to the extent that she was until recently; but it will enjoy a fresh blossoming and be seen as our true home, where we will find life and hope beyond death.”



## What is Spiritual Direction?

Sr Lauren Butler, Carmelite Extern Sister and Spiritual Director,  
on behalf of Whakakōingo o te Ngākau: The Yearning Heart, the Diocesan Spiritual Directors’ Group

A question often pondered is: “What is Spiritual Direction?” I notice a genuine curiosity in this question, so let me share my understanding of spiritual direction.

Spiritual direction is a confidential ministry of accompaniment, support, and encouragement, which is centred on your relationship with God. A director acts as an instrument for God. As a mediator, they listen attentively to the directee safely sharing their deepest desires and attuning to how God may be guiding them, as they grow in awareness of the gift of grace that is already here.

The substance of a session is what happens in our prayer time and everyday life. As St Teresa of Avila said: “God walks among the pots and pans.” God uses all our experiences to communicate with us — we need to learn to tune in and notice the movements within our hearts. A director will listen to what is said, and also be attentive to the silence about what is not said

— like how an iceberg has much more going on underneath than we can see.

A session is a bit like the image of panning for gold, swishing around the material of life and noticing the little gold nuggets that appear. These gold nuggets are pondered and relished as a gift from God and explored further.

Spiritual direction is for everyone who wants to grow in their relationship with God. A director listens to and cherishes your unique journey, accompanying you wherever you are in the spiritual life.

If you would like to explore spiritual direction further, I invite you to visit [cdoc.nz/what-we-do/mission/spiritual-direction](http://cdoc.nz/what-we-do/mission/spiritual-direction) for a list of priests, religious, and lay directors available in the Christchurch Diocese, for your prayerful consideration.



*“Be who God meant you to be”,  
said St Catherine of Siena,  
“and you will set the world on fire.”*

This heroic Doctor of the Church was convinced that it only takes one person, on fire with faith, to transform the whole planet. For new managers of Replenish, Cameron and Cheryl Surrey, this has become a guiding principle for life. “We also know”, says Cameron, “that behind every saint are people who encouraged and helped them to recognise and unlock their God-given potential. This is how we see our work at Replenish — coming alongside people of faith and helping them take the next steps in that transformation.”

“We are blessed”, adds Cameron, “to be working at this beautiful rural property, just 20 minutes out of Rangiora. It’s the ideal location for our leadership development workshops (CliftonStrengths, APEST, Called and Gifted), a peaceful silent retreat, or even a wedding reception.”

We share two testimonies from people who benefited from their time at Replenish.

Patricia says: “Replenish is the perfect setting for any spiritual reflection and learning with its peaceful rural setting and sense of retreat from life’s distractions. So, when I saw the opportunity to join Cameron’s ‘Called and Gifted’ workshop at Replenish, I had to act. After returning to my faith, I often found myself in prayer, asking God what He wanted from me and how I could serve. What I was sorely lacking was any way of understanding if He had already gifted me with talents and strengths to serve. Thankfully, through ‘Called and Gifted’, Cameron offered a warm and gentle approach to the learning and discernment process, helping each of us fully understand the process and leaving ample time for reflection. The entire experience has changed my approach to being a follower of Christ and I now feel equipped to continue to seek to serve and to draw others nearer to Him.”

Grant says: “I personally got a lot out of attending the recent APEST retreat. Previously, I had explored God’s call in my life, but had not given much thought to ministry styles — the particular way I am called to serve. Am I an apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, or teacher? Learning

about my own ministry style has been quite transformative and will definitely influence the way I approach service. I can also see a benefit in recognising the ministry styles of others, especially in leadership roles within the Church. Whether you’re a volunteer or employed in ministry, if you want to serve well and gain greater self knowledge, the APEST retreat will help you grow in understanding and bring you closer to God. As St Augustine said, “Grant, Lord, that I may know myself that I may know thee.”

Book an event, personal retreat, or check out what’s coming up at [replenishretreat.co.nz](http://replenishretreat.co.nz)



Managers of Replenish, Cheryl & Cameron Surrey



The Country Cottage offers an intimate and cozy retreat for 2-4 guests



# A Liturgical Set-Piece Turns 1,700

by Ken Joblin

## Question:

*“What happens between the homily and the Prayer of the Faithful in the Mass?”*

**Answer:** we are invited by the priest to stand and profess our faith. This profession of faith is stated at every Sunday Mass and on solemn feasts. It usually takes the form of the Nicene Creed, though the shorter Apostles' Creed is now more often preferred by those who seek to expedite the Mass.

Because the Creed is a liturgical “set-piece”, it can become a habitual recitation, something we are required to say but to which we give little real thought: familiarity breeding a half-conscious, “go through



the Council was the condemnation of Arius' ideas and the formulation of the Nicene Creed. The Nicene Creed was then expanded at the second ecumenical council, held in Constantinople in 381, to include a section on the Holy Spirit, the “one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church,” and other Christian teachings that had been challenged.

Pope Leo XIV has already noted that there are many false ideas people have about Jesus. “Today, too,” he noted, “there are many settings in which Jesus, although appreciated as a man, is reduced to a kind of charismatic leader or superman. This is true not only among non-believers but also among many baptised Christians, who thus end up living, at this level, in a state of practical atheism.” He goes on to say that “In daily life, Christians often fail to live as if they believe in Jesus' divinity and that he, God-with-us, is still very much with us.” He reminds the world that Jesus is the “Messiah and Son of the Living God.” We do that, objectively, every time we proclaim the Creed.

*“What is in the Nicene Creed matters and provides the crucial foundation for the whole faith of the Church”*

the motions.” These days, we are not even expected to profess the Creed from memory, as we simply read what is on the ubiquitous screen in front of us. It does make one wonder that, if a mischievous projectionist slipped a new clause onto a PowerPoint slide, allowing us to profess that the Melbourne Cup is always run on the first Tuesday in November, people would unthinkingly recite it. Do we have too much “screen time” at Mass?

Twice a liturgical year, the Nicene Creed has an added feature, in that we kneel at the words “was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.” We do this on the solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord on 25 March and the Nativity of Our Lord on 25 December. Otherwise, on Sundays, we bow at this point.

In professing the Nicene Creed, or perhaps chanting or even singing “Credo in unum Deum”, we are verbalising a text which is now 1700 years old. The Catholic Church and the Christian liturgical traditions of the post-Reformation, are marking this important anniversary, which has allowed us to adhere to the truth of the Trinity and of the Church.

Why is it known as the “Nicene” Creed? The first Council of Nicaea was the first ecumenical synod in the history of the Church. It was convened by Emperor Constantine in what is now the Turkish city of Iznik. The council began its work

on 20 May 325. It was summoned by Constantine shortly after he had legalised Christianity, making it much safer for Christians to openly practice their faith. With Christian legitimacy, came the luxury of debating theological ideas.

In the city of Alexandria in Egypt, a priest named Arius began to challenge Jesus' divine nature, origin and relationship to God the Father. Constantine convened the first universal council, bringing together 318 bishops to resolve the controversy caused by the popular Arian heresy and restore order. The main result of

What is in the Nicene Creed matters and provides the crucial foundation for the whole faith of the Church. The first section of the Catechism of the Catholic Church is dedicated to outlaying what we profess in the Creed. The Catechism, formulated under St Pope John Paul II and with the watchful eye and meticulous mind of Cardinal Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, is always the “go to” in understanding our faith. As we mark 1700 years since the Council of Nicaea, we might “go to” it and thus awaken our minds to what we so often say with our lips.



On Sunday 15th June an ecumenical service was held in the Anglican Transitional Cathedral to recognise and celebrate the 1700 year anniversary of the Nicene Creed, seen as a point of unity for many Christians. Photo: Very Rev Ben Truman (Dean of Christ Church Anglican Cathedral), Father Valentin Basiuk (Russian Orthodox), Ven Susan Wallace (Te Hui Amorangi o te Wai Pounamu - Māori Anglican Diocese of the South Island), Bishop Michael, Bishop Peter Carrell (Christchurch Anglican Diocese)



# New Artwork Honours Marian College's Mercy Heritage



A meaningful new addition to Marian College's campus now stands as a daily reminder of the school's Mercy roots.

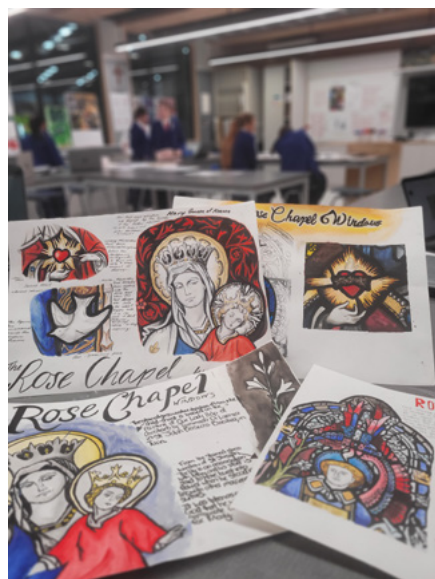
A print of the Rose Historic Chapel's stained glass window—depicting the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Christ-Child, alongside Venerable Catherine McAuley and a child, has been gifted to the school

by Nga Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand. The artwork holds deep significance, not only as a tribute to Marian College's Mercy charism, but also to its historical connection with the former St Mary's College, which merged with MacKillop College in 1982, to form Marian. Uniquely, this stained glass window is the only one in New Zealand to feature Venerable Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy.

The print now takes pride of place in Marian's Catherine McAuley Library, named to honour the school's Mercy foundation, and is already being appreciated by students in their day-to-day lives.

For the Year 11 art class, the arrival of the print could not have been more perfectly timed. As part of their NCEA Level 1 Visual Research Enquiry standard, students had been studying the Rose Historic Chapel in Colombo Street, not far from St Mary's Pro-Cathedral. Just hours after visiting the chapel on a field trip, the

students were surprised to find a print of the very window they had admired, now installed in their own school. "It was so cool that that window is in our library," said Year 11 student Siena O'Dowd. "It meant I could show my friends who didn't come on the field trip and I was able to share with them the stories I had learnt about it and its significance, while showing them the piece in person." Classmate Emma Malone, whose own artwork is inspired by the window, shared her excitement: "I love doing portraits, so when I saw the window, I thought it was so beautiful. I was so surprised when we went to the library and there it was!" Principal Mary-Lou Davidson said "We are very grateful to the Sisters for this beautiful gift and their constant support of Marian College. Our school charisms and history are central to the culture of Marian and now our students can see this every day in the image of Mary and Venerable Catherine McAuley."



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# Marian College Builds Bridges of Compassion with Women's Refuge Service

Inspired by insights gained during the 2024 Mercy Leadership Programme at Villa Maria College, Marian College has deepened its commitment to meaningful partnerships which uplift those in need. This Lent, Marian College chose to support SHE — Support, Heal, Empower; a local women's refuge service dedicated to assisting vulnerable women and their children.

What made this partnership extra special was the hands-on approach taken by Marian's senior students in the Special Character programme; to craft beautiful, reusable bags from leftover Pasifika fabric. This embodies Marian College's values of respect for culture and sustainability. Each Whānau group contributed essential care items: nappies, wipes, body soap, shampoo, conditioner, and hand creams, to fill these bags, ensuring that women fleeing hardship received practical support, wrapped in kindness.



This initiative was more than a donation drive; it was a demonstration of genuine empathy and community care. Julia Johns, Clinical Manager at SHE, expressed deep gratitude: "The overwhelming response to your donation drive has truly touched us

all. The clients who have already benefited are deeply appreciative, and your compassion continues to ripple through the community. It's inspiring to witness such heartfelt collaboration between Marian College and SHE."

## Marian Students Reflect, Celebrate, and Connect on Catholic Schools' Day

by Seyara De Silva, Head of Special Character, Marian College



*"If God is all-powerful, why does God allow terrible things to happen?"*

*"Do you ever feel like doing a mic drop after an especially good sermon?"*

These were just a couple of the thought-provoking questions that Fr Alister Castillo tackled during the Marian College assembly Q&A session, which kicked off the week-long celebrations for Catholic Schools' Day.

The session invited all students to reflect on what it truly means to study at a Catholic school and how this shapes their lives. Students were encouraged to surround themselves with friends who uplift the Catholic message and support them on their personal faith journeys.



In addition to the Q&A, the Special Character group sent heartfelt cards to our brother and sister primary and secondary schools, to be delivered on Catholic Schools' Day itself, Wednesday 28 May.

On the day, Marian embraced the theme of "shining like stars in the world." The celebrations were combined with YCC's fundraiser for Caritas, with proceeds supporting St Leo's School in Kiribati.

As students made their donations at the school entrance, they wrote down their hopes for the year and added them to "The Hope Tree," which now stands as a creative symbol of the collective aspirations of the student body.

During interval, students were treated to cake, sparking conversations about the joy and pride of being part of a Catholic school community. The festivities continued at lunchtime with over 20 teams competing in "Catholic Schools' Day Trivia," testing their knowledge of Catholic faith and history, amidst a lively crowd of spectators.

Ultimately, Catholic Schools' Day provided Marian students with a meaningful opportunity to connect with the wider Catholic network to which their school belongs and reflect on how the school's story enriches their own.



# Celebrating Catholic Schools Day 2025

On 28 May, schools across our diocese celebrated Catholic Schools Day 2025. The theme this year was 'Shine like stars in the world: E tīaho ana koe hei rama i te ao.'

Our schools marked the day in a variety of creative and faith-filled ways. Here are some highlights.



## St Peter's Primary School, Beckenham

St Peter's began Catholic Schools Day with a prayer service, featuring their school band. A group of students from Catholic Cathedral College visited for the morning, joining in a shared Religious Education session. Some students from St Peter's also spent time at Catholic Cathedral College, fostering connection and community between the two schools. Afterward, St Peter's students enjoyed a variety of games.



## Sacred Heart Primary School, Addington

Sacred Heart Primary School enjoyed a wonderful morning together, reflecting on why being at a Catholic school is so special.

The school gathered for prayers in the morning, and then they put aside their busy programmes and worked together to create collaborative pieces of art that showed their love for Jesus. Sister Gael Henry, a Mission Sister, came to help.



## Sacred Heart School, Timaru

For Catholic Schools Day Sacred Heart, Timaru celebrated the many diverse cultures that make up their school family. They prayed in many languages and the children wore clothes that celebrated their cultures. They look so proud!



## John Paul II High School, Greymouth

John Paul II High School joined in a mass with their two nearest primary schools on the Coast, St Patrick's, Greymouth and St Mary's Hokitika and it was great to see the church full to bursting! Then all except the Year 1-3 students came back to JP II for a sausage sizzle and kai for the staff followed by fun activities led by the student leaders to celebrate their connectedness through Catholic Education and their values and beliefs.



## St Alban's Catholic Primary School

St Alban's Catholic started the day with a prayer service on the theme "Shine Like Stars in the World". Then all students decorated a star with their name and ways they can shine to contribute to a wall display.





# Autumn Native Tree Planting in Christchurch Catholic Schools

by Jenny Carter, on behalf of the Laudato Si' Action Group

In March 2024, the Laudato Si' Action Group applied for charity trees from Trees for Canterbury for autumn planting. The aim of this initiative is to regenerate native bush areas and teach our children the value of our native flora and fauna. Laudato Si' is Pope Francis' encyclical letter on ecology and climate, and is our inspiration for this project.

Six of our schools applied for, and were gifted, over 600 trees from Trees for Canterbury. These small taonga are a symbol of creation and joy. The ambience of native bush areas around our schools encourages our children to take care of our common home. The trees were especially chosen for the climate of specific areas.

Ryan McInnes is DRS for Christ the King School in Burnside. He said, "Thanks again for the opportunity to be involved in this. We received 106 trees which was amazing, and the Special Character Service Group planted them all in the last week of Term 1. We have been watering them regularly and they are looking very healthy. The same team is now weeding gardens on a weekly basis and watering when needed."

On **5 September**, the Laudato Si' Action Group is running two sessions to mark the opening of the 2025 Season of Creation.

**When?** 1.00-3.00pm & 7.00-9.00pm

**Where?** Te Atawhai Centre as part of the Rosary House Spiritual Life Programme

All are welcome.

Topic: reflecting on and exploring Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter, Laudato Si' and his 2023 follow up exhortation, Laudate Deum, so that together, we may more deeply respond to "both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" (L.S. 49).

We look forward to supporting everyone interested in Laudato Si' Action, in our diocese, parishes, schools, and in families, with projects and activities. Please let us know of any projects supporting Pope Francis' Encyclical to better care for our common home.

[laudatosiactionplatform.org](http://laudatosiactionplatform.org)

[Jenny.carter@xtra.co.nz](mailto:Jenny.carter@xtra.co.nz)



## From Bryndwr to the Vatican: Greta Writes to Pope Leo

*This lovely letter to Pope Leo comes from Greta, a Year 3 student from St Patrick's School Bryndwr.*

Dear Pope Leo,

Congratulations on becoming our new Pope. It was exciting news for us in New Zealand. What was it like doing your first Mass as Pope? Why did you choose Leo as your new name? My name is Greta and I go to St Patrick's School Bryndwr in Christchurch. It is a Catholic School with 175 students. My teacher Miss Hibbs asked my class what makes my school Catholic and this is what I think.

First we believe in God and Jesus is our friend. At St Patrick's we learn about God in Religious Education and we show the Mercy Values. Every Monday morning Fr Alister comes to our school to do a Mass and reads the Gospel. We also have pillars from the Cathedral that fell down in the earthquake and we put them in the prayer garden. In my classroom we have a prayer table with a bible, rosary beads and a candle. We also have giant rosary beads.

Our school has a motto "Called to Shine" and Miss Hibbs likes to say WWJD, which stands for 'What would Jesus Do?' We have a cross on our uniform. I love going to a Catholic School because we learn about God and Jesus and make a lot of kind friends. Good luck to our new Pope.

From Greta



### St Joseph's Primary School, Rangiora

St Joseph's Rangiora School Mass held in the morning to celebrate.



### St Joseph's Primary School, Timaru

St Joseph's Timaru Catholic School held a liturgy in the morning.





## Stella Maris Parish *Christchurch East*

### 25 Baptisms Light Up Our Easter Vigil

This year's Easter Vigil was a powerful celebration of new life in Christ, as 25 new Catholics were baptised. Among them, 18 completed our OCIC and OCIA programmes, marking the culmination of months of formation, prayer, and discernment.

Surrounded by the warmth of candlelight and the joy of the resurrection, the newly baptised received the sacraments of

initiation and were joyfully welcomed into the Church. Each story is unique, yet all were drawn by the same call—to follow Christ and live as His disciples.

### Youth Ministry: *Hope Alive in the Hearts of Young People*

As the Church celebrates the Jubilee Year of Hope, Stella Maris Parish youth ministry is leaning deeply into the call to renew our faith and rekindle hope among our young people.

In a world often marked by uncertainty, fear, and division, our young people are called to rise up as witnesses of God's love, bringing light to their schools, families, and communities. At the heart of our mission this year is a powerful truth: God loves His young people with an everlasting, personal, and purposeful love. Through every youth gathering, we are reminding them of this love — a love that calls, heals, and sends. Rooted in the sacraments and the life of the Church, we are helping young people identify the unique gifts God has planted in them and the fruits of the Holy Spirit growing within their hearts.



## From Hurunui Parish of the Good Shepherd



### Patronal Mass at Amberley

On 11 May, the Amberley church was overflowing with extra chairs outside for a combined parish Mass at 10.30, as we celebrated the patronal feast for the Hurunui: the Good Shepherd. Over 300 people came from Hanmer, Cheviot, Culverden, Hawarden, and Christchurch to be with us. The Mass was celebrated by Fr Rex Ramos, our Hurunui parish

priest, accompanied by a Filipino choir and Robert Loretz, who wrote a special Good Shepherd hymn for the occasion, 'Good Shepherd, Lead us Home'. This was the first Mass where we were able to pray for our new pope, Leo XIV. Fr Ramos preached on the ways we are "sheep" and how we can follow the Shepherd, Jesus, who laid down his life for his sheep (Jn 10:1-10). After Mass, we moved to the hall and into the grounds outside







# The Holy Spirit is with us

by Anne Hooper

The Holy Spirit Community in Tinwald held its last regular Sunday Mass on Sunday 29 April. The Tinwald parish (now a community of St Augustine of Canterbury, Mid-Canterbury), has been operating since 1966. It is with great sadness that, due to the Mid Canterbury Parish now having but one priest, we are no longer able to offer a Sunday Mass. Tinwald's Holy Spirit Community is a strong, vibrant, friendly, welcoming community of the Mid Canterbury Parish. Our morning tea after Mass is well received by the congregation. As Tinwald is a growing area, we intend on keeping our community connected.

Fr Lito celebrated the final, regular Sunday Mass with a congregation of 145 in attendance. Our organists (one of whom has a 55 year connection) and the Participants were thanked for their dedication and support over the years. We are grateful for the love given to our community and its church during this time and know we will still be part of the wider Mid Canterbury Catholic family.

From leadership to compassion, from creativity to bold faith, every young person has something vital to offer. This year, our programmes are helping our young people discover who they are in Christ, recognise the fruits of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and discern how to share their gifts with the world.

Hope Is Alive — and It's Contagious. We are already starting to see hearts opening, prayers deepening, and joy multiplying. When young people know they are loved by God and filled with His Spirit, they become unstoppable messengers of hope. This generation is ready to carry the flame of hope into the world. Come, Holy Spirit — fill the hearts of Your young people. Enkindle in them the fire of Your love and send them out to set the world ablaze with hope.



for the parish feast, which was a potluck lunch along with some beautiful Filipino food, accompanied by light entertainment to serenade us. We were fortunate with the weather, so we could all enjoy the meal outside on the grass.

## Good Shepherd Parish Prayer for the Hurunui

Lord Jesus, you are the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep; who leads, guides, protects, feeds and saves us. Without you we are lost.

As Patron of the Hurunui Parish, we entrust ourselves to you once again. Grant us courage and stillness of heart, to hear your voice above the clamour of the world and live by your word.

Guide those who stray back to the safety of your fold, to be fed once more at your table.

Lead us all to the joy and happiness of your kingdom, to be with you for eternity.

You who live and reign for ever and ever.

Amen.

## St Brigid's Loburn To Celebrate 150th Anniversary



Bishop Michael will offer Mass to mark this significant milestone at 2.00pm on Sunday 9 November, at St Brigid's Church, 232 Loburn White Rock Road. Michael Brown is the coordinator for St Brigid's Church and is adding a further chapter to and republishing Michael Hanrahan's book, "Brigid's Church", first published in 2000. Should you have any historic photographs or written material which would assist in compiling this chapter, please contact him at [mandmbrown.nz@gmail.com](mailto:mandmbrown.nz@gmail.com).



*Bishop Ashby celebrating the 100th anniversary in 1975*



## A Special Award in Rakaia *Given by Pope Francis*

At the evening Mass in St Ita's Church, Rakaia, on Sunday 25 May, Mrs Sylvia Mellish was presented with a Papal Award from Pope Francis. The Benemerenti Medal for 'well deserved' exceptional service to the Catholic Church was presented to her by Fr Lito Quinones, Parish Priest of St Augustine, Mid Canterbury.

Mrs Mellish was born and bred in Dunedin where, at 14 years of age, she became an organist at St Patrick's Basilica, South Dunedin. For more than 50 years, she has been very involved in music: playing, teaching, singing, and directing choirs, preparing liturgies for Sunday Masses, special occasions, weddings, and funerals. She was a member of the Pastoral Parish Councils of Ashburton and Rakaia for many years. As an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion,

(which she describes as a huge privilege), she has taken Communion to the sick and dying over many years.

Sylvia Mellish has been involved in education as a teacher and principal for 60 years. She was the first lay teacher at St Ita's School in Rakaia and became Principal of the School on its amalgamation in the early 1980s. She also produced a book on the history of the school and the church. Mrs Mellish retired (for the third time) from teaching only last year, when she moved to Christchurch. She is now a member of the Holy Family Parish, Christchurch West, from where she continues her ministry to the sick.

Mrs Mellish is currently the National President of the Catholic Women's League, Aotearoa New Zealand. She has been a member of the League for 54



*Sylvia Mellish with her Papal Award from Pope Francis*

years, receiving a life membership from Rakaia on the same day as her Papal award. Sylvia was humbled and delighted to receive her Medal in the presence of her family and Parish Community. (The award was dated 'Aprilis XIX', two days before the death of Pope Francis RIP)

## Faithful Christchurch Layman Posthumously honoured with the Benemerenti Medal



In May, Bishop Michael celebrated a Mass in St Mary's Pro-Cathedral in memory of the late Michael McEvedy.

Mr McEvedy was posthumously honoured with the Benemerenti Medal — a Papal award given to members of the clergy and laity for outstanding service to the Catholic Church. His daughters, Alex Rutherford and Catherine McEvedy, received the medal on his behalf, in recognition of his service

and commitment to and support of the Church and the wider community.

Michael McEvedy has always been a strong supporter of the Church and was an active member of his Leeston parish, serving as Chair of the parish council and financial administrator. His involvement has been wide-ranging and includes overseeing the amalgamation of Sacred Heart Girls College with Xavier Boys College to form Catholic Cathedral College. He was involved with administrative bodies at a diocesan level. He supported the establishment of the Catholic Business Network and generously donated to various ecclesial and civic projects. He was also involved in a variety of civic bodies, and was Mayor of Selwyn from 1995 to 2007. May his good works go before him and may he rest in peace.



*Bishop Michael, Alex Rutherford, Catherine McEvedy, Fr Denis Nolan*



# Planning Ahead: The Quiet Gift of Saving for Your Funeral

by Liza Sparrow, CDF Marketing & Business Development Manager

No one wants to think about losing a loved one – a parent, a spouse, or a close friend. It's tempting to avoid difficult conversations about wills, bank accounts, or funeral arrangements. But avoiding these conversations doesn't delay the inevitable – it only makes things harder when the time comes.

Melanie Perry, an Account Administrator with the Catholic Development Fund (CDF), has spent two decades helping families prepare for the future. She believes that planning ahead, particularly saving for your own funeral, is an act of compassion.

"While talking about death can feel uncomfortable, planning ahead, especially

saving for one's funeral, is one of the kindest things a person can do for their family," Melanie says. "People are often afraid that talking about it might be upsetting for their loved ones, but in fact, it's a final gift of care to their children."

A CDF Funeral Savings Account provides more than peace of mind. It offers a practical financial advantage: up to \$10,000 set aside specifically for funeral costs is exempt from asset testing when applying for the Residential Care Subsidy. This helps protect your family's financial security during an already difficult time.

Funerals are a significant moment in the Catholic journey – the final sacrament deserving of dignity and preparation.



Having these arrangements thoughtfully planned and funded relieves emotional and financial stress for grieving family members.

"In the end, saving for your funeral isn't just about practicality," Melanie adds. "It's a quiet, generous act that helps bring peace and ease stress."

For more information or to speak with someone about setting up a CDF Funeral Savings Account, Melanie is available for a confidential conversation by calling 0800 40 FUND (0800 403 863).

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### MONDAYS

9.00am Board Games  
10.00am Morning Tea  
10.30am Arts and Crafts  
12.00noon BYO Lunch / Socialise  
12.45pm Exercise Class  
1.30pm Variety Hour  
2.30pm Afternoon Tea

### THURSDAYS

9.00am Board Games  
9.30am Mass  
10.00am Morning Tea  
10.30am Board Games  
12.00noon BYO Lunch / Socialise  
12.30pm Housie (numbers limited)  
2.15pm Afternoon Tea  
3.00pm Exercise Class

*Gold coin donation for non-residents*

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# Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things

*How Time, Talent, and Treasure Can Create Local Impact*

by Liza Sparrow, CDF Marketing & Business Development Manager

*“The opportunity to step away from daily business and be energised by great leaders and thinkers—especially those who bring a faith lens to their work—is what the Catholic Business Network is all about.”*

Alex Bailey, Chief Operating Officer,  
Catholic Diocese of Christchurch

The Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon is more than just a race—it's a powerful tribute to resilience, unity, and the enduring human spirit. Known as “*The Run to Remember*”, this annual event honours the 168 lives lost in the 1995 bombing and celebrates a community that chose hope over despair.

Launched in 2001 by Oklahoma City businessmen Thomas Hill, Chet Collier, and David Hill, the marathon has grown into a world-class, community-led event. What began as a solemn act of remembrance has become a beacon of purpose, healing, and action. It's a reminder that **extraordinary things happen when ordinary people respond to a need**—with their time, their talent, and, when needed, their treasure.

At the recent Catholic Business Network (CBN) luncheon, keynote speaker Peter de Keratry challenged the 135 guests present to consider their own role in creating change within the communities they serve. “**Whose job is it to help?**” he asked.

The answer, he suggested, lies not in waiting for others—but in realising that we are the ones we've been waiting for. Like the Oklahoma City founders, we are called to bring full hearts and purposeful action to the places and people that need us most.



Peter reminded us that the desire to give is instinctive—embedded in who we are. Reflecting on the Christchurch Diocese's upcoming fundraising campaigns, he proposed that sometimes, a donor's need to give is greater than an organisation's need to receive. And giving isn't limited to money. Time, skills, and energy are often just as valuable—and sometimes even more impactful.



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cbn.nz





*“many left inspired to think not just about the big, public moments of generosity, but the quiet, daily choices to give, lead, and love”*

The story behind the marathon is a powerful example of what happens when people listen to that inner call—not for recognition, but to uplift others. It’s a call we all receive, in different ways.

So how do we respond?

Peter believes we are all leaders—in our homes, our workplaces, and our communities. Each of us carries unique gifts that can be used to serve others. Whether it’s offering your time to a cause, sharing your professional expertise, or supporting a local initiative financially, every act counts. Giving shouldn’t be what

we do after life’s demands are met—it should be part of how we live.

He closed with a challenge rooted in faith:

**“What are our talents? What can we accomplish? Can we return what God has given us?”**

As guests reflected on the powerful example of the marathon, many left inspired to think not just about the big, public moments of generosity, but the quiet, daily choices to give, lead, and love.

Thanks to Rawlinsons, our sponsor for this event.

### About the Speaker

Peter de Keratry is a globally respected leader in Catholic fundraising and development. With a distinguished career leading major capital campaigns and stewardship initiatives across the United States and Australia, he currently serves as Chief Development Officer for the Diocese of Arlington, Virginia. Peter was in Christchurch during Lent to begin planning with Bishop Michael for the campaign to raise funds to build the new Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament.

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# Happy Birthday, Rima!

*Your faith and generosity are a blessing to our community*

by Liza Sparrow, CDF Marketing & Business Development Manager



The Catholic Development Fund (CDF) is honoured to acknowledge the remarkable 107th birthday of Rima Arney (seen here on her 106th birthday), a cherished and loyal CDF client born on 15 May 1918.

Rima Arney opened her CDF savings and funeral accounts in 1997 – thirty years after the Fund's establishment in 1967. For nearly three decades, **her quiet generosity and steadfast commitment to the Church have helped enable countless good works** across the Diocese of Christchurch. Through her investment with the CDF, school classroom developments have been completed, outreach programmes have flourished, and care for the vulnerable has been strengthened.



same time. Bishop Barry would often ask how she was. One Monday, she called a little distressed after getting lost on the way to Sunday evening Mass. I told the Bishop, and he replied, 'Tell her from me she's probably got a few in the bank – but make sure she keeps saying her prayers!' She loved that!

She doesn't quite believe her age – she'll say, 'I'm getting a bit old,' and I'll reply, 'No, Mum, you are old!' and get a cheeky smack on the hand. She's been so lucky with her health ... and still enjoys a daily coffee. It's all quite remarkable, I don't know the secret to her longevity."

*“her quiet generosity and steadfast commitment to the Church have helped enable countless good works”*

Her daughter Angela Woolstencroft, who worked as Bishop Barry Jones' personal assistant before the Canterbury earthquakes, reflects on Rima's enduring love for the Church:

*“She was very upset when she could no longer attend Mass at her parish, but she's so grateful to now receive Holy Communion weekly. While I was still working, Mum rang me every day at the*

Rima's humour, resilience, and unwavering faith continue to inspire everyone who knows her.

From all of us at the Catholic Development Fund: Happy 107th Birthday, Rima.

Your faith and generosity are a blessing to our Catholic community. Thank you for the difference you've made!

## Golden CATHOLICS Supporting Catholics in Our Parishes

Golden Catholics is a treasured group within the Catholic Diocese of Christchurch, bringing together senior and retired members for fellowship, food, and inspiring talks. To keep these meaningful gatherings thriving, we're looking for volunteers from parishes and schools to help host events—with guidance and support from the Catholic Development Fund team.



**Find out more, or offer to help:** Please contact Liza Sparrow for an informal chat: [lsparrow@cdoc.nz](mailto:lsparrow@cdoc.nz) | 0800 403 883  
**Register to attend Golden Catholics in the Spring:** 11.00am, 24 September | Marian College, Chch | [events@cdoc.nz](mailto:events@cdoc.nz)

## Inform

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The Editor, PO Box 4544, Chch 8140 **E** [inform@cdoc.nz](mailto:inform@cdoc.nz) **P** 03 366 9869

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