



Inform

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**A Culture of
Life-giving Love**

page 18

**Celebrating Coastal
Catholicism**

page 20

**Treasuring Local
Sacred Art**

page 26





From Our Bishop



As we draw near to the close of this extraordinary year of Jubilee, our hearts cannot help but lift in praise for the abundance of grace we have received. What a holy and hope-filled year it has been. As Catholics, we stand within a sacred lineage of remembrance and thanksgiving. Our Lord's birth we are soon to celebrate reminds us that God enters history to redeem, restore, and renew. In that same spirit of jubilee, we pause to give thanks once more for the moments through which the Lord has revealed His presence in the life of our diocese throughout this blessed year.

In late January, in communion with the Church throughout the world, I opened the Jubilee Year for our diocese in St Mary's Pro-Cathedral. Throughout the year, many groups celebrated Jubilee Masses, both there and elsewhere. Many pilgrims journeyed to our designated pilgrimage sites. As part of this year of pilgrimage, we re-established the Eucharistic procession on the Feast of Corpus Christi around our Pro-Cathedral.

This year's Lenten season was a truly blessed period of spiritual preparation. It was an honour to welcome 67 individuals, who were either baptised or received into full communion with the Catholic Church at Easter. The desire of adults to join our Church, known as a new spring time of faith, is a growing experience shared by Catholic communities around the world.

At our first Catholic Business Network lunch of the year, we heard from Peter de Keratry, a globally respected leader in Catholic fundraising and development, to begin planning for the campaign to rebuild the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament. Many left inspired to think not just about the big, public moments of generosity, but the quiet, daily choices to give, lead, and love.

Around 200 people participated in the Lenten journey of Fiat and Exodus, where groups of women and men throughout the diocese took up a guided spiritual journey of penance and prayer. In April, around 130 women gathered in Marian College for a special retreat, centred on the Jubilee Year theme of Hope. Around 90 of our men did likewise later in the year.

Unforgettably, on Easter Monday, the world seemed to stop as Pope Francis was called to his eternal rest, and millions around the globe joined in witness for his requiem. With hope and great joy, we welcomed Pope Leo XIV. May his mission be blessed, may his heart be strengthened and may the whole Church walk with him.

Jubilate is our diocesan sacred music programme and is now in its tenth year. Late May saw the first of this year's seven concerts, bringing 900 singers and an audience of around 2,000 together in song.

In the middle of the year, in the same spirit of HOPE we announced that Warren and Mahoney, one of the country's leading architectural firms, will design the new Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament and its surrounding precinct. I am confident that they 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.

In late June, over 120 young people from throughout the diocese gathered for Revolution 2025, the Catholic Youth Team's junior Youth Camp. 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

*Adoration before the diocesan Jubilee
Corpus Christi procession*

(Photo credit: Sarah Blair Photographer)

“The many events, gatherings, and milestones we have shared are all signs of God’s enduring presence among us.”



Bishop Michael introducing Cardinal John Dew at the 'Night at the Conclave'
(Photo credit: Sarah Blair Photographer)

for Young People. In September, 115 campers between the ages of 13 and 18, converged on Woodend for Antioch. These encounters with Christ are so important for our young people.

In early July, a vocations retreat was held for men discerning the call to priesthood. This is something very close to my heart and I am encouraged by the interest being shown in God’s call to discern this vocation. Please pray for the our seven seminarians as they seek God’s will in their lives.

We were blessed to join with Cardinal John Dew for A Night at the Conclave in early August. More than 650 gathered in the James Hay Theatre to participate in an evening of rare insight and reflection. Cardinal Dew’s presentation 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.

August was a very busy time of year as around 190 people gathered in Temuka for our second annual Diocesan Prayer Conference, which offered beautiful moments of prayer and reflection and a lot of conversation.

Pilgrimage is at the heart of a Jubilee year. In September, a day-long local pilgrimage from Christchurch to Akaroa took place, recalling the arrival of Bishop Pompallier there, seeding the Church in this part of the world. In late October, I was glad to join thirty Catholics from our region on a 6-day diocesan pilgrimage to Northland, to sacred places at the foundation of the Catholic faith in New Zealand, more about this later in Inform.

On 1 November, the Church recognised St John Henry Newman as the 38th Doctor of the Church, a title reserved for a select few, whose lives and writings are proclaimed as especially worthy of study and devotion. I have always liked his hymn, “Lead, Kindly Light” which features as a suggested hymn for the Night Prayer of the Church in English speaking countries. This additional honour bestowed on St Henry Newman is significant for the English speaking world as, prior to his conversion to Catholicism, he was

and remains revered by the Anglican Communion, as a leading theologian of the Oxford Movement. I am the Catholic bishops’ representative on the Anglican Roman Catholic Commission of Aotearoa New Zealand and am grateful that the Church’s further recognition of him is another point of unity between ourselves and the Anglican Communion.

After a period of consultation, the Te Rangimarie Maori Catholic chaplaincy accepted my invitation to relocate to the new cathedral precinct. Earlier this month, the chaplaincy moved its liturgical home to St Mary’s Pro-Cathedral where they will remain until our cathedral is built. Their chaplain, Fr Monty Bamford has written more about this later in these pages.

Earlier in December, Catholic Social Services moved to a new location. After over 60 years of operations, they have joined the other agencies of the Catholic Diocese of Christchurch at 391 Moorhouse Avenue.

As we conclude this Jubilee year, I invite you to join with me in giving thanks for all we have received. The many events, gatherings, and milestones we have shared are all signs of God’s enduring presence among us, encouraging us to trust, to unite, and to never lose hope. My prayer is that this same spirit continues to inspire us as we look to the future, trusting in God’s providence.

May the joy and peace of this holy season fill your hearts and homes. Wishing you and your loved ones a blessed and hope-filled Christmas.

Yours in Christ

+ Michael Gielen
Bishop of Christchurch

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O Holy Night

by Kirsten Challies, Spiritual Director and Parish Pastoral Worker Cathedral Parish

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

As our tumultuous global year nears a close, it is only right that we make space for contemplating Jesus' coming among us to bring light to a fallen world.

Peering into the stable in Bethlehem, we see Mary gazing on the face of her newly born son, looking with wonder at God having come to be among us as her baby, Jesus. The pure and indescribable beauty of her newborn holding back any doubt: "How can I raise the King?"; "Will I be able to teach Him all He needs to know?" The holy and humble presence of the creator of the universe now lying in her arms, dependent on her loving care, confirming for her that God's ways are not our ways and God will lead.



Who could you invite to Christmas Mass this year?

Christmas is such a special time - not just for gathering with loved ones, sharing meals and giving gifts, but for celebrating the **birth of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour**. He is the true reason for the season!

Many people are more open than we realise. A simple invitation could be the moment someone has been waiting for... to find hope, to feel welcomed, to return home.

So take courage. Pray and ask: *Lord, who are You inviting through me this Christmas?* You may be surprised who says "yes"!

Let's help someone encounter Jesus this Christmas - **an invitation could change a life**.

As the shepherds approach in awe and wonder, Mary and Joseph's hearts sing at the hearing of God's unbounded joy in announcing the birth of Jesus upon this earth. The first experience for humanity, of what would come to be known as "the Trinity"; a sacred scene that would light up the face of the earth forever.

But zoom out - and we see the hustle and bustle of Bethlehem, bulging with Davidic descendants, re-uniting with friends and family, many enjoying the rekindling of those relationships. Others are busy meeting their own needs and those of their families, as they do life away from their home. Days are full - many people to meet, many needs to be met, much to be done.

What strikes me about this scene?

When I consider my own life and the place Jesus takes in it, where would I place myself in this scene?

What might Jesus say to me there?

Emmanuel, God-with-us - how have I encountered God in the people, places, and things of my day?

With our past year having been so fractious around the globe, perhaps this Christmas, we might spend a little extra time in prayer, bringing all those who suffer the ill-effects of war, to the manger, that Jesus might bring His saving grace.



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Christmas Eve alone in my cell

With a bleeding heart and an empty soul this day brings to mind the past, the years I spent somewhat happily. Now I wake up in the morning on Christmas Day and they have me locked in the cell. For years I have lived in prison without joy and gifts, why was I even born!

Christmas without seeing anyone to talk to, to hear "Happy Christmas" before I close my eyes. Once friends and children had me as a father, now that I am in prison everyone has turned me away.

But I pray, that He may forgive them, that they may come to the path of God and that He may enlighten them all. A Christmas without joy, alone and forgotten, alone far away and abandoned.

D.K.H. An inmate in the New York Prison

Is it a coincidence that the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ took place outside the usual confines of society?

The piercing cry of a child born from a young mother continues to be a reality today. A child was born into a world that would reject him, but his birth brought a light that this broken world had never known.

A light that penetrated every person and revealed to them that they have value and that they are loved by God. This light dwells within us, reminding us every day of our value.

He came for us, knowing the cost, knowing the price that must be paid.

As we prepare to celebrate Christ's birth, we are called to remember that at that very moment our value was expressed.

"For God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son that they might be saved." John 3:16

For six years, I have been working as a Chaplain in a prison. Before that, I had never been in such an environment. To be honest, I wouldn't change it for anything now. Every day I see how real, powerful, and alive the presence of our Lord, Jesus Christ is — in every person I meet there. It's easy to say that the people inside are

there for a reason, but it becomes harder when we remember the words of Jesus:

"Let the one who is without sin be the first to throw a stone." John 8:7

The most difficult moments come when they start to open up and speak honestly about their lives. I often feel so small before their stories. Only God knows what they have lived through — especially in their childhood and young age — and how a mix of pain and wrong choices brought them to this point.

Many of them are cut off from their families, and for some, there is no way to communicate at all. This is especially painful during Christmas, when most of us are surrounded by family and love.

Jesus came for us — knowing the cost and the price to be paid — to tell us that each one of us is created out of Love and has great value in His eyes.

As we prepare to celebrate His birth, let us remember that Christmas is the moment when our true worth was revealed:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

So, in this environment where many people are isolated and forgotten — much

like Joseph, Mary, and Jesus were in the stable outside the city — it becomes incredibly meaningful to offer even the simplest acts of kindness. Sometimes, just visiting them, like the shepherds, or remembering them in our prayers, can be a true gift.

There are approximately 20,000 children affected by the incarceration of their parents in New Zealand, and they are all around us. Inspired by the Light of Christmas, let us open our eyes and hearts to truly welcome each of these children as we meet them.

"Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:40

Wishing you and the whole world a Merry, Happy, and Peaceful Christmas where Jesus comes and is born in our hearts.

NP

According to the Ministry of Justice, New Zealand has one of the highest imprisonment rates, with 170 people in prison per 100,000 New Zealanders compared to the OECD average of 147 prisoners per 100,000 people. Most of the people who are incarcerated in New Zealand are parents to children 17 and under. Children who have had their parents incarcerated experience a range of negative outcomes including long-term poor health, educational, and social outcomes, and are at high risk of future imprisonment themselves. With Māori disproportionately more likely to be incarcerated compared to non-Māori, these effects will disproportionately affect them and their whānau.

Disclaimer

These results are not official statistics. They have been created for research purposes from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) which is carefully managed by Stats NZ. For more information about the IDI please visit <https://www.stats.govt.nz/integrated-data/>.

Source: ORANGA TAMARIKI / Ministry for Children / June 2024

Antioch 2025

Another Antioch camp is in the books, and what a weekend it was. With record numbers and an exceptional keynote speaker, this year's September gathering at Woodend proved to be one of the best Antioch experiences yet.

115 campers, along with their dedicated leaders, came together for three unforgettable days of faith, friendship, and fun. Participants aged 14 to 18 immersed themselves in Antioch's hallmark mix of dynamic keynote talks, engaging small group discussions, and deeply moving moments of worship, prayer, and encounter with the Sacraments — especially in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Our keynote speaker, former South Islander Br John Paul Schryvers MGL, travelled from Melbourne to lead the camp through the theme "Sure and Steadfast Anchor," inspired by

the Jubilee Year. His heartfelt messages invited young people to find hope and stability in Christ, even amid life's challenges. The Saturday morning session based around the call of Jesus to get into the boat with him was one that left a tangible energy in the room and a lasting impact on participants.

Alongside the spiritual depth, campers enjoyed all the classic Antioch highlights: great food, lively social times, and of course, the ever-popular messy games. This helped grow a camp community who started as strangers, but ended up as anything but. Workshops and interactive sessions offered opportunities to reflect personally and creatively on faith, while spontaneous moments created memories that will last well beyond the weekend.

Reflecting on the weekend, Camp Director Mark Currie mused, "Every year, Antioch reminds us what's possible when young

ISSUE 147 ADVENT 2025



Nga mihi nui from the editorial desk

Welcome to Inform Issue 147, our Advent edition. My thanks to all of you who submitted stories to Inform in 2025. It remains a privilege for me to receive and read them. Inform Issue 147 looks back over the last three months of Catholic life in our diocese.

Along with our regular features, Matt O'Connell takes us on pilgrimage to Northland and reflects on the gift of the Year of Jubilee. We celebrate 20 years of the John Paul II Centre for life and their collaboration with Loving for Life on Catholic dating. We offer a focus on sacred art with two articles on local parish treasures. We devote several pages to Catholic life on the West Coast of the Christchurch Diocese.

After you have read this packed edition, please pass on its stories to others, either in hard copy or online: <https://cdoc.nz/inform>. We wish you well as you prepare for the coming of our Lord at Christmas and at the end of time. "Maranatha, come Lord Jesus."

In Christ

Ken Joblin, Editor



"Sing a New Song Unto the Lord" Jubilate Raises Voices Heavenward

by Ken Joblin, Jubilate Director

In our last Inform, we celebrated the first four concerts in this, the tenth year of Jubilate. The series is now complete, with two further concerts in St Mary's Pro-Cathedral for the parishes of Christchurch East and North respectively.

In both concerts, the richness of our faith was celebrated in sacred music: from Gregorian Chant to modern song, in Latin, English, Maori, and Tongan. At their Stella Maris Jubilate in early September, the choir of St James School, Aranui got us off to a great start with two sacred waiata. The Tongan Choir of St Anne's Woolston gave us four-part harmony. Two weeks later, the Christ the Redeemer Jubilate featured college choirs from St Bede's, Marian, and Villa Maria, all of whom provided well polished performances. For the first time, we welcomed Prima Voce, the junior choir from Villa Maria, and the Year 9 choir from St Bede's. The choir of St Albans Catholic School offered Mozart's Ave Verum, showing again that singing the music of classical composers in Latin is both achievable and satisfying. This latter concert concluded the Christchurch series and did so in a packed Pro-Cathedral. We have more about our final concert in Greymouth in our West Coast Feature.

In concluding our Christchurch North concert, I encouraged the singers and audience to see that they are part of a large movement of singers throughout any one year. This

people encounter Jesus and community in a real and joyful way. Seeing a group of young people worship and grow together was incredibly special. The energy, the openness, and the sense of God's presence were something special."

Plans are already under way for Antioch 2026, with organisers dreaming even bigger and aiming to welcome even more young people into this transformative experience.



St James School (Aranui) Choir, Christchurch East concert



Villa Maria College Choir, Christchurch North concert

year, we estimate around 950 choral singers and 2,000 in our collective audiences. Every year has its own stand-out musical moments but it is gratifying that this year, 33 of our 35 schools took part, with a good number of parish singers involved. The well-known hymn "Sing a New Song" concluded each concert this year. As a Catholic musician and singer, I was moved each time to hear that number of singers proclaiming the words "I know my saviour lives."



St Bede's College Choir, Christchurch North concert

Diocesan Jubilee Pilgrimage to Northland

by Matt O'Connell - Evangelisation Coordinator, Christchurch Diocese



Pilgrims gathered around
Marsden Cross in Rangihoua Bay

In this Jubilee year, many in our diocese have gone on pilgrimage, seeking to grow more deeply in their faith. Some have gone overseas, others have gone to our four dedicated Sacred Sites in our diocese.

One of the highlights of the year was the diocesan pilgrimage to Northland, to the very places where the Catholic faith was born in New Zealand. 32 pilgrims from Christchurch, Ashburton, and Timaru set out to walk in the footsteps of the very first missionaries, who left everything to bring the Catholic faith to Aotearoa New Zealand.

“All the pilgrims who attended loved the experience and were deeply impacted.”

Our pilgrimage began in Auckland, before we made our way north to Paihia which was to be our base for the week. We had a beautiful experience on the first evening. I had wanted to connect the pilgrims with local communities, so we arranged to have an evening Mass and potluck dinner at the Holy Family Catholic Church in Kerikeri. This was a truly beautiful occasion. In his homily, parish priest Fr Tony King-Archer spoke about why we go on pilgrimage — to grow deeper in our relationship with Jesus Christ. He spoke about the hardships of pilgrimage and how we join these to the suffering of Jesus on the Cross. After Mass, the community put on an amazing dinner for us; there was so much beautiful food that the pilgrims were lost for words. The community was so welcoming and hospitable and it was a real reminder

that hospitality, welcome, and meeting new people are important parts of any pilgrimage.

The next day, Bishop Michael Gielen joined the pilgrimage group. We started our day by travelling to the Waitāruke Sacred Heart Church just south of Mangonui. We arrived to a moving welcome from the local Māori Community. In the following Mass (for the feast of Sts Simon and Jude, apostles), Bishop Gielen reminded us that we had been called by Jesus to come on pilgrimage, and that he has more for us to do. He observed that

the 12 apostles, through the power of the Holy Spirit, set fire upon the earth, and that fire has not gone out.

After lunch, we stopped briefly at Doubtless Bay. This is where the first Catholic Mass was said in the New Zealand Territory on Christmas Day, 1769. A French Ship called the St Jean Baptiste had a Catholic Chaplain, Fr Paul-Antoine Leonard de Villefeix, OP, on board and was stationed in the bay for two weeks.

The next day was the highlight of the Pilgrimage, the foundation of the Catholic Faith in New Zealand.

First we travelled to Totara Point, site of the first Mass by Bishop Pompallier on 13 January, 1838. We gazed out on the Hokianga Harbour and could just imagine Bishop Pompallier as he sailed up the harbour and arrived at the home of

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Highlight of the pilgrimage, visiting St Mary's Church, Motuti

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Thomas and Mary Poynton. It was moving and inspiring as we learnt about their lives, their faith, and their desire to have a priest in New Zealand. They have been described as the first Catholic family of New Zealand, and they did much to support the growth of the faith in the years following.

One of the pilgrims shared that her great great grandmother was present at that first Mass on 13 January as a 10 year old. We listened in awe as she read out her relative's experience of being at that first Mass.

We then travelled the short distance to St Mary's at Motuti, the resting place of Bishop Pompallier, whose remains were returned to Motuti in 2002. The pilgrims were warmly welcomed by Deacon Ben and the Kaitiaki of St Mary's. Bishop Gielen celebrated a beautiful Mass with the community in Māori. There were tears as joyful singing lifted the roof. At the end of Mass, Bishop Gielen, on behalf of the pilgrims, asked Deacon Ben and the community to raise the casket of Bishop Pompallier for us to view. This was a solemn, sacred moment for all present. The pilgrims had reflected on Bishop

Pompallier's departure from New Zealand, probably feeling that he had failed, but the love of the Māori people brought him home to Motuti.

It was a day of reflection about the first missionaries that came to this land. What St Pope John Paul II once said about the three wise men can equally be applied to Bishop Pompallier and these first missionaries – "Christ had opened their minds and hearts" to begin the long journey ... "they did not hesitate to leave everything behind." They made their own pilgrimage, responding to the inner call from Jesus Christ to set out, leaving the comfortable behind, to the other side of the world to bring the good news. This was a truly blessed and powerful day.

The pilgrims followed the passage of the first missionaries the next day as they travelled to the National Shrine of St Peter Chanel in Russell. St Peter was on the first boat with Bishop Pompallier, and was dropped off at Futuna with another brother, where he lost his life for the faith in 1841. The pilgrims learnt more about his life, celebrated Mass at the Shrine, and venerated his relic.



St Mary's Church, Motuti

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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

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Totara Point, site of the first Mass in New Zealand, celebrated by Bishop Pompallier on January 13th, 1838

Diary entry documenting the account of a pilgrim's great great Grandmother at the first Mass at Totara Point on 13 January 1838.

"Three days after his (Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier) arrival with two other priests, the first Mass was held on New Zealand soil in the Poynton home at Totara Point. It was a joyful occasion for everyone, and I was able to receive Communion for the first time since my First Communion in St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney Town. It was an occasion for everyone to wear their finery and my beautiful birthday dress, and matching ribbon. Families met for the first time and bonds were made. Each Sunday attendance at Mass became a ritual of celebration and friendship. Young Thomas was one of the Altar-boys for that first Mass and received a beautiful French Crucifix to commemorate the occasion. It was blessed by the Bishop, and became a precious family heirloom."

The pilgrims then headed to the Pompallier Mission and Printery, where we learnt about the amazing story of the printing press they used to print prayer books for the Māori people.

Later the same day, the group headed to the Waitangi Treaty grounds. The tour began with a powerful cultural performance at Te Whare Runanga, followed by a very informative guided tour of the grounds. Pilgrims visited the Treaty House and learnt all about the signing of the treaty. The time at Waitangi finished with an evening of fellowship, another cultural performance, and a hangi at the Whare Waka Café.

The final day of our Jubilee Pilgrimage to Northland began with Mass, before we headed back to Auckland via the Waipu Forest, where we stopped and gazed at Tāne Mahuta, and the Kauri Museum.

It was a truly blessed and sacred experience. All the pilgrims who attended loved the experience and were deeply

impacted. It was a privilege and blessing to lead this group of people to these sacred places of our faith in New Zealand. Pope Benedict XVI reminded us many years ago that even though the outward journey is finished, it is not the end, "but a new journey begins — an inner pilgrimage." This is important not just for those pilgrims who travelled to Northland, but all of us who have travelled through this Jubilee Year as 'Pilgrims of Hope.' Like the three wise men who "returned home by different way," all of us will be called to be different and changed as a result of this Jubilee Year.

We might also reflect on the role of pilgrimage in our spiritual lives as we head into the new year. We have seen how pilgrimage is at the heart of a Jubilee year, but we are also called to go on pilgrimage at other times in our faith journey — making a journey to seek Jesus Christ, to encounter him more deeply and respond more fully to his grace and his call on our life. As you rest and reflect over the summer holidays, perhaps think and pray about what the Lord is asking of you next year. The diocese will have further opportunities to go on pilgrimage in 2026, including another Northland Pilgrimage. If you might be interested, please contact Matt O'Connell on 03 366 9869, or moconnell@cdoc.nz.

The Diocesan Northland Pilgrimage, and indeed the whole Jubilee year, has been a blessing to this Diocese and the whole of the Catholic Church. In this upcoming Christmas season, as we reflect on the graces of this year, continue to be open to the Lord's call on your life and the promptings of the Holy Spirit. If you hear the call, "do not hesitate to leave everything," as the first missionaries did, because our deepest desire is "to worship Jesus."

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Photo credit: CNS photo/Lola Gomez



New Zealand Bishops echo Pope Leo's words in new letter

New Zealand's Catholic Bishops have welcomed Pope Leo's first major teaching document, calling it a "powerful reminder of the Christian imperative to love the poor."

The Vatican published *Dilexi Te* (*I Have Loved You*) in October. The document, formally called an apostolic exhortation, carries significant weight within papal teaching.

Pope Francis had started work on the letter earlier this year, with Pope Leo revising it and adding some of his own reflections.

"In a world in which the divide between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' appears to be increasing exponentially, Popes Francis and Leo have laid out starkly the demand on Christians to love the poor," said Bishop Michael Dooley, vice president of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference.

"It is no coincidence that the document was signed on 4 October, the feast day of St Francis, a champion for the poor," Bishop Dooley said.

In *Dilexi Te*, the case for caring for those in poverty is traced back 2000 years to the life and impact of Jesus. The authors reference Scripture passages, Church leaders from the first century onwards, and teaching through the centuries to emphasise the issue.

The document also chronicles many examples of how Catholic individuals and communities have demonstrated their love for the poor through action. It cites hospitals — which emerged from the early

Church — as well as Catholic schools, social service agencies, aged care services, justice efforts for prisoners, and care for migrants.

"*Dilexi Te* re-introduces us to some of the giants of our Catholic tradition who have lived out this mission — people like St Francis, St Clare and St Benedict," Bishop Dooley said.

"In our own New Zealand context, we think of the incredible life of service of Meri Hohepa Suzanne Aubert and her collaborators, as well as St Mary MacKillop and her sisters founding schools focused on girls and the poor."


Bishop Dooley said the exhortation is not simply a chronology of Catholic heroes of yesterday. It is a clarion call to Catholics — and all people of good will — to carry out

their own practical actions to love for and support those in poverty.

"Ministries like Catholic Social Services, Caritas, MissioNZ, and St Vincent de Paul are doing that in concrete ways," he said.

"And while there is a significant emphasis on financial hardship, Pope Leo invites us to consider how people suffer poverty spiritually, morally, culturally, as well as those who find themselves without various human rights. Ultimately, Popes Francis and Leo are reminding us that every human person has inherent and equal dignity — regardless of their personal circumstances. And they are challenging us to play our part in meaningfully supporting those who find themselves facing difficulty."

Read *Dilexi Te* on the Vatican's website.




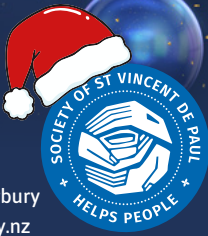
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"Dilexi Te" in Action - *Walking with the Poor*

by Luis Arevalo, Catholic Social Services Manager

In *Dilexi Te*, "I have Loved You", Pope Leo articulates a truth we desire to live by every day at Catholic Social Services (CSS). He makes clear that the poor are not problems to be solved but the very face of Christ, asking to be encountered. The preferential love for the poor is not an optional extra, it is at the heart of Christ's ministry, articulated in, through, and by his Church.

Along with all Catholic Social Teaching, *Dilexi Te* makes clear that the Gospel is for all people, including the poor. The Gospel calls us to see that Christ is already present, because everyone is made in the image and likeness of God.

"The poor are not problems to be solved but the very face of Christ, asking to be encountered."

Pope Leo reminds us that Christ humbled himself to be close to us. He writes: "Our faith in Christ, who became poor, and was always close to the poor and the outcast, is the basis of our concern for the integral development of society's most neglected members." At CSS, we are never comfortable with the language of "charity", if by charity, we are merely being condescending to the poor, that we are being kind in our supposed superiority. What we seek to practice is charity in the truest sense: a recognition that in serving those whom society marginalises, we are not doing people favours, but fulfilling our intrinsic Christian vocation, to love our

neighbour as Christ has loved us.

"Ubi Caritas et amor, Deus ibi est" (where there is charity and love, God abides.) These are the words of the Entrance Antiphon at the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday evening, where Jesus washes the feet of his disciples.

There are many reasons why people who come to us are poor. Those who may have material wealth, may hold many presumptions as to why people find themselves in difficult circumstances. Pope Leo puts it bluntly when he says: "The poor are not there by chance or by blind and cruel fate." They are

there because of decisions made in boardrooms and parliaments, because of economic structures when they prioritise profit over people.

The work of CSS operates on multiple levels. Yes, we provide immediate relief: the counselling session, the meal, the practical support. Every person we serve with dignity, is a small act of resistance against the "throwaway culture" that Pope Leo decries.

Perhaps the most challenging invitation in *Dilexi Te* is the call to see the poor not as objects of our service, but as subjects with agency, wisdom, and something

essential to teach us. Pope Leo writes: "We must 'let ourselves be evangelized' by the poor and acknowledge 'the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.'"

At CSS, the most innovative aspects of our service delivery have often come from listening to those we serve. Pope Leo reminds us that "the poor are not a sociological category, but the very 'flesh' of Christ," which means encountering them should change us as much as we hope to support them and allow them to discover Christ in us.

Care for the poor is not just a ministry the Church performs, it is constitutive of the Church's identity. Pope Leo is uncompromising: "Any Church community, if it thinks it can comfortably go its own way without creative concern and effective cooperation in helping the poor to live with dignity and reaching out to everyone, will also risk breaking down." Along with all seeking to walk with the poor, our work at CSS is not an initiative to help Catholics feel better about ourselves. It is but a small way we can live out the Gospel. In my last article for Inform, I referred to the Corporal Works of Mercy. Every Catholic in our diocese has a stake in this work because it embodies what we believe about human dignity, solidarity, and God's preferential love for the poor.

Pope Leo insists that authentic care for the poor must address political and economic structures: "We need to be increasingly committed to resolving the structural causes of poverty. This is a pressing need

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that cannot be delayed.” Our immediate services matter: they represent Christ’s compassion made tangible. But if we are not also working toward a society where fewer people need emergency support, we are not living the full implications of Catholic Social Teaching.

At CSS, we find ourselves at the intersection of mercy and justice, immediate compassion and structural transformation. We are called to serve individuals with excellence. We are also called to challenge the forces that create their need.

The invitation Pope Leo extends is both simple and impossibly demanding: to see the poor not as problems to be solved, but as the face of Christ asking to be loved. At CSS, seeing the face of Christ in those we serve is a theological imperative: it is Monday morning, it is the person

in the waiting room, it is the moment of encounter when professional distance dissolves and we simply meet another human being in their need.

This is what it means to live *Dilexi Te*: to receive Christ’s love for the poor and to make that love tangible, immediate and real. Every day at CSS, in countless unremarkable moments, we are seeking to reflect *Dilexi Te*.

“I have loved you.” These words, chosen by Pope Leo, are the words we embody through our work. In embodying them, we discover they are also spoken to us: for in serving the poor, we encounter the One who became poor for our sake, and nothing is ever the same again.

Join us in answering this call. The poor are not waiting for our convenience: they are Christ asking to be encountered, now.

Editor's note:

In my own reading of this Exhortation, I was struck by its two concluding paragraphs which I quote here:

¹²⁰. Christian love breaks down every barrier, brings close those who were distant, unites strangers, and reconciles enemies. It spans chasms that are humanly impossible to bridge, and it penetrates to the most hidden crevices of society. By its very nature, Christian love is prophetic: it works miracles and knows no limits. It makes what was apparently impossible happen. Love is above all a way of looking at life and a way of living it. A Church that sets no limits to love, that knows no enemies to fight but only men and women to love, is the Church that the world needs today.

¹²¹. Through your work, your efforts to change unjust social structures or your simple, heartfelt gesture of closeness and support, the poor will come to realize that Jesus’ words are addressed personally to each of them: “I have loved you” (Rev 33.9).



Welcoming the Te Rangimārie Chaplaincy to St Mary's Pro-Cathedral

by Pa Monty Bamford - Chaplain, Te Rangimārie Chaplaincy

For many, the most noticeable change following the Second Vatican Council was the use of vernacular languages in the celebration of Mass. Interestingly, while Vatican II permitted the vernacular for readings and certain prayers, it also affirmed that Latin should be preserved in the Latin Rite and remains the default language of the Latin Church. Consequently, my seminary formation was sufficient that I can—and do—celebrate Mass in Latin, English, and Te Reo Māori. Throughout the diocese, Mass is also celebrated in Samoan, Tagalog, Spanish, Indonesian, Mandarin, and Bisaya. This diversity is a positive fruit of the Council.

In January 2023, Bishop Michael Gielen asked me to be the Chaplain of the Te Rangimārie Chaplaincy — the Maori Catholic community in Ōtautahi Christchurch. In September 2023, when Bishop Gielen began consultations regarding the location of a new cathedral, the first group he approached was the Katorika mana whenua—the Māori Catholic community of Christchurch. From that engagement, a compelling historical narrative emerged, significantly influencing his decision to locate the new cathedral on the Barbadoes Street site.

Following the public announcement of the site in April 2024, Bishop Gielen initiated further consultation to discern an appropriate name. In August 2024, the name Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament — Te Hāhi Matua o te Hākarameta Tapu Rawa was adopted. In November 2024, he invited the Te Rangimārie Chaplaincy to be based at the new cathedral site. The proposal was considered at a hui that month, attended by our respected kaumatua Bob Te Miha (RIP 14/3/2025) and was warmly accepted.

The hui also mandated that the Chaplaincy explore interim venues for Miha Māori while the cathedral is under construction. After a discernment process involving several options and robust discussion at a hui in May 2025, three preferred locations were submitted to Bishop Gielen for final consideration. Beginning Sunday, 7 December 2025, Mass in Te Reo Māori is now celebrated weekly at St Mary's Pro-Cathedral until the new Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament is completed.



The Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand has long recognised the unique place of Māori as tangata whenua—the first people of the land. Bishop Pompallier asked the native people to teach him aspects of Māori tikanga (protocol), Te Reo Māori (language), and Te Ao Māori (the worldview) when he first arrived on these shores. The New Zealand Catholic Bishops have consistently affirmed the Church's commitment to fostering bi-cultural relationships within our multi-cultural society. In our diocese, the rebuilding of the cathedral presents a clear opportunity to weave the distinct tribal expressions of Ngai Tahu (the main iwi in the South Island) and their hapu into parish and diocesan life.

As Chaplain to the Te Rangimārie Chaplaincy over the past three years, I have been deeply moved by the community's spiritual traditions that resonate with Catholic spirituality. The concept of whakapapa—genealogy and connection—mirrors our understanding of the Communion of Saints. The practices of inoi (prayer), waiata (song), and pōwhiri (ritual welcome) fit naturally within our Catholic liturgical life. Some ritual elements surrounding Matariki (the Māori New Year) carry distinctly Eucharistic undertones.

The Te Rangimārie Chaplaincy brings gifts of spirituality, resilience, and communal wisdom that can renew our diocese. Their presence invites us to become more relational, more grounded in the land, and more attentive to God in our daily life. As the Te Rangimarie Chaplaincy begins worship at St Mary's Pro-Cathedral, and then at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament when it is built, our cathedral will truly become a whare inoi—a house of prayer—for all peoples, a place where Latin and vernacular languages exist side by side. In doing so, the Catholic Diocese of Christchurch will reflect the bi-cultural foundation of Aotearoa New Zealand and embody the Gospel call to be one body, one spirit, in Christ.



Student leaders, teachers and diocesan staff at the Catholic School Youth Ministry Equipping School in Canberra

Catholic Schools Youth Ministry International in the Diocese of Christchurch

Mass in Te Reo Māori will be celebrated at the following times:

First Sunday of the month

12:30pm, Blessed Sacrament Chapel, St Mary's Pro-Cathedral

Second Sunday of the month

12:30pm, Blessed Sacrament Chapel, St Mary's Pro-Cathedral

Third Sunday of the month

12:30pm, Blessed Sacrament Chapel, St Mary's Pro-Cathedral

Fourth Sunday of the month

6:00pm, St Mary's Pro-Cathedral (Parish Mass)

Fifth Sunday of the month

(when applicable)
12:30pm, Blessed Sacrament Chapel, St Mary's Pro-Cathedral

The Catholic Schools Youth Ministry International (CSYMI) has a vision to inspire, renew, and equip Catholic schools as centres of evangelisation. Its primary aim is to help Catholic school leaders, teachers, and students develop and sustain a personal living relationship with Jesus and a strong Catholic identity, through ongoing formation and participation in the life and mission of the Church. Formation is the key.

In February of this year, a group of student leaders and teachers from John Paul II High School, St Thomas of Canterbury College, and Catholic Cathedral College joined with diocesan staff to attend the Catholic School Youth Ministry Equipping School in Canberra. The "Equipping School" is a gathering of student ministry leaders from Catholic colleges to 'equip' them to effectively serve in their own schools, by leading junior retreats, prayer services, service programmes, and developing 'peer to peer' ministry. In the first year of implementation in our diocese, we have groups of enthusiastic students leading junior retreats in their own secondary school, as well as leading class retreats in local Catholic primary schools.

Bishop Michael is very supportive of this programme. In 2024, he invited all Catholic secondary school principals and Directors of Religious Studies, together with priests and parish staff, to Canberra for the "Currents of Grace" conference, which was an introduction to the CSYMI model. In November 2025, a three-day 'Spiritus' formation programme for 120 Catholic teachers and leaders was held in Christchurch.

In 2026, the Catholic Youth Team will deliver the Equipping School here in Christchurch, and later in the year, the three pilot secondary schools will have all their Year 10 students come together for the "Catch the Wave" retreat experience. Following this, they will be invited to be part of a Year 11 Youth Ministry class within their school in 2027.

In this first year of implementation, the impact on the young people in our pilot schools has been significant. This has led to strong interest from our Catholic Primary schools to also be involved, through the CSYMI Junior programme. Eleven Catholic primary schools in our diocese will be pilot schools for CSYMI Junior in 2026. We appreciate your prayers in support of this exciting programme.

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A Year in Safeguarding in the Catholic Diocese of Christchurch

It's been another busy year for safeguarding in the Christchurch diocese. 57 Safeguarding Workshops were facilitated across all diocesan locations, with over 800 volunteers in attendance. Parishes and Catholic communities in the diocese continue to work hard to collectively make significant progress in embedding safeguarding best practices to protect children, vulnerable adults, volunteers, and all members of the Church community.

These huge efforts reflect a mutually improving Church safeguarding culture, which is creating safer, accountable, and transparent Church environments.

A sense of safety, both emotional and social, creates the conditions where personal faith can deepen, grow, and flourish. With a focus on implementing national safeguarding standards, safe practices, training, formation, culture building, monitoring and compliance, support for survivors and communities, and integration of recommendations, we are well placed to create and maintain safe environments.

What changes are safeguarding practices making at a local level? This is what we have heard back:

Testimonial:

Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish

"The instigation of the Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct set an expectation and standard for volunteers to adhere to. The safety and wellbeing of children and adults-at-risk is our highest priority. Safeguarding requires everyone within the Church to do their part. The more we have a mindset of a culture of safety within the Church, the more people will feel safe, protected and heard."

Testimonial: Nazareth Care

"Nazareth Care is a safer place for everyone. By placing the best interests of vulnerable individuals at the heart of our operations, we've created an environment where everyone feels safe to work, learn, and thrive. Clear reporting mechanisms and leadership commitment are key to this transformation. This approach has significantly improved transparency and

collaboration. These improvements have been achieved alongside our ongoing and robust safeguarding training programmes."

- Sr Paula Asiasiau: Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth (CSN)

Pope Leo XIV's words at the 2025 Safeguarding Conference in the Philippines highlights the Church's commitment to safeguarding. He described the Church as "our spiritual home," where every parish and pastoral activity should be a place "to glorify God and care for others, especially children and the vulnerable. In this regard," Pope Leo said, "I renew my appeal that there can be no tolerance for any form of abuse in the Church."

May I thank all those of you who have committed yourselves to a culture of safeguarding in the Christchurch Diocese. Your ongoing commitment means that trust can be regained and that we can be free to glorify God, have a deepened love and respect for each other, and be more confident that those searching for God will find Him in our midst.



Participants of the 2025 SCCANZ Kickstart Day (online leadership safeguarding course)

To view dates for upcoming safeguarding workshops please visit the website:

cdocsafeguarding.nz

To read the Executive Summary of the Christchurch Diocese National Office for Professional Standards External Review of the safeguarding in the diocese scan here >



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Devotees in Christchurch Diocese celebrate 10th year of Our Lady Peñafrancia feast

by our Filipino Chaplaincy

For ten powerful years, the Diocese of Christchurch has stood in unwavering devotion to Our Lady of Peñafrancia. This year's Peñafrancia festivities ignited hearts, stirred spirits, and united the Filipino community in a moving celebration of faith and tradition.

The nine-day novena began on 11 September at Sacred Heart Church in Addington. Each evening, families and community groups stepped forward to sponsor the novena and Mass, while a rotation of priests led the celebrations. It was not just the Bicolano faithful who gathered; Filipinos from all walks came together, bonded by shared belief and deep reverence.

On 20 September, a fluvial procession at Lyttelton Harbour drew devotees from throughout the Diocese. Boats glided across the water in a stirring tribute, a visual prayer that echoed far beyond the shore.

*“More than a tradition,
Peñafrancia is a homecoming of hearts”*

The main feast day followed on 21 September at Catholic Cathedral College Hall, with Fr Rex Ramos, Filipino Chaplain and parish priest of the Hurunui parish, presiding. A campus procession preceded the Mass, held in step with the grand Peñafrancia celebration in Naga City, Philippines.

Fr Rex said in his homily that: "The true devotion to Our Lady is not in being clothed in gold, but in giving to the poor. The true devotion to Our Lady is not in lighting candles, but in being a guiding



Campus procession at Catholic Cathedral College led by Fr Rex Ramos

light to those who are in the dark. The true devotion to Our Lady is not in offering flowers. It is in spreading fragrance in those downtrodden places where our poor brethren live in suffering. The fragrance

the single most who owns her heart, is only Jesus Christ. Jesus became the smallest version of himself, so it would be easier for us to cuddle him. God the Divine became small, so it would be easier for us to love Him."

Over 800 devotees filled the hall; an extraordinary gathering of faith, culture, and community.

Behind this growing celebration is the Bicol Express Community of Canterbury (BECC), who carry forward the vision first lit by the late Fr Benito Velasco. A priest from the Archdiocese of Caceres, Fr Velasco planted the seeds of this devotion in Christchurch ten years ago—and every year since, it has flourished.

More than a tradition, Peñafrancia is a homecoming of hearts. It is not just for Bicolanos—it is for every Filipino who calls on "Ina," the beloved intercessor whose miracles continue to inspire and unite.



Our Lady Peñafrancia feast day celebration at Catholic Cathedral College Hall



Celebrating 20 Years

Thanks to your prayers, service and generosity, the John Paul II Centre for Life has been loving, serving and defending life, marriages and families in the Diocese for 20 years. On 12 November, Bishop Michael Gielen celebrated a Mass of thanksgiving, followed by a dinner where many supporters gathered to mark this milestone. The evening honoured retiring Director Maria Schmetzer for her faithful leadership and thanked Fr Peter Farrant for his service as chaplain. Bishop Gielen blessed the Centre as it enters a new chapter, and the team at the Centre asks for your continued prayers and support.

Photo Credit - Sarah Blair Photographer



Bishop Michael blesses former Directors, Maria Schmetzer and Theresa Mischewski, and current Director Brigid Conroy



Maria Schmetzer, founder and retired Director, with husband Tony. Maria was gifted an aptly titled "Pope John Paul II" rose, which also grows in the Vatican



Meet the team

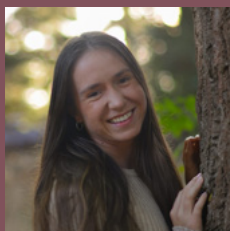
The John Paul II Centre for Life equips young adults, married couples, and families with formation, resources, and pastoral support rooted in St John Paul II's vision for the human person. Our goal is to help every person discover their dignity and live in life-giving relationships - cultivating a culture where all human life is valued from conception to natural death.



Brigid Conroy
Director



Debra McTague
Special Projects
Coordinator



Jessie Mischewski
Marketing & Social
Media Coordinator



Lara Paterson
Pastoral Support



Megan Emery
Pastoral Support



Former Director John Kennedy, and his wife Celia, share memories at dinner of the Centre's founding and many formation initiatives



Cultivating a culture of life-giving love

by Brigid Conroy, John Paul II Centre for Life and Briegé Entwistle, Loving for Life NZ

We both remember being told to save physical affection for marriage, while every song, movie, and friend insisted that "love" meant following our feelings. The mixed messages left us more confused than guided.

Whether you came of age in the 60s, 90s, or are navigating young adulthood today, the experience is remarkably similar: a culture equating freedom with "anything goes," and well-meaning voices responding with fear rather than wisdom. One extreme tells us to indulge every desire. The other tells us to suppress them entirely.

But what if neither extreme is the answer?

This September and October, Holy Family Parish asked Loving for Life NZ and the John Paul II Centre for Life to run a four-part series for their young adults - supporting a healthy dating culture in their community.

Centred on the themes of friendship, relationships, dating, and vocation, the series invited participants to engage with the Church's beautiful vision for love and human flourishing. Up to 70 young people attended each session, hungry for real answers about love and relationships, accompanied by parish couples and supported by the young adults' leadership team.

St John Paul II understood what we're all searching for: a vision of love that's

neither naive nor cynical, that takes seriously both our dignity and our deepest desires. He would always encourage young people with the message: "Do not be afraid! Open wide the doors to Christ." To have the courage to open yourself up, not to everything, not to nothing - but to Christ, who "knows what is in man" better than we know ourselves.

This is what we call "life-giving love" - love that finds its fulfilment in laying down one's life, that doesn't grasp or use, but gives and receives in true freedom. Cultivating a culture shaped by this vision is exactly what the John Paul II Centre for Life and Loving for Life NZ exist to do.

We share office space at the Diocesan Offices, but more importantly, we share a mission: helping people of all ages encounter God's vision for human life, love, and relationships. Through formation programs, resources, and accompaniment, we're creating spaces where Christ's "words of life" can be heard above the cultural noise.

Find out more

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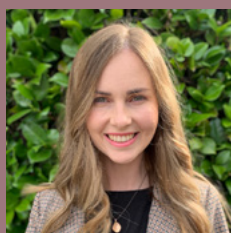
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Loving for Life NZ

Loving for Life NZ encourages young people to understand their identity, value, and relationships through Christian-based relationships and sexuality education. We serve primary and secondary students, as well as parents, whānau, and educators, by providing age-appropriate, values-based programmes that nurture the whole person. Our goal is to help every young person recognise their dignity and make choices that lead to flourishing relationships and a healthy, hope-filled future.



David Jackman
Director



Briegé Entwistle
Coordinator



April Holden
Coordinator



Becky Gillespie
Auckland Coordinator





125th Anniversary of the Hobday Organ



A Musical Week at St Patrick's

125th Anniversary of the Hobday Organ

In early October, St Patrick's joyfully celebrated the 125th anniversary of its historic Hobday organ. This instrument began its life in the first church and was then transferred to the new church in the 1990's. It sits aloft in the west gallery.

Any church is blessed to have a beautiful pipe organ, and the sound of this instrument has been a continuous part of liturgical life at St Patrick's. Love for their Hobday was evident as a full church listened to more than an hour of organ music, supplemented by solo pieces by James and Stephanie Roberson, along with the parish choir, led by its long-serving director and key organiser of the event, Sue Falvey.

"The event drew enthusiastic participation from both parishioners and the wider local community," said parish priest, Fr Mathew Siji. "We were privileged to feature renowned organist Ron Newton as chief guest, and his presence certainly added a special touch to the occasion, honouring the legacy of sacred music that has enriched the parish for generations."

Jubilate West Coast

The following evening saw the final Jubilate for 2025, bringing together our three schools: St Patrick's and John Paul II High School in Greymouth, and St Mary's Hokitika. "This musical event showcased the talents of young performers and highlighted the unity of the Catholic school communities," said Greymouth parish priest, Fr Mathew Siji.

The three schools prepared a shared repertoire of Catholic sacred music

which formed the bedrock of an hour-long concert in St Patrick's church.

This programme was supplemented by individual items from all three schools, along with solo songs from talented couple James and Stephanie Roberson. Jubilate Director Ken Joblin also offered some beautiful chant from a millennium ago.

"It was a great evening which we love supporting. We are looking forward to next year," said St Patrick's School Principal, Ian Johnson. "The kids always enjoy it," added Parish Youth Worker Ivory Wallace.

A feature of this event is the broadening of Jubilate from the parish school in its earlier years, to more recently including John Paul II and St Mary's Hokitika. Joanie Roberson is Director of Religious Studies at the high school. "It is delightful to see the confidence and joy in music that is growing amongst many members of our school community, as well as enthusiasm for more and more to get involved and learn new skills," she said.

James Roberson is Head of Music at John Paul II High School and 2025 is his second year directing his school choir in Jubilate. They began the concert with a choral arrangement of John Farnham's well known 'change' anthem, "You're the Voice," and concluded with a setting of Psalm 95 (96) "Sing a New Song", composed especially for Jubilate by James himself. "It was a wonderful festival this year and we very much enjoyed it," he said. "I can't promise to write a piece for every year but it was great to be able to contribute to the existing Psalter tradition! We will very much look forward to next year for another Jubilate festival - I'll have to start thinking about repertoire!"

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The evening brought together 50 young singers and an audience of around 80. Maria Lockington is on the staff of St Mary's Hokitika. "It was a memorable, slick, and very special event," she said. "It was an incredible blessing to be there and hear the talent from all three schools. We have had so much positive feedback."

Sacramental Life at St Patrick's, Greymouth

On the feast of Corpus Christi, ten children received their First Holy Communion, marking a significant step in their spiritual journey. Bishop Michael Gielen graced St Patrick's with a special visit to baptise five students from St Patrick's School. These young candidates were well prepared through the school's sacramental programme. Fourteen students from John Paul II High School were Confirmed by our bishop. These important sacramental steps were filled with grace and joy, bringing together our school and parish community, to celebrate the deepening of faith among these young individuals.

What a great day!

On Sunday 9 November, more than 200 faithful parishioners from Greymouth, Hokitika, and South Westland gathered in the oldest church of the West Coast, St Patrick's, Ross, for their Jubilee Year Pilgrimage. Organised by Fr Peter Head, parish priest of South Westland, this was a wonderful time of meeting together and sharing our faith, hope, and love.



Jubilate West Coast (from top) John Paul II High School; St Mary's Hokitika; Combined Choirs



Greymouth Confirmation 2025



(left) Greymouth Baptismal Mass; Greymouth First Holy Communion



Hobday Organ Event

A Century of Faith: St Paul's, Kokatahi

In the heart of the Kokatahi Valley, where the farmland stretches toward the Southern Alps and the rhythm of daily life still follows the milking shed, a small timber church has stood quietly for 100 years. St Paul's Catholic Church is more than a building: it is a symbol of endurance, faith, and belonging for generations of Westland families.

On the weekend of 29-31 March, parishioners and visitors gathered, to the very day, one hundred years since the first Mass and Dedication of St Paul's. Local parishioners from the Kokatahi-Koiterangi (Kowhitirangi) community, along with members of the wider St Mary's Hokitika Parish and beyond, came together to honour a century of worship and witness. Unlike the original dedication in 1925, when Bishop Brodie was unable to attend, this time the community was honoured to welcome Bishop Michael Gielen, who joined Parish Priest Fr Huynh Tran, to celebrate the Centenary Mass. Our bishop also joined the congregation later that evening, at the celebratory dinner held in the Kokatahi Hall.



Preparing for a Milestone

Preparations for the centenary began many months in advance. Parishioners met regularly to plan the weekend's programme, research the church's history, and make sure every detail was worthy of such an occasion. The window above the altar needed repair, and the church itself was due for a fresh coat of paint. Local builder Matthew Fairmaid

generously volunteered his time, equipment, and skill to carry out the work, supported by many helping hands from the parish community. By the time the weekend arrived, the little church looked as radiant as it had on its opening day.

A Weekend of Prayer and Remembrance

The celebrations began on Friday evening, 28 March, with a gathering at St Paul's to pray the Rosary. As the familiar words echoed through the timber interior, parishioners reflected on the faith of those who came before them. A talk by Mary O'Connor followed, sharing stories of the people whose names appear on brass plaques and memorials inside the church — early donors and families whose generosity and devotion shaped its beginnings. These moments connected the present generation with their ancestors in a powerful, tangible way.

Walking Through History

Saturday morning dawned bright and clear. Christopher O'Malley led a history tour of the valley, tracing sites significant to the parish story. Before St Paul's was built, Masses were often held in family homes — the O'Reillys', the O'Neils' and others — or in the local hall. The tour stopped at these locations, sparking memories and conversation among older parishioners, who remembered the families and the stories attached to each place.

The tour also reflected on how the valley itself has changed. In 1925, St Paul's stood at the heart of a bustling settlement — alongside the post office and store, the butter factory, Kokatahi Hall, Kokatahi Hotel, tennis courts, sawmill, and saleyards. Today, only the church, hall, and hotel remain, silent witnesses to the transformation from small mixed farms to large, modern dairy operations. Yet through all that change, St Paul's has remained a constant — a steadfast spiritual home in an ever-shifting landscape.

In 1925 Mary Maude Moynihan donated this chalice and pattern. The inscription on the inside of the base was in Latin. Translated, it reads, "Remember Thomas and Mary Moynihan and their parents." Thomas was killed in a tree accident on their farm on 3 June 1928. Maud (nee Quinn) died 27 June 1928. Their parents were Mary (nee Brosnahan) and Denis Moynihan and Mary (nee Cunningham) and John Quinn.



A Mass to Remember

That afternoon, in warm Coast sunshine, the crowd gathered outside the church with Bishop Gielen. James O'Connor set the scene by describing what the first opening day in 1925 might have looked like. Farmers, having finished milking their small herds, would have dressed in their Sunday best and travelled by horse-drawn traps, vintage cars, or on foot, to celebrate the long-dreamed-of church their community had worked so hard to build. At the bishop's invitation, the congregation entered the church in silence — just as their predecessors might have done a century earlier. Then the hymn *All Are Welcome* rang out, filling the small space with gratitude and joy. During the Mass, the bishop invited parishioners to speak aloud the surnames of families who had been part of St Paul's through the years, as well as the names of past priests. Some families are still represented in the district today; others have long since moved away. The roll call of names was a moving tribute to generations of faith.

The offertory procession was rich with symbolism: milk and gumboots representing the valley's dairy farming heritage; paint and brushes acknowledging the countless working bees that have kept the church standing; and photographs of early clergy — Rev Dr Kennedy and Fr Thomas Campbell, who officiated at the first Mass in 1925, along with Fr Charles O'Reilly and Fr Daniel O'Connor, both local men who answered the call to priesthood. Fr O'Reilly (1863-1939) was the first priest ordained from Westland, and Fr O'Connor, now a Columban missionary, has spent over 40 years serving in Pakistan.

Honouring the Past, Celebrating the Present

Following the Mass, parishioners gathered for photos before two of the community's senior members, Tarcille O'Connor and David Roberts, planted a tree to commemorate the occasion — a living symbol of St Paul's continuing life and growth. That evening,



the celebrations continued at Kokatahi Hall, where stories and laughter filled the room. Bishop Gielen spoke warmly of his own upbringing on a dairy farm, a connection that resonated deeply with the farming community before him. Messages of congratulations were read from afar, including one from Fr Daniel O'Connor in Pakistan, and another from Fr Joaquin in the Philippines, who had been parish priest when planning for the centenary began. On Sunday, a final Mass and shared lunch brought the weekend to a close — a fitting end to a holy and memorable celebration.

A Church with a Big Heart

From its earliest fundraising efforts — jumble sales, euchre tournaments, and Paddy's Markets, to generations of baptisms, weddings, and funerals, St Paul's has always been woven into the fabric of Kokatahi life. For a hundred years, it has offered a place of prayer, community, and quiet strength to those who live and work in this rural valley. A century on, St Paul's remains as its founders dreamed — a small church with a big heart, still anchoring the spirit of Kokatahi and standing as a humble but enduring testament to faith on the West Coast.



A Joyful Day of Faith and Community *Stella Maris Parish Day Celebration*

At the start of September, Stella Maris Parish joyfully celebrated another successful Parish Day, bringing together over 500 parishioners and friends in a day filled with faith, culture, and community.

The celebration began with a beautiful Mass, celebrated by Fathers Job Thyikalamuriyil, Tang Phan, and Dan Doyle. Performances followed from all of our parish schools, showcasing the incredible gifts and talents of our young people.

A festive afternoon drew parishioners cultural food stalls, Mr Whippy, a coffee cart, and the youth ministry's sausage sizzle, along with games and activities.

This wonderful day was made possible thanks to the hard work of more than 70 volunteers and the enthusiastic support of our parish schools. It was a truly sunny, joy-filled celebration, reflecting the heart of our Stella Maris family - united in faith and friendship.



160th Dedication Mass

St Joseph the Worker, Lyttelton

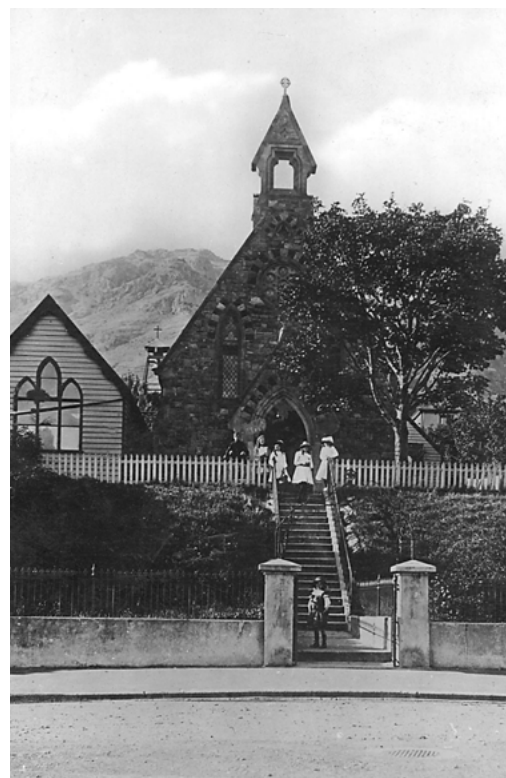
by Dave Sanders, Host and Organiser of this event

During Labour Weekend, a special Mass was offered to mark the 160th anniversary of St Joseph's Church, Lyttelton. Past Lyttelton parishioners joined together at St Anne's Church, Woolston, in the more recently established Stella Maris Parish of Christchurch East, to celebrate and acknowledge this anniversary. We were blessed to have our last three Lyttelton parish priests in attendance, with Fr Denis Nolan and Fr Dan Doyle concelebrating the Mass. Our last living Lyttelton Sister of Mercy, Sister Judith Murphy, also joined us from Nazareth House, supported by Sister Kathleen and Sister Anne. Mass was followed by hospitality in St Anne's church hall.

St Joseph's Parish held its first Mass on 29 June 1865, some 22 years before the establishment of the Catholic Diocese of Christchurch.

Since that time, St Joseph's has been a dedicated spiritual family. Included in our Parish were two schools (St Mary's and St Joseph's) and our Sisters of Mercy.

St Joseph's church was completed on schedule and opened on the feast of Sts Peter and Paul on 29 June 1865, at a cost of 900 pounds. Funds for the new church were not only collected locally, but also from the Wellington and Sydney archdioceses, and 100 pounds was contributed as a gift from the provincial government of the day.



*“We give thanks for the ministry
of the Sisters of Mercy”*



Eventually, after completion of its fit-out, the total cost was twelve hundred pounds.

The Lyttelton Times reported a couple of weeks later:

“The new church in Lyttelton was opened for divine service on the 29th June. A numerous congregation assembled for the eleven am service, officiated by Reverends Jean Chataigner and J C Chervier. A procession was formed and the outer walls were blessed with Holy Water. The Church was elegantly decorated with flowers and the Mass was filled with much love and hope.”

With the 2010-11 Canterbury earthquakes sadly taking their toll, we all observed the slow and saddening destruction of our historic and sacred church, until the June 2011 quake ended our stunning gothic stone church forever. During our 160 years and up until our final Mass in 2022, we were blessed with spiritual support from no less than thirty three priests. We give thanks for the ministry of the Sisters of Mercy throughout that time. We know St Joseph will continue to look over us all and intercede for our community and those associated with it. St Joseph the Worker, pray for us.



Volunteers are Appreciated in South Canterbury

The parish of St Mary MacKillop recently acknowledged and honoured the dedication of our volunteers, who carry out the many roles ensuring the smooth running of our three churches. It was a remarkable achievement and unfolded smoothly and efficiently. The lunch was a culinary delight, offering an impressive variety of dishes, including a 'suckling pig'. We express our heartfelt gratitude to all parishioners who contribute to the community through their diverse services.



Our Lady of the Plains Celebrates Two Events

Our Catholic Women's League (CWL) recently hosted 54 women from our parish and around the diocese for a Daffodil Day gathering. Guests enjoyed a delicious soup and savoury lunch, followed by a four round Fun Quiz. Everyone got into the spirit of the day by wearing a splash of yellow, with some going all out wearing bright yellow outfits, adding an extra layer of fun to the day. It was a wonderful day of faith, service, fellowship, and fun, raising \$950 for the

Cancer Society, a cause close to many hearts. Together we lived out our motto of 'Faith and Service,' with a generous portion of friendship and laughter.

The annual quiz night for our parish was recently held in Lincoln's St Patrick's church centre. The fundraising result of the evening was \$900, a fantastic result. It will go a long way to help our newly resident family, refugees from Afghanistan. They are sponsored by our local St Vincent de Paul conference, having had a long and harrowing journey to get here. They are very happy to call New Zealand their home, and the money raised will go a long way to meeting the educational needs of their six children over the coming year.



Celebrating All Saints

by Michelle Carshalton



On the eve of All Saints Day, St Peter Chanel Parish, Waimakariri, hosted a carnival style Saints Party. We wanted to celebrate the saints of our Church, and offer a fun, Catholic alternative to other Halloween type events running in the community.

Held at St Patrick's School, Kaiapoi, Juanita and Ben Kearns led a team of volunteers who ran fun games and activities from 4pm-6pm. There was a slew of arrows fired at balloon dragons, as the children celebrated the heroism of St George, fires fought in honour of St Florian, gold panning in recognition of St Barbara, cookie decorating, hook-a-duck, and much more! Children received prizes at each carnival stall, which included child-friendly saint cards and a special treat related to the saint.

Over 200 people from the parish, schools, and general community attended the event, with many walking in off the street, having never encountered the beauty and joy of the Catholic tradition of celebrating the saints.

While the children were engaged in activities, the parents were treated to a cup of tea and a spread of food put on by the St Vincent de Paul Conference of Kaiapoi.

As the evening wrapped up, it was clear that this celebration did more than honour the saints; it clearly showed how faith, fun, and community could weave together, to create something beautiful and worth celebrating.



Getting the snakes out of Ireland like St Patrick

Restoration of a Taonga

Our Lady of Fatima Statue

by Margreet Vissers, former Mairehau parishioner and now part of our Pro-Cathedral Community



On the morning after the 2010 earthquake, Christina Kilkelly and Alister Castillo, parishioners of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Mairehau, entered the church to check for damage. They found the large statue of Our Lady in pieces on the floor. The earthquake had sent it crashing to the ground, crushing the crown, smashing the head and face, and splintering and cracking the length of the statue. Christina and Alister carefully gathered the broken pieces and stored them in the church kitchen, together with the broken statue.

At the time, Evan Webb, artist, sculptor, educator, and highly skilled craftsman, was chair of the Board of Trustees of Our Lady of Fatima School. Having already repaired eight earthquake-damaged statues and crucifixes belonging to the school, he expressed an interest in restoring the statue from the church. Upon demolition of the Mairehau church building in January 2014, the statue and box of broken pieces were delivered to him at his home.

History of the statue

Bishop Edward Joyce, the fourth Bishop of Christchurch and a devotee of Our Lady, imported the statue from Portugal in 1951. It was displayed in the Lady Chapel in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament from 1951 until 1975. Fr William O'Mahony, parish priest of the newly established Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Mairehau, arranged for the statue to be loaned for the day of the inaugural parish Mass in July 1952. During a re-design of the Cathedral interior in 1974, the Lady Chapel was re-modelled and the statue replaced, with the original Icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

In 1988, an appropriate home was found in the new Our Lady of Fatima church, built on Innes Road, where the statue took pride of place on a high shelf, to the left of the sanctuary. A silver box containing soil, stones, and leaves from the Cova da Iria, site of the apparitions in Fatima, was

Details of the damaged statue in 2014, showing the extensive breaks to the head and face, splits in the wood and the crushed crown.



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Completion of the restoration. The statue was repainted and the crown was carefully reshaped and glued. The picture on the left shows Evan Webb applying gold leaf to the edge of the cape. The bottom right picture shows Olivia Webb working on the detail of the face.



(right) The fully restored statue of Our Lady of Fatima.



placed behind it. On October 13, 1992, at a Mass to mark the 75th anniversary of the apparitions in Fatima, the statue was crowned by Monsignor James Harrington with a crown made in Rome.

The sculptor

The 1.5 metre wooden (Brazilian cedar) statue was made in 1951 by Portuguese sculptor Guilherme Ferreira Thedim (1900-1985), younger brother of José Ferreira Thedim (1892-1971). In 1920, José created the statue of Our Lady, located in the Chapel of the Apparitions of Fatima. It is reported that Guilherme worked with his brother on this first statue. He later set up his own sculpture workshop and produced hundreds of images of

sacred art that are now found around the world. He was one of only a few people allowed to have contact with Sister Lucia, the surviving seer of Fatima, and had frequent correspondence with her, using her recollection of Our Lady's clothing, height, skin colour, eyes, hair, and facial expressions to assist with his sculptures.

The repair process

The meticulous repairs by Evan Webb are documented in the attached images. In the final stages of the restoration, Evan's daughter, Olivia Webb, also a fine artist and painter, completed the fine paintwork detail on the face. The Our Lady of Fatima statue is now ready to be returned to the diocese. May she find a suitable home among us.

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A Lectern of Significance, a Sacred Taonga

by Pene Clifford - St Joseph the Worker, Lyttelton



A Faithful and Long-Serving Sacristan

Our Lady of the Snows, Methven

by Angela Grieve nee Clemens, one of Bernie McCloy's 38 nieces and nephews

Mrs Bernie McCloy, now in her 90s, has attended Our Lady of the Snows since her marriage to Ted McCloy in 1957, and was our Sacristan for many years since. On 1 June, Bernie was present at a Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael Gielen. She is a resident of Methven house.

In Christian tradition, the lectern from which the Word of God is proclaimed is frequently constructed in the form of an eagle. The symbolism of this comes from the four creatures around the throne of God, spoken in the prophecy of Ezekiel in the Old Testament and found in developed form in the Book of Revelation in the New Testament.

Christian tradition has come to associate these creatures with the four evangelists. Each of the writers of the Gospel has his particular message regarding the character of the Saviour and each message is appropriately symbolised by one of the four creatures. While all the evangelists share in the proclamation of the Gospel, John's Gospel and its message is one of the most frequently expressed in sculptured form in lecterns. John is the eagle. He is the one who soars and is taken into the sun to proclaim the Gospel.

In the St Joseph's lectern, this Christian symbolism is expressed in Māori artistic form. The impetus for the commissioning of this lectern came from a clergy seminar on the Treaty of Waitangi in early 1990. Fr Durning, an experienced chaplain of the Māori people, suggested that there should be something in every church with which Māori could identify.

At that time, Fr Pat Kearney CSSR, was the superior of the Redemptorist community, ministering in the church of the Most Holy Redeemer at North New Brighton. He approached Riki Manuel, a renowned and respected local carver and artist, and asked him to carve a lectern for their chapel. It was a 1990 project, commemorating the Sesquicentennial year of Aotearoa / New Zealand.

The unveiling of the lectern took place in May 1991, during the Saturday Novena. Members of the Catholic Māori Community of Te Rangimarie attended the blessing of the lectern. With the closing of the chapel, the lectern was gifted to the church of St Joseph the Worker, Lyttelton, in 2001. It was the lectern for the church until it was destroyed by the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes. This special lectern was then used regularly in the chapel in the Lyttelton presbytery, until St Joseph the Worker parish was closed at Pentecost 2021, becoming part of Stella Maris Parish of Christchurch East. With karakia, the lectern was welcomed into St Anne's church, as a symbol of connection for the St Joseph the Worker parish.

This beautiful lectern is carved from Kauri timber, once part of the New Brighton pier. The scale and proportion of the work provide a fitting place for the proclamation

“ Here, Māori spirituality, formed and informed by the Gospel, flows together as one.”



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of the Word during liturgical worship.

Māori meeting houses, wharenui, generally contain an abundance of carved figures and woven patterns. These are a potent means of expression and storytelling for a people with no written language.

The carved eagle representing St John the Evangelist is the New Zealand Haast eagle, the Pouakai. Now extinct, this was the largest eagle in the world. This gigantic bird had talons as big as a tiger's claws and may have lived until 500-700 years ago, in the forests of the South Island. With a wingspan of up to three metres, the female weighed as much as thirteen kilograms, much bigger than the largest eagle in the world today.



Below the eagle, the symbols representing the three other evangelists are carved in relief on the front and sides of the column supporting the lectern. The lower part of the column is carved with a tekoteko figure. This is often found at the apex of the whareniui. At other times, this figure is at the base of the verandah pole. The lectern follows the latter tradition. The figure is carved in a prayerful posture, that symbolises our trusting relationship with our Creator.

The pedestal on which the figure stands, is carved with the kawē o te hue pattern. This depicts the fronds of the gourd, used in reciting the whakapapa, the genealogy of the family tree. Māori tradition places great importance on the genealogy of the ancestors, the previous generations — the family tree. This is also found in Jewish tradition and continued in the Gospels. In the first chapter of his Gospel, St Matthew provides a list of the ancestors of Jesus, from Abraham, our father in faith. By our common Baptism, Christians are all part of the family of God, with one Lord, one faith, one Baptism. We all breathe the same Wairua Tapu, breath of the Holy Spirit passing through us. Here, as elsewhere in the work, Māori spirituality, formed and informed by the Gospel, flow together as one.



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Sister Hilary Swanson RIP

“Remain in My Love”

by Sister Mary Wood RSM

Sister M Hilary Swanson RSM died on 18 September 2025, aged 98. Born in Timaru, Hilary was the sixth of eight children. Her early schooling was at Sacred Heart Primary School in Timaru, before the family moved to Christchurch.

Returning to Timaru in 1947, Hilary joined the Sisters of Mercy and was professed in 1950. Through her tertiary studies, she gained her teacher's certificate and accreditation, and other scriptural, theological, and music qualifications.

Hilary taught for over forty years in catholic primary schools throughout Canterbury, Hokitika, and Cobden, inspiring a love of literature and the arts in her students.

It was a joy for Hilary to coordinate the running of the Mercy Library for over ten years. This was a Catholic lending library for the people of Christchurch and

Canterbury, set up by the Sisters of Mercy. Along with the issuing of books, Hilary had a great ability to be a compassionate listener to anyone who dropped in for a chat, to pray and to share at a deeper level.

Another of Hilary's gifts was Children's Prayer Ministry at St Joseph's School, Papanui. She invited children to spend time with her as she taught them about

“Hilary had a great ability to be a compassionate listener to anyone who dropped in for a chat, to pray and to share at a deeper level.”

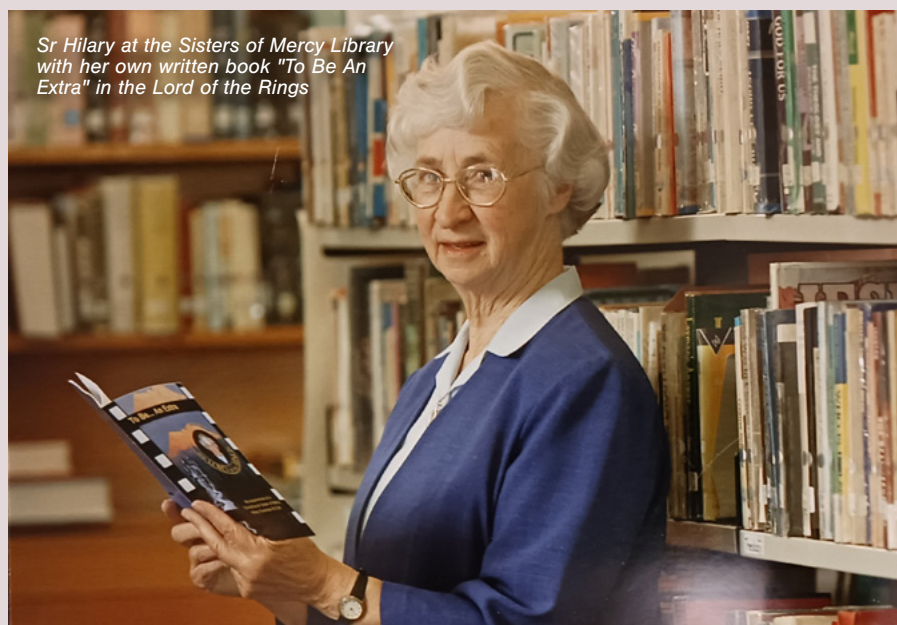
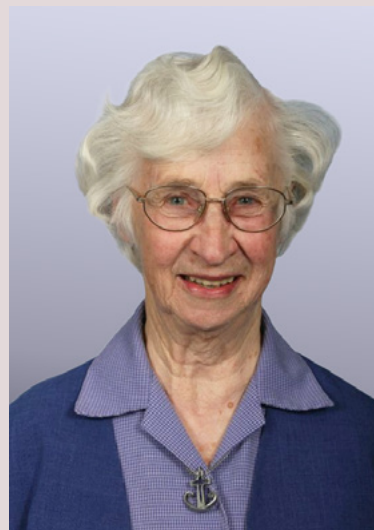
Jesus and how to pray. Depending on the age level of the child, Hilary would prepare small prayer cards and prayer beads for them to take away. Many a time, children would come individually for this

special prayer time; at other times, a class group would come to the chapel at the Sisters' House on Main North Road, for quiet reflection and prayer.

Hilary's love of J. R. R. Tolkien's books “The Lord of the Rings” stemmed from her appreciation of the language and its fantastic imagery. This inspired her to reply to the Press Heading in 1999: “Extras needed for the Lord of the Rings” and she was accepted. Hilary became an “extra” in the second movie of The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers.

Hilary dedicated much of her adult life to understanding the writings of two mystics — St John of the Cross and St Teresa of Avila. She was steeped in the spirituality of these two mystics and was often invited to run a retreat day, seminars, and organise prayer groups, based on the spirituality of both, especially St John of the Cross.

Hilary had inscribed on her profession ring the motto “Remain In My Love.” This captures Hilary's yearning to remain close and to be centred in God. Rest in God's peace forever, Hilary.



Sr Hilary at the Sisters of Mercy Library with her own written book "To Be An Extra" in the Lord of the Rings

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St Joseph's School students at the Shrine of Mary, Mother of Light at the Community of the Beatitudes in Leithfield



Pilgrims of Hope: Encounter Day at the Community of the Beatitudes

In September, the year 5-6 students from St Joseph's School, Rangiora, experienced a memorable Encounter Day at the Community of the Beatitudes in Leithfield.

This sacred place holds special significance as one of the four designated pilgrimage sites in the Christchurch Diocese, in this Jubilee Year of Hope.

in New Zealand, with many others established around the world. They were also reminded about some of the early missionaries who brought the Catholic faith to Aotearoa. What was especially interesting was discovering that the Shrine of Mary, Mother of Light at the Beatitudes, was made in the image of the Shrine of

“For many of our students, this was their first opportunity to visit and discover its rich story of faith and the history of how it was established.”

For many of our students, this was their first opportunity to visit and discover its rich story of faith and the history of how it was established. They also came to understand the special grace of the Plenary Indulgence that can be received when visiting a designated pilgrimage site.

The day began with an introduction to the Community and its history. Students were inspired to learn that this is the only Community of the Beatitudes

Our Lady of Fourviere in France.

After exploring the beautiful grounds, the students took part in a session with Cyrene Tionko from St Vincent de Paul, who guided them in reflecting on what it means to be Pilgrims of Hope.

The afternoon offered quiet moments of Eucharistic adoration and prayer, followed by a time of reflection where students wrote personal messages of hope to



Pilgrims spending some time in the “Red Shed” - a replica of the shed in which Venerable Meri Hōhepa Suzanne Aubert lived and worked when she was in the Hawkes Bay

share with one another.

This pilgrimage was a truly faith-filled encounter — nurturing not only the spiritual growth of our students but also their appreciation of their faith. As a school community, we are grateful for this opportunity to journey together in hope.



Faith in Action on the Runway - Young Vinnies Fashion Show Fundraiser

The annual Young Vinnies Fashion Show Fundraiser was a wonderful celebration of creativity, community, and compassion. This year was extra special, as Marian College joined Villa Maria College for the first time, bringing fresh energy, friendship, and a true sense of sisterhood.

The evening featured stunning performances from Marian College's Dance Club, and lively music by Human Resources, the talented band from St Thomas of Canterbury College.

Their contributions, along with the students' impressive fashion displays, made the night unforgettable. Behind the scenes, students led every aspect of the event: from planning and production to choreography and hosting, raising over \$3,000 to support St Vincent de Paul Society's Christmas projects, helping families and individuals in need. With another school set to join in 2026, excitement is already building for what is next.



Giving Back: How Alumni are Opening Doors for Our Students

At Catholic Cathedral College (CCC) we believe every student deserves the opportunity to pursue their dreams, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, or socio-economic background. Yet in recent years, university scholarships have become increasingly competitive, some with steep criteria that can leave many capable students without that extra little

bit of financial support that can make all the difference in their first year of study. For these reasons, the generosity of our alumni is received with deep gratitude. Two remarkable scholarships, established by past students, are making a difference and creating smoother pathways to tertiary education for some of our students.



Gerick Nogaliza 2025 Gold Band Finance scholarship recipient

The Raoul Pope Scholarship



Dr Raoul Pope is a proud CCC graduate. After leaving CCC, he studied medicine at the University of Otago. After some impressive appointments and achievements, he currently serves as Head of Neurosurgery at the Mater Private Hospital in North Sydney. Over his 20 plus years of experience, Dr Pope has changed lives by completing thousands of specialist

surgeries. His annual scholarship has supported numerous students who have not received other scholarships, offering a lump sum contribution toward tertiary education costs. "I was an average to above average student, but I did have a drive to try hard at school, so my work ethic was strong." In Dr Pope's words, "If I can do it, then anybody can."

Our students are deeply grateful, often expressing how this support was unexpected and how humbled they feel by such generosity.



Donnell Balili 2025 Dr Raoul Pope scholarship recipient



Year 8 Students Search for Pompallier

by Year 8 students from
Our Lady of Victories School, Sockburn

In late October, Year 8 students from Our Lady of Victories School, Sockburn, pilgrimaged to Akaroa, one of the four official pilgrimage sites for our diocese. We joined Fr Brian Fennessy and some of his parishioners for Mass in the historic St Patrick's church. The first Catholics arrived in Akaroa in 1840, and in August of that year, Bishop Pompallier celebrated his first Mass in the South Island there. It is a special place, and fitting that we went there in this important Jubilee Year.

Local historian Marie Haley shared history with us about this first Mass, outlining life for Akaroa's first Catholic settlers, and even Bishop Pompallier's first baptisms in New Zealand. It was a day of reflection, prayer, connection, and fun together, and a perfect way to celebrate the end of our Catholic Primary School Journey.

Hope in Action: Highlights from Marian



At Marian College, 2025 was a year where faith came alive through action. From service projects and fundraising events, to moments of prayer and reflection, students across the school embodied the spirit of hope, bringing light not only to their community but far beyond its gates.

Moments of Stillness

Amidst the busyness of school life, Wednesday lunchtimes offered students the opportunity to take a moment to realign their week in faith, by spending fifteen quiet minutes in prayer and reflection. "It was a good break in the middle of a busy week, no matter where you were in your faith journey," said Evie Hanson. Each week, prayers were offered for world events, charities, and members of the Marian community. "Rosary group was a reminder that just 15 minutes of prayer a week could make a difference," Evie reflected.

Hope Beyond the Classroom

The school's biggest event, the 24-Hour Move It Challenge, was a collaboration with St Bede's College. Students walked, danced, and moved for an entire day to



Teachers and students from Josephite Affiliated Secondary Schools gathered for the AJAAS Pilgrimage

raise funds for Caritas, generating \$3,200, which was matched by the New Zealand Aid Programme, to equate to \$12,600 to support communities through the He Oranga Taurikura programme.

As the year drew to a close, Marian joined forces with Villa Maria College for a Fashion Show Fundraiser, proving that creativity and compassion go hand in hand.

Faith through Art

Leading up to Catholic Schools Day, students created cards to send to other Catholic schools, acknowledging their special position in having faith-filled education. "It was a unique way to appreciate and recognise the gift of Catholic education and how blessed we are to be part of a community, where being part of Christ is fostered," Biencei Lerum said. Students also made Rosary bracelets, which will be donated to St Vincent De Paul op shops.

AJAAS Pilgrimage

In September, Marian College hosted members of our Josephite family from Australia and the North Island, as they began a pilgrimage to commemorate the Year of Jubilee as 'pilgrims of hope', following in the footsteps of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop. The group of about 40 teachers and students from Josephite Affiliated Secondary Schools, began their pilgrimage at Marian College, before travelling to St Joseph's church in Temuka, Roncalli College in Timaru, and finally to Queenstown.

The journey included prayer services, school visits, historical presentations, and scenic exploration, fostering spiritual reflection, intercultural understanding, and personal growth. Through storytelling, community engagement and guided reflection, the students and staff deepened their connection to the Josephite tradition and the values of compassion, courage, and service.

The Marian College annual can drive brought in over 700 cans for St Vincent de Paul



Planning Ahead: Peace of Mind with the CDF Funeral Savings Account



by Liza Sparrow, CDF Marketing & Business Development Manager



As Catholics, we know that in death, life is changed, not ended. Preparing for this change may not be easy to discuss with our families, yet preparation can be one of the kindest gifts we leave them. By planning ahead, we can ensure our wishes are honoured, we can help our families and friends to grieve and pray for us without needless anxiety over arrangements and contribute positively to the life of the Church. The Catholic Development Fund (CDF) Funeral Savings Account, provides a secure, straightforward way to set aside funds for your funeral, giving you peace of mind that your arrangements will be carried out according to your wishes.

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For more information or to request an information pack, contact the Catholic Development Fund on (03) 366 9869 or visit <https://cdf.org.nz>.

Funeral Planning Workshop

In late November, Fr Alister Castillo and the Christ the Redeemer parish bereavement team, hosted a thoughtful and informative funeral planning workshop. More than 40 parishioners and friends gathered to consider both the spiritual and practical dimensions of farewelling and praying for loved ones who have died.

Fr Castillo emphasised the pastoral importance of equipping parishioners with the knowledge to make informed, faith-centred decisions. CDF Administrator Melanie Perry, explained how setting aside funds for future funeral costs can offer peace of mind. Michelle Taylor from John Rhind Funerals shared valuable insights into funeral planning, outlining key decisions families may face and the ways early preparation can ease stress during a difficult time.



(left to right) Judith Woodnutt (Parish Pastoral Coordinator), Fr Alister Castillo, Michelle Taylor (John Rhind Funerals), and Melanie Perry (CDF).



CHRISTMAS CLOSURE

Our offices and CDF Online will close during the festive period.

CLOSE: NOON, TUESDAY 23 DECEMBER

RE-OPEN: 9.00AM, MONDAY 5 JANUARY 2026

May we take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support of the Fund and wish you and your family a very happy Christmas and New Year.

Call Us: 03 366 9869 / 0800 403 863 **Email us:** cdf@cdoc.nz

Visit Us: 391 Moorhouse Avenue, Christchurch 8011

cdf.org.nz



Becoming Pilgrims of Hope

The September Golden Catholics gathering at St Mary's, New Brighton, celebrated faith and friendship in our Jubilee year. Senior parishioners came together at Mass and heard Bishop Michael's inspiring talk on "Becoming Pilgrims of Hope in the Year of Jubilee," which reminded everyone that God's love and hope are constant companions, even in challenging times. Over a delicious light lunch, guests enjoyed re-connecting with old friends and making new ones. With the warm hospitality and sense of community fostered by the Catholic Development Fund and Stella Maris Parish, the event embodied unity with Bishop Michael and senior parishioners.



A Grounded & Courageous Voice in Agribusiness & Faith



In September, Leonie Guiney shared her insights on ethical leadership and values-driven decision-making at the Catholic Business Network lunch. Drawing from her extensive experience as a South Canterbury dairy farmer and Fonterra Director, she highlighted how faith had guided her business practices in a competitive environment. Guests appreciated her candid presentation, which wove practical advice with stories of the intersection of business and community. Leonie spoke about the role of her Catholic faith and daily disciplines in sustaining her through business challenges, and the importance of mentoring the next generation. We were grateful to hear from a grounded and courageous voice in agribusiness and faith.



**CATHOLIC BUSINESS
NETWORK**

cbn.nz

Write with Faith



As Christmas approaches, a season of giving, gratitude, and reflection, CDF is delighted to offer a small gift with every online purchase made through The Catholic Shop.

Our complimentary CDF pen is a simple gesture to inspire you to write with faith as you connect with loved ones, whether penning Christmas cards, writing gift tags, or simply tackling that never-ending to-do list!

We're proud to partner with The Catholic Shop, offering a beautiful selection of rosaries, crucifixes, candles, missals, Bibles, cards, sacramental gifts, books, and more. Each item is thoughtfully curated by The Catholic Shop

Manager, Vicki, to help you find something meaningful for those you care about.

As you prepare for the festive season, you might also like to consider opening a CDF Christmas Club Account to plan ahead for next year's celebrations and summer adventures. By setting aside a little each week, your savings will earn interest and be ready for withdrawal by 1 December 2026, helping ease the financial demands of this special time of year.

This Christmas, take a moment to pause, give thanks, and write with faith.

www.thecatholicshop.nz

www.cdf.org.nz

Christchurch Priest Honoured for Outstanding Service

In September, the annual meeting of the Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand was held in Adelaide. At this conference, Msgr Brendan Daly of the Christchurch Diocese received the Owen Oxenham Memorial Award for Outstanding Service to Canon Law. He was also made a lifetime member of the Society.

The award, the highest recognition bestowed by the Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand, was established in memory of the Society's founding president, Rev Dr Owen Oxenham. It is reserved for those whose sustained contributions have significantly shaped the field of canon law and enriched the life of the Church. Msgr Daly is the second New Zealander to receive the award, following Msgr David Price of the Auckland Diocese.



(above) Msgr Brendan Daly speaking at the National Safeguarding Conference; (right) Owen Oxenham Memorial Award for Outstanding Service to Canon Law



Maria Sequeira, Msgr Brendan Daly, Elizabeth Ong

In 1986, Msgr Daly completed his doctoral studies in canon law in Ottawa, Canada. He served as rector of Holy Cross Seminary, was principal of Good Shepherd College, was a lecturer in canon law, and is a long-time judge and judicial vicar on tribunals in New Zealand and Australia.

Msgr Daly's expertise is widely sought after across the Pacific and Asia, and includes his role as canon lawyer for the Safeguarding Office of the Asian Bishops Conference. He continues to contribute to safeguarding and formation at regional and international levels, for the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors.

An accomplished scholar, he is author of three books, including *Penal Issues in Canon Law*, published in August 2025 by Paulist Press. Alongside are dozens of



articles, as well as chapters in books and conference papers. Ordained a priest for the Diocese of Christchurch in 1977, this academic is also known for his passion for marathon running, having completed more than 50 races worldwide.