



Inform

A PUBLICATION OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOP OF CHRISTCHURCH

ISSUE 146 SPRING 2025



*700 gather to hear of
Cardinal Dew's Night at the Conclave*

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Christchurch youth celebrate
Jubilee Youth Festival

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Fr Michael Pui turns 25!

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From Our Bishop



Called to be people of Hope

In the last few days, I had an unusual encounter with a young father of four who radiated hope. He was smiling, joy-filled, and vibrantly alive. As we spoke, he said something I had not heard in a long time: "I have so much hope for our future. It is a wonderful time to be alive." As a father of four, he was celebrating the gift of bringing new life into the world.

Meeting young people, especially young men, who are brimming over with hope is rare for me. Honestly, when I read the news or scroll through social media, or when I speak with many people about the state of our world and their own lives, I am often met with a sense of despair and hopelessness. Many believe our world is beyond hope. Sometimes, I am tempted to give in to this sense as well. However this is not the Catholic way. We are a people of hope, infused with the virtue of hope at our baptism. We have been promised by God that there is more for us, a unique plan for our happiness here on earth and eternal life with Him in heaven.

In this Jubilee Year of Hope, we are challenged and reminded to re-examine our hearts, our attitudes, and our conversations. Are we living out the virtue of hope? Are you a bearer of hope? Are we practicing the virtue of hope in our lives?

More than Optimism

The young father I met was neither naïve nor blind to life's struggles. As a teenager, he felt a deep sense of despair and emptiness. He played in a heavy metal band, rebelling against society and his family. He felt unloved and hopeless, often wondering what life was truly about. During this time, he encountered a Catholic who was different, someone who

exuded joy and hope, whom he described as a light entering his darkness. He knew he wanted what this person had. Soon after, he heard a song that proclaimed, "Jesus has more for you than you could ever imagine." He struggled to believe these words, but he made the choice to place his hope in Jesus.

After fifteen years of living out this commitment, including five years in the seminary, ultimately leaving, marrying and having children, he discovered that Jesus truly was faithful. By trusting Him, Jesus provided more than he could have imagined. This hope did not always arrive as he expected; rather, it appeared as unexpected gifts along his journey.

Hope Has a Name

Discussing this call to hope with the young father, we recognised that the true secret to hope is not through a theory or even our own efforts, it is through a person. Jesus is our hope. At our baptism, we were infused with Him, He promises to be with us always and to give us the hope our hearts desire. In moments of fear and uncertainty, the real decision is this: whose voice will I listen to? The voice of despair that shouts loudly, or the quiet voice of Christ that whispers, "I am with you, trust me."

Hope: A marathon, not a sprint

Most of us do not find that hope comes easily. Too often, we slip into thought patterns and conversations that foster despair. Worries about our past and fears for the future can easily overwhelm us. However, our faith promises and calls us to more. At our baptism, we received the supernatural virtues designed to sustain us throughout life: faith, hope, and love. Hope, in particular, is much more than mere optimism or positive thinking. It is a supernatural virtue, orienting us to look to Jesus to fulfil our deepest desires for love, peace, forgiveness, and eternal life.

"I have so much hope for our future. It is a wonderful time to be alive."



Cardinal John Dew, Hilary Muir and Bishop Michael at A Night at the Conclave



Bishop Michael giving his keynote talk at the Youth and Young Adults Jubilee Festival

Four Dimensions of Hope

- **Trusting God as our foundation:** Hope anchors us in God as our ultimate goal. Even in our darkest, most hopeless times, He promises never to abandon us. He gives us the grace to persevere through all trials with trust.
- **Looking beyond present suffering:** Hope enables us to see beyond our current struggles and to trust that God is working for our good, even when we cannot see the outcome.
- **Inspiring others:** When we choose hope, we become beacons of light for those around us. Our hope can inspire, uplift, and encourage others who are wrestling with despair.
- **Active participation:** Hope calls us not only to wait but to act — to participate in God's plan, to pray, to serve, and to love courageously, knowing that our efforts are never in vain.

The Jubilee of hope asks us: are we truly living as people of hope? Do our words, actions and choices reflect the supernatural gift we have received? I pray for you now, that you will open yourself anew to hope, despite what is going on around you or even within you. Our world, your family and friends are longing for meaning, comfort, and joy. By allowing the virtue of hope to live in you, you will draw others into the light and love that only Christ can give, trusting that He indeed has more for us — far more than we could ever imagine.

Celebrations of Hope in this Year of Jubilee

A Night at the Conclave

It was a true blessing to gather with 700 people in the Christchurch Town Hall, recollecting the grace and the beauty of the conclave. The conclave and the election of Pope Leo filled us with hope.

Diocesan Prayer Retreat

My thanks to the people of South Canterbury for hosting our diocesan prayer retreat. It was truly hope-filled to join a church full of people from around the diocese, all celebrating beauty and intimacy with God.

Eucharistic Procession

What a blessing it was to share our faith and love for the Eucharist on the streets of Christchurch. May this act of worship and witness bring grace to our city.

Jubilee Youth Gatherings

In the past few months, we have held two diocesan youth events. Young people from throughout our diocese have once again reminded us what a joy it is to know and follow Jesus. We are so grateful to all who made these gatherings possible.

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael Gielen".

+ Michael Gielen
Bishop of Christchurch



Bishop Michael preaching at the opening Mass of the Diocesan Prayer Conference

Diocesan Jubilee Prayer Conference by Matt O'Connell

On a cold but beautiful early August Saturday morning, 187 people gathered in Temuka for the second annual Diocesan Prayer Conference.

Using the theme of the Jubilee Year, 'pilgrims of hope', people travelled from around the diocese on pilgrimage to one of the Jubilee Sacred Sites, the St Mary MacKillop Chapel.

From 8am, people started gathering to register and then went to the beautifully restored St Joseph's Church for Reconciliation and Adoration.

The conference began at 9.15am with Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael. A local parish choir led the music, and the first reading of the Mass of the Day was, providentially, from the book of Leviticus, announcing a Jubilee Year. Following a delicious morning tea, the conference opened with a keynote address from Fr Chris Eaton MGL, who spoke of the importance of prayer for becoming people of hope.

The middle part of the conference saw participants choosing optional workshops

on prayer: the Psalms, the Bible, Mass, the Holy Spirit, and much more.

During lunchtime, people had the opportunity to chat, visit the St Mary MacKillop chapel for Eucharistic adoration, go to confession, and pray the rosary. After a second round of workshops and afternoon tea, Bishop Michael gave the second keynote address on becoming witnesses of hope. This was a very powerful presentation, touching the hearts of many in attendance.

The conference ended with a beautiful time of prayer and adoration in the church. Many commented on how moved they were by having the opportunity to go on pilgrimage together.

On behalf of the team, I would like to thank the parish of Opihi for their welcome and support, and also St Joseph's School, Temuka, for their support and use of their facilities.

ISSUE 146 SPRING 2025



Nga mihi nui from the editorial desk

Welcome to Inform Issue 146, our Spring edition. This issue covers Catholic life in the Christchurch diocese from June through to the end of August.

Along with our regular pages, we cover a number of great events in the diocese and offer thought provoking articles for your consideration. "A Night at the Conclave" brings us closer to the action in Rome, with the election of our new Holy Father. Our Jubilee Youth Festival is our centre feature and shows the communion between our Catholic youth here and those gathering with Pope Leo for World Youth Day in Rome. We mark a key milestone for our diocesan priest, Fr Michael Pui, who is currently directly serving the Vatican.

After you have read this edition of Inform, please pass it on to others who may connect with a word or story from within its covers. Share the link to the latest Inform cdoc.nz/inform. My spirit is always lifted by reading about the depth of our faith and of the many good things, so many Catholics are doing for others in the Christchurch diocese.

In Christ

Ken Joblin, Editor



Conference participants praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament in St Joseph's Church



More than 230 parishioners from Holy Family Parish travelled on pilgrimage to Temuka this month – pictured outside the beautifully restored St Joseph's Church, Temuka. What a grace filled day!

Photo Credit:
Peter Fleming



Taking Jesus into the City

Corpus Christi Eucharistic Procession

In late June, the feast of Corpus Christi gathered over 400 people in St Mary's Pro-Cathedral for the first Diocesan Holy Hour and Eucharistic Procession for some time. After exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Bishop Michael led a solemn procession on a 1km walk through the city streets, taking the Blessed Sacrament to the people of Christchurch. Upon returning, the gathering concluded with Benediction. It was a beautiful, moving, and solemn occasion, marking one of the most important feasts in the Church.

This feast arose in thirteenth century Belgium and was a response to debates about the real presence and as a result of an upsurge in eucharistic devotion. Its extension to the entire Western Church was first decreed by Pope Urban IV in 1264. The feast celebrates the mystery of the nourishing and enduring presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.

It is hoped that this procession, holy hour and benediction will now become an annual event on the Diocesan Calendar.



Photo Credit:
Sarah Blair Photographer

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A Night at the Conclave Captivates Christchurch Audience

In early August, more than 700 guests filled the James Hay Theatre at the Christchurch Town Hall, for 'A Night at the Conclave', an evening of rare insight and reflection with Cardinal John Dew. In a rich dialogue, Catholic broadcaster Hilary Muir encouraged Cardinal Dew to share his remarkable experiences inside the Papal Conclave which elected Pope Leo XIV and of the time following the death of Pope Francis.

Hilary Muir guided the discussion with curiosity and humour, posing questions many in the audience had long wondered including how the real process is compared with the popular fictional depictions seen in films. "Yes, I have seen the movie," Cardinal Dew admitted with a smile.

Cardinal Dew spoke with warmth and candour about the human moments, the spiritual atmosphere, and the unity of purpose among those present. This interview captured both the gravity of the conclave and the warmth of the man recounting it.

Danica Berania is a Year 12 student from Catholic Cathedral College and attended this event. "It was such an honour to have a glimpse behind the sacred ritual in the Catholic Church—the Conclave. I would like to extend appreciation and gratitude on behalf of everyone who went to watch it. We were able to listen live to the Cardinal's first public interview after returning from the Conclave and his experience was deeply inspiring and informative. Hilary Muir interviewed the Cardinal skilfully and through her gentle but pointed questions, Cardinal Dew was able to share what he experienced and felt during the process, not just facts. The questions of the wider community were answered. This event made a lasting impression for all those who attended. What struck me the most in the interview with Cardinal Dew was his description of the responsibility of the sacred process, as the decision was in their hands. I remembered him saying that when he entered the Sistine Chapel, the place was hushed as everyone was praying. His words reminded me of the importance of prayer in asking the Lord to guide them and that leadership in faith is not about authority - it is about service to and trust in the Lord."



"It was such an honour to have a glimpse behind the sacred ritual...his experience was deeply inspiring and informative...This event made a lasting impression for all those who attended."

Danica Berania, Year 12 student from Catholic Cathedral College

The day before the Night at the Conclave event, Cardinal Dew was hosted by St Francis of Assisi school in Mairehau, where 400 year 7 and 8 students from several of our schools gathered to hear a similar message. This special opportunity was appreciated by the students who also enjoyed asking questions to find out more about the Conclave and Cardinal Dew himself; "What made you decide to become a priest?" and "Do you travel a lot?"

Cardinal Dew is only the third New Zealand Cardinal in history to take part in this centuries-old and very careful process. His presentation to both events was informative and inspiring, leaving people with a deeper understanding of the conclave and a renewed appreciation for the faith, service, and humanity underpinning the election of a Pope.



"Sing a New Song Unto the Lord"

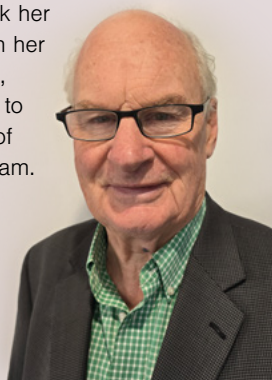
Jubilate Raises Voices Heavenward

by Ken Joblin, Jubilate Director

New Chaplaincy Appointment

by Mike Stopforth
Director, Bishop's Pastoral Office

On behalf of Bishop Michael, I am pleased to announce that John Dooley has been appointed as hospital chaplain to Christchurch Hospital and Christchurch Women's Hospital. John has been a Volunteer Chaplaincy Assistant for the past eight years, so brings this particular experience as well as his life experience to the role. He is passionate about this ministry and began in this role in early August. Angela McCormick has recently retired after ten years of faithful service in this ministry. We thank her for her work, wish her well for the future, and look forward to John being part of the chaplaincy team.



Jubilate is a series of sacred music concerts which take place around the diocese each year, featuring primary and secondary school singers along with choirs from our parishes. Indeed, this year we celebrate the tenth year of Jubilate and four of the seven concerts have now taken place.

Each concert takes around an hour and is held in the evenings to allow for parishioners, family, and friends to join us. Feature items are interspersed with congregational singing. The use of good Catholic hymns allow choirs to move into position, while everyone remains involved in strong core singing. The repertoire is sent out to schools and prepared in advance of each concert.

We began in May with Jubilate for Christchurch South and West in a packed

Pro-Cathedral. The richness of our faith was celebrated in sacred music: from Gregorian Chant to modern song in Latin, English, Maori, Samoan, Tongan, and Filipino. Our Dio Schola offered beautiful six and seven part motets from the Church's treasury of sacred music. For the first time, we featured a beautifully disciplined Tongan choir, based in Our Lady Queen of Peace parish in Christchurch South. Our schools are growing in confidence and are contributing a variety of feature items.

A feature of this year has been the bringing together of a very good number of smaller schools from outside Christchurch. Mid Canterbury hosted Jubilate for the second time in Ashburton with its schools and



Filipino Choir

Jubilate photography credit:
Rachel van der Plas

Combined primary schools choir
joined together in song at
St Mary's Pro-Cathedral





(left) Combined Mid Canterbury primary school choir at the Church of the Holy Name in Ashburton;

(above) Our Lady of Victories Choir at St Mary's Pro-Cathedral

Samoan and Filipino adult choirs forming a dynamic hour of song. This year saw a comprehensive uptake of Jubilate in South Canterbury with a beautiful hour in Timaru's Sacred Heart Basilica. They mustered around 100 singers in the choir, to say nothing of a comfortably full church.

Bridget Sullivan leads the choir from St Joseph's School, Timaru North. "We really enjoyed being part of Jubilate, and it was such a special experience for our students. They loved the opportunity to sing alongside others and be part of such a joyful celebration", she observed. Carrie Cooper directs the Holy Family Parish Choir in Timaru. "The evening gives our wee Parish choir a concert to work towards and to look

forward to. We are already brainstorming what we could learn for next year!"

The second Jubilate in Christchurch featured singers from the Cathedral and Waimakariri parishes. The Cathedral Samoan Choir offered a complex contemporary composition and was outstanding, and Schola Loretz, a dozen singers mostly drawn from the Loretz family of the Beatitudes Community, offered a naturally blended sound.

Numbers are difficult to determine, but thus far, we believe we have had around 550 choral singers and some very generous and actively participating audiences. We are looking forward to the next three concerts in this tenth year celebration.



St Francis of Assisi School



St Joseph's School, Rangiora

Paddy Beban

RIP by Bishop Michael Gielen

I would like to record our sadness at the death of Paddy Beban, after a long illness.

Paddy was a much loved former Financial Administrator for the Christchurch Diocese, serving both Bishops John Cunneen and Barry Jones. Among his work, he supported Bishop Jones in all that was needed during and after the Canterbury earthquakes. He was both a dedicated and meticulous manager. On a visit to Paddy in the last few months, he spoke very highly to me of his time serving the diocese and recalled with affection, his relationship with Bishop Jones.

His Vigil and Requiem Mass took place in St Mary's Pro-Cathedral on Tuesday 1 July and Wednesday 2 July.

We pray for his family and in thanksgiving for his years of service to the Catholic community and beyond. May his good deeds go before him and may he rest in peace.



St Bede's College Chapel



Te Raekura Redcliffs School



Spark Square



Paragon Apartments



Ballantynes Redevelopment



Christ Church Cathedral Reinstatement

Building Christchurch Landmarks
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Catholic Social Services staff ready to serve the community at their Soup Kitchen in Linwood Park

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WE WELCOME YOU TO JOIN US

Catholic Social Services and the Call to Serve

Editor's note:

Luis Arevalo is our Catholic Social Services (CSS) Manager. He and his dedicated team work quietly away in meeting the needs of some of the most vulnerable people in Christchurch and in the wider diocese. I recently met with Luis to ask him about the work CSS is currently doing.

“What are the principles underpinning your work?”

“Perhaps I should start by saying that Catholic Social Teaching offers us a different path: where human dignity, solidarity, and the preferential love for the poor are key. For over six decades now, CSS has lived these principles in the heart of Christchurch. In more recent years, we've turned our gaze to the wider diocese, from Waimate in the south to Cheviot in the north.”

“Tell us about one of your more recent initiatives.”

“We more recently opened our doors for free counselling. This is the only service of its kind in Christchurch. In doing so, we wanted to clearly signal that every person, regardless of their ability to pay, deserves to be heard, healed, and treated with dignity. This year alone, 645 new clients walked through our doors, each carrying burdens too heavy to bear alone.”

“What sort of demand do you have for this service?”

“Our 8-10 week waitlist is testament to the need for healing in our community. We make sure people are welcomed, not as a case number or recipient of charity, but as someone deserving of our very best.

Through our Child and Family Psychology and Learning Assessment services, we've watched children who were once labelled as “problems”, discover they are uniquely made with their own gifts. We are running a pilot programme in four state schools. These are Shirley Primary, Linwood Avenue Primary, Rawhiti School, and Gilberthorpe. This programme is making sure children are receiving support, when their families might never have afforded it.”

“What are some of your team's more profound experiences in this work?”

“Some of our most profound moments happen not in offices or assessment rooms, but in parks across Christchurch, during the winter months. Our soup kitchens were born from the wisdom of a homeless client, who suggested we “feed the people directly from the nearest park.” Sometimes the best solutions come from those who understand need the most.



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CDF SAVINGS ACCOUNT

cdf.org.nz



Meet the CSS Team

Our team of practitioners and administrators are highly experienced, passionate and committed about providing social services to our community. Our team consists of professional counsellors, psychologists and administrators and you can be assured of a safe and caring environment with complete confidentiality.



Catholic Social Services
Manager

Luis Arevalo



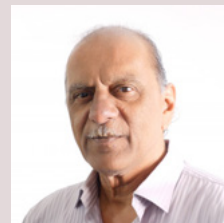
Clinical Leader &
Group Facilitator

Ingrid Vargas



Receptionist/
Administrator

Robyn Glubb



Counsellor &
Group Facilitator

Melwyn Rodricks



Counsellor &
Group Facilitator

Rebecca Pettitt



Child and Family
Psychologist

Rebecca Adams



Child and Family
Psychologist

Jillisa Wainwright



Educational
Psychologist

Hannah Miller

We work with St Vincent de Paul. In doing so, we don't just distribute food, we seek to restore dignity. When volunteers hand out winter clothes and blankets alongside warm meals, they are saying "I identify with your suffering."

We also offer free haircuts every second Tuesday. This initiative came again from someone who couldn't afford a haircut for several years.

Our CREAM programme (Conflict Resolution, Emotional Awareness and Anger Management) and Seasons for Growth courses recognise that healing isn't just individual, it ripples through families, communities, and generations.

Project Good Faith represents perhaps our most challenging and sacred work, walking alongside survivors of abuse, meeting them exactly where they are. It offers practical support like firewood and food vouchers, while honouring the deeper truth that healing happens in community."

"What are your CSS Team looking to do next?"

"We have not been able to offer our services to people on the West Coast of our diocese. As with every organisation committed to justice, we struggle from lack of funding."

As I listened to Luis speak with such passion about the work of CSS, the corporal works of mercy came to mind. Four of these are a clear summary of their work:

1. *Feed the hungry.*
2. *Give drink to the thirsty.*
3. *Clothe the naked.*
4. *Shelter the homeless.*

On behalf of our Inform readership, I pray that you and your team will receive every blessing as you go about this work.

For more about the work of CSS and how you might help support it, visit catholicsocialservices.nz

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Retreat participants gathered in the Marian College Chapel for a time of prayer

Men's Retreat participants challenged to *'put out into the deep'*

by Matt Malone and Mike Stopforth

On the last weekend in July, more than 90 men gathered at Marian College for the annual Diocesan Men's Retreat.

The retreat began with a relaxed social time, giving participants the chance to connect and get to know one another over a drink. The first session opened with a powerful testimony from Ramez Ailabouni, who offered a reflection on his life, vocation, and how God has been working in his life in recent years. Bishop Michael then gave the first keynote address, challenging us to "put out into the deep," placing our trust fully in our heavenly Father, so we may become confident and courageous men, husbands,

fathers, and grandfathers. The evening concluded with night prayer in the chapel, where the sound of over one hundred voices praying and singing to our Lord in unison created a deeply moving atmosphere.

Saturday morning began with adoration and benediction, followed by parish-based small group reflection time. After breakfast together, the men heard an inspiring testimony from Danny Nicholls, who spoke about living a life of humility and trust in God's providence. Bishop Michael then delivered his final keynote address, calling each man to place his life into the hands of Jesus and invite us to come forward in an act of surrender to God's will.

The retreat concluded with a beautiful Mass. Once again, the chapel was filled with the powerful voices of men singing together, a truly uplifting experience.

Feedback from participants has highlighted how much the retreat strengthened their faith, deepened their connections with one another, and renewed their sense of brotherhood in Christ. Many left encouraged and inspired, already looking forward to next year's retreat.



Men gathered for a focused small group discussion



Danny Nicholls sharing his testimony at the Men's Retreat



CWLANZ Biennial Conference, a Forum for Hope

by Sylvia Mellish - National President, CWLANZ

The Biennial National Conference of the Catholic Women's League Aotearoa New Zealand (CWLANZ) took place in Auckland in July, bringing together 80 members from throughout the country, along with four members from Australia. This year's theme, "Women of Hope," aligned with that of the Jubilee year.

Highlights included the traditional powhiri, led by Manuel Beazley, Vicar for New Zealand Māori. He recently represented New Zealand, along with Archbishop Paul Martin and Fr Denis Ngakura, at the Papal Synod in Rome. He discussed the Instrumentum Laboris working document for the Synod's Continental phase in Oceania, an event which included 355 participants. As an aside, when looking for some English speakers at lunch time, he shared a table with Cardinal Robert Prevost, now Pope Leo XIV.

Dr Rocio Figueroa, lecturer in Theology at Te Kupenga - Good Shepherd College, addressed the assembled members on the place of women in the Church. With experience in Peru, Italy, Mexico, and the Holy See, Dr Figueroa's dynamic presentation was very warmly received.



Christchurch attendees of the CWL National Conference

CWLANZ's Annual "At Home Appeal" this year is Women's Refuge New Zealand. Linda Thompson, CEO from Tamaki Makaurau Women's Refuge, described the organisation's work and thanked the Catholic Women's League for its support. Joan Lawn, National Mission Secretary, reported that an overwhelming \$148,000 had been raised for our Pacific Mission Communities.

At the Biennial General Meeting, held during the conference, Mrs Sylvia Mellish (Christchurch) was re-elected for another two-year term as National President. She

confirmed the appointments of National Secretary, Mary Slattery, Christchurch, and new National Treasurer, Roz Siveresen, Christchurch. She expressed grateful thanks to Colleen McKay, Christchurch, past National Treasurer who is retiring. Joan Lawn (Ashburton) was thanked for her outstanding service as Mission Secretary, and Lorraine MacMillan, Greymouth, was elected as the new National Mission Secretary.

A proposal from Christchurch Inner City Branch, 'to establish Youth Branches of the Catholic Women's League, with a focus on secondary schools and parish youth groups,' was met with enthusiasm. On the lighter side, most attendees enjoyed a bus tour of Auckland's North Shore and other attractions. The conference dinner, featuring Fr Chris Skinner SM as guest artist, was a delightful evening of food, song, and fellowship.

The next National Conference will be held in Christchurch in 2027.



The board of the Catholic Women's League Aotearoa New Zealand (CWLANZ)

Come and enjoy social interaction with other seniors...

Donation/Koha requested to help cover costs

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

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Season of Creation 2025:

Turn Debt Into Hope - Interconnected Celebrations in 2025

by Kathleen Rushton RSM on behalf of the Laudato Si' Action Group (Contact: kprushton@gmail.com)

The Season of Creation, which began on 1 September and ends on 4 October, the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, calls the worldwide Christian family to unite together ecumenically in prayer and action, to protect our common home and all creation. Our well-being is interlinked with the well-being of the earth.

The Celebration Guide 2025 calls us to unite around the theme "Peace with Creation" and the symbol "Garden of Peace", which are inspired by Isaiah 32:14-18. The prophet Isaiah pictured the desolated Creation without peace, because of the lack of justice and the broken relationship between God and humankind. Our hope is that Creation will find peace when justice is restored. Biblical hope is active and calls us to act, pray, change, and reconcile with Creation and the Creator in unity, metanoia (repentance), and solidarity.

The Guide links us with the 1700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed which we are celebrating this year. For centuries, Christians have responded to the Nicene call to live and witness to their common faith, in our troubled, unequal, and divided world. Our confession is creation-centred: "We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all things were made. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of Life" (Niceno-Constantinopolitan Version).

During this year, we are also celebrating the tenth anniversary of Laudato Si' (LS) which is a transformative call to us to "care for our common home." Pope Francis wrote: "The entire material universe speaks of God's love... The history of our friendship with God is always linked to particular places which take on an intensely personal meaning ..." (LS #84).

We Aotearoa New Zealanders are "linked to particular places" of the Pacific Ocean, which extends over one-third of the surface of the planet and is the largest geographical feature on earth.

Because of climate breakdown, commonly referred to as climate change, this sea of islands, the ancestral home of Pacific Islanders, is the most vulnerable region on earth.

Although our present government has cut its funding to the Pacific nations, it is continuing our country's leadership in this area by providing climate finance as grants rather than loans. Grants do not have to be repaid, allowing nations to recover from and adapt to climate change impacts, without the burden of repaying debt.

In this Jubilee Year, we Aotearoa New Zealanders of the Pacific can play a vital role in a global campaign for justice. Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand is linking with Caritas International by providing resources for the Season of Creation 2025: Turn Debt Into Hope.

The goal of this global campaign is to enable us to learn about the global debt crisis and its impact on our neighbours of the Pacific; to reflect on New Zealand's role and responsibilities; and to identify actions our communities can take to make a difference. Caritas offers us guidelines for possible actions such as meeting with your local MP, writing personal letters to MPs, organising a parish liturgy, connecting with your community and encouraging people to sign a global petition, and advocating for the forgiveness of debt and for system change to prevent the escalation of the debt crisis.

For further information and resources, see:

<https://www.caritas.org.nz/turndebtintohope>
<https://seasonofcreation.org/>



**PEACE
WITH CREATION**
SEASON OF CREATION 2025

**TURN
DEBT
INTO
Hope**

*"The entire material universe speaks of God's love...
The history of our friendship with God is always
linked to particular places which take on
an intensely personal meaning..."*



Vietnamese community gathered at Our Lady of Victories church in Sockburn

Christchurch Vietnamese Community Honours Our Lady

The Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is not only a day of special significance for the Church in New Zealand. Our country's national feast day is also shared by the Church in Vietnam. Tradition holds that Our Lady appeared in La Vang in Central Vietnam 227 years ago, to comfort Catholics facing persecution. The Vietnamese Catholic Bishops' Conference reports that this year, the annual pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of La Vang saw a grand procession of 90,000 Catholics from the Marian monument to the Basilica altar to mark their national feast day.

On Sunday 17 August, the Christchurch Catholic Vietnamese community came together at Our Lady of Victories church in Sockburn to pray for Vietnam and place it under the protection of the Assumption of Mother La Vang.

Trang Dinh, from the Christchurch Vietnamese Community, told Inform that "The whole Mass was beautifully celebrated by Fr Viet Tran, Fr Tang Phan, and Fr Simon Eccleton. We all dressed up in our formal dress code, especially the ones who carried Mother Mary. We processed around Our Lady of Victories church and each parishioner offered their flowers to Holy Mary afterward. Offertory was more special with candles, flower bouquets, fruit baskets... and after Mass, we got a chance to sit down together to share lunch with yummy foods, lots of laughs, and love."



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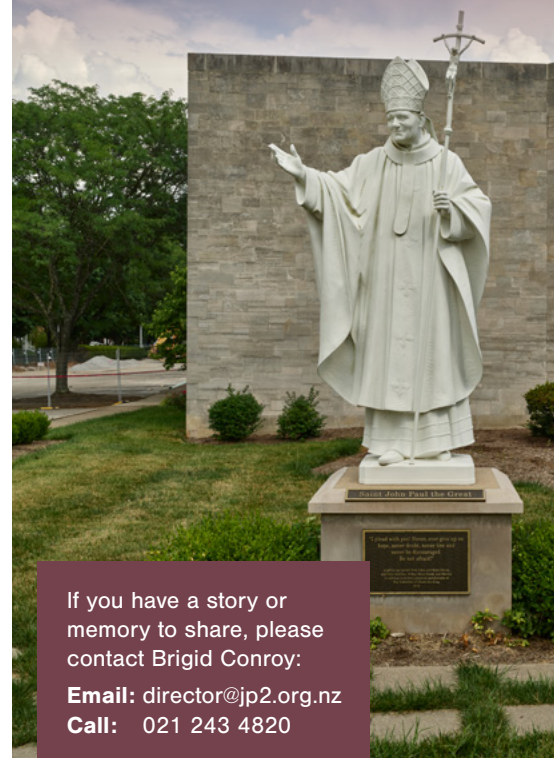
Thanksgiving Mass

Wednesday, 12 November, 5.30pm
Our Lady of Victories, Sockburn

Twenty years is quite the milestone, and a good reason to celebrate! The JPIL Centre team is planning a Thanksgiving Mass on Wednesday 12 November and would love to see you there. Whether you've been a donor, volunteer, employee, or friend, you've been part of the Centre's story and it wouldn't be here without your faithfulness and generosity.



Fr Viet Tran, Fr Tang Phan, and Fr Simon Eccleton leading the procession honouring Our Lady



If you have a story or memory to share, please contact Brigid Conroy:

Email: director@jp2.org.nz
Call: 021 243 4820

End of Life Choice Amendment Bill

by Ken Joblin, Inform Editor

“deeply consider the consequences of euthanasia and assisted suicide becoming a reality in New Zealand... I know it will have consequences for people like me if the referendum is passed”

In 2020, as the General Election approached, Inform Issue 124 comprehensively covered the dangers of a referendum in favour of the End of Life Choice Bill becoming law.

Inform readers will remember what a difficult year 2020 was. The opportunities to really understand what the proponents of the Bill wanted were limited, because of Covid and the anxiety surrounding it. Indeed, abortion had been further liberalised in March of that year, on the very eve of the first lockdown. 2020 then, was a very dangerous year for anyone who was vulnerable in New

Zealand society, particularly the unborn, those with disabilities, and anyone who believed that society was uncaring about them or not wishing to be troubled by their existence.

The opposition to this Bill brought Catholics alongside Christians of other traditions, people of faith and people of none, because all of us could see the degradation of human life that would result in legalising euthanasia.

I invited you to “deeply consider the consequences of euthanasia and assisted suicide becoming a reality in New Zealand. Along with many others, I have worked very hard against euthanasia because, as someone with a life-changing permanent disability, I know it will have consequences for people like me if the

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referendum is passed. Have no doubt that the legislation will inevitably then be broadened, with many consequences.”

I then pleaded with you to “say “no” to the End of Life Choice Act at the General Election in October.” I have no doubt many of you did. Certainly, our parishes were very active in informing our people of the impending danger and many of you were moved to write to the appropriate Select Committees to reject such a Bill. Sadly, New Zealanders voted 2 to 1 in favour of the Bill becoming law.

Like me, you may have become aware that, in more recent weeks, the original proponents of the End of Life Act wish to see it amended and its application broadened. This initiative is the Private Member’s Bill of ACT’s Todd Stephenson, MP. This Amendment Bill was recently re-drafted to include 25 recommendations from the Ministry of Health’s official three year review of the End of Life Choice Act. MP Todd Stephenson has written to all MPs, requesting that they support his Bill bypassing the ballot and being sent straight to a select committee; in doing so, he requires the support of 61 MPs. It is important for us to let Parliamentarians know that the End of Life Choice Act needs to be repealed, not amended.

We know that euthanasia is not health care, it promotes a culture of death. We know that our lives belong to our Creator and that we are privileged to be stewards of our life, of those who need our support and of God’s created world.



“We know that euthanasia is not health care, it promotes a culture of death”

What does the proposed Bill seek to achieve?

Five of its twenty-six objectives are:

- To remove the criteria that the patient is expected to die within six months, death would no longer be an issue.
- To permit a doctor to raise the issue of euthanasia with a patient as part of a person’s treatment and end of life care options.
- To set out the obligations of health practitioners not to allow conscientious objections to override their duty to act in accordance with the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumer’s Rights, and specific actions that health practitioners must take to facilitate continuity of care.
- To require hospices, retirement care facilities, rest homes and private hospitals, including religious facilities, to provide access to “assisted dying”.
- That Health NZ be required to undertake a number of functions to support “assisted dying as a health service”.

I support the efforts of any individuals and organisations requesting that our members of Parliament reject the Bill in its amended state and alert them to the consequences of further liberalisation. In whatever ways we can, we need to remind them that the first duty of those elected to our Parliament is to legislate to protect the right to life of every member of our community from conception to natural death.

Returning then to Inform Issue 124, Bishop Martin observed in his editorial that, euthanasia is “a serious undermining of the very principle of life as a gift from God. It isn’t our life to take away. Euthanasia is a harm for any society.” He went on to say, “We do not live in a world where everyone is free to decide what they like. We never have been and so it is important that we enshrine in law those things which protect us from harm and euthanasia is a harm for any society.”



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Jubilee Festival for Young People

The last Sunday in July saw more than 200 young people, leaders, and families from throughout the Diocese gather in St Mary's Pro-Cathedral and City Church for the Jubilee Festival for Young People. Such festivals are part of the universal Jubilee Year celebrations. The half-day festival offered a vibrant mix of sacraments, worship, sessions, and community time, all designed to inspire participants to live as "Pilgrims of Hope." Keynote addresses from Bishop Michael and visiting speaker, Fr Chris Eaton MGL, re-enforced this theme. A highlight of the afternoon was the time of Eucharistic Adoration and Reconciliation, with priests remarking on the depth and humility shown by penitents. The celebration was truly diocesan, with attendees from 12 parishes, including Timaru and the West Coast.





Powerful Prayer, Inspiring Talks, High Energy Activities

In late June, over 120 young people from throughout the Diocese gathered for Revolution 2025, the Catholic Youth Team's Junior Youth Camp. Over three days, young people experienced powerful prayer, inspiring talks, and high-energy activities. These days centred on this year's theme, "Sure and Steadfast Anchor" (Heb 6:19). Highlights included small group discussions, team challenges, and a moving evening of Eucharistic Adoration and Reconciliation.



Jesus and Me (JAM) 2025

by Sreeja Jose on behalf of Jesus Youth Christchurch

In July, 51 children aged 8 to 12 years gathered for JAM 2025, a joyful initiative of Jesus Youth (JY).

With the theme "Jesus, Our Forever Friend", the day was filled with fun, faith and friendship — all centred on the love of Christ. Through music, drama, games, and prayer, the children shared their joy and deep trust in Jesus. Their energy, creativity, and

faith reminded us that God is powerfully at work in young hearts. JAM 2025 was a beautiful reminder that when we come together in faith, Jesus is truly with us. It was a day full of laughter, grace, and the light of Christ.

Our heartfelt thanks to all the families who supported this special day - for preparing your children, being present, and cheering them on with love. Find our latest updates and events at <https://jesusyouth.org.nz>.

The Connection between Altar Serving and Vocations to the Priesthood

by Matt O'Connell - Vocations Coordinator, Christchurch Diocese

In late August, Pope Leo XIV addressed altar servers from France on their pilgrimage to Rome for the Year of Jubilee. He spoke to them of the importance of Mass ...

"And the Church, from generation to generation, carefully preserves the memory of the Lord's death and resurrection, of which she is a witness, as her most precious treasure. She preserves and transmits it by celebrating the Eucharist, which you have the joy and honour of serving. The Eucharist is the Treasure of the Church, the Treasure of Treasures. From the first day of its existence, and then for centuries, the Church has celebrated Mass, Sunday after Sunday, to remember what her Lord has done for her.

Dear Altar Servers, the celebration of Mass saves us today! It saves the world today! It is the most important event in the life of a Christian and in the life of the Church, because it is the rendezvous where God gives himself to us out of love, again and again. Christians do not go to Mass out of duty, but because they absolutely need it; they need the life of God, who gives himself without return!"

Pope Leo then goes on to encourage the young altar servers to "persevere faithfully." He notes that they are "doing (their) parish a great and generous service."

He reminds them that "when you serve, and when you approach the altar, always keep in mind the greatness and holiness of what is being celebrated. Mass is a time of celebration and joy. How, indeed,

can we not have joy in our hearts in the presence of Jesus? But Mass is also a serious, solemn moment, marked by gravity. May your attitude, your silence, the dignity of your service, the beauty of the liturgy, the order and majesty of the gestures, draw the faithful into the sacred grandeur of the Mystery."

Finally, Pope Leo encourages them to be open to a vocation to the Priesthood.

"I also hope that you will be attentive to the call that Jesus may address to you to follow him more closely in the priesthood. I address myself to your young, enthusiastic, and generous consciences, and I am going to tell you something that you need to hear, even if it may cause you some concern: the shortage of priests in France and throughout the world is



Bishop Michael and altar servers preparing for the Confirmation Mass at St Patrick's, Kaiapoi



Altar servers from St Peter Chanel Parish

a great misfortune! A misfortune for the Church. May you, little by little, Sunday after Sunday, discover the beauty, the happiness, and the necessity of such a vocation. What a wonderful life, that of the priest who, at the heart of each of his days, encounters Jesus in such an exceptional way and gives him to the world!"

Pope Leo makes a very important point — the link between altar serving and vocations to the priesthood. Statistics show that over 70% of newly ordained priests have, as young people, been altar servers in their parishes. Vocation directors note that serving at the altar can play an important role in a young man experiencing, up close, holy Mass and the role of the priest in offering the sacrifice of the Mass. It gives young men a deeper appreciation of the priesthood.

What might we do to encourage more young men to become altar servers and how might we support them and sow the seeds of a possible vocation?

Here are some ways.

1. Newly ordained priests speak of the encouragement of their families to serve at the altar. Families, if you have boys, encourage them to serve and speak to them about the possibility of a vocation.
2. Parishioners, please pray for your parish altar servers. Prayer is so important, because we get the vocations we pray for.
3. Gather your altar servers regularly for formation and training. Make sure you have an annual retreat. Consider having an Altar Server Appreciation Sunday in your parish.

4. Consider taking your altar servers on a small pilgrimage. Pope Leo spoke to the young altar servers about the importance of pilgrimage. He said "it helps us to "convert," that is, to turn to Him, to grow in faith and in His love, to become better disciples so that our lives may be beautiful and good under His gaze, with a view to eternal life."
5. Consider making an annual visit to the Pro-Cathedral to meet with our Bishop and other altar servers from around the Diocese. This annual gathering, to begin in 2026, will be a great opportunity for prayer, fraternity, and support.

Pope Leo concluded by thanking the altar servers for their faith. He said that it is a "great comfort, a sign of hope" and he asked them to "persevere courageously, and (to) bear witness to those around you of the pride and joy that serving at Mass brings you."



VOCATIONS

"We get the Vocations We Pray For"

In early July, a vocations retreat was held for men discerning the call to priesthood.

Young men gathered at Sr Eveleen House in Sumner for a weekend filled with talks, prayer, Mass, and fraternity.

Priests of the diocese came to share their experience and all the young men came away feeling refreshed and renewed in their discernment.

Please continue to pray for these young men and for vocations in general.

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



Editor's note:

On 21 July in the year 2000, Bishop John Cunneen ordained Fr Michael Pui to the priesthood. As he is now the National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies, Fr Pui does not currently have parishioners. He quietly decided not to celebrate this priestly milestone. However, due to the encouragement and organisational skill of a couple of ex-parishioners, a general invitation was sent out for a Mass of Thanksgiving to be held on 23 August 2025 at St Patrick's, Kaiapoi, a parish in which he served and where he currently resides.

Around 160 people attended this occasion and included Frs Thanh Do (Parish Priest of Waimakariri), Fr Tien Cao (Parish Priest of Mackenzie) and Fr Denis Nolan (now in retirement). A shared lunch ensued on this beautiful day and included a Powerpoint presentation and speeches. Fr Pui's 'second homily' for the day! We wish him *Ad Multos Annos!* from the Christchurch Diocese.

As we are covering this milestone in our Vocations section, we include Fr's Homily here.

Fr Michael Pui: 25 Years of Priesthood in the Year of Jubilee

"If you had been a parishioner of mine, you are likely to have heard in at least one of my homilies, the point that there are many paradoxes in Our Lord's teachings, and therefore, there are many "paradoxes" in our Christian faith.

The dictionary describes a paradox as something seemingly absurd or a contradictory statement or proposition, but when investigated, may prove to be well-founded or true. St Francis of Assisi captured some of the Christian paradoxes beautifully in a prayer, now turned into a hymn, "Make me a channel of your peace".

In that prayer/hymn, the paradoxes that St Francis gave us included: "It is in giving we receive, in forgiving that we are forgiven, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life."

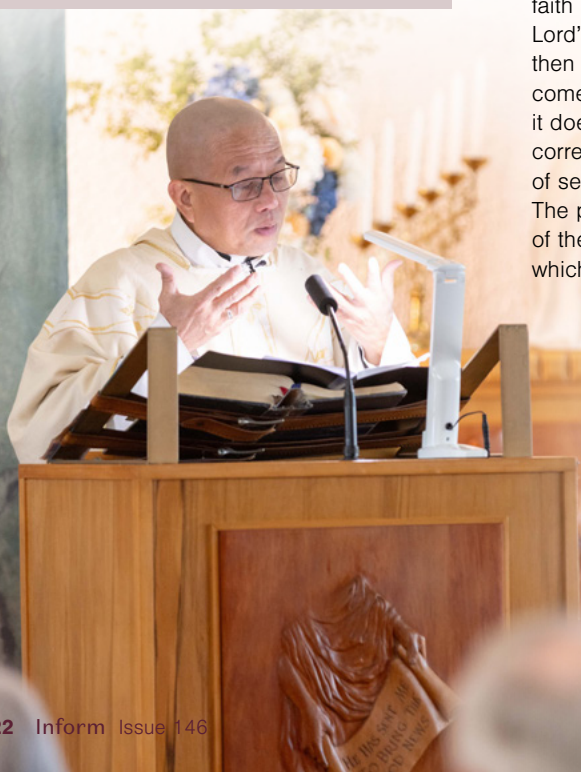
I would say the third paradox would be more poignant if it says, not 'it is in dying that we are born to eternal life', but "it is in dying to self, that we are born to eternal life". In this broken world, everyone dies, but the dying to self, highlights that it is something we have to choose.

If Our Lord's teachings and the Christian faith have many paradoxes, and Our Lord's teachings have many paradoxes, then surely, the Catholic priesthood must come with many paradoxes. And indeed, it does. The Catholic priesthood, when correctly embraced, calls for the giving of self, and it calls for the dying to self. The priest is meant to be after the heart of the Good Shepherd, a description of which Our Lord gave of Himself in today's

Gospel reading (John 10:11-16). The Good Shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep.

One word describes this paradoxical act of giving of self, of the Good Shepherd, the best "sacrifice". Christ sacrificed Himself, that we may have life. And this is probably the biggest paradox of all, that the person who sacrificed himself, if done out of love for others, never sees it as a sacrifice. Any parent who truly loves their child, would know what it means; Loving parents would sacrifice much for their child, but no loving parents would see their complete giving as a sacrifice.

This very element of 'sacrifice', called for in the Catholic Priesthood, is often misunderstood. I have reflected on it before I even went to the seminary. I think it is misunderstood because not many seminaries tackle the very answer to the fundamental question about the priesthood: Who is a priest? Yes, seminaries teach budding priests sacramental theology or morality, and they provide both academic and human formation and so on, but they do not first tackle the answer to that question: Who is a priest? And the answer is quite simple: "A priest is one who offers sacrifice". For a Catholic priest, that sacrifice is rooted in the sacrifice of the Mass. Take the Mass away from a priest, and he might just as well choose to become a social worker, as there are many aspects in common with that profession. In my present role as Director of Pontifical Mission Societies, take the Mass away from me, and I would be in the role of an administrator.



"Help us in our quest, our calling, our vocation...For without your help ...we priests may easily lose sight of why we become priests in this giddy world of unbelief."



The element of 'sacrifice' is therefore meant to permeate the life of the priest; for example, our priestly vow of celibacy. It must be seen, not just as a 'marriage ban', or some obscure call to "obedience", but a sacrifice. It must be seen as a sacrifice of offering up something that is so good and holy to God, for the greater good. Just as fasting pre-supposes the goodness of food, celibacy pre-supposes the goodness of marriage. To despise priestly celibacy, therefore, is to undermine marriage itself—as the early Church Fathers pointed out. For some of us priests, including myself, we have additional sacrifices to deal with: the sacrifice of our worldly careers. Some of us even have to sacrifice the love of our own, because our family rejects us for being a priest.

At a human level, all sacrifices come with pain, and it may be the thing that breaks the priest, if he loses sight of what it is all about. And that is where you, the faithful, the laity, have a role in helping us priests to be what we are meant to be. Help us in our quest, our calling, our vocation, to go after the heart of the Good Shepherd. Help us to appreciate and live the paradoxes captured in the priesthood. For without your help, without your love of the Mass and the priesthood, and the Sacraments, we priests may easily lose sight of why we become priests in this giddy world of unbelief. And in losing sight of that, we start to claw back what we sacrificed, and we lose our way, and even get into trouble.

After 25 years of priesthood, I have come to appreciate my need for you, for your love of the priesthood and your priests, despite our human brokenness and frailty. Thank you for your faith. Thank you for helping us priests be better priests. Thank you for being there when life gets hard. Thank you for being here to celebrate my milestone."

Fr Michael Pui, MMXXV



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The Neocatechumenal Way in Stella Maris parish: A new experience of evangelisation & Christian initiation

In April-June, for the first time in New Zealand, the initial catechesis of the Neocatechumenal Way was given in the parish of Stella Maris, Christchurch East.

The Neocatechumenal Way is an itinerary of Catholic formation. It operates within parishes, aiming to help individuals re-discover and deepen their faith. It is inspired by the catechumenate of the early Church, where adult converts were prepared for baptism. The Neocatechumenal Way is at the service of the Bishop of the diocese, to assist with the work of evangelisation and Christian initiation.

The catecheses at Stella Maris parish are the fruit of a long period of discernment between Bishop Michael, Fr Job (the parish priest) and the itinerant team responsible for the Way in New Zealand (David and Fiona Piccolo, Fr Moises Tapia and James Tomelty.)

In starting the Neocatechumenal Way in the diocese, three young missionary families from the Way in Australia left their families, homes, and jobs in Sydney, Adelaide, and Brisbane. They moved to Linwood, Philipstown, and Woolston within the Stella Maris parish boundaries. From July 2023, Paolo and Rebecca and their three children, Andrea and Teresa and their two children, and Aaron and Anna Maria and their newborn moved to Christchurch. They found jobs, rented houses, and were happily welcomed by Stella Maris parish. They started to participate in parish life.

In April this year, David and Fiona with their seven children from Sydney, Fr Moises, a priest of the Archdiocese of



Saturday morning — Mission and morning prayer on Ferry Road at Woolston

“The principal mission of the Neocatechumenal Way is to, little by little, reach out to those who no longer attend church or maybe have never known of the unconditional love of God for them”

Sydney, and James, a seminarian from the same diocese, moved temporarily to Christchurch to give the initial two month catechesis. The older children were welcomed into Catholic Cathedral College and the younger ones attended St Anne's primary school.

"Our children had a beautiful experience in the Catholic school system, as well as being welcomed in the St Anne's Youth Group, which was wonderfully welcoming and a highlight of their time in Christchurch," David said. "Stella Maris parish is a beautiful community of communities, each with their own characteristics, but all worshiping and evangelising together. We have been very happy to participate in its work of evangelisation. The principal mission of the Neocatechumenal Way is to, little by little, reach out to those who no longer attend church or maybe have never known of the unconditional love of God for them."

"We came to Christchurch to give freely what we ourselves have received for free: the Love of God." Fr Moises said. "As preparation for the catechesis, we offered morning prayer in the parks and public places, with the families and their children, sharing our experiences of God's love with those listening, while singing the psalms with our guitars and instruments. Each weekend as we did this, we noticed the deep thirst of people around us for the Word of God. For me, this confirmed Bishop Michael's discernment of the urgent need for evangelisation."

It was a blessed time of evangelisation in the parish, during which many came to



The weekend retreat — Listening to the Word of God, surrounded by the beautiful (and cold) weather



First Holy Communion Celebration at Mid Canterbury Parish

On Sunday 15 June, at the 10:30am Mass at Holy Name Church in Ashburton, 48 children from the parish received their First Holy Communion. May the grace of this Sacrament deepen their faith and draw them ever closer to God.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our priests Fr Lito and Fr Peter, coordinators, teachers, and the families of these children. Your dedication and guidance have been instrumental in preparing them for this holy occasion.

Let us continue to pray for these young communicants as they grow in faith, hope, and love.

listen to nights of catechesis, preaching, and celebrations.

The two months finished with a weekend retreat, during which the first Neocatechumenal Community of Stella Maris was formed. This community 'walks' in this itinerary of Christian initiation, supported on the tripod of Christian life: the Word of God, the Liturgy, and the Community. The community meets Wednesday and Saturday evenings at 7.30pm in St Anne's parish hall.

"We are happy God has given us the grace and opportunity to begin to help a little in his work of evangelisation," Fr Moises continued, "but there is still a long way to go. "The harvest is rich, but the workers are few." We need your prayers, that the Lord may strengthen us in carrying out this mission."

In communion with Bishop Michael and Fr Job, David, Fiona, and Fr Moises hope to be back soon to continue their mission in Stella Maris parish and if God desires it, to keep growing this new charism in the diocese of Christchurch.

For more about the Neocatechumenal Way, please contact Aaron and Anna Maria O'Sullivan on 021 0882 3942.

Our Lady of the Plains Parish

40 Candidates from Our Lady of the Plains Parish, Selwyn, received the Sacrament of the Eucharist in June.

We congratulate the children and their parents for achieving this important milestone in their faith journey and continue to keep them in our prayers and encourage them to be open and generous in giving their time to serve and participate fully at Mass and in parish activities so that they continue to grow in their relationship with Jesus throughout their lives.



(clockwise from top) **Lincoln:** 33 candidates received their First Holy Communion at St Patrick's in Lincoln. Fr Brian Fennessy celebrated the Mass. **Darfield:** six candidates received their First Holy Communion at St Joseph's in Darfield on the 15th June. Fr Chris Orr celebrated the Mass. **Leeston:** Jordan Borisi received his First Holy Communion on the 15th June at St John the Evangelist Church in Leeston from visiting priest Fr Ben Asare.





Rhubarb Rhubarb Rhubarb

How to Survive a Homily

by John O'Connor www.foodforfaith.org.nz, john@fff.org.nz

The Synod survey of parishioners throughout Aotearoa / New Zealand revealed widespread dissatisfaction with the quality of homilies. The critique revealed a repeated, widespread, and real concern. Parishioners want better homilies.

Preachers want to give good homilies

People might be encouraged to know that homily quality is also a priestly concern. Priests want to do better, but are often at a loss about how best to prepare and present a reflection for a congregation, which is more diverse than ever before in background, cultural diversity, liturgical and sacramental awareness, and lived experience of personal and communal relationship with Jesus Christ.

A common request is that sermons be shorter (perhaps just a couple of minutes), certainly less than five — with a joke, a story, and a simple, practical application. But such a superficial adjustment might be a rather jumpy reaction, based on a sad resignation: it's not possible to change the quality so at least let's shorten the weekly suffering. While homilies should not be too long, neither should they be too short. The keep-it-brief solution is surely a bit insulting to the many parishioners who come to the liturgy with awareness of their personal hunger for God and a desire to be nourished by every part of the action of the Mass.

Chat GPT

There are simple guidelines for preachers. To begin a homily with the cliché opening "In today's Gospel reading..." is perhaps the quickest way to kill any interest in what follows. Whereas, a preacher who, every now and then, opens with "I wasn't sure what to say today, so I asked ChatGPT..." immediately has the attention of everyone in the church.

I have introduced a few priests to the gift of AI in homily preparation, not as a secret and shameful short-cut, but as an open admission and welcome tool. I searched "Gospel of Dives and Lazarus in New Zealand 2025" and AI was right on the mark in response:

"For New Zealand, the Dives and Lazarus parable is a powerful lens through which to examine national wealth, privilege and poverty. An editorial in The Common Good highlights that most people in Aotearoa are in the global top 20% by wealth, even as the nation's OECD ranking has slipped. The piece insists that the parable indicts lives lived comfortably amid global suffering and calls for spiritual and social conversion - i.e. to no longer be Dives (the rich and ignorant one)."

Not a personal witness — but the fulness of faith

While a homily might contain personal elements, it should not be reduced to the personal witness of the priest. Such a focus would reduce the breadth and depth of the Good News, to the bits which the preacher was managing to live. Instead the preacher, speaking to himself as much as to a congregation, must seek to present the fulness of faith in Jesus Christ, humbly aware and even openly admitting that he himself fails to live this life fully and that we are therefore together as pilgrims of hope on this journey.

Truly Catholic

Homilies which repeatedly promote local programmes and activities, without reference to national and international conflicts, politics, poverty, and suffering, quickly become as tiresome and futile as the party-political broadcasts of a ghetto guru. A truly catholic (lit. universal) homily, while announcing divine grace in Geraldine and Greymouth, will also denounce the depravity of genocide in Gaza and provide a Christ-centred critique

*Portrait of Saint John Chrysostom of Antioch.
An early Byzantine mosaic from the Cathedral
of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople*

of political methods and decisions which are foreign to the care for the poor and vulnerable, which is the heart of the ministry of Jesus. Homilies which fail to communicate that a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is offered to every hearer, precisely within the circumstances and struggles of each week, well, such homilies are tragically missing the mark completely.

The past was no different

Recently, I had the opportunity to look over homilies preached by the Christchurch bishops of the early twentieth century. Many of these are preserved in the Diocesan Archives. Rarely was there a mention of Jesus Christ as alive and present. These homilies were not a personal invitation to divine life, experienced in the Mass and from it, in the family, friendship and work, social and sporting activity.

It is true that throughout history there have been remarkable preachers. I think of John Chrysostom (4th century), known at the time as Golden Mouth. Then in the late 19th century, John Henry Newman, recently named by Pope Leo XIV as a Doctor of the Church.

However the collected homilies of each of these wise and holy teachers would not be received well today across Canterbury, Westland, and the Chathams. Too long (we would say). Too heavy. Not enough jokes. But a person who seeks a more intimate relationship with Jesus, who Googles and reads these old collections, will meet Christ firstly because the preacher was seeking to communicate



Christ and secondly, and equally importantly, because you (the reader and the seeker) are actively searching, seeking, and prayerfully listening for the Word of God through these well-intentioned, yet weak and imperfect, human voices.

A Dramatic Shift: Sermon to Homily

The dramatic change in the style of liturgical reflections over the past half-century is significant: no longer sermons — (often defined as a lecture on a religious or moral subject in the context

of Mass) but now more user-friendly homilies (intended primarily for spiritual encouragement and faith formation.)

Naturally the preacher has a key role in the success of a homily. However the homilist is not the only protagonist in the homiletical process. In our age of ready entertainments, distractions, and more limited attention spans, most people wrongly consider the work of the homily to be the sole responsibility and activity of the preacher. However, every person who hears even the worst of homilies, has an opportunity to hear the voice of Christ speaking directly to them.



Rhubarb

At a Monday clergy lunch in Greymouth, a year or two after my ordination, our conversation turned to the homilies that each of us had given the day before, reflecting on a particularly challenging set of scriptures. One priest offered a comment which broadened my perspective dramatically and changed my method of preparing homilies for the forty years since. Bernie, my brother priest, opined that if a listener was truly open to hearing Jesus speak, it would be enough for the preacher to stand at the lectern repeating “rhubarb rhubarb rhubarb” and the intentional and hungry pilgrim would, by the intervention of the Holy Spirit, hear and recognise the voice of Jesus and in this way, be inspired to respond through the week ahead. Of course, we all laughed. Bernie was always able to see a different and often helpful perspective. But we all knew exactly what he was saying.

I’m probably not the one to provide tips for preachers, since my personal preparation method is a bit unconventional, but I do offer an encouragement as a challenge: it’s time for every person to take responsibility for their personal reception of Christ in any and every homily they hear. Yes, it’s good that we are not satisfied with ten minutes of parish pep talks and religious training at the conclusion of the Liturgy of the Word. But my key point is that a homily is the work of both the preacher speaking and the parishioner listening.

The Example of Jesus

It’s worth recalling that almost all of the thousands of people who heard Jesus speak the Homily of Homilies in the Sermon on the Mount, wandered home completely untouched by the message of the Beatitudes and remembering only the

free fish & cornbread meal. Even Jesus, the preacher of preachers, failed to captivate his hearers. Why? Because even more than a homily is dependent on the power of the preacher, it requires the hope-filled and expectant anticipation of the hearer. The homilist might broadcast the seed, but without a generous and open reception, the seed will fall on barren ground.

It is helpful to consider that every preacher wants to serve well as a homilist, providing engaging and helpful reflections to feed the faith of those who are hungry. However if a parishioner is not aware of their personal need for God, seeking encounter with Jesus in this moment and in every moment of the week ahead, even Jesus himself, speaking directly (as in his Beatitude homily on the mount), will fall on deaf ears and drowsy hearts.

I know that preachers take their ministry as homilists seriously and with very few exceptions seek to do the best they can. Perhaps the missing part of a successful homily is most often, the hungry heart and open ear disposition of those who listen?

An invitation — a five-second prayer

You might like to test this yourselves. At the next Mass you participate in, take five seconds between the end of the Gospel and the beginning of the homily, praying for the preacher and entreating Jesus to speak to you clearly, directly and personally in whatever the preacher shares in his homily. You may well be pleasantly surprised at the result.



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Crossing the Waimakariri river on the first day of the pilgrimage walk

Jubilee Pilgrimage Walk

Recently, the Sisters of the Community of the Beatitudes led a group of girls on a three-day jubilee pilgrimage walk, from St Mary's Pro-Cathedral to the Sanctuary of Fourvière in Leithfield. The group, known as "Know the Word", meets regularly for a time of Lectio Divina, craft, and Eucharistic Adoration.

Leaving St Mary's after the morning Mass, the group took to the city streets to begin their 16km day 1 trek in good spirits and in ideal conditions. The Northern Corridor walkway took them over the Waimakariri bridge and into Kaiapoi, with the promise of a hot shower at the local pools. After dinner at St Patrick's parish centre, we watched the inspiring story of the Servant of God, Sr Clare Crockett, whose cause for beatification was opened in January 2025. (Documentary on YouTube: All or Nothing: Sr Clare Crockett)

Day two dawned with a hard frost and clear skies. After an early Mass and a good breakfast, the group headed north-west, along the Kaiapoi River, to join the Passchendaele Memorial Path, to Rangiora. Another 16 kilometres to the eco camping ground, where a well-equipped bungalow awaited us. After a good meal lovingly prepared by the mums and delivered by the support team, there was time for games and sharing the experiences of the day.

The third day provided the penitential element to our pilgrimage, with a change of weather overnight. We set off along the back roads of Rangiora with our walking companions: rain, wind, penetrating cold, blisters, mud...and no toilets! A flooded road sent us kilometres out of our way, but all is grace! The group didn't let the conditions dampen their spirits, as the usual prayers (20 mysteries of the rosary for specific intentions), Lectio Divina, and brief periods of silence were interspersed with episodes of

"...rain, wind, penetrating cold, blisters, mud...and no toilets! A flooded road sent us kilometres out of our way, but all is grace!"



Following the Kaiapoi river walkway



The pilgrimage walk began at St Mary's Pro-Cathedral

laughter and relays of uplifting songs such as "100 green bottles hanging on the wall..." etc.

A tad later than expected, the whole band of pilgrims made the last climb up the driveway to arrive at the Sanctuary of Fourvière, where the mums were waiting to cheer us on with applause and words of encouragement for the last steps of this long, wet march. After a prayer of thanksgiving at the shrine of Mary, Mother of Light, we hobbled to the chapel for the closing Mass, which was followed by a festive meal with all the families. A great effort and a huge "Thank you!" to the mothers and support team for their precious help!

Jubilee Pilgrimage from Leithfield to Temuka

On 12 July, the Community of the Beatitudes made its jubilee pilgrimage from the Sanctuary of Fourvière in Leithfield to the St Mary MacKillop chapel in Temuka. There was a warm welcome from local parishioners, who prepared the hall for our arrival and opened the historic convent and chapel, where St Mary MacKillop prayed with her sisters during her visit to New Zealand. The Community celebrated Mass there and prayed the jubilee prayers, after which we were shown through the museum, telling the story of the founding of the Opihi parish and the coming of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart.

After a visit to the beautifully restored St Joseph's church, the Community took leave of their gracious hosts and took to the road again, in the direction of another 'pilgrimage' site; the Richard Pierce Memorial, commemorating the first successful powered flight by a British citizen... A Canterbury farmer with a big dream and a good amount of Kiwi ingenuity!

Pilgrims Of Hope

by Anne Crawford, Spiritual Director Holy Family Parish, Timaru

on behalf of the Christchurch Diocesan Spiritual Directors Group Whakakōingo o te Ngākau: The Yearning Heart

“These are turbulent times. We are grateful for our faith in Christ, which is underpinned by hope and nurtured by prayer. We seek to connect and focus on God, our ‘still point of the turning world.’”

In your parish, you may have heard the encouraging song “Pilgrims of Hope,” which was commissioned for this special Year of Jubilee. If so, you will have sung the words “Scattered fragile sons and daughters find a home in your dear Son” and “Son made man for you and many who will find the way in him.”

“Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring.” This quotation is from the “Bull of Indiction for the Ordinary Jubilee Year 2025.” Pope Francis’ words remind us that hope is a gift: “a grace that arises from an innate desire to be happy.”

These are turbulent times. We are grateful for our faith in Christ, which is underpinned by hope and nurtured by prayer. We seek to connect and focus on God, our “still point of the turning world.” These words of T.S. Eliot reassuringly remind us of our centre, our grounding in the Triune God. We tend this wellspring by praying. There will be prayer styles that feel right for us which for some will be contemplative ways of praying. We seek to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17)

God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is with us in all of our everyday experiences. We remind ourselves of this as we grow spiritually. One activity that we may not think of as exercising us contemplatively is going to the movies.

Being in a darkened theatre with others, our attention is focussed visually and aurally. We receive the images and sounds that present themselves to us, experiencing emotions as we are moved by our imagination — a spiritual experience, a way of getting into our heart space. As Monty Williams SJ sums up: “In watching a film, we are present to a depiction of certain values that reinforce, erode, or challenge our value systems.”

The suffering, conundrums, and joy presented in three movies I have seen this year have led me to reflect on life. The first, “Bonhoeffer” was very interesting historically, extremely moving emotionally, and most intriguing philosophically, considering the ethical dilemma he faced. The second movie was “The Salt Path,” which may be understood as a pilgrimage by two seniors who had lost almost everything materially but still had each other. The devotion displayed and kindness of strangers was truly inspiring. The third movie was “Koka” which is also a pilgrimage. The main character, Hamo, displayed peaceful, attentive stillness and perseverance as she travelled on her difficult journey.

In each of these movies, the protagonists inspired the audience by holding on to that “still point of the turning world.” They maintained their integrity and their actions were underpinned by hope.

Priests Retirement Villas Project

In a quiet yet powerful way, our new project is taking shape; one that embodies gratitude, legacy, and care. This initiative marks a milestone in our ongoing commitment to those who have dedicated their lives to serving our community: our priests in retirement.

A Community's Generous Response

Bishop Michael and our priests have been moved by the generosity of our Catholic community. Your contributions reflect a profound love and respect for the clergy.

Progress & What's Ahead

The project is now moving from vision to reality. Here's where things stand:

- Due diligence is under way, including detailed cost assessments, contractor selection, and regulatory compliance.
- Procurement is being carried out with care to ensure we engage contractors who share our values and commitment to excellence.
- Construction is scheduled to begin in late October/early November 2025.
- With planning complete, we are now moving towards delivery, with a strong focus on quality and budget discipline.

Looking Beyond the Build

Once the villas are complete, attention will turn to the refurbishment of John Fisher House, upgrading two additional units and chapel for our priests in retirement.

The architectural vision is being led by Matt Foley of Foley Group. This carries a special significance, as in past years, the Foley family have designed several of our great buildings in the diocese. Now Matt continues that legacy with this project.

CBN June Event

In June, the Catholic Business Network (CBN) hosted an inspiring and well-attended evening featuring renowned business leader Simon Challies in conversation with Ed Sparrow. The event, held at the Commodore Hotel, drew 135 professionals, school students and education leaders, parish leaders, and priests who gathered to hear about 'Leading Through Adversity'.

Simon Challies is one of New Zealand's most respected business figures, known for his transformative leadership as CEO of Ryman Healthcare and his ongoing work as co-founder of the BrainTree Wellness Centre. Diagnosed with Parkinson's disease at age 41 in 2016, Simon continues to lead with grace and conviction, serving on multiple boards and using his journey to advocate for wellbeing, dignity, and purpose.

In a relaxed yet deeply moving conversation, Simon shared stories of leadership, adversity, and touched on his Catholic upbringing, reminding us that true leadership is not just about results, but about kindness and using one's gifts in service of others.



Simon Challies (left) and Ed Sparrow (right) at the June CBN event

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Stepping Up: Leading with Purpose at the Year 7 Retreat



On Friday 1 August, 11 Year 10 Marian College students travelled to Rangiora to help lead the Year 7 retreat at St Joseph's School.

It was a day centred on the theme of leadership and it gave students a real opportunity to step into that role, applying

what they had learnt through our Peer-to-Peer Ministry training earlier in the year.

The day began by splitting into small groups and running a series of icebreaker games to help the Year 7s feel comfortable and connected. This set the tone for a day of engagement, reflection, and growth. Each group was then given a scenario to perform – an activity designed to explore different aspects of leadership in action.

After morning tea, we listened to an inspiring speaker from Young Vinnies, who spoke about servant leadership and putting others first by leading through humility and compassion. It was a powerful message and afterwards, the students returned to their small groups to debrief with the Year 7s. Helping guide these conversations was a real highlight, as it allowed our students to step up as leaders and mentors, encouraging the younger students to reflect deeply and find their own voices.

Later in the day, everyone gathered to celebrate Mass, a meaningful moment that reminded us of the spiritual foundation behind our leadership roles. Our final activity was the game "Priest of the Parish". It was a fun, energetic way to end the retreat and helped strengthen the sense of community built throughout the day.



Marian College students leading the Year 7 retreat at St Joseph's School



Marian College Head of Special Character Seyara De Silva dressed in a Sisters of St Joseph habit to mark the Feast Day of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop. St Mary of the Cross MacKillop was known to give out lollies and treats from her providence bag and it has become a tradition at Marian to do the same on her Feast Day

A Message from our Newly Appointed Principal St Mary's Catholic School, Hokitika



Kia Ora,

I am the Principal-TUMU of St Mary's School, Hokitika. I am from Muriwhenua, the most northern tribe of Aotearoa. My whanau, hapu, and tribe of Ngati Kahu ki Whangaroa are Maori Catholic, with our centre at Waitaruke, Whangaroa.

The Marist Sisters and Mill Hill Fathers are the founding cornerstones of Waitaruke. Our tupuna acknowledged the Catholic Faith at Piwania and now five marae identify as Maori Catholic communities. We live the Tupuna Faith of Catholicism and Maori Spirituality.

As the new Principal-TUMU, I am honoured to be here in Hokitika, where the people, parish, and community are kind,

generous, and wholesome. The tamariki and pouako-esteemed teachers are respectful, loving, and magnanimous.

Greeting the families-whanau in the morning is refreshing and rewarding. The Alps as a backdrop to our school are majestic and awesome. God is definitely here in the people, the mountains, and the waterways of Hokitika, Westland.

Please note I have the ta moko on my chin and moko rae on my forehead.

In closing a special message to salute the fine efforts of Fr Huynh at the school. Tena koe e Pa.

Nga mihi,
Marlene Ransfield



Game On for Good: Marian and St Bede's Move It for Caritas

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

From 9:00am Friday 8 August to 9:00am Saturday 9 August, Marian College came alive with colour, energy, and movement.

The 2025 Caritas 24-hour Move It Challenge saw students taking part in a huge range of activities, including tug-of-war, dodgeball, volleyball, tennis, basketball, Fat Man Splat, dance lessons, yoga, multi-sport, Just Dance, capture the flag, and of course, Spotlight. Both the covered courts and indoor gym buzzed with laughter, competition, and teamwork for a full 24 hours.

The event was an incredible success, with around 300 students from St Bede's College and Marian College joining the challenge across different time slots — many of whom “moved it” for much of the 24 hours.

While the event was filled with fun and excitement, it also provided an opportunity

to reflect on the reality of those who move out of necessity. Our sore muscles and tiredness were a small glimpse into what many people living in poverty endure daily, walking long distances for food, water, and safety.

This year's challenge raised a significant amount of money for Caritas, supporting communities in Cambodia, Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, and Tonga, through the He Oranga Taurikura programme, which helps these communities prepare for future emergencies. With the New Zealand Aid Programme quadrupling every dollar raised, our efforts will have four times the impact.

Our thanks to all those who were involved in this event and all those who donated to our fundraising challenge. We are incredibly grateful for your support.

“...With the New Zealand Aid Programme quadrupling every dollar raised, our efforts will have four times the impact”

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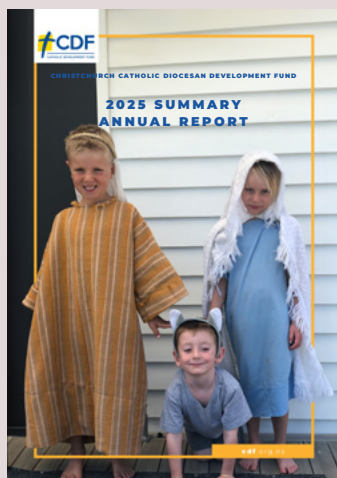
by Liza Sparrow, CDF Marketing & Business Development Manager

CDF Confirms \$600,000 Distribution to Support Diocesan Good Works

The Catholic Development Fund (CDF) has confirmed a \$600,000 distribution to support key ministries across the Diocese of Christchurch.

CDF Chair Graeme Wilson said the distribution reflects the Fund's mission to combine ethical investing with tangible support for the Church's work.

"With a capital base of over \$35 million and an investment strategy guided by Catholic values, we're proud to be a reliable and long-term source of funding," he said. "This year's distribution will help Bishop Michael respond to real and pressing needs in communities throughout the diocese."



To view the 2025 Summary Annual Report, visit cdf.org.nz/about-cdf/annual-reports or contact 0800 403 863 to request a posted copy.

JBWere: Ngā Kaitiaki o te Pūtea

The Catholic Development Fund (CDF) has one simple mission: to serve the Church. That means making sure every dollar entrusted to it is used wisely and in line with our Catholic values. At the heart of that responsibility is JBWere – the professional investment team that manages the CDF's \$33 million portfolio.

JBWere has been assisting the CDF in managing its investments since 2002, with a consistent focus on financial stability and strength, ensuring that the CDF's investments align with the Church's moral policy. Michael Ensor, Executive Director at JBWere New Zealand, puts it plainly:

"Considering the CDF's purpose, the portfolio is positioned with a strong focus on Catholic values and the preservation of capital."

That's thanks to careful governance from the CDF's Trustees and a rigorous investment process that ensures CDF funds are invested in businesses or industries that align with the Church's moral teachings. It's a high standard – and it's one the CDF is proud to uphold.

Simple, Safe, and Faith-Aligned

"Investment is predominantly in cash and high-quality bonds," says Ensor. "It's a conservative, straightforward approach that's guided by Catholic values. Every institution we invest with must meet defined standards as security for those deposits. That means low risk – and peace of mind."

The CDF is considered a long-term, low-risk investor, seeking sustainable growth and income from carefully selected financial assets. While returns are important, they are always secondary to the Church's moral responsibilities.



Terry Foote CDF Trustee, Janice Rennell Diocesan Finance Manager, Paul Henry JBWere Wealth Management Advisor and Michael Ensor JBWere Executive Director

Janice Rennell, CDF Finance Manager, agrees.

"This is a haven for depositors seeking a values-based investment. Our strategy is clear, our management is solid, and our purpose is grounded in the long-term vision of the Church. The CDF has supported the Diocese of Christchurch since 1967, and we are proud to continue providing a sustainable annual distribution to the bishop."

Investing With Integrity

At the heart of the CDF's investment policy is a simple truth: stewardship is a moral responsibility. The bishop acknowledges that staying true to Catholic values may, at times, mean accepting lower financial returns, and the Fund is prepared to make that sacrifice.

The CDF portfolio deliberately avoids investments that could cause harm to people or the environment. Instead, it supports organisations that promote human dignity, the common good, and environmental responsibility.

The CDF welcomes both individual and organisational investors from across Aotearoa New Zealand who are seeking a safe, secure, and values-based investment — one that not only preserves capital and provides a healthy return to depositors, but also helps build a better, more just society.

Values and Principles*

- Do no harm
- Active Corporate Participation
- Promote the common good

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Christchurch seeks to invest in companies that support and sustain people in a socially just manner and who conduct business in an environmentally sound way.

**Excerpt from the Catholic Diocese of Christchurch / Christchurch Catholic Diocesan Development Fund Treasury Policy.*

LOCAL IMPACT

\$600k distribution
to the Bishop of Christchurch (FY25)

\$1.5m interest paid
to investors (FY25)

\$4.4m loans (as at balance date)
for school property development

\$33.4m depositor funds
(as at balance date)

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Bishop Michael addressing the church leaders gathered at the Christian Prayer Breakfast



Over 200 Christian Leaders Pray for the Peace and Prosperity of Christchurch

The end of July saw over 200 church leaders, mission agencies, business, and other Christian leaders from throughout the city, come together to pray for the "peace and prosperity of the city" (Jeremiah 29:7). Following Mayor Phil Mauer's opening of the gathering, small

groups were able to pray for one another, for our city, for our nation, and the nations of the world. Mike Stopforth from the Bishop's Pastoral Office said, "it is always a joy to gather with our brothers and sisters to pray together for the needs of our community and our world."



Prayer Breakfast attendees united in prayer for Christchurch



A Treasure of Our Hari Hari Church

Alex Bailey - Chief Operating Officer, Christchurch Diocese

In late June, I visited the Hari Hari Church in the South Westland Parish. I noticed this prayer in the stained-glass windows around the Church.

*"Jesus dear Lord, this grace bestow:
To know myself and Thee to know;
to die to self, in Thee to live;
whate'er may come, from Thee receive;
to conquer self and follow Thee.
May this alone, My pleasure be."*

I was struck by this prayer and am pleased to share it with you, the Inform Readership.

Visit the diocesan website

www.cdcc.nz



Here you will find information about parishes, Mass times, diocesan news and events.

Parishes, schools and church groups are welcome to advertise events.

Please email mstopforth@cdcc.nz.

Inform

A PUBLICATION OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOP OF CHRISTCHURCH

**Deadline for next issue:
Friday 7 November 2025**

Contributions may be sent at any time to:

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Design & layout: Cath Waller **Printing:** Sprint Print

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