



Inform

*Inform Issue 150
celebrating a
major milestone*

A PUBLICATION OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOP OF CHRISTCHURCH

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ISSUE 150 SPRING 2026



New Cathedral plans
unveiled

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Cathedral fundraising
campaign begins

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From Our Bishop



*Giving thanks for our past and
looking with faith towards the future*

Greetings to you all

This edition of Inform celebrates two significant milestones in the life of our diocese: the publication of the 150th edition of Inform and the announcement of the design for our new cathedral. Both invite us to reflect with gratitude on our past and to look with confidence towards the future.

Over many years, Inform has connected our diocesan family by sharing stories of faith, mission and service from throughout the diocese. I am deeply grateful to the many contributors, photographers, editors and volunteers who have helped make this publication possible since it began in 1991. In a special way, I wish to acknowledge Ken Joblin, whose dedication, professionalism and commitment have guided Inform for many years. His work has not only informed us, but has helped preserve the story of our diocesan community for future generations. It is fitting that this milestone edition coincides with another important chapter in that story: the unveiling of the design for our new cathedral.

When Bishop John Grimes, (the first bishop of the newly established Diocese of Christchurch), arrived in the late nineteenth century, he inherited a small Catholic community with limited resources. Yet, he carried a vision that was far larger than what lay before him. He believed that Christchurch deserved a great cathedral, a place that would honour God, inspire the faithful and stand as a sign of the Catholic presence in this city, for generations to come. It was a bold dream.

Bishop Grimes travelled widely, seeking support, including that of Pope Leo XIII. He raised funds throughout New Zealand, Europe and America. There were setbacks, financial challenges and moments when the project seemed destined to fail. Yet he persevered, because he understood something profoundly important: people need inspiration. They need something that can unite them, lift their hearts and remind them that they are part of a story greater than themselves.

When the Cathedral of the Blessed

Sacrament was opened in 1905, Christchurch witnessed something extraordinary. The basilica designed by Francis Petre, immediately became one of the architectural treasures of New Zealand. The Press described the occasion beautifully, comparing the cathedral to "a beauteous bride apparelled for her wedding day." Even today, those words help us appreciate the sense of hope, pride and joy that surrounded its opening. Yet perhaps Bishop Grimes' greatest achievement was not simply the cathedral itself, but the faith, courage and vision that made it possible. He understood that every generation is called to leave something of value for those who come after it. Those who built the cathedral made a statement about the place of God in the life of this city, leaving a gift that future generations would inherit.

Bishop Grimes' vision stood proudly over Christchurch for more than a century. Then the earthquakes changed our city forever. The cathedral that had inspired and served generations, was taken from

JUBILARIANS MASS

On 6 August, the priests of the diocese gathered to celebrate the jubilee of priests who have reached milestones of ordination.

This year we celebrated the following priests:

60 years Fr Mike Mahoney SM;

50 years Fr Peter Norris
& Fr Kevin Mowbray SM

25 years - Fr Sean Mary Britto CSJ
& Fr Isaiah Lee (Korean)

Please continue to pray for our priests and give thanks for their many years of faithful service.



Left: Fr Kevin Mowbray SM, Fr Mike Mahoney SM, Bishop Michael, Fr Sean Mary Britto CSJ, Fr Isaiah Lee



New native timber doors and stained glass windows from the former cathedral of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament (render by Warren & Mahoney)

“...the Church “opens its doors as though they were its arms”, welcoming all people to hear the Word of God and gather around the altar of Christ.”

us, leaving not only a physical absence but a visible reminder of what had been lost. Yet, the challenge before us today is remarkably similar to the one Bishop Grimes faced more than a hundred years ago. We too are being asked to look beyond present circumstances and build with faith for the future. A cathedral has always been about something greater than bricks and mortar. In every age, Christians have built churches, not simply because they needed a building, but because they wanted to proclaim through beauty, worship and sacrifice, that God remains at the centre of life. Our new cathedral is not simply about replacing what was lost. It is about renewing that vision for a new generation, expressing confidence in the future and declaring something hopeful about who we are and what we believe.

During the recent dedication celebrations for Barcelona’s Sagrada Família, Pope Leo XIV reflected that the Church “opens its doors as though they were its arms”, welcoming all people to hear the Word of God and gather around the altar of Christ.

He also reminded us of a deeper truth: the liturgy is “the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed and the source from which all her power flows.” That is ultimately why cathedrals matter.

One day, future generations of Catholics will gather in this cathedral for baptisms, weddings, ordinations and funerals. They will come to celebrate moments of joy and seek God’s comfort in moments of sorrow. They will encounter Christ in the Eucharist, hear His Word proclaimed and discover their place within the community of faith.

They may never know our names, but they will inherit what we choose to build. That is why this announcement matters. It is not ultimately about constructing a building. It is about honouring God in the present, expressing confidence in the future and leaving a legacy of faith for those who follow.

Bishop Grimes understood that, more than a century ago. Perhaps his greatest lesson for us today, is that every great work of God begins when ordinary

people have the courage to trust Him and take the first step. The first foundation stone is never concrete or stone. It is faith. Whenever a community responds generously to God’s call, something beautiful becomes possible.

Yours in Christ

+ Michael Gielen

+ Michael Gielen
Bishop of Christchurch

“...he persevered, because he understood something profoundly important: people need inspiration. They need something that can unite them, lift their hearts and remind them that they are part of a story greater than themselves.”



Bishop Grimes

An Extraordinary Blessing & Responsibility

by Joseph Hampton, BArch (hons) ANZIA Reg Arch, Principal – Architect

Some projects have a different responsibility. They ask us to think beyond our own lifespan and challenge us to consider what stewardship looks like 50, 100 or even 200 years from now. They ask you to consider what it means to create a place that might shape people's lives for generations. The new Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament is one of those projects.

For me, this project is also deeply personal. My family's connection to the Catholic community in Christchurch

stretches back more than 180 years. Earlier generations of my family contributed to the construction of the original cathedral. My grandparents worshipped within its walls. My parents met on this site. Today, my own children are part of the Cathedral parish community. In many ways, the Christchurch Diocese and the Cathedral Parish have helped shape the character and identity of my family across seven generations. To now play a role in helping create its future is an extraordinary

blessing and responsibility.

As a Christchurch architect and someone who has been contributing to the cityscape for 20 years, I often think back to a moment when I was twelve years old, standing inside St Peter's Basilica in Rome. I remember being overwhelmed by a sense of awe and inspiration that was difficult to explain. It was an experience that helped inspire my decision to become an architect. The young boy standing there could never have imagined that one day



Come and enjoy social interaction with other seniors...

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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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he would be presenting the design of a cathedral to a Bishop.

Experiences like that can inspire a vocation, but creating a cathedral for future generations is never the work of one person. It begins with a shared vision. Bishop Michael, together with an amazing group of advisors from across the Diocese, provided a brief that had clearly been shaped through prayer, consultation, and deep reflection. It spoke not only about the practical requirements of a cathedral, but also about how people should feel as they moved through each space. Together with the Diocese, my talented colleagues, our consultant team, and the dedicated parish and stakeholder advisory groups, we translated those aspirations into a design that is grounded in tradition, shaped by faith, and built responsibly for today.

The cathedral draws from the rich traditions of the Catholic faith while responding to the realities and opportunities of contemporary Christchurch. Its cruciform plan provides a clear theological connection to Christ's sacrifice while each element of the design reinforces the liturgy. The Blessed Sacrament sits quite literally at the heart of the building. Every seat is arranged to strengthen participation in the Mass and create a sense of shared communion. Space is provided for devotion, reconciliation, prayer, and pilgrimage.

The architectural language balances Romanesque solidity with Gothic aspiration. Strong forms, natural materials, and enduring construction methods are

combined with light-filled spaces that gently draw the eye heavenward. The design seeks to create beauty without excess, grandeur with humility, and permanence without extravagance.

But this is not simply a cathedral building. It is a cathedral precinct. The wider campus, including the Te Rangimarie Centre and surrounding gathering spaces, have been designed to support the ongoing life of the Diocese while creating opportunities for education and community connection. It is a place where people can gather not only to worship, but also to meet, learn, celebrate, reflect, and spend time together. In that sense, the cathedral contributes not only to the life of the Church, but also to the identity,

“My hope is that future generations will find in this cathedral what I found as a young boy standing in St Peter’s Basilica: a sense of wonder and inspiration, and a place that draws people together, deepens faith, and serves the people of Canterbury for generations to come.”

continuity, and collective memory of the city itself.

We often talk about creating buildings that endure. But the truth is that the most meaningful buildings endure because generations of people invest them with meaning. They become the setting for baptisms and weddings, funerals and celebrations, prayer and friendship.



Joseph Hampton, (Warren & Mahoney)
- Principal Architect

They become woven into the lives of a community.

My hope is that future generations will find in this cathedral what I found as a young boy standing in St Peter’s Basilica: a sense of wonder and inspiration, and a place that draws people together, deepens faith, and serves the people of Canterbury for generations to come.



BEHOLD, HERE GOD LIVES AMONG HIS PEOPLE

– *the journey from concept to design*

by Sr Clare - Community of the Beatitudes

“For everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven...a time to tear down and a time to build up...a time to throw away stones and a time to gather stones together.”

These words from the book of Ecclesiastes are very pertinent for us as a diocese, as we undertake to build a new temple for the Lord. We had become all too familiar with the tearing down of stones. To rebuild takes somewhat longer. The empty space in Barbadoes Street bids us now look to the raising of new stones, to erect a Cathedral, the Mother Church of the diocese, where we, the living stones making a spiritual temple in the Lord, may gather around our bishop.

Prior to the work of elaborating a design brief, Bishop Michael undertook an extensive consultation in 2023 to discern both the location and the name for the new cathedral. The College of Consultors, the Diocesan Finance Council, the clergy, parish leadership, religious orders, technical and project specialists, Catholic Māori, as well as the wider community, had the opportunity to speak of their hopes, preferences, concerns, aspirations, and to prayerfully listen to what the Spirit

is saying to the Church in this place.

In April 2024 it was announced that the Cathedral Precinct would be built on the Barbadoes Street site, and in March 2025, after almost a year of consultations, listening and prayerful discernment, Bishop Michael announced that the name, the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, had been chosen, continuing the legacy of churches and cathedrals of that name on the Barbadoes Street site, where Catholics have worshipped since 1864.

Since September 2024 an advisory group of clergy, religious, laity and representatives from mana whenua and cultural communities had been meeting regularly with Bishop Michael to assist him in this work of discernment, and to elaborate the design brief that would guide the architects. Every effort was made to work within the proposed budget, while remaining open to the surprises of divine Providence.

Experts in church architecture, liturgy, sacred art and design were consulted to inform the group in their work. A Sacred Art sub-committee was formed to create a brief for the interior of the new

cathedral and a Sacred Art Coordinator was appointed to oversee the overall interior space and the sacred fixtures and artworks, to achieve the timelessness and nobility conducive to worship, around the central mystery of the Eucharist. In June 2025 after a robust architect selection process, Bishop Michael announced that Warren & Mahoney had been chosen to design the new Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament and the surrounding precinct.

The advisory group met regularly with the architects to accompany the evolution of the design, based on the comprehensive fifteen-page brief that had been presented to them. This was where purpose, finality, inspiration, engineering, budget, prudence and a work of unity came together in a marvellous way.

A cathedral has a special role as Mother Church of the diocese and evangelises by its very presence. It proclaims that God is here dwelling among his people. It is a visible sign of the unity of the faith and links the local church with the universal church throughout the world.

As we saw the emerging images of the concept design there was the sense that it truly reflected and embodied the aspirations identified throughout the consultation and in the brief. The softer, romanesque forms inviting us into a maternal embrace where all are welcomed are combined with the more dynamic, vertical lines of gothic-style pointed arches, elevating our gaze upwards, where organic, palm-like forms, remind us of the entry into the heavenly Jerusalem. We are being drawn into the mystery, into transcendence, a sense of amplitude, of spaciousness and intimacy. The central mystery, where all eyes will immediately be drawn, is the Eucharist. The ‘Holy of Holies’ from where all graces and the mission of the Church flow forth.

I have been privileged to follow the evolution of the design brief and to see the architectural imagery taking form. I believe the beauty of this cathedral will give us a new sense of belonging and of continuity. It will proclaim the Good News to the men and women of our time, in this place and be a great consolation to the people of this city and to our diocesan family.

*“Organic, palm-like forms remind us of
the entry into the heavenly Jerusalem.”*



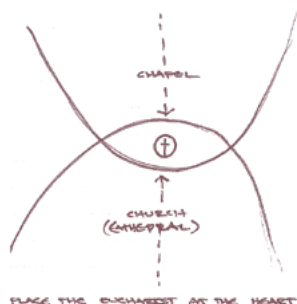
Sanctuary of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament (render by Warren & Mahoney)

More Than Just a Building

The process of designing the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament has unfolded over more than two years. People across the Diocese have shared their hopes for our new Mother Church – the lay faithful, mana whenua, our cultural groups, our consecrated religious and our clergy. Bishop Michael and a small group of advisers representing those communities prayed

and discerned with those aspirations, creating a design brief for the Cathedral precinct.

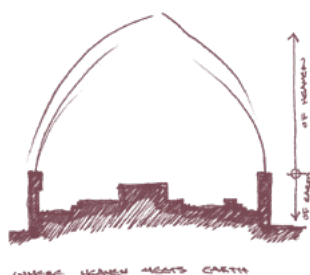
In partnership with the Cathedral's architects, Warren and Mahoney, the following key attributes for our spiritual home were developed to guide the building's construction, with a focus on how it will contribute to the life of the city, the Diocese and the country.



BLESSED SACRAMENT AT THE HEART

Whakapono

This Cathedral will stand as a timeless symbol of hope and faith. The site will be Christchurch's sanctuary – where God's presence dwells. This design response is centred on prayer, worship and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, inviting the faithful into a deeper participation in the life of the Church through Christ's constant presence. This will be an identifiable Mother Church for the Diocese that is contextually and culturally grounded in Ōtautahi and Aotearoa.



WELCOMING, OPEN & ENGAGING

Manaakitanga

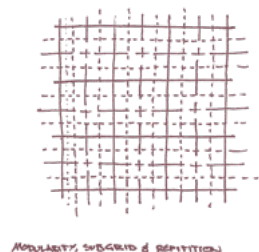
This will be a welcoming place of worship for generations of Catholics to gather as one with the Bishop. As a witness to our Catholic traditions and mission, this precinct will give testimony to the Faith. The outcome will provide spaces for solace, social interaction and understanding, making space for our patron, St John the Baptist, and diocesan stories. This intergenerational outcome will honour the history of the Church and the whakapapa (history) of the land.



A GENEROUS WITNESS OF FAITH

Ahikarora

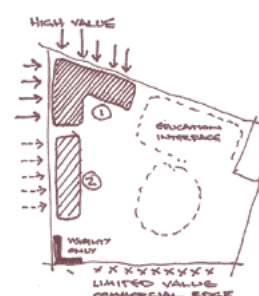
This will be a connected living precinct, on fire with faith. We will build our Cathedral and thereafter our Cathedral will build us – anchoring a vibrant precinct, rooted in the Diocese's mission, that will nurture connections with schools and the broader community. The spiritual experience will extend beyond the Cathedral; the precinct shall be seen as a place of hope and a magnet for people of all faiths.



PRUDENT & COST EFFICIENT

Rangatiratanga

The Cathedral precinct will strike a balance between grandeur and budget-conscious design. The entire project team will manage costs effectively throughout the project lifecycle, seeking opportunities for reuse, shared facilities, economic construction and efficiencies of scale.



ENDURING, FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP

Kaitiakitanga

Our Cathedral will prioritise low-maintenance, cost-efficient operations through durable, dignified and cost-effective materials that minimise upkeep. The outcome will integrate visionary design with financial prudence and practical implementation, embedding the principles of *Laudato Si'* where possible. The precinct will be regenerative and future-focused, while also demonstrating clear financial viability and responsible stewardship of resources.

The Cathedral's Liturgical Design & Sacred Art Programme

Like many of the world's cathedrals, the new Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament has been designed with the understanding that its artistic and liturgical story will unfold over many years. Throughout the history of the Church, cathedrals have often been completed in stages, with sacred art, stained glass, sculpture and devotional features added over many years. The architectural form is established first, creating the foundation upon which sacred art can be thoughtfully integrated over time.

Sacred art is not simply decoration. Its purpose is to draw people into prayer, reveal the mysteries of faith, support the liturgy, and lift hearts and minds towards God. For this reason, the Diocese has engaged a Sacred Art Advisor who has been interviewed and briefed, and whose recommendations are now awaited as the next stage of planning begins.

Several important principles guide the development of sacred art:

- Architecture comes first. The form and liturgical function of the cathedral provide the framework into which all sacred art must fit.
- Sacred art serves the liturgy. Every artistic element should support worship and deepen the encounter with Christ.
- Unity and harmony are essential. Stained glass, sculpture, furnishings, mosaics and devotional artworks should work together as a coherent whole rather than as individual pieces competing for attention.
- Art is created for a particular place. Significant works of sacred art are generally designed for a specific building and architectural setting. For this reason, it is not usually appropriate simply to relocate liturgical art to another church.
- Beauty should reveal truth. Sacred art should communicate the Gospel, the lives of the saints, and the mysteries of salvation through beauty and symbolism.
- The programme develops over time. Cathedrals often took decades or even centuries to reach their full artistic expression.

These principles have influenced decisions regarding artworks from the former Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament. While treasured elements of the cathedral's heritage will be preserved where appropriate, the Stations of the Cross and the former tabernacle will not be transferred into the new cathedral. The sacred art for the new cathedral should emerge from and complement its own unique architectural vision.

A good local example is the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Timaru, where elements of the stained glass programme were completed years after the building itself. This reflects a longstanding Catholic approach: first establish the architectural form, then complete the artistic details as the vision unfolds.

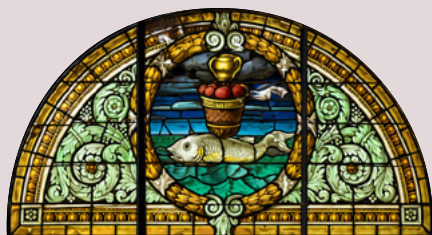
The future sacred art programme for Christchurch's cathedral will be substantial. It includes three rose windows and over thirty stained glass windows surrounding the cathedral, including a prominent rose window on the main façade. Three salvaged stained glass windows from the former cathedral will be incorporated above the large native timber entry doors, creating a beautiful link between past and future.

Beyond the visual elements, the cathedral's liturgical furnishings will be carefully designed, including the cathedra, ambo, main altar, presider's chair, tabernacle, baptismal font and devotional spaces. Particular attention is also being given to acoustics, recognising that sacred sound, silence and music play a vital role in creating an atmosphere of prayer and transcendence.



Exterior of the Perpetual Adoration Chapel (render by Warren & Mahoney)

Among the most significant features will be the Blessed Sacrament Chapel for perpetual adoration, located behind the sanctuary and connected architecturally and theologically to the tabernacle and main altar. Together, these elements will help ensure that the cathedral becomes not merely a beautiful building, but a sacred home for worship where architecture, liturgy and sacred art unite to reveal the presence of God.



“Three salvaged stained glass windows from the former cathedral will be incorporated above the large native timber entry doors, creating a beautiful link between past and future”

An Invitation to Generosity and Sacrifice

by Bishop Michael

More than 120 years ago, Bishop John Grimes invited the Catholic people of Canterbury to help build a cathedral that would stand as a visible sign of faith, hope, and the presence of God among us. Families responded with remarkable generosity, sacrificing from what they had so that future generations would have a sacred place in which to worship and encounter Christ.

I continue to meet people who speak with gratitude of the sacrifices made by their grandparents and great-grandparents for that great undertaking. Their gifts were not simply financial contributions; they were acts of faith, offered in the belief that God was calling them to build something that would outlast them and serve generations yet unborn.

That same responsibility and privilege now rests upon us. We have been given the opportunity to build a new Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament: a mother church for our Diocese and a lasting sign of hope for Christchurch and beyond.

I therefore invite every Catholic family and every individual to prayerfully consider making a sacrificial offering towards this sacred mission. The Cathedral will not be built by a few generous donors alone, but through the faithful response of many people, each giving according to their means.

At the heart of our faith stands the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who gave

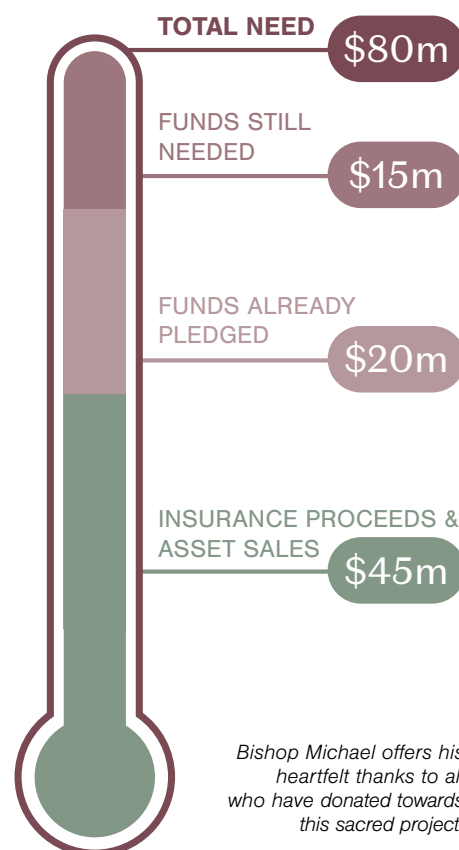
everything for us on the Cross. Our generosity can never equal His gift, yet sacrificial giving is one way we express our gratitude and love. It is not measured simply by the size of the gift, but by the love and sacrifice with which it is offered.

For some, this may mean setting aside the cost of a few coffees each week; for others, the gift of an hour's wages. What matters is not that every gift is equal, but that each one represents a personal commitment to our shared vision.

In practical terms, it is my sincere hope that every household will consider giving every week for the next five years. This is the commitment our priests have already made, giving \$50 a week for five years. Their example reminds us that sacrifice, offered together, can achieve something truly significant. A gift of \$40 a week over five years amounts to more than \$10,000; \$20 a week becomes more than \$5,000. Such faithful and regular giving would make a profound contribution toward the fundraising required for our new Cathedral.

I have been deeply moved by the generosity already shown within and beyond our Catholic community. Many recognise that this Cathedral will be more than a building: it will be a place of prayer, beauty, welcome, and evangelisation; a beacon of hope that points people towards God.

Now it is our turn. Just as those who came before us answered the call of faith, so we are invited to leave a legacy for those who follow. Together, through prayer, sacrifice, and generosity, we can build a Cathedral that will honour God and serve His people for generations to come.



How You Can Help

More than 130 years ago, with Bishop John Grimes SM as their shepherd, the people of this Diocese were generous. Now it is our turn. We build not for ourselves alone, but for those who will come after us.

We are asking for sacrificial pledges – gifts paid over five years that allow you to make a lasting impact without financial strain. Every contribution, no matter the size, becomes part of this sacred undertaking.

A MODEST GIFT GOES A LONG WAY

Even a small weekly contribution can make a lasting difference to the restoration of our Cathedral.

\$10	\$2,600	\$25	\$6,500
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Nga mihi nui from the editorial desk

Welcome to Inform Issue 150, our spring edition and a milestone in our Inform history.

In September 1991, Bishop Basil Meeking's opening words in the first Inform read: "A warm welcome to Inform. It is a response to my request for further means of communication in our diocese. I hope it may provide some information we need as intelligent and active members of the Church." He said that we are people who live by faith and "that faith will be the guide and standard of this modest publication".

In the 35 years since the first edition, many stories have been told, many friends, family members, loved pastors and buildings have left us. What began as a humble news letter has expanded: it is now bigger, in full colour, is printed in the thousands and available to millions throughout our diocesan website. It has been a quarterly publication except for the years Archbishop Paul Martin was bishop of Christchurch, when five issues were produced each year. I began as editor at Issue 94 in September 2013, following on from the professionalism of Gerard Duignan. While style and presentation have changed, some things remain the same. Each bishop still wants Inform to celebrate the best of Catholic life in the Christchurch diocese.

In this significant issue, my editorial welcomes you to an extensive Inform Retrospective, where we feature people and events over the 35 years of Inform. Along with recalling people who have since died and buildings which were lost after the earthquakes, we can also see the diocese re-building with the opening of new churches and the changing of the episcopal guard. You can find all the issues of Inform at cdoc.nz/inform

I thank all those who have edited Inform and been involved in its production. I especially thank the hundreds of people who have written for and provided graphics for Inform which assist



“that faith will be the guide and standard of this modest publication” Bishop Basil Meeking, Issue 1, 1991

in making it the magazine it is today. My spirit is always lifted by reading of the many good things, so many Catholics are doing for others in the Christchurch Diocese. May we always celebrate the gift of our faith and constantly give thanks to God, the author of our lives and whose Son calls us to be his holy bride.

In Christ

Ken Joblin, Editor



(Issue 1) **Catholic Diocesan Youth Team** (left to right)

Tim Joosten: Full-time youth worker, Raylene Dwyer RSM: Full-time youth worker (Director), Michael Stopforth: Part-time youth worker, Angela Woolstencroft: Part-time clerical assistant, Fr Michael Doyle: Chaplain

(Issue 6)

Welcome

The Christchurch Diocese welcomes our new Auxiliary Bishop, John Cunneen D.D. Bishop John was ordained in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament on November 30. (see supplement).



A YEAR IN UKRAINE



Father O'Malley with some students at Holy Spirit Seminary, Lviv, Ukraine

● FOR THE PAST 12 MONTHS I've been the only Kiwi among 50 million people in western Ukraine, heartland of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church. Its Slavic history, spirituality and traditions are quite different from Western Catholicism. With some apprehension I immersed myself in this byzantine world as an English teacher at the Holy Spirit Seminary in Lviv with 300 students.

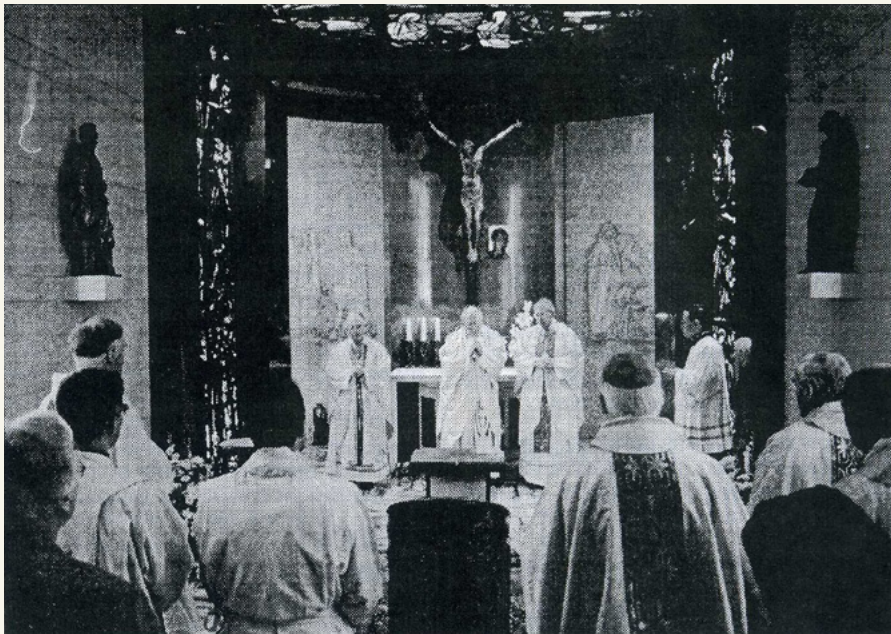
After 40 years of Soviet suppression, the exile and martyrdom of many bishops, priests and laypeople are now reaping the reward of new life and rapid expansion.

Why teach English to Ukrainian seminarians? With no Ukrainian textbooks or qualified teachers, it was decided to use up-to-date English texts and volunteer staff from the West until trained local clergy can take over. I prepared a 500-word English vocabulary of theological and scriptural words, which I taught with blackboard and chalk, notebooks and pencils, in 15 lessons a week and much private tuition. Eventually I became confident enough to be confessor to the students. They loved this sacrament and had me hearing confessions for about an hour each day.

An ancient tradition of the Greek-Catholic Church allows its priests to be married. Consequently I came to meet our students' girlfriends, attended weddings of senior students and spent weekends with their families. By our standards they are poor, but extremely generous to visitors. They are deeply Catholic and pack their churches for long liturgies on Sundays and feastdays. They are proud of their country, its rich history and culture. Though their emotion often overshadows reason, it is all rooted in their profound religious faith and closeness to the land. They have much to teach us. Please pray for this largely unknown part of the Catholic Church.

Fr Miles O'Malley

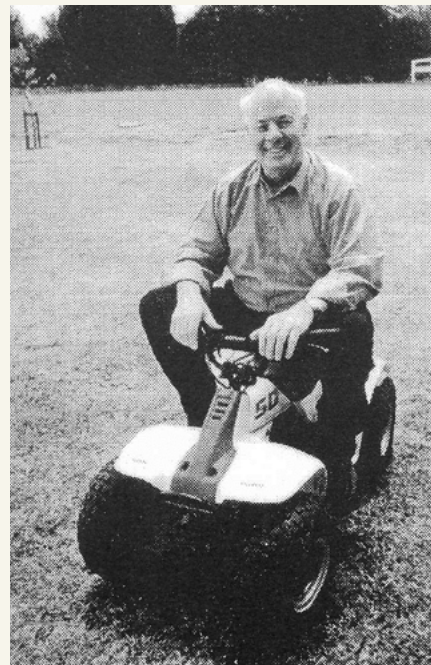
A parishioner offered his parish priest a bottle of cherry brandy on condition that he acknowledge it in the church bulletin. So: "Father thanks Mr Smith for his gift of fruit -and for the spirit in which it was given."



(Issue 36) NZ Bishops celebrating Mass with Pope John Paul II on their recent Ad Limina visit to Rome in December. Michael Pui, serving on the right, is a seminarian from our Diocese, studying in Rome



(Issue 6) Woolston's pastor, Fr Frank Campbell, up a tree



(Issue 32) Bishop John Cunneen "Trimming the Diocese"

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(Issue 40)

People

European Tour

Recently I returned from the Europe 2000 Tour with the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament Choir and Orchestra. What a wonderful experience it was, particularly in the places we visited. The clamour of Cairo, the splendour of the Holy Land, the surprise of Turkey, the wonder of Europe. Our visit to Galipolli was almost a pilgrimage, how special to hear the Last Post played, and sing our National Anthem at Chunuk Bayir where the memorial reads; 'In Honour of Soldiers of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force 1915'. 'From the uttermost ends of the earth'. In the spirit of ANZAC we even managed a verse of Waltzing Matilda for the Australians buried in their war cemetery at Lone Pine.

However for me, numbered among the many highlights was the quality and consistency of the CBS choir and orchestra as they performed in some of the oldest and most venerable religious shrines in the Middle East and Europe. Regularly, and after sometimes long and arduous travel, they would prepare for and perform to more often than not, standing ovations and prolonged



CBS tour in Ephesus – Turkey

applause, as their talented and practised contribution was appreciated by those in attendance.

Don Whelan conducted them with an ease born of familiarity and long experience. This was his third tour with the choir to different parts of Europe. He has an amazing list of connections and he seemed to be able to open many doors for us, not least those of St Peter's Basilica for the opening of the Jubilee Holy Door and Midnight Mass, where some of the choir helped lead the congregational singing. Don, the choir and

orchestra were real troubadours and cultural ambassadors for our diocese and country.

As Cardinal Christoph Schonborn of Vienna said as we processed out from Mass on the Feast of the Epiphany, 'Your choir fits very well into St Stephen's Cathedral'. High praise indeed from this Cathedral, City and Land – of such distinguished composers and music. Well done team CBS!!

Fr. Denis Nolan
St Patrick's, Greymouth.

(Issue 44)



Parishes

Dallington

The Parish of St Paul's held a very successful Golden Jubilee celebration on Saturday February 3. Past and present parishioners gathered at St Paul's for the choral Jubilee

Mass led by Bishop Cunneen and seven priests who had worked in the parish. Following the Mass, 255 people attended the Jubilee Dinner held at the Richmond Working Men's Club.

The Jubilee Committee chair Graeme Southorn compered the evening, during which the parish choir led the entertainment. The parish council chairman Reon Murtha's toast to the parish was given an amusing response by Josephine van Montford and Mary Caldwell.

The Jubilee cake was cut by Bishop



Dallington Parish Jubilee Mass

Cunneen (the first Curate) and early parishioners, Ray and Norma Musson.

The parish history, 'The Fresh Easterly', researched and written by Kathleen Casey

is available from the Parish office, 31 Gayhurst Road, at \$15.00.

Reviewing the jubilee the parish council minutes record one word: excellent.



Sisters and others surround the casket of Bishop Pompallier at the Carmelite Monastery

CARMELITE MONASTERY

The following is an excerpt from Fr Paddy Cahill's reflection on the day of prayer in the presence of the remains of Bishop Pompallier at the Monastery.

"We had no idea what lay ahead of us, but as I came away at the end of the day I was filled full of wonder at the experience. The public chapel was filled with people who had come to pay their respects. At 11.00am the beautifully carved casket was taken from the hearse and carried in procession to the gates of the monastery

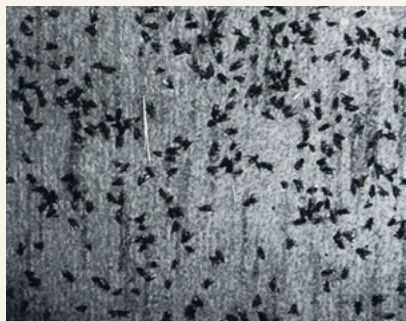
enclosure where we were met by the Sisters who then joined the procession to the Sisters' Chapel where the casket was placed on a table. The Sisters then joined hands as they surrounded the casket, blessing it one by one with holy water. This was a deeply moving scene. It was as if the Sisters had gathered the Bishop up in their arms and offered him to the Lord. At the end of the service the Bishop and priests blessed the casket with holy water which moved the people so much that many came forward to do the same."

Have you ever wondered about the priesthood?

"Put out into the Deep"

A time of discernment and inquiry for men who have thought about, or would like to think about the Priesthood will be held at Good Shepherd House on Friday 17 May at 6.30pm until Saturday 3.30pm.

Please contact the Vocations Director, Fr Rick Loughnan at (03) 377-5610 or rick@caverock.net.nz by 4 May.



(Issue 57) FLY-BUYS at Fairlie Church? Actually it is more like Flies-Stopping-By!! For nearly three months the church building has been invaded by a plague of Clusterflies. The experts say that the best solution is simply to vacuum them up (sigh!). Incense has been used to deter them from coming in with some measure of success. As the cold days come, the numbers are dwindling (the flies!), and it is hoped that it would soon be Fly-Bye.

(Issue 63)

Reliquary of St Therese of Lisieux by Fr Bill Middleton

The Pilgrimage tour of the reliquary to the Diocese of Christchurch in October exceeded all expectations, with great crowds honouring the Saint at all eight venues: Cathedral, the Carmelite Monastery, Ashburton, Timaru, Waimate, Riccarton, Darfield and Greymouth. The priests at the venues and others who provided reconciliation were generous with their time as was Bishop John who accompanied the Pilgrimage around the Diocese. Homilies and Liturgies were excellent and we relished Fr John O'Connor's article in the Press. Fortunately we were able to provide good reading material, pictures, medals, programmes etc. due to generous sponsorship we received, which along with individual gifts



and book sales met the cost of the tour. The visit will long be remembered by those who were fortunate to be able to join in. The Riccarton Parish Newsletter said: 'This humble saint somehow draws us to her, and then on to thirst for an experience of God's wonderful, faithful love for each one of us. She teaches us how we depend on Him, and because, by ourselves we are like little children, how we can put our total trust in our Good Heavenly Father.'



(Issue 67)

We Have A New Coadjutor Bishop

The Most Rev Barry Phillip Jones DD was ordained on Wednesday 4th October in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament

Extract from the 'Prayer of Consecration':

'So pour out upon this chosen one that power which is from you, the governing Spirit whom you gave to your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, the Spirit given by him to the Apostles, who founded the Church in every place to be your temple for the unceasing glory and praise of your name'.



Left to right: (Issue 79) *Still sewing - Msgr Bill Middleton: Raconteur, tailor, cook, priest... who else but Msgr Bill Middleton, parish priest at Christ the King, Burnside* (Issue 83) *Farewell Bishop John Cunneen DD* Inform marked the Requiem Mass of Bishop John. Almighty and merciful God, eternal Shepherd of your people, listen to our prayers and grant that your servant, John Jerome Cunneen, our bishop, to whom you granted the care of this Church, may enter the joy of his eternal Master, there to receive the rich reward of his labours. Through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Inform 84) *A Final Minute or Two with Fr Paddy Cahill* When he discovered his cancer was untreatable, he wrote to his brother priests and bishops, saying "I have been truly blessed all my life. I have always had a great love for the priesthood and I was blessed by wonderful priests both in the parish and at St Bede's. I have enjoyed your goodness, and have been inspired by your courage and faithfulness."

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Fr John Morrison, Parish Priest, St Patrick's, Greymouth reflects:



"On Friday 19 November with the gas explosion at the Pike River Mine, twenty nine workers lost their lives. At first it was, 'Are there survivors?' and, 'How soon can they be rescued?' We all clung to this hope. But then as the enormity of the tragedy became evident the whole community grieved.

At midday on the Monday after the explosion the Greymouth Ministers' association met. We decided to offer a prayer vigil

each evening through the week in the Anglican Church building, with each church community presiding in turn. These prayerful gatherings were well attended by a large cross section of people. Before our Friday Mass the church bell was tolled twenty nine times. Two services for individual victims have been held in St. Patrick's Church."

Pope's message to Bishop Barry Jones:

"The Holy Father was saddened to learn of the sudden devastation and loss of life in the city of Christchurch due to the recent earthquake. He wishes to express his spiritual closeness to everyone who has been affected, and sends his condolences to the families of all who mourn the loss of loved ones..."

Response of the heart

"In the last couple of weeks I have observed a small part of our church's pastoral response to people affected by the earthquake", says Mike Stopforth, Bishop's Deputy for the Pastoral Plan. "There are a number of Catholic groups responding in numerous ways to the needs of people, particularly on the Eastern part of the city, and the generosity and tireless work of so many in our community is our gospel response to people in need." "In all of this we are a people of hope and the readings for Mass on the two following Sundays provided solace, for example the psalm response for 6 March, 'Be my rock of safety'." For all those who have experienced loss; of family, homes, employment, businesses or church buildings, the Bishop continues to pray for all of you.

Visit the diocesan website
cdoc.nz

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

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

Please email mstopforth@cdoc.nz

(Issue 85)

Sr Mel Kennedy LCM



Shipwreck survivor made her mark (Issue 84)

"She was always a very prayerful and gentle LCM," says Sr Helena Kearns LCM about Sister Mel Kennedy LCM, who died peacefully at Nazareth House on 7 January 2011, in her 90th year.



(Issue 85)

Sr Mary of the Sacred Heart RIP

Sr Mary of the Sacred Heart OCD told the story that when she was eight and being taught to play the piano by a Sister of Mercy, she pointed to a picture of St Therese on the wall and said, "When I grow up I want to be a nun like her. Years later, when that she heard I was entering Carmel she was overjoyed."

(Issue 84)



How to feed 9 families - all in a day's work

"Because the river is only two minutes away from the Presbytery, I try and squeeze in every opportunity during the salmon season to get a fish," says Fr Michael Pui. He tells a pretty fishy tale. "This morning, after Mass, I had a Skype-call from my sister in England, and we wished each other a "happy Chinese New Year" (our great-Grandparents were from China). It was a short call because I needed to anoint a dying man." After lunch on the run Fr Michael had just 15 spare minutes, but hooked a 12 lb salmon. Then he spent a Holy Hour praying for vocations before the Blessed Sacrament. Next, he popped back and after just five minutes "A 17lb salmon jumped out of the water!!!" He had made his limit of two per day in just 10 casts. Who knows what the year of the rabbit holds," he asks, "... more fish?"

(Issue 95)

Faithfest 2013

The following are extracts from a homily, given by Bishop Barry Jones, who closed the Year of Faith in 2013 at FaithFest, a day-long event, bringing together thousands of Catholics from throughout the diocese at the then Westpac Arena.

Everywhere, today, the Catholic Church will be honouring Jesus Christ, the King of the Universe. It is the conclusion of the Church year. There are processions and devotions in honour of Christ the King.

We too have come together to honour Christ the King, and to close the year of faith. For the past year, we have taken our part in observing the Year of Faith. Numerous activities have contributed to it. Today, we come to its close and we honour Christ the King.

"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

These beautiful words enabled the good thief to entrust himself completely to Jesus. We all can make his words our prayer because to accept Jesus as King means to be in a living friendship with him, it means that we pray to him and that we listen to him. We give thanks today for our faith in Jesus which bring us together today around the altar of God, on which the sacrifice of Jesus is made present so that we can join our weak and imperfect prayers to his great prayer. This gathering makes it clear that we learn the truth about Jesus only in the Church and through the Church. While our faith is intensely personal, - no one can have it for us, nor can we have it for someone else — our faith is also intensely ecclesial and communal; we come to faith in Jesus by joining in with the People of God, which is Christ's Church. It is in and through the Church that Jesus feeds us with his Word, and with his holy sacraments. St Augustine calls the Church "our Catholic mother" because she brings us to birth by offering us the Word of God and the sacraments, through which the Holy Spirit transforms us and makes us holy.

Today we thank God for the gift of faith which always comes to us as an undeserved blessing — pure grace. It enables us to understand hidden truths which light up the whole of life, as far into the future as enabling us to see the meaning of suffering and death. We thank God for the many activities and blessings of the Year of Faith which is now coming to its close. We thank the Father for the gift of Jesus, the eternal Son, who took his human nature and birth from Mary, mother of all who put their faith in him.

Let us make our own this prayer of Pope Francis to Our Lady; "Mother, help our faith. Teach us to see all things with the eyes of Jesus, that he may be light for our path. And may the light of faith always increase in us, until the dawn of that undying day which is Christ himself, your Son, our Lord."





(Issue 101) **Cherry-picker painting**

The South Westland parish recently bought a used cherry-picker and this has proved very useful for maintenance, particularly for painting the roofs of the churches.



(Issue 102) **Diocese to Move Forward with Attempting to Save our Cathedral Nave.**



Above: (Issue 103) **St Patrick's Greymouth Sesqui-Centennial** On 20-22 November 2015, Greymouth celebrated its Sesqui-centennial. It is indeed 150 years since Greymouth became the first Catholic Parish on the West Coast.

Right: (Issue 104) **Servant Priest Bishop Barry Jones** In his homily Most Rev Basil Meeking reflected "He will be remembered by us as a man of integrity, who filled the episcopal office with honour." For the motto on his coat of arms he chose the quote from the Book of Psalms: "The Lord delights in His people."



(Issue 104) **Priestly Ordinations** Beautiful words of wisdom from Most Rev Basil Meeking "Dear Deacon Do, dear Deacon Tien, dear Deacon Thanh, for such a ministry, you have to be men of faith... It is essential that you be always aware whose sacramental instrument you are. That means being united to Christ through an intensely Eucharistic life, and through a continuing inner conversion to Christ."

(Issue 105) **Mons O'Connor RIP** "Monsignor Gerry O'Connor was a man who never put himself forward despite his capabilities and gifts; he was unfailingly kind; he was not an academic but highly intelligent; he was a modest man who made a substantial contribution to the life of the Church in Canterbury and Westland."

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Above left: (Issue 108) **RIP Monsignor James Harrington** Monsignor Harrington was never in doubt that the priest has a unique and indispensable role in the mystery of the Church, that the priest is first and foremost the one who bears this divine mystery and introduces others into it. He always knew that by ordination he had been brought into the ministry commissioned by God in Jesus Christ who through the Holy Spirit is revealed for us as unconditional divine love. An accomplished artist, he had overseen the design and manufacture of stained glass windows at Holy Name Seminary, Riccarton Road, Christchurch.

Above right: (Issue 110) The Christchurch Diocese celebrates the priestly ordinations of Fathers Graeme Blackburn, Alister Castillo and Huynh Tran.



Clockwise: (Issue 109) **World Renowned Catholic Composer And Conductor Coming To Christchurch** in July 2017.

(Issue 111) **Christchurch is Ablaze!** The Ablaze 2017 Q and A panel; Fr Michael Gielen, Bishop Nicholas Hudson (Auxiliary Bishop Westminster Diocese), Jan Heath (Brisbane), Daniel Ang (Broken Bay Diocese, Australia).

(Issue 112) **Fr Graeme Blackburn RIP: The Diocese of Christchurch Celebrates a Long-Awaited Episcopal Ordination** Bishop Paul Martin greets his people after his Ordination Mass.



A Service of Prayer and Hope (Issue 116)

Message given by Bishop Paul Martin SM at a Service of Prayer and Hope organised by Combined Churches of Christchurch, Thursday 21 March 2019.

"Our city is changed forever by the tragic and evil actions of those who act out their fears and hate with violence. We are changed, but in so many moments in the past week, and in this outpouring today of love and support for our Muslim brothers and sisters, we see that already hope is breaking through and in the end love will prevail.

In these days we have become aware that we ourselves may not always have been as welcoming and generous to people who have different cultural backgrounds and beliefs. But this week we have changed as we reach out to those who suffer. We have spoken warmly and supportively with those who may have previously been strangers while living next door and working alongside us.

We have suffered deeply, and we are right to feel anger. But anger and pain can be seeds that give birth to a new way of living together.

We, citizens of this beautiful city Otautahi Christchurch, know this place of pain and suffering well. In the last decade we have been through devastation and, from this

pain and loss, seen a new beginning. A new city is emerging in this place, new buildings yes, but also a new and strengthened and united people.

So today let it be known to the world that we, the people of this place and this land, are committing ourselves to a new beginning - that this place, our city and this land of Aotearoa New Zealand, is a place of hope and love. Let us show the world (as we have in the past decade) that while we in Otautahi Christchurch have been brought to our knees again by tragedy, we now stand with renewed passion, strong, as one, and embracing every stranger as a brother, a sister, and a friend.

As we gather today we are strengthened by the love and hope we share: faith in the one God of Christians and Muslims alike, and in the words of the scripture we have just heard let us remember that the faithfulness of God never fails, God's love is offered to us anew every morning. Let us again now accept this divine gift and let us be strengthened to live as beacons



Bishop Paul and Sr Bertha prayed together at the Interfaith Prayer Service held at the Peace Bell in the Botanic Gardens in Christchurch on Sunday 24 March

of hope and love in this place, that this new Christchurch light may shine to the ends of the earth heralding a new era of living together as one united, hope-filled and loving human family."

A Blessing of Blindness by Ken Joblin (Issue 116) (Adbridged)

A daily experience for me is to be driven around Christchurch as I go about my life as a blind person. Many of those who drive me have come to New Zealand in more recent years. They have come for a better life. Some have escaped war-torn countries or densely populated cities, many have had to leave their families, all have great hope in the future here for their children. Big sacrifices have been made and, as they arrive here, we are as foreign to them as they are to us. As they grow in confidence, they begin to interact with us and as our own experience of humanity is broadened, we too open up to them. After a while, it is no longer "us and them."

In travelling with a driver, I have to place my life into their hands. I have entrusted them with the ultimate responsibility, my life. I have not been let down. On Good Friday we sing the Psalm refrain "Father, I put my life in your hands." If I can place my life into the hands of another human being, surely I can do so with my Father in heaven. After all, my help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth.

My taxi travel has had me sitting beside members of the Islamic community here in Christchurch. They have picked me up from outside churches which has led to conversations about faith. The first thing we do is show respect for each other as people of prayer, for whom God is at the centre of our lives. We acknowledge how important it is for people of faith to work together in a country that seems to want to live without God. I have never been inside a mosque but my own situation has allowed me to spend time with people who are outside my experience. If I was capable of driving my own car, I would not have this opportunity.

On Friday I had just finished teaching 25 children from Sacred Heart Addington. I left Addington at 1.45pm, returning to the city. Unbeknown to me, I had narrowly escaped a lock-down. I was with my driver and we were both perplexed at the number of police cars speeding passed us. His taxi computer informed him

of the critical incident taking place in Deans Avenue. As we came down Moorhouse Ave, we came across a big group of people just standing there and police going in different directions. As it became clearer that an attack on a mosque was taking place, I was grateful to be driven to the safety of my own home.

Lent 2019 is indeed a very dark time here in Christchurch. We have seen the evil which comes from a distorted view of humanity. There must surely be some good to come from this evil. Might it be a new respect for faith in New Zealand? Might it be an opportunity for the insularity which comes from a strong adherence to a faith to open out and encounter others? Will there be insight once the immediate emotional response subsides? Is it a warning to us not to allow ourselves to live in a Facebook echo chamber or in a religious ghetto? Do we need to re-discover the joy of finding out something new and different and in making ourselves vulnerable, that others gain a new insight into the goodness of God?

We can be confident that insight is there to be found. Here is "the question", one we hear as our lives are illuminated by the light of Easter: "What good would life have been to us, had Christ not come as our Redeemer?"

In Christ.

Ken Joblin (Editor) and Guide Dog Nelson with 'top Chinese Taxi Driver' Tuong Wu





(Issue 115) Our Lady of Victories Re-Opens



(Issue 115) Akaroa Church celebrates re-opening



(Issue 115) St Bernadette's Church Re-Opens

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(Issue 117) Golden Catholics Gather to Hear From Their Bishop



(Issue 118) St Patrick's is Going Home



(Issue 119) Dedication of St Bede's Chapel



(Issue 120) Fifty Years of Fidelity On Sunday 6 October 2019, a very special Mass was celebrated in St Mary's Pro-Cathedral. In our 10.30am Choral Mass, we gave thanks to God for the work of Don Whelan, who has been our Musical Director for fifty years.



(Issue 122) Lock-down reflections from the Mischewski family

(Issue 122)

Covid-19 The Lockdown Seen From A Different Angle

by Fr Arsène KAPYA, M.Afr. St Peter Chanel Parish, Waimakariri

While many people are experiencing great hardship, we are challenged to look for God amid our trials. So, while not wishing to minimise the many difficulties and stresses people are experiencing and will do for some time to come, the lockdown can be looked at in a positive way too.

While missing the physical presence of our beloved parishioners, I was feeling deeply in communion with them during our Masses in an empty church, but knowing they were praying with us through youtube and facebook in livestream mode. We were also in spiritual communion with people around the world who found our link through the parishioners.

At times we live so outwardly that we can neglect to be in touch with our inner and real self. We might fear silence because through it we are confronted with our vulnerability and our inner wounds. But I have appreciated these moments of solitude. Silence has allowed me to go deeper into myself, to reflect more about my life, my faith, my mission, etc. As I tend to be more in my head, now I am more in touch with my feelings and with my heart. I have prayed more, in silence. I have listened to the voice of silence which speaks to me. In silence, at times I experienced the presence of God, especially during moments of silent prayers. In silent prayer, while bringing to my awareness the sufferings of the world (Covid-19; wars in some regions, cancer, famine in some countries, dictatorship, etc), I experienced the silence of God, as though He were absent. But in reality He is present. In silence, the Heart of God is communicating to my silent heart. In silence, I feel that God is beyond the physical reality (that is the meaning of metaphysic) and at the same time He is present



in our day-to-day life. Then I remember Martin Buber who said that we need to discover the Transcendence of God in the immanence of the world.

The lockdown makes me dream. In silence, I dream that we are not fighting alone against Covid-19, because God is on our side. I dream that we shall overcome it because Christ is victorious against death and evil. I dream that there will be more solidarity among peoples/nations throughout the world. I dream that the earth is in birth pangs, and that a new humanity is being formed. Then we will have a new way of life in which the "being" will be more valued than the "doing". The voice of silence is telling me: Behold, I am making everything new (Isaiah 43,19; Revelation 21,5).

*“Silence has allowed me to go deeper into myself,
to reflect more about my life, my faith, my mission, etc.”*

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(Issue 122)

A “Holy Saturday” Experience

by Monty Bamford, Seminarian - Christchurch Diocese

The experience of the restrictions due to the Covid-19 Virus has been a “Holy Saturday” experience for me. The time during Holy Saturday before the Easter Vigil is the time when Jesus was buried. Catholic tradition holds that he descended into hell to free the just who had gone before him. This is a liminal time, a time when his suffering is over, but he has not yet conquered death. We wait, ready to celebrate his resurrection at the Easter Vigil.

But this year I feel like we are stuck with Jesus in the tomb, waiting for the stone to be rolled back and light to break in. This time in the tomb has been prolonged for six weeks, maybe more. We are isolated from the sacraments and experiencing

our own personal hardships. Until the lockdown restrictions have been fully lifted, it feels like we can't celebrate the resurrection with fullness of joy.

We are constantly in a time of “almost, but not yet.” The time of the Church is a time of image and foretaste, a time of living between the reality of the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ and his coming again at the end of time. This time is especially difficult given that we cannot experience the foretaste of life with him in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. And so we wait, hoping, praying, yearning to be united more fully with the risen Christ in this world and in the world to come.



(Issue 122)

“A man of great wisdom and prayer, a formidable preacher.”

Extract of Homily given at a Vigil Mass for Bishop Meeking in the Chapel of Nazareth House by Fr John Adams 16 June 2020

My own personal association with Bishop Basil began some time after he had relinquished the role of Catholic Bishop of Christchurch. With a rather modest appreciation of the great beauty and splendour of the Catholic Church, I found myself at Good Shepherd house, one of the fruits of Bishop Basil's episcopate. I was desperate to make some sense of this deep call that I had discovered in my life, which had led me away from a presumed life of marriage and family. For me, Bishop Basil Meeking became a hero, albeit at that time, a distant one. A man of great wisdom and prayer, a formidable preacher, and yet prepared all the same to, on occasion, listen to my uninformed meanderings. After my ordination as a priest, Bishop Meeking

accepted my request to become my spiritual director, and so, for the past 15 years I have enjoyed his regular spiritual guidance. We also discovered that, by happy coincidence, we had the same baptism date, and so also for the past 15 years we have met for dinner on that anniversary. I will miss him dearly on December the 8th this year.

When the time comes for someone to sit down and write a history of this diocese, I am sure it will contain many more details of the significant impact Bishop Basil Meeking has had on the Church in this place. In my view Basil's life has been a tremendous force for good in the Church. He gave this diocese a welcome and distinctive character.





(Issue 124) "Our Cathedral in Barbadoes Street is in the process of being prepared for deconstruction... I know it is a painful reality but I also know that we will create a new and worthy cathedral which will, in turn, have its own treasures for our time and beyond." Bishop Paul

(Issue 125) Fr Tang Phan a much anticipated Ordination

(Issue 125) Kevin Clark RIP "his human life was a journey - a journey into love"





(Issue 129) Celebrating The Beauty of Jubilate

(Issue 133) Most Rev Michael Gielen DD installed as 11th Bishop of Christchurch; Fr Monty Bamford ordained Priest for Christchurch Diocese

(Issue 135) RIP Fr Bill Middleton He knew that the priest, in the person of Christ, brings what the world cannot - he brings Christ into the heart of the human condition. This Requiem Mass is a powerful declaration that our human death is not the end of the matter. And in fact be liberated from the burden of their sins. He helped them to refocus on the things which truly matter. He anointed and administered the last rites to countless numbers of people over the years of his public ministry. In this way he brought consolation and peace to weary and troubled hearts

(Issue 137) Fr Kevin John Foote RIP





Left to right from top:

(Issue 135) Christchurch Diocese Holds Ablaze Parish Renewal Conference;

(Issue 144) Sr Mary Hanrahan RSM, OBE RIP Former Principal Villa Maria College;

(Issue 137) Perpetual Adoration Chapel Turns Ten; The Beatitudes Celebrates a Final Profession: Sr Monica Tauillili becomes Sr Giovanna Maria of the Holy Eucharist; Consecration of Tema Colati to a Life of Virginity;

(Issue 138) Marian College, our new home;

(Issue 139) Christchurch travels to Palmerston North Bishop John Adams with family and friends who travelled from Christchurch for his Ordination.





Left to right from top: (Issue 143) Family Parade of Saints and Living Rosary; (Issue 142) Reflections on the Legacy of Priesthood
A Tribute to Fr Jim Nicholas; Fr Anton McLean RIP; Christchurch Diocese Offers a Memorial Mass for Fr Benito Velasco;
(Issue 144) Fr Geoff Gray RIP; Temuka community celebrates church re-opening.

The visit of the relics of St Carlo Acutis

by Matt O'Connell - Evangelisation Coordinator, Christchurch Diocese

As part of a national tour, the relics of St Carlo Acutis visited the Diocese of Christchurch (June 17-20). Over four full days, nearly four and half thousand people attended an event with the relics. This number included nearly 2,000 primary and secondary students.

The relic was accompanied by Msgr Anthony Figueiredo and Kate Hobbs. Born in India and raised in London, Msgr Figueiredo now lives in Assisi, where St Carlo lies incorrupt, and looks after the relics of St Carlo Acutis, taking them all over the world for people to venerate and learn about the life of this new, extraordinary, saint. Kate Hobbs is the president of the Friends of St Carlo Acutis in Australia, and is currently taking the relic of St Carlo all around Australia.

Msgr Anthony is fond of the sayings that "St Carlo goes where he wants to go" and that "he works fast." Both were very true in Christchurch. There was an extremely packed schedule as St Carlo went here, there, and everywhere, visiting churches, parishes, the adoration chapel, schools, and the Pro-Cathedral.

St Carlo Acutis is one of the Church's newest saints, having been canonised a year ago. He was born in London on 3 May 1991, to Italian parents who soon

returned to Milan. His parents were not particularly religious, but even from a very young age, Carlo fell in love with God. He attended Mass as often as he could, prayed the rosary, and went to Eucharistic Adoration. He also had a great love of the poor, often using his own money to purchase items for them.

He was also a normal teenager, and this is why he had such an impact on our school students. He was a similar age as many of them when he died. He tried hard in school and was well loved by all. He loved everything about computers, "and was considered by many to be a genius." He used these skills to great effect once he discovered the Eucharistic Miracles. Initially he wanted to visit every site of every miracle, and when this was not possible, "he researched and collated all the authenticated Eucharistic miracles by himself and put them on-line, doing the programming for the website." This website was the genesis of The Eucharistic Miracles of the World, an international exhibition of the approved miracles. The website is available at: www.miracolieucaristici.org.

St Carlo Acutis died of leukaemia near Milan on 12 October 2006, aged 15 years old. His Mother recalls that "shortly before his death, Carlo offered his sufferings for

the Pope and the Church. The heroism with which he faced his illness and death had convinced many, including family members and friends, that he was truly somebody special. When the doctor that was treating him asked him if he was suffering a lot, Carlo answered: "there are people who suffer much more than me!" He was someone special, as he is now a canonised Saint of the Catholic Church, and a model, inspiration, and sure guide for today's generation.

In one of his talks, Msgr Anthony recalled the saying of GK Chesterton when he said that "it is the paradox of history, that each generation is converted by the saint who contradicts it the most." Msgr Anthony believes that St Carlo Acutis is the saint for our generation; a boy who loved God and loved the Eucharist, in a world that has "eclipsed God." He noted that St Carlo's entire life was centred on the most Blessed Sacrament and the "Eucharist became a raging fire in his heart."

Msgr Anthony also pointed out in his numerous talks that "St Carlo was a normal kid! His holiness was not set apart from daily life, but woven into it." He was someone that today's young people, and indeed all of us, can relate to. He became extraordinary in the ordinary moments of life - a lesson to all of us.

In many of his talks, Msgr Anthony talked about 5 simple steps that anyone can follow to become holy and a saint. He said that these were the five steps that marked the life of St Carlo. First, it was going to Mass as often as he could, even daily. Second, it was going to Eucharistic Adoration. Third was spiritual direction and regular confession. Fourth was devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints. Finally, it was the small, hidden acts of charity in the ordinary circumstances of this life. St Carlo wanted to be a saint; he desired it with all his heart, and he had a plan to do this, following these simple (but difficult) steps.

The heart of the message of St Carlo can be summed up with some of his quotes. "To always be close to Jesus" was his "life plan." His life showed that holiness and sainthood can be found in the normal circumstances of everyday life and that all of us "are born as originals but many die as photocopies." He desired to be a saint, and he was convinced that to do so "the only thing we have to ask God in our prayers is to become Saints." He was also convinced about the power of

"God writes for each one of us a unique, unrepeatable story. He leaves us the freedom to write the ending."



the Eucharist. He knew with all his being that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist, in fact he said that "the Eucharist is my highway to heaven."

It was a very blessed time with many graces and miracles. As Msgr Anthony said, "Carlo works fast." One little personal example: my wife and I had been waiting for an appointment for our daughter for a long time. They had the opportunity to venerate the relics at New Brighton Catholic school and, one minute after leaving, we got a phone call offering us 12 free sessions. Carlo works fast!

Msgr Anthony believes that "St Carlo's greatest gift to this generation is one of hope." We saw a glimpse of that in the thousands that came to venerate the relic, and the thousands of petitions that were written, seeking his help and intercession.

Emily Sit, from the Diocese of Palmerston North, beautifully summed up the legacy of the visit of St Carlo Acutis:

"The St Carlo Acutis mission was not simply an event to remember. It was the beginning of a new chapter. May we continue to walk the simple path Carlo lived: centred on the Eucharist, strengthened by prayer, renewed through the sacraments, devoted to Our Lady, generous in charity, and always pointing others, not to ourselves, but to Jesus Christ."

St Carlo Acutis, pray for us.



"Put God at the centre of everything, and all other things will take their right place."



A Longing for Jesus

by Hannah Chapman, Catholic Youth Team

July and August saw the excitement and joy of Revolution Camp, followed by our diocesan celebration of World Youth Day Christchurch. These two events brought together young people from schools and parishes throughout the diocese to encounter Christ, through moments of prayer, community, and joy, and especially through encountering Him in the sacraments.



Revolution Camp welcomed 85 year 7-9 participants and 40 youth and young adult leaders for three days of prayer, exciting activities, and friendship. Throughout the camp, young people were invited to encounter Jesus and explore a personal relationship with Him.

Jeremiah 31:3 was the scriptural theme for Revolution 2026, where God reveals, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you." The camp's theme, "Again and Again," reflected this promise, reminding participants that God does not only meet us in life's extraordinary "mountaintop moments," but continues to walk with us faithfully through the ordinary moments of everyday life. Tara Wall, a member of the Ignite Australia team, joined us to explore this beautiful theme. Tara led five sessions throughout Revolution, using personal testimony, interactive activities, and scripture. Through these sessions, she challenged young people to honestly reflect on their relationship with Jesus and trust in His faithfulness, closing with an encouragement for them to respond

to Jesus' invitation to follow Him more deeply. Throughout the rest of Revolution, participants engaged in prayer workshops, an Amazing Race, and small groups, designed to encourage growth and fellowship.

Riding the wave of enthusiasm from Revolution, we saw 130 youth and young adults join us at World Youth Day Christchurch, to celebrate their faith alongside Bishop Michael. The celebration gathered young people together in community, to hear from inspiring speaker Zac Parnell, experience Jesus in Eucharistic adoration, receive the Lord's mercy through reconciliation, and participate in the source and summit of our faith, the Holy Mass.

These events are an inspiring witness not only to the hunger for Jesus in the hearts of our young people, but also to the commitment and sacrifice of dozens of volunteers, who generously gave their time to serve the Church through youth ministry. A series of Year 10 retreats lie ahead, before the largest Antioch on record in September.

Igniting Christchurch in 2027

by Mike Stopforth - Director, Bishop's Pastoral Office

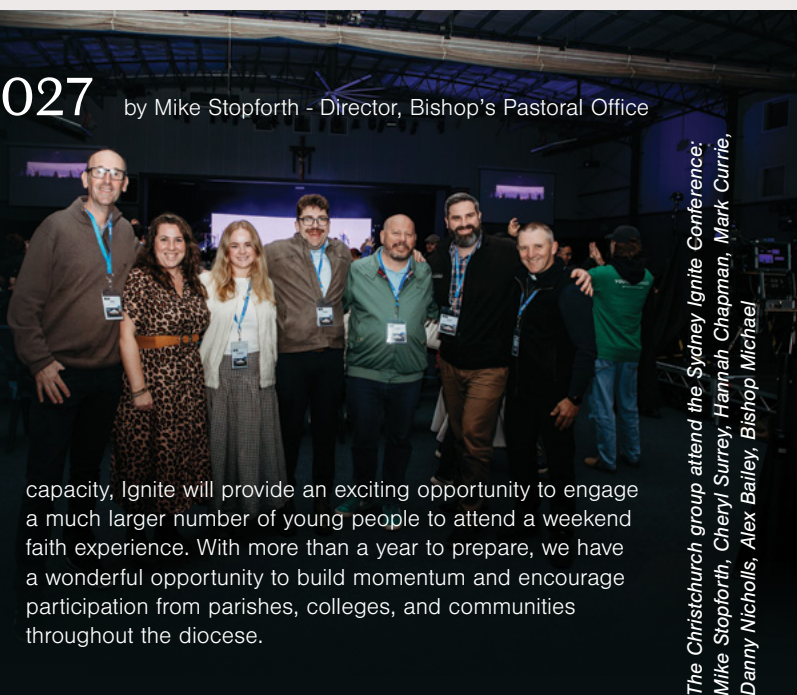
Recently, a small group from our diocese attended the Ignite Conference in Sydney, to discover what will be needed when Ignite comes to Christchurch late next year.

The Sydney Ignite conference attracted over 1,000 people, and was a festival of worship, Adoration, Mass, Reconciliation, and workshops, primarily for youth and young adults. Based in Brisbane, Ignite has held conferences throughout Australia since its inception in 2001.

Christchurch will become the first host city outside Australia to welcome an Ignite Conference. This non-residential conference will be held from 30 September to 3 October 2027. Bishop Michael sees Ignite Christchurch as a blessed opportunity for our diocese and the wider Church in New Zealand; a time of grace and renewal, particularly for youth and young adults.

With our Catholic Youth Team camps regularly reaching

capacity, Ignite will provide an exciting opportunity to engage a much larger number of young people to attend a weekend faith experience. With more than a year to prepare, we have a wonderful opportunity to build momentum and encourage participation from parishes, colleges, and communities throughout the diocese.



The Christchurch group attend the Sydney Ignite Conference: Mike Stopforth, Cheryll Surrey, Hannah Chapman, Mark Currie, Danny Nicholls, Alex Bailey, Bishop Michael

Encouraging Spiritual Conversations

During June and July, many of us experienced the retreats and parish missions of Fr Dominic Sultana, a priest of Malta's Gozo Diocese. His bishop commissioned him to serve as an itinerant preacher, taking him to numerous countries, most recently to New Zealand and the Christchurch Diocese.

Fr Dominic's retreats and parish missions help us encounter God, experience healing, and discover our personal mission in life. For him, encountering God is about meeting the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and deepening our relationship with each of the Divine Persons of the Trinity. A key theme of his preaching is that Christian discipleship extends far beyond the walls of the church. Faith is lived out in our homes, friendships, workplaces, and communities, where our lives can bear witness to God's love. Fr Dominic reminds us that our workplace is a mission field, a place where God can be glorified through excellence, integrity, and genuine service to others.



“Our workplace is a mission field, a place where God can be glorified through excellence, integrity, and genuine service to others.”

Fr Dominic also offers his Christ-like Listening Seminar. Through his experience in different countries, he observes that many Christians live their

faith in isolation. While they attend church regularly, they rarely experience deep spiritual conversation or accompaniment. Through his seminar, he seeks to give people the skills to support and accompany one another through peer-to-peer spiritual listening in their parish communities.

During his time in the Diocese of Christchurch, Fr Dominic led weekend retreats in Greymouth, Waimakariri, and Selwyn; conducted parish missions at Stella Maris Parish and Holy Family Parish in Timaru; and presented his Christ-like Listening Seminar at the Christ the King Pastoral Centre. A consistent response has been that Fr Dominic helped us to be more aware of God's presence in our lives, and feel more confident to help others grow in faith.



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Discernment in Common

— The Dioceses Synodal Journey

by Mike Stopforth - Director, Bishop's Pastoral Office

In 2021, Pope Francis opened the global Synod on Synodality and invited every diocese throughout the world to enter into a process of listening, dialogue and discernment with their communities. The Synod focused on the themes of Communion, Participation and Mission.

Following the gatherings of representatives of the Church from around the world in Rome in 2024, a Final Document was produced, calling the Church to become more deeply a community that listens, discerns, and walks together. Central to this vision is a renewed commitment to wider participation in the life and mission of the Church and a greater appreciation of the baptismal calling of all the faithful. This echoes Pope Benedict XVI's emphasis on the principle of co-responsibility within the Church which he spoke of some years prior.

With the election of Pope Leo XIV, the Church awaited his guidance on the future direction of the work of the synod process. In his first address following his election, Pope Leo from St Peter's in Rome, reaffirmed his commitment to a synodal Church, saying: *"To all you brothers and sisters of Rome, Italy, and all the world, we want to be a synodal Church, walking and always seeking peace, charity and closeness, especially to those who are suffering."*

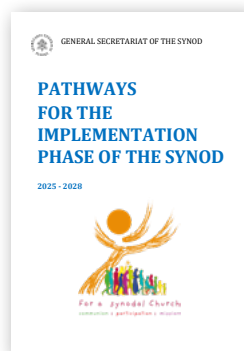
In late 2025, an Implementation Document was released with the endorsement of Pope Leo XIV. The document outlines the next phase of the synodal journey and provides guidance for helping synodality take deeper root within local Churches focusing on embedding synodal practices, strengthening formation, enhancing mission and fostering accountability.

As part of this next phase, every diocese around the world is to establish a Diocesan Synod Team. Bishop Michael has brought together a small diocesan team whose work currently has two primary focuses:

1. The Implementation Document emphasises that a sound understanding of the Synod's Final Document is essential. The team is therefore studying the document together to develop a shared understanding of its vision and implications for diocesan life.
2. One of the primary tools used throughout the synodal process has been Ignatian Spiritual Conversation, often referred to as Conversation in the Spirit. This prayerful process enables participants to listen deeply to one another and the Holy Spirit within a community. It has proved to be a powerful means of communal discernment and a practical way of fostering a synodal culture. A process based on this model has now been prepared for parish leadership groups across the Diocese.

Over recent months, Bishop Michael has begun sharing the vision and priorities that have been emerging for him for the diocese. As part of this next stage of discernment, he is inviting parish leadership (Parish Pastoral Council, Senior Leadership Team or a group of parish leaders) to gather for a spiritual conversation based on the following question:

How is the Lord calling our parish to worship, catechesis and witness?



The Diocese's approach to synodal implementation is intentionally gentle and practical. Rather than introducing large-scale programmes, the focus is on embedding spiritual conversation as a regular and effective tool within parish life, helping communities grow in prayerful discernment, shared responsibility, and missionary renewal.

To read Bishop Michael's vision and priorities for the Diocese, and to download the handout outlining the process, please visit: cdoc.nz/news-events/synodal-communal-discernment or contact Mike Stopforth, e-mail mstopforth@cdoc.nz or phone 027 539 8542.

2027

FIRST HALF

Evaluation Assemblies in
Dioceses and Eparchies

SECOND HALF

Evaluation Assemblies in
National and International

Episcopal Conferences, Eastern hierarchical
structures and other groupings of Churches.

2028

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Assemblies**

OCTOBER

**Celebration of the Ecclesial
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St Patrick's church Greymouth had a wonderful evening with Taize prayer service on Wednesday, 22nd July, with more than 100 people attending it. It was conducted in connection with the celebration of Matariki, with a special focus on meditative singing, remembrance, creation, renewal, and coming together.



17 children received their First Holy Communion on the feast of Corpus Christi on 7th June at St Patrick's church, Greymouth.



7 students from St Patrick's school received Baptism during the Mass on Friday 19th June, after being prepared through the sacramental programme at the school. May God bless them.

Rosemary Banks Catholic Business Network



Join us on Thursday 24 September at 5:30pm for a thought provoking evening meeting with Rosemary Banks. After more than four decades as a New Zealand diplomat, Rosemary will reflect on New Zealand's place in a rapidly changing world, and the way other countries see us. Having twice served as ambassador to the United States, to both Republican and Democrat administrations, she will discuss the way America's view of its global role is

changing, and what this means for New Zealand.

Rosemary will puncture some of the myths and stereotypes about diplomats, and explain why the personal qualities and characteristics needed to succeed in diplomacy or in business are so similar. She will also speak about her personal journey from a country childhood to education at Villa Maria College and Canterbury University, and on to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.



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Serving the Poor: A Path to Holiness

by Phil Bell - St Vincent de Paul, Canterbury

When we think about growing in holiness, we often think of prayer, the sacraments, and reading Scripture. These are essential foundations of Catholic life. Yet, the Gospel also reminds us that one of the surest ways to encounter Christ is by serving those who are poor, lonely, and forgotten.

For members of the St Vincent de Paul Society, serving those in need is far more than charitable work. It is a path of discipleship. Every home visit, shared conversation, food parcel, or act of practical assistance, is an opportunity to meet Christ face to face.

Jesus makes this beautifully clear in Matthew's Gospel:

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me... Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:35-40)

These words are the heart of the Vincentian vocation. We do not simply serve people in need; we encounter Christ through them. Every person we meet is created in the image of God, and possesses an inherent dignity that can never be diminished by poverty, loneliness, illness, or circumstance.

St Vincent de Paul understood this profoundly. He encouraged his followers with the simple but challenging words:

"Go to the poor: you will find God."

What an extraordinary invitation. Rather than seeing the poor only as people to help, St Vincent teaches us that they



Teresa, Pamela & Sharon at the Stanmore Rd Vinnies Shop

become our teachers. They reveal Christ to us. They challenge our assumptions, deepen our compassion, and remind us that love is measured not by grand gestures, but by faithful acts of service.

Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, who founded the St Vincent de Paul Society with a group of university students in 1833, understood that faith could never remain merely an intellectual exercise. When challenged by those who asked, "What is your Church doing for the poor?" his response was not another argument but an invitation to action: "Let us go to the poor."

Ozanam recognised that when Christians step into the lives of those who are struggling, their own hearts are transformed. As St James reminds us, "Be

doers of the word, and not merely hearers" (James 1:22). Prayer draws us closer to Christ, and service sends us into the world to become His hands and feet. Together, they shape us into missionary disciples.

One of the beautiful aspects of the Vincentian way is that it begins with friendship. We do not see people as problems to solve but as neighbours to love. We listen to their stories, respect their dignity, and walk alongside them with hope. In doing so, we often discover that we receive far more than we give.

Many Vincentians will tell you that while they may have joined to help others, they stayed because God transformed their own hearts. Serving the poor cultivates humility, gratitude, patience, and trust in God's providence. It becomes a school of holiness.

As St Vincent de Paul also reminded us, "Love is inventive to infinity." There are countless ways to live that love today: through home visitation, supporting families, serving in a Vinnies shop, helping with food assistance, visiting those who are isolated, or offering your professional skills in service of others.

If you are seeking a practical way to deepen your faith, perhaps God is inviting you to step beyond the pew and into the lives of those who need hope. The St Vincent de Paul Society welcomes people of all ages who wish to put their faith into action through person-to-person service.

Contact your local parish, visit your nearest St Vincent de Paul Conference, or simply ask how you can help. You may discover that in serving your neighbour, you encounter Christ, and that the person most changed is yourself.

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CWLANZ Mission Communities

At its New Zealand founding between 1930 and 1949, The Bishops of Aotearoa New Zealand requested that the Catholic Women's League (CWL) support the Maori Mission and the Church in the South Pacific. Branches are allocated specific mission communities to support with prayer, letters, and fundraising. The national mission secretary oversees the allocation of mission communities and works, to ensure this support is spread as widely and as equitably as possible. Donations made to communities in the Pacific region between September 2024-2025 realised \$33,939. We currently support 12 Mission communities in the Solomons. Christchurch Diocese CWL has four of these communities for which we raise funds.

Lorraine Macmillan from Greymouth is our national mission secretary. Accompanied by her husband Paul, she recently visited the Solomon Islands, where she met with Most Rev Chris Cardone OP., Archbishop of Honiara and the Solomons.

Lorraine Macmillan reflected: "My initial impressions were of a very hot country (average temperature 35 degrees Celsius, with eighty to ninety percent humidity.) The people live simply in small villages, and are humble and welcoming. Although many are employed, they are poorly paid and live from hand to mouth. Some families run roadside stalls, built from whatever they can find, sometimes just under the shade of a market-type umbrella. They sell locally grown vegetables, bread, betelnut, bottled water, and oil.

On arrival, I made contact with Archbishop Cardone, who was very welcoming, very inclusive, informative, and also very realistic. He was able to confirm with me the communities and contacts we currently

*"Their faith is visible!
They are proud, devout, and sincere."*



Lorraine Macmillan with Sister Donna & Sister Benedict (DMI Order)



Paul & Lorraine Macmillan with Archbishop Chris Cardone OP

have there and now, with his assistance, have a guaranteed line of communication and pathway for transferring funds to our mission communities. In 2025, the CWL nationally, donated \$16,939 to their various mission communities in the Solomons, and the Christchurch Diocese contribution within that was \$4,000. The Catholic Church is in great shape in the Solomons, ably led by Archbishop Cardone. A real highlight for me was attending 9am Sunday Mass (1 of 4 services held every Sunday) offered by the Archbishop, joined by a congregation of over 2000 parishioners, in the beautiful open-air Holy Cross Cathedral. Hundreds of families attended, a secondary school choir sang, and two small cultural groups performed, as well as plenty of young people - their faith is visible! They are proud, devout, and sincere. Mass lasted 90 minutes - it was inspiring and refreshing.

An absolute delight for me was being able to track down Sr Donna - a nun from the Daughters of Mary Immaculate (DMI) Order - the local sisters. She was the contact person for my Greymouth branch's mission community. We had lost contact during the Covid period. Sr Donna is a midwife at the Good Samaritan Hospital in the Tetere Parish. When I saw her on 20 May, she told me they had already delivered 70 babies that month. I was able to assist her by buying some basic food supplies (rice and tinned fish) for patients' meals in the hospital. Families must feed their own family members in hospital, and due to distance and poverty, many are unable to do so. In late June, I also arranged for a fridge/freezer to be delivered to her own house, as she has never owned one.

Life in the Solomons can be tough for many, but generally, I found the locals to be happy, friendly, and very grateful for our support of them."

Women's Event June 2026

Lord make me a channel of your peace...

What a blessed evening we shared at our Diocesan Women's Event in June, coming together in friendship, faith, and encouragement. It was a wonderful opportunity to pause from the busyness of daily life, enjoy one another's company, and reflect on God's call to peace.

We were privileged to hear from Sr Clare Lyons, who invited us to reflect deeply on the gift of peace. She shared that she had once heard the words "Do not be afraid" appear 365 times in Scripture, one for every day of the year. Curious, she searched for the word "peace" and discovered it appears 399 times. What a beautiful reminder that peace lies at the very heart of God's message to us.

Sr Clare brought our attention to an important question: How can you and I

embrace the call to be peacemakers, to be channels of peace? She reflected on the Beatitudes in Matthew's Gospel, where "Blessed are the peacemakers" is the seventh Beatitude. "Through this Beatitude, Jesus recognises peacemakers as children of God. Sr Clare reminded us that the whole purpose of Jesus' saving mission and redemption was to become our peace, our salvation, and our healing. He desires each of us to know a deep and lasting peace that does not crumble or dissipate when the world around us falls apart. "This powerful reflection encouraged us to consider how we can be bearers of Christ's peace in our families, communities, and the wider world.

Sharing also the inspiring words of Pope St John Paul II, who, in his 1995 Letter to Women, described women as teachers of peace. He wrote that to be a peacemaker, a woman must first nurture peace within herself. This inner peace comes from knowing that we are loved by God and responding to that love with generosity and compassion.

He also reminded us that "Women need to help women." These words resonated deeply as we gathered, supporting and encouraging one another in faith and friendship.

Kirsten Challies followed, building on Sr Clare's messages by encouraging us to look beyond our own peaceful surroundings and remember those throughout the world who live amid conflict, fear, and uncertainty. While we are blessed to live in a beautiful country where we can freely pray and encounter



God in creation, many of our brothers and sisters do not share this privilege.

Kirsten encouraged us to respond in practical ways through prayer:

- Remember those affected by war, violence, and hardship.
- Bring them before God each day and pray for His grace and protection.
- Consider pausing at midday to pray for peace, perhaps joining others in praying the Angelus.
- Recognise that through prayer we can stand alongside those who are suffering and bring hope where it is most needed.

Following the reflections, we enjoyed a light supper and lively conversation. There was a genuine sense of peace, joy, and connection as women shared fellowship, laughter, and friendship together.

Thank you to everyone who attended and contributed to making the evening so special, especially our speakers, Sr Clare Lyons and Kirsten Challies, for their thoughtful and inspiring reflections.

Sr Clare concluded her reflection with this final prayer, "I pray that God might give each one of us the grace to know at a deeper level the delight he has in us, his joy in bringing us into existence, with his plan of glory for each one of us, to share in his own life. May this knowledge of the heart fill us with a very deep joy and peace. And may that joy and peace transform us and make of each one of us a peacemaker and a bridge-mender, that our feet may be those that announce good news and we be recognised as children of God!



Building Christchurch Landmarks
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We now look forward with anticipation to our Women's Retreat on 5 September 2026, another opportunity to gather, reflect, and deepen our faith together. We hope you can join us.

150th celebrations in Ashburton

On Sunday 19 July the faith communities of Ashburton, Methven, Rakaia, and Tinwald (today's St Augustine of Canterbury parish) came together in Ashburton's Holy Name Church to mark the 150th anniversary of the first Catholic church being opened in the area.

The little wooden building in Burnett Street was blessed by Fr Jean Chervier SM, who was based at New Headford, on Shands Track, near Lincoln. His mission territory covered much of rural Canterbury, and he was responsible for building many of the early churches in the area. He had celebrated the first Mass in Ashburton five years earlier, and was to continue ministering in the area for a further five years after the church was built, until the parish was established in 1881 with Fr Edmund Coffey as first parish priest.

The little church, known as St Augustine's, was the first of three churches in Ashburton. It was relocated twice during its life, and was used as a school and parish hall until it was eventually demolished in 1974.

At the anniversary celebrations Fr Peter Costello, representing Bishop Michael Geilen, celebrated Mass with parish priest Fr Lito Quinones and former parish priest Fr Denis Nolan.

After the Mass, parishioners and visitors came together in the

(above) Many of the congregation gathered around the altar after Mass

(right) The oldest parishioner, 108-year-old Mrs Patricia Macer, with parish priest Fr Lito Quinones

parish centre for lunch. The oldest parishioner, Patricia Macer, who will be 109 in October, had the honour of cutting the cake. She spoke about her memories of her early days in the parish, including the opening of the present Holy Name church in 1931. Children were not allowed to attend the opening, but her brother Patrick was an altar server.

Descendants of another early parishioner, Denis O'Reilly, were also present. Only recently arrived from County Kerry, Ireland, when the church was opened, he settled in the Ashburton area and sponsored several other Irish families to come to Ashburton. Also present, and helping organise the celebrations, were descendants of the Dolan family from County Meath. Several of their family members were baptised by the first Ashburton parish priest, Fr Edmund Coffey.

The parish vision today is to follow that of Fr Chervier and other early priests, to build a vibrant, welcoming, multicultural parish where all can come together and reflect, grow our faith, and flourish in Christ.

Ashburton's first Catholic Church, St Augustine's, blessed and opened on 16 July, 1876



Ashburton's first parish priest, Fr Edmund Patrick Coffey, appointed in 1881



Father Jean Claude Chervier SM, who was responsible for having Ashburton's first church built





The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) has quietly and beautifully nurtured the faith of children in Christchurch for many years. Rooted in the Montessori tradition and developed by Sofia Cavalletti and Gianna Gobbi in Rome, CGS offers children a prayerful space called the atrium, a place where scripture, liturgy, and hands-on materials invite them into a deep, personal encounter with God. What began as a small movement in Italy has grown into a worldwide approach to children's faith formation. Christchurch has played a meaningful part in that story.

CGS first came to our diocese through Katherine Pawson, who discovered their work while living in Sydney. After completing her formation and serving in an atrium there, Katherine returned home with a desire to establish CGS in Christchurch. She began by creating an atrium space at St Joseph's School in

Papanui, where children were welcomed into this gentle, contemplative way of prayer. From those early beginnings, the vision of CGS took root: that even the youngest child is capable of profound wonder, prayer, and relationship with God.

In recent years, CGS has continued to grow. Last year, Katherine, together with catechists Anna Abraham and Kate McBreen, and with the support of atrium families, opened two new atria in spaces made available at our diocesan offices. These spaces have allowed more children to experience the peaceful rhythm of the atrium and to encounter Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who calls each of us by name.

As interest grows, so does the need for new catechists. This year, we are delighted to offer Level 1 Part 1 Formation, the foundational training for those who wish to serve children aged 3-6. Participants will

explore the spirituality of the young child, the essential themes of CGS, and the beautiful materials used in the atrium. It is a time of learning, prayer, and discovery, not only about the child, but about one's own relationship with God.

Whether you are a teacher, parent, parish volunteer, or someone who simply loves working with children, this formation is an invitation to join a movement that has transformed faith formation around the world. We warmly encourage anyone interested to consider joining the upcoming Level 1 Part 1 Formation and becoming part of this growing work in our diocese.

For more info, contact Anna Abraham at chch.childrens.atrrium@gmail.com

<https://cdoc.nz/what-we-do/catechesis-of-the-good-shepherd>

Canterbury Catholic Homeschoolers' Mass

by Emma O'Connell



On 22 July, the Feast of St Mary Magdalene, some sixty homeschooled children, along with family and friends, gathered for Mass at St Patrick's Church, Kaiapoi. Bishop Michael celebrated the Mass, which was concelebrated by Waimakariri Parish Priest Fr Do Nguyen and his Assistant, Fr John Rizzo. Four homeschooled children served at the altar.

A local homeschooling parent organised everyone to come together, participate in, and celebrate this wonderful occasion.

Children led the ministries of the Mass: welcoming us all at the beginning, sharing with us the first reading, leading us all in the Prayer of the faithful, and bringing up the offertory. The Mass was accompanied by beautiful music, provided by the Surrey family. A shared morning tea was enjoyed by mass-goers afterwards.

Canterbury boasts around 1,500 homeschooled pupils, the second largest student population after Auckland, and a fast growing trend across the world.



Mike Nolan: Catholic Superman

In mid July, Mike Nolan retired after 25 years as Manager of the Catholic Education Office (CEO).

Mr Nolan began his work with the CEO under Bishop John Cunneen in January 2001, having been Principal of Catholic Cathedral College for some years. In his time, he worked with seven of our eleven bishops.

At his farewell event, Bishop Michael recognised his faithful guidance and support of our schools throughout his years of



Archbishop Paul Martin SM, Mike Nolan, Therese Coleman, Bishop Michael

service. Tom Wallis is current president of the Catholic Primary School Principals Association. He recalled a Nolan phrase which perfectly captures his leadership philosophy and commitment: "Our work is not hard work, it is heart work."

Peter Callanan was for many years, Principal of St Anne's, Woolston. He recalled a Christmas party where "Mike dressed up as Superman, flew around the room delivering gifts, and dived out of a sash window onto a gym mat." He went on to say that Mike took a risk in that it was quite possible the said mat had been moved by a conscientious groundsman.

In his own remarks, Mr Nolan quoted St John Paul who said that "To teach means not only to impart what we know, but also to reveal who we are by living what we believe." In concluding, Mr Nolan gave a tribute to his late wife, Ruth, for her love and understanding, saying "She helped me become a better leader than I ever could have been without her."

We are deeply grateful for his own faith, his commitment to evangelisation, his support of school boards, principals and teachers, and his meticulous co-ordination of property matters, and wish him every blessing in a well-earned retirement.

We also farewelled Therese Coleman, who was thanked for her many years of dedicated service to Catholic education.



For many families, home education is a chance to grow deeper relationships with each other, focus on tailored learning, and ensure that the Catholic faith is intertwined in our everyday lives.

While there is not a specific patron saint for home education, there are saints that were either homeschooled themselves, or chose to teach their own children at home. To learn more about home education in New Zealand, a great place to begin is nchenz.org.nz

Ready to Answer the Call

At his recent welcome, newly appointed CEO Manager Danny Nicholls observed, “I have had lots of comments over the last couple of months along the lines of “big shoes to fill” and “no pressure” – all tributes to what Mike has built up in his tenure. I am not daunted by that though, I am excited and ready for this opportunity. I know it is a role that the Lord has prepared me for and I am ready to answer that call.”



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May our churches be places of welcome, of worship and of witness.

Grant us wisdom to discern how our time, our talent and our treasure can be offered to this sacred undertaking. Fill us with a spirit of generosity, aware that in giving, we also receive.

Bless our efforts, which are directed towards making you known more deeply in our diocese and in our world.

Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

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Bishop Michael Gielen

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