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NZCatholic

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# Installation of new Auckland bishop will proceed under Covid restrictions

by ROWENA OREJANA

The Mass of Installation of the new Auckland Bishop Stephen Lowe is set to proceed on February 19 at the Cathedral of St Patrick and Joseph, but participants will be limited to 100, following the protocols of the Covid protection framework.

The installation will be preceded by a pōwhiri on February 18 at the Pompallier Diocesan Centre on New St, Ponsonby.

Auckland general manager James van Schie said that, at red on the Covid 19 protection framework, 100 people with My Vaccine Pass will be allowed to attend each event.

“Our Catholic tradition is for the doors of the Church to be open to all but, due to Covid health protocols, both the pōwhiri and installation will be limited to invited representatives of the vibrant life of the diocese,” Mr van Schie said.

However, the installation will be live-streamed from the cathedral “so that people from across the Diocese can be part of this historic and prayerful liturgy”, Mr van Schie added.

Details on the live-stream will be published on the diocesan

website and throughout parishes and newsletters nearer to the date.

Mr van Schie said that, in the lead-in to the installation, a series of videos called “Getting to know our new Bishop” will be posted on the diocese’s social media channels.

“Bishop Steve is very much looking forward to getting around to communities across the diocese in the months ahead, and is hoping to return to St Mary’s church in Motuti, where the founding bishop of our diocese, Bishop Pompallier, is at rest,” he said.

Mr van Schie has asked all the readers of NZ Catholic to pray for the new bishop.

Bishop Lowe was appointed Bishop of Auckland on December 18, 2021.

In a letter to the parishioners of the diocese last year, Bishop Lowe said that he told the papal nuncio that he was happy in the Hamilton diocese and was leaving with “a heavy heart”.

“I will be leaving Hamilton with a heavy heart, but with a heart full of memories of people I have met and have come to know and love,” he said.

However, he said he had been



Bishop Stephen Lowe

“asked to respond to the needs of the Church, and trust again that the Lord shepherds us in and through his Church”.

“And so I humbly accepted the Holy Father’s invitation to this new service he has entrusted me for the people of God,” he said.

In another letter, this time addressed to Aucklanders, Bishop Lowe asked the faithful to pray for him as he promised to pray for them.

# Bishop Lowe apologises for abuse harm

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

Auckland Bishop Stephen Lowe has made a personal apology for the harms caused by those who have abused vulnerable people entrusted to the care of the Church in the two dioceses for which he currently has responsibility. (He is currently apostolic administrator of Hamilton diocese).

In a February 1 letter to “my brothers and sisters in Christ”, he noted the abuse statistics published by the Church that day (see story page 3), as well as the immense damage the abuse caused, and the ongoing trauma experienced by those who suffered abuse. For this, “the Church is deeply apologetic and deeply ashamed”, he wrote.

He also expressed his “commitment to working to create a safe Church and to working with survivors”.

Bishop Lowe wrote that the statistics make “very sad and distressing reading”.

“The number of complaints [is] far too many, particularly up to the 1970s. The fact that complaints continue to be received is a reminder that we are dealing with the flawed dimension of human nature. This is not just a Church problem, this is also a problem in our society. For too long abuse has been a taboo topic that was never talked about. Now survivors are finding their voice.

It is their courage, and their call for the Church to change, that has prompted the safeguarding workshops that have been offered in your community,” the bishop wrote.

He encouraged people who see something that doesn’t look right to talk to someone else about it.

“Abuse thrives in a culture of secrecy. This is why it is important that we bring it into the light,” he added.

He also encouraged survivors to make contact with the Church’s National Office for Professional Standards, or to go to the Police.

“We are committed to responding to your complaint and journeying with you to the extent that you wish to engage with the Church,” Bishop Lowe wrote.

He added that he had met some survivors, and had learned a lot from them.

He also gave an assurance that, “for those entering the seminary or religious life today, there is a robust screening on their suitability for ministry”.

“Their formation has a strong human and psychological dimension that was not available in earlier years, and that again assesses their suitability for ministry. The Church is committed to learning from the mistakes of our past and as we form men and women for ministry in the Church of today.”



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# Scale of abuse in New Zealand Catholic Church revealed in research project

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

The scale of reported alleged abuse within the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand has become known for the first time from extensive research undertaken by the Church at the request of the Royal Commission on Abuse in Care.

A total of 1680 reports of abuse were made by 1122 individuals against Catholic clergy, brothers, nuns, sisters and lay people from 1950 to the present, with 592 alleged abusers named.

Almost half the reported abuse involved sexual harm. The 1960s and 1970s were the decades with the most abuse reported, with 75 per cent dated before 1990.

The results of this research have been requested by, and provided to, the royal commission. The definition of abuse used is the one used by the commission, and includes reports of sexual, physical, emotional, psychological and neglect. According to an "Information Gathering Project Fact Sheet" from Te Rōpū Tautoko, "... failure to act on reports and facilitating abuse were also included in the categorisation of reports of abuse".

The research was undertaken by Te Rōpū Tautoko, the group that coordinates Church engagement with the royal commission.

According to a media statement issued by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference, Te Rōpū Tautoko encourages anyone who has suffered abuse in the care of the Church to approach the police, the royal commission, the Church's agency for managing reports of abuse (the National Office for Professional Standards, or NOPS), or one of the many support groups and networks that exist for survivors.

Te Rōpū Tautoko sought and examined records – in what is called an "Information Gathering Project" – from the country's six Catholic dioceses, and from 43 Catholic religious congregations. The research included records of 428 Catholic parishes, 370 Catholic schools and 67 other care institutions. The findings include:

- Of the 1274 Catholic diocesan clergy (those who work under a bishop, not for a congregation) who have worked in New Zealand since 1950, 378 reports were made about 182 (14 per cent) of those clergy.

- Of the 2286 male congregational members (brothers and priests belonging to a congregation) who have worked here since 1950, 599 reports were made about 187 (8 per cent) of them.

- Of the 4247 female congregational members (sisters or nuns) who have worked here since 1950, 258 reports were made about 120 of them, or 3 per cent.

- Of the 1680 complaints, 1350 involved children and 164 involved adults, with the age of a further 167 not established by the research. Of the 1680, almost half (835) were reports of sexual harm against a child. Of the total, 687 relate to educational facilities, 425 to residential care, 228 to parishes and 122 to other locations. A further 219 were at unidentified locations.

According to the NZCBC media statement, Te Rōpū Tautoko acknowledges that the records will not represent all the abuse that has happened in the care of the Catholic Church, as the research only covers recorded reports. Not all the reports of alleged abuse found during the research resulted in police complaints or criminal convictions. Not all the reports were upheld at the time they were made, or subsequently, but many were.

Not all the alleged abusers were identified – 308 of the reports were against unidentified people. A total of 1296 reports were against 592 named alleged abusers. Of those 592, 393 had one report about them, 143 had two to four reports, 40 had five to nine, 10 had 10 to 14 and six had 15 or more. Those six accounted for more than 10 per cent of all reports of alleged abuse.

A further 138 allegations of abuse were made against 103 other individuals, mostly lay staff, volunteers and similar people involved with the Church.

Catherine Fyfe, chair of Te Rōpū Tautoko, said: "Church leaders are committed to ensuring transparency. Consistent with this principle, we have published this information now, as soon as the work on it has been completed. It is important

to note that the extent of reports of abuse in the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand has not been collated before now. The Information Gathering Project was a major exercise involving dozens of people over two years." This work involved searching paper files dating back 70 years in hundreds of places, she added.

Sister Margaret Anne Mills, DOLC, president of the Congregational Leaders Conference of Aotearoa New Zealand (representing Catholic religious orders and similar entities), said: "Each piece of data represents many people's lives. Much of it represents terrible harm committed by one person on another. We can never forget that. Being involved in being part of healing that harm, as much as is possible, is, and needs to continue to be, our focus. All Church leaders need to urgently understand and acknowledge our shared history; understand and acknowledge the shocking impact of abuse in Church settings on victims and their families; understand what it means for survivors and our faith communities; and act today."

Cardinal John Dew, president of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference, said: "These statistics on abuse in the Catholic Church going back to 1950 are horrifying and something we are deeply ashamed of. I am grateful that so much work has been done in researching the details and making them public. As we continue to respond to the royal commission into abuse, and we build a safer Church for everyone, I firmly hope that facts like these will help us to face the sad reality. The Church will learn from this and affirm its commitment to the work of safeguarding."

The publication of the research comes shortly before the royal commission is scheduled to start hearings that will investigate events at Marylands School in Christchurch. A public hearing is planned to take place from February 9-17 in Auckland.

Marylands was a residential school for boys, many with disabilities, run from the 1950s to 1984 by the Hospitaller Order of St John of God brothers. The commission is also looking into any abuse by the brothers at Hebron Trust, a Christchurch facility for at-risk youth operated by one of the brothers, and abuse by the brothers at Marylands against residents of the neighbouring St Joseph's orphanage, run by the Sisters of Nazareth.

In total, 236 reports of abuse relate to Marylands School and the Hebron Trust. That represents 14 per cent of all the abuse complaints compiled in the research. The three most prolific offenders worked at Marylands, and the most prolific offender went on to establish the Hebron Trust. A further 239 reports of abuse (also 14 per cent of the total) relate to St Joseph's Orphanage and Nazareth House, Christchurch. Half of those reports do not identify an offender.

A resource document from Te Rōpū Tautoko for Catholic school and parish leaders, issued ahead of the February hearing, stated that "the abuse that will be described by survivors ... highlights a dark and appalling part of the Church's history in New Zealand".

"The period of time and events relating to

“These statistics on abuse in the Catholic Church going back to 1950 are horrifying and something we are deeply ashamed of. I am grateful that so much work has been done in researching the details and making them public. As we continue to respond to the royal commission into abuse, and we build a safer Church for everyone, I firmly hope that facts like these will help us to face the sad reality. The Church will learn from this and affirm its commitment to the work of safeguarding.”

– Cardinal John Dew

Marylands and the early days of the Hebron Trust have been the subject of many court cases and subsequent settlements, and resulted in much media coverage during the 1990s and 2000s. This will also inform the commission's investigation, and whether there are any systemic, structural or other factors which contributed to the abuse occurring, and the adequacy of the response by the Catholic Church to allegations of abuse," the resource document stated.

"These accounts, combined with those of many other victims and survivors of abuse in the care of the Catholic Church, at Marylands or elsewhere, will help the royal commission to make findings about what happened and why, and any appropriate recommendations for change."

According to the IGP fact sheet, a total of NZ\$16.8 million has been paid directly to approximately 470 survivors in pastoral or ex-gratia payments by Catholic church entities. Of the total, NZ\$8 million has been paid to survivors by the St John of God Brothers, and nearly \$2 million (NZD) has been paid by the Sisters of Nazareth.

In addition, the IGP report stated, Church entities have provided paid counselling and other therapeutic and social support. Some other in-kind support has been provided, such as payment of school fees or the purchase of household items. These are not included in the total above.

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# Schools start the year with continuity plans in place

by ROWENA OREJANA

The Ministry of Education is encouraging schools to have a business continuity plan in place, and will be giving schools the flexibility to manage their own communities at this time.

New Zealand Catholic Education Office chief executive officer Dr Kevin Shore told *NZ Catholic* that schools will be facing “hundreds of different issues” as they try to get students into school during this phase of the pandemic.

In a sector-wide meeting with the Secretary of Education Iona Holsted, Dr Shore said that the ministry has signalled that it would let schools manage their own communities.

“They want schools to open, but they also want schools to have the flexibility to respond to events as they unfold. Each community is quite different. And the challenges for a large secondary school or a small secondary school are different from a large primary school or a small primary school. They are all unique communities, and the pandemic could affect them in different ways,” he said.

Dr Shore said that the ministry is also encouraging schools to think

about a business continuity plan that will enable them to respond to events as they happen.

“Even though you can’t predict what would happen, you can put things in place so that, when they happen, you are in a good place to manage them,” he said.

With the Omicron virus threatening the community, Dr Shore said the biggest risk for schools is losing a significant portion of their staff to the illness.

“Some of the solutions will be things like having a mixture of remote and face-to-face learning, or rostering different levels of school on different days. In the very worst case, it may have to be school closure,” he said.

He said they wouldn’t want the worst case scenario to happen, but schools need to be ready to respond to such situations.

“At NZCEO, for instance, we’ve split the staff into two. And so that those two teams will never be in the office at the same time. And we’ve done that to make sure that the whole office won’t be there all at once, so that we can keep the business operating,” he said.

Dr Shore said that, among the issues schools have to contend with,



Dr Kevin Shore

masks and classroom ventilation are the more important ones at the moment.

“I know the ministry will be supplying schools with surgical masks enough to supply teachers, so they can change those a few times every day. I think that would be happening very soon,” he said.

“The ventilation issue is probably a major issue for some schools.

Some schools have classrooms with really poor ventilation. The Ministry of Education has ordered air purifiers, but many of them won’t be available until late term 2. So schools are really worried about what they do now.”

In the meantime, he said, the ministry will be sending out to schools CO<sub>2</sub> monitors to identify poor ventilation.

Dr Shore said that Catholic schools have already dealt with the issue of mandatory vaccinations towards the end of last year.

“The grief of that process has been dealt with last year, and schools are trying to move forward from this point, knowing that that aspect of it had been managed somewhat,” he said.

He said Catholic schools fared better than the other integrated schools, with staff having a higher than 95 per cent vaccination rate.

“From the point of view of the students, I think the schools will be encouraging parents to vaccinate the young people as the most effective way of supporting their health and safety,” he said.

Dr Shore stressed young people will be allowed to go to school whether they are vaccinated or not.

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## New leadership team for St Kevin’s, Oamaru

by JEFF DILLON

The beginning of the new school year has seen a couple of familiar faces fronting in the leadership roles officially at St Kevin’s College in Oamaru.

Jo Walshe is the new principal, having been appointed to replace Paul Olsen, who resigned from that position at the end of 2021 after eleven years. Craig Smith is the new deputy principal, and he replaced Kerry Ryan, who also resigned at the end of 2021 after sixteen years in that role.

St Peter’s College (Gore) and Kavanagh College (Dunedin) have both appointed women as principals in recent years. With St Kevin’s appointing Ms Walshe, it means that three out of the four Catholic secondary schools in Dunedin diocese have principals who are women.

Ms Walshe has previously worked at St Peter’s College in Gore, Waitaki Boys’ High School, Waitaki Girls’ High School and St Kevin’s. She then became Head of English at Waimate High School for five years, before returning to St Kevin’s as assistant principal.

Mr Smith, although not a Catholic, attended St Kevin’s as a student. He went on to play professional cricket for Otago. “I was a bowler for the Otago Volts, and was in and around the setup for about ten years,” he said.

It was during an injury break that he helped as a teacher aide at Kavanagh College in Dunedin and decided to complete a postgraduate qualification in teaching. In 2010, he joined the teaching staff at Southland Boys’ High School in Invercargill, and later moved back to Oamaru, where he took up the position of head of sport and physical education at St Kevin’s College.

For Mr Smith, the promotion up the batting order is something for which he acknowledges the help of others on the way, “I was lucky to have the experience of Paul [Olsen] and Jo to help me with learning the role, and Kerry Ryan, the previous deputy, was always on hand to answer any silly questions I had”.

His interest in cricket is still evident. “I (am) still player/coach for the St Kevin’s



Jo Walshe (left) and Craig Smith

College 1st XI and thoroughly enjoy passing my knowledge on to the younger generation.”

Ms Walshe also acknowledges the guidance she has had along the way. “I have also been extremely fortunate to have worked in a Senior Leadership Team which communicated well and was very tight-knit. Paul Olsen was very kind to me as principal, because he allowed me to be creative and develop different programmes. He was also very good at discussing strategic planning and the differing forces that shape a school as he encountered them, which gave me more insight to the running of the school than I might not have otherwise had.”

Both the principal and her deputy are passionate about the key values that are promoted at St Kevin’s. They are identi-

fied as the FIRE values (Family, Integrity, Respect, Excellence)

The school begins the new year with a roll of about 450, evenly distributed by gender, and including 85 hostel students.

Ms Walshe said: “Both Craig and myself are heavily invested in our local community. We have based our families here in North Otago and love the people, the lifestyle and the sense of cohesiveness you gain from living in a rural area. We wish to show respect to that and to the heritage of the College by doing our very best in our roles. We are both very committed to education as a gift of liberation for all people and see it as mission critical to the development of a thoughtful, inclusive and spiritually responsive Catholic community.”

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# Sixteen from Vietnam hope to be priests in NZ

by MICHAEL OTTO

Plans have been made for 16 men from Vietnam to come to this country to study and prepare to be diocesan priests in New Zealand dioceses.

When they arrive in New Zealand, it is planned that they will work to complete level 6.5 IELTS academic (English language), while living in their "home" dioceses in this country, so they can begin studies at Te Kupenga - Catholic Theological College, and apply to become seminarians.

NZ Catholic understands that the timing of their eventual arrival in New Zealand will depend on the New Zealand Government allowing foreign students to once again enter the country for study. The sixteen will have to go through whatever MIQ or isolation requirements are in place when that happens.

Former Holy Cross College rector Msgr Brendan Daly has played a key role in arranging for the Vietnamese men to come to New Zealand.

Msgr Daly, who lectures in canon law at Te Kupenga Catholic Theological College's Auckland campus, has previously liaised with Church authorities in Vietnam to bring men to this country to study for the priesthood.

He told NZ Catholic that he was asked to get three seminarians for Christchurch diocese a year ago.

"Then I was asked to get three for Wellington archdiocese. The requests just kept growing, so that there are one for Dunedin, four for Christchurch, three for Wellington, four for Palmerston North, two for Hamilton, and three for Auckland diocese," he said.

Msgr Daly said that, in July last year, 200 young men sat the seminary entrance exam for Vinh-Thanh seminary in Vinh diocese in northern Vietnam, and 40 were accepted.

"I asked Bishop [Pierre Nguyen Van] Vien about the possibility of some of those who were not accepted for the seminary in Vietnam coming to New Zealand instead. Bishop Vien consulted with the Vinh seminary rector and the parish priests of prospective students, and during the next few months the students agreed to come. They were



Fifteen of the sixteen men from Vietnam hoping to be priests in NZ (the sixteenth took the photo)

interviewed on zoom by Father Tien Cao, the vocation director in Christchurch, and myself. There was also a zoom call to each of their parents to obtain permission to bring their sons to New Zealand," he said.

Msgr Daly added that, before the first Vietnamese students came to Christchurch several years ago, he met with their parents in Vietnam and received permission to bring them to New Zealand.

"It was a very formal occasion for the parents who were formally dressed for the occasion. Then there was a meal afterwards."

The sixteen who have agreed to come to New Zealand have moved to Da Nang in Vietnam to study English. They are living in a three-storey house together, and their accommodation is being financed by the New Zealand dioceses on a pro-rata basis, Msgr Daly said.

These students are all aged in their 20s, and 15 have university degrees, he added.

"The sixteenth has studied music for several

years and is very intelligent. The most common degree is Information Technology, one had a degree in English, there are several engineers and some accountants," he said.

Msgr Daly said that the 16 men "are committed Catholics who want to be priests. They have good human qualities, are intelligent, and the bishop, who studied in Australia, has judged that they will adjust well and adapt to a society like New Zealand's".

Parishioners in this country should "welcome them warmly, as they welcome so many immigrants who are so much a part of our parish communities now in New Zealand", he added.

NZ Catholic asked Msgr Daly to comment on why he thinks the Church in Vietnam produces so many potential vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Msgr Daly said: "The Church in Vietnam has experienced a great deal of persecution over the centuries. Possibly there have been hundreds of thousands of martyrs in Vietnam. The people are very conscious of the heroes in the faith who have preceded them. That helps inspire young people to accept vocations to priesthood and religious life."

Msgr Daly also expressed the hope that the example of the men from Vietnam might encourage more vocations in New Zealand.

## Bishops sell share of site to Marists

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

The sale of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference's half share in the former Good Shepherd College site in Auckland to the Society of Mary will help Te Kupenga-Catholic Theological College to move to modern premises.

Proceeds from the sale of the site at 20 Ponsonby Rd will go to refurbishing the St Columba Centre and adjacent Holy Cross Seminary in near-by Vermont St, Ponsonby.

The upgrade will see Te Kupenga-Catholic Theological College move its Auckland campus from 20 Ponsonby Rd to the St Columba Centre, giving staff and students a modern space better integrated with the seminary.

Barring issues related to the Covid-19 pandemic, the move to Vermont St is expected to happen around Easter, which is in mid-April this year.

The Ponsonby Rd site had been owned 50-50 by the NZCBC and the Society of Mary. The Society has agreed to purchase the NZCBC share, and plans to host some of its ministry agencies at the site, including Logos, a Marist youth development project.

Te Kupenga was formed in January, 2020, by merging the former Good Shepherd College with the former Catholic Institute, creating three subsidiaries, including Catholic Theological College. It had always been planned to eventually move Catholic Theological College to another site.

NZCBC secretary and Bishop of Auckland Stephen Lowe said the bishops were pleased the Ponsonby Rd site will continue to house entities devoted to the mission of the Church.

"The buildings in which we perform our ministry may change, but our passion for the mission of the Church and the Gospel of Christ is enduring," said Bishop Lowe.

"The bishops are grateful and very appreciative of the work and patience of staff of Te Kupenga and Holy Cross Seminary for helping bring these changes into effect, and we acknowledge the significant disruption to staff and students caused by construction works and moving premises."

Catholic Theological College Level 7 head and lecturer Fr Merv Duffy said: "It will be hard leaving 20 Ponsonby Road — we've taught from here for 21 years — but the Vermont Street site has more parking, which will benefit our students."



The property at 20 Ponsonby Rd

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# The promise of natural religion

Along with many other cultural commentators, I have been tracing for the past many years the phenomenon of religious disaffiliation, the sobering fact that armies of people, especially the young, are leaving institutional religion behind. . . . However, I wonder whether the insistence upon the existence of so many “nones” has led to a certain misperception — namely, that all or most of those who have left the churches have simply become atheists, sceptics, and materialists. In point of fact, the closer we look at the “nones”, the stranger, more variegated, and

## Robert Barron

oddly religious they seem.

My thoughts on this matter have been prompted by a remarkable book I just read called “Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World”, written by Tara Isabella Burton. Herself a millennial and in possession of a doctorate in theology, and having made her own journey through this world on her way to becoming a Christian, Burton is particularly qualified to explore the rather dense jungle of religions and spiritualities proliferating especially among those under 40. She observes that very few of the religiously-disaffiliated would identify as atheists or strict materialists. In fact, a large number of them would fit neatly into the category of “spiritual but not religious” (SBNRs). Most SBNRs, though they disdain the traditional churches, remain hungry for four elements that religion has classically offered: meaning, purpose, community, and ritual. And they have found these values in some odd places.

For instance, there is, Burton shows, a vibrant community that has grown up around their common love for the Harry Potter stories, which they treat as practically sacred texts and with whose

characters they deeply identify. She makes the incontestable, but still startling, observation: “Given that 61 per cent of Americans have seen at least one Harry Potter film, it is very likely that more Americans can name the four Hogwarts houses than can name the Gospels”. Still others find the four religious values in that farrago of beliefs and spiritual practices that goes by the name “New Age”. Think of the communities and rituals that have formed around “UFOs, Reiki, acupuncture, crystal healing, and the kind of creative visualisation ubiquitous in the New Thought movement”. Others discover meaning in their shared commitment to social justice, and their concomitant disdain for those individuals and groups who stand athwart the achievement of racial, political, or gender equity. Among some radical feminists, witchcraft has taken on a tremendous spiritual significance: “Combining progressive feminist politics with a fervent opposition to institutional Christianity . . . modern witchcraft embraces its power to transgress”.

In the course of her well-written and fascinating study, Burton gives many more examples of the sometimes wacky contemporary quasi-religions that have supplanted the traditional institutional faiths. Though it might surprise my readers a bit, this Catholic bishop would like to say something positive about all of this. The secularisation hypothesis, first proposed by atheists and sceptics in the nineteenth century, and reiterated ad nauseam by elite commentators today, holds that, as secularist science, technology, and education advance, religion will inevitably decline. Not only has this hypothesis been proven wrong in many parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, where various forms of traditional religion are booming; it has also been proven wrong in the West, where religion, despite the thousand predictions of its disappearance, continues to reassert itself. What we see in Harry Potter religion, New Age spirituality, Wicca and

witchcraft, etc. are attempts to find community and purpose precisely in a ritualised relationship to some power appreciated as transcendent. We can blithely condemn all of this, or we can see it as expressive of what the Catholic tradition calls “natural religion”, which is the instinct, deeply-rooted in each of us, to search for meaning in the ultimate sense. Despite the claims of the ideological secularists, it is just not that easy to stamp out religion. In the face of obstacles, both exterior and interior, it finds a way.

Now, this does not mean for a moment that Christians should be satisfied with the “blossoming, buzzing confusion” of natural religion, especially the kinds on offer today, but we should, as St Paul, St Irenaeus, St Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas, G.K. Chesterton, and Pope Benedict XVI did in their own day, meet it and engage it with the word of revelation. One of the marks of the natural religious attitude is that the seekers are always in control of the conversation: they set out to find ultimate meaning on their own terms. Burton, in fact, argues that this tendency is especially prevalent today, when seekers claim the right to rewrite sacred texts and reconfigure sacred rituals to suit their personal preferences. But a revealed religion, like Catholic Christianity, holds that God has spoken. Our quest is real and it can be holy, but what finally matters is that God has answered it on his terms.

Again, it would be easy enough to write off the frankly weird forms of religiosity that Burton describes, but this would be seeing glass as half-empty. Rather, we Catholics should rejoice that the religious instinct remains vibrantly alive in the SBNRs. And then we should eagerly engage that instinct with the liberating challenge of the Gospel.

Bishop Robert Barron is an auxiliary bishop of Los Angeles. This article was first published on [www.worndonfire.org](http://www.worndonfire.org). Excerpts from it are republished here with permission.

## Ronald Rolheiser

# Theology and spirituality – writing about it or writing it

In the world of the arts, they make a distinction between persons who create an artifact, an artist, a sculptor, or a novelist, and persons who write about artists and their works. We have novelists and literary critics, artists and art critics, and both are important. Critics keep art and literature from bad form, sentimentality, vulgarity, and kitsch; but it's the artists and novelists who produce the substance; without them critical assessment has no function.

For example, the book “The Diary of Anne Frank” is a masterpiece. Countless books and articles have been written about it, but these are not the masterpiece, the substance, the artifact that so deeply touched the soul of millions. They are commentaries about the artifact. Of course, sometimes a person can be both, a novelist and a literary critic, an artist, and an art critic, still the distinction holds. These are separate crafts and separate disciplines.

That same distinction holds true within the area of theology and spirituality, though it is often not recognised. Some people write theology and others write about theology, just as some people write spirituality and others write about spirituality. Right now, I'm writing about theology and spirituality rather than actually doing theology or spirituality.

Perhaps an example can help. Henri Nouwen was one of the most popular spiritual writers in the past 70 years. Nouwen wrote spirituality; he never wrote about it, he wrote it. He was not a critic; he wrote spiritual texts. Many people, including myself, have written about Nouwen, about his life, his works, and why he influenced so many people. Strictly speaking, that's writing about spirituality as opposed to writing spirituality as Nouwen did. Truth be told, we don't have

an abundance of spiritual writers today of the calibre of Nouwen. What we do have, particularly at an academic level, is an abundance of critical writings about spirituality.

I offered the example of a contemporary spirituality writer, Henri Nouwen, but the distinction is perhaps even clearer when we look at classical spiritual writers. We have in fact created a certain “canon” of spirituality writers whom we deem as classics: the Desert Fathers and Mothers, the Pseudo-Dionysius, Julian of Norwich, Nicholas of Cusa, Francis of Assisi, Dominic, Ignatius, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Francis de Sales, Vincent de Paul, and Therese of Lisieux, among others. None of these wrote works of criticism in itself, they wrote spirituality. Countless books have been written about each of them, critically assessing their works. As valuable as these books are, they are in the end not spirituality books, but books about spirituality.

The same is true for theology. We have infinitely more books written about theology than we have books that are actual theology. The word “theology” comes from two Greek words, Theos (God) and logos (word). Hence, in essence, theology is “words about God”. Most theology books and courses on theology contain some “words about God”, but these are generally dwarfed by “words about words about God”.

This is not a criticism, but a clarification. I have taught and written in the area of theology and spirituality for nearly 50 years and am blissfully unaware of this distinction most of the time, mainly because we need both, and the two simply flow in and out of each other. However, there is a point where it becomes important not to confuse or conflate the critical assessment of an artifact with the artifact itself, and in our case to recog-

nise that writing about theology and spirituality is not the same thing as actually doing theology and doing spirituality. Why? Why highlight this distinction?

Because we need the artist and the critic to speak to different places inside of us, and we need to recognise (explicitly at times) where we need to be fed or guided. The artist speaks to the soul with one kind of intent, namely, to inspire, to inflame, to deepen, to bring new insight, and to move us affectively. The critic speaks with a different intent: to guide, to keep us balanced, sane, robust, clear-headed, and within the bounds of decency, community, proper aesthetics, and orthodoxy. Both are important. One saves the other from unbridled sentimentality, and the other saves the other from simply being an empty exercise. In a vast over-simplification, we might put it this way. Critics define the rules of the game and hold the players to the rule; but art, theology, and spirituality are the game. Games need to be refereed or they quickly degenerate.

In our churches today, there is often a tension between those who are trying to create new insight, generate new enthusiasm, and speak more affectively to the soul, and those who are guarding the castles of academia, orthodoxy, liturgy, and good taste. Academic theology is often in tension with devotional life, liturgists are often in tension with pastors, and popular spiritual writers are often in tension with critics. One or the other may irritate us, but each is ultimately a friend.

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# Revisiting Pope's letter on abuse

With a better idea of the scale of reported alleged abuse in the Catholic Church in this country now public, certain reflex responses can arise.

"It was a long time ago . . ."; "It wasn't us [my group within the Church]."; "Other institutions have done similarly . . .", for example. At least the "it's only a few bad apples. . ." response can be laid to rest. But reflex responses are not adequate by a long shot. A far better response came from Pope Francis, in his 2018 letter to the People of God on the subject of abuse. It is worth revisiting some of what he wrote, at some length.

*"Crimes that inflict deep wounds of pain and powerlessness, primarily among the victims, but also in their family members, and in the larger community of believers and nonbelievers alike. Looking back to the past, no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient. Looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated." . . .*

*"We have realised that these wounds never disappear, and that they require us forcefully to condemn these atrocities and join forces in uprooting this culture of death. . . . The heart-wrenching pain of these victims, which cries*

## Editorial

*out to heaven, was long ignored, kept quiet or silenced. But their outcry was more powerful than all the measures meant to silence it, or sought even to resolve it by decisions that increased its gravity by falling into complicity. The Lord heard that cry and once again showed us on which side he stands. . . .*

*"With shame and repentance, we acknowledge as an ecclesial community that we were not where we should have been, that we did not act in a timely manner, realising the magnitude and the gravity of the damage done to so many lives. We showed no care for the little ones; we abandoned them. . . .*

*"While it is important and necessary on every journey of conversion to acknowledge the truth of what has happened, in itself this is not enough. Today we are challenged as the People of God to take on the pain of our brothers and sisters wounded in their flesh and in their spirit. If, in the past, the response was one of omission, today we want solidarity, in the deepest and most challenging sense, to become our way of forging present and future history." . . .*

*"Together with those efforts [to ensure the safety and protection of the integrity of children and of vulnerable adults, as well as implementing zero tolerance and ways of making all those who perpetrate or cover up these crimes accountable], every one of the baptised should feel involved in the ecclesial and social change that we so greatly need. This change calls for a personal and communal conversion that makes us see things as the Lord does." . . .*

*" . . . the only way that we have to respond to this evil that has darkened so many lives is to experience it as a task regarding all of us as the People of God. . . . Without the active participation of all the Church's members, everything being done to uproot the culture of abuse in our communities will not be successful in generating the necessary dynamics for sound and realistic change. . . "*

The Pope had more to say about the penitential dimension of fasting and prayer in this context, and on the blight of clericalism, which has been a factor in all of this. People should read and reread his letter.

The scale of what happened in Aotearoa New Zealand is now clearer, but even one incident of abuse is one too many. Hopefully, the publication of these figures is another step on the road to justice.

## The Habit



## Letters

### Readings

In August, I wrote to your paper about the grotesque reading used for Mass on August 15.

Well, the same reading was used in the Mass celebrated when Damien Walker's wonderful painting of Our Lady was feted around the country for the re-dedication of Aotearoa New Zealand to Mary Mother of God.

Then on Christmas Eve, the Gospel reading included the phrase "because Joseph and Mary had not had intercourse". How gross is that in a church service where many young children are present? "Intercourse" is not a word discussed around the dinner table, so it should not be used in Gospel readings. Matthew's Gospel uses a more benign phrase, "they did not sleep together".

Perhaps the Liturgy Committee could revert to that phrase. I can't imagine how the virginal priests feel having to read that word out.

C. Wheeler,  
Rangiora.

■ NZ Catholic invited Te Kupenga Catholic Theological College Scripture lecturer Fr Kevin Waldie, SM, to respond to this letter. His response is as follows:

It is to be noted that the Apocalypse reading reflects a late First Century context in the early Church's proclamation

of Christ. This biblical author's form of language thus heralds the powerful presence of God and his Christ in that moment. His words inspire confidence during uncertain times. The woman of chapter 12 has honoured status because she has safely given birth to the Saviour, the one and only ruler. In this symbolic world then, the Johannine author is declaring something important about Christ and the Christian faith community. In short, this text venerates the mother of the Lord while emphasising her son's powerfully abiding presence among us.

With respect to the cited English version of Matthew 1:18, it must be acknowledged that the Greek text can be translated in a variety of ways. Any good dictionary will offer various meanings for the verb in question. First and foremost, it means to come together (understood here as husband and wife), or to be in someone's company, or to engage in marital relations. Most versions I have consulted offer the translation "before they came together", which in my opinion is accurate.

A final word: the biblical text is always undergoing revision. And we as receivers of that text should always remember that any translation is an interpretation of the original language text. The translations available are therefore not always going to receive universal approval.

## Births

I was saddened to read recent reports in the news about a growing trend of young people in this country seriously considering not having children as one way of responding to climate change. One commentator worried about the over-individualisation of climate risk being assumed by young people, in considering such a thing.

In a talk in Italy last year, Pope Francis acknowledged that young families can be beset by worries that risk paralysing their life plans. But "sustainability" is key for building a better world, the Pope said.

We often talk about economic, technological and environment sustainability and so on. But we also need to talk about generational sustainability. We will not be able to nurture production and preserve the environment if we do not pay attention to families and children. Sustainable growth comes from here.

History teaches this. During the phases of reconstruction following the wars that devastated Europe and the world over the past centuries, there was no restart without an explosion of births, without the ability to instil confidence and hope in the younger generations.

We cannot follow short-sighted models of growth, as if a few hasty adjustments were the only thing needed to prepare for tomorrow.

N. O'Donnell,  
Auckland.

## Euthanasia

Let's avoid the term "assisted dying" (NZ Catholic, December 12) as it is an attempt to sanitise the process of euthanasia. Furthermore, the article, in referring to limited decision-making capacity, raises the legal question why such a person should be allowed to apply for euthanasia in the first place.

In September 2020, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a document (*Samaritanus Bonus*) authorised by Pope Francis, giving guidance on pastoral care of those who may seek to receive euthanasia or assisted suicide. Accompaniment here is described as "an invitation to conversion, especially when euthanasia, requested or accepted, will not take place immediately or imminently. Here it remains possible to accompany the person whose hope may be revived and whose erroneous decision may be modified, thus opening the way to admission to the sacraments. Nevertheless, those who spiritually assist these persons should avoid any gesture, such as remaining until the euthanasia is performed, that could be interpreted as approval of this action." (*Samaritanus Bonus* Part V Section 11)

It's worthwhile supporting Defend NZ ([www.defendnz.co.nz](http://www.defendnz.co.nz)), a movement designed to cope with the legalised euthanasia environment. Defend NZ aims to protect the vulnerable, expose abuse and improve care.

Richard Harward,  
Onehunga.

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# Catholic findings in redress report summarised

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

The group formed to coordinate Catholic engagement with the Royal Commission into Abuse in Care has released a summary of "Catholic findings" contained in an interim redress report tabled in Parliament late last year.

In a January 2022 update, Te Rōpū Tautoko collated Catholic findings in "He Purapura Ora, he Māra Tipu; from Redress to Puretumu" ([www.abuseincare.org.nz/our-progress/reports/from-redress-to-puretumu/](http://www.abuseincare.org.nz/our-progress/reports/from-redress-to-puretumu/)) produced by the royal commission. Te Rōpū Tautoko also summarised the recommendations in the redress report.

The Catholic findings are generally critical of the way the Church dealt with survivors and with the Church's approach to the issue in general.

The bishops and congregational leaders of the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand said in December last year that they would closely study the interim redress report and look at how they can implement the recommendations.

The Church had been working proactively while waiting for the commission's report. Te Rōpū Tautoko has created a roadmap of work that

needs doing across all areas of the Church, to make improvements in response to reports or disclosures of abuse in the care of the Catholic Church. (NZ Catholic, December 12, 2021).

The first finding in the Te Rōpū Tautoko summary of Catholic Church findings in the interim redress report was that survivors of abuse face numerous barriers when disclosing abuse to the Catholic Church, made worse by the very structure of the Church, and that the Church had not taken sufficient steps to reduce the barriers.

Another finding was that "there have been failures by bishops and religious superiors to use procedures under canon law, or to use them properly. In addition, only the Holy See can permanently remove a priest or bishop from ministry, but responses from the Holy See are often delayed. This suggests the rights of alleged abusers being prioritised over survivor needs, and over the prevention of further abuse".

"Catholic institutions frequently fail to provide appropriate care and support for survivors during redress processes or criminal proceedings," it was added.

Under a heading "Poor record

keeping, culture of secrecy and lack of interest", the report found that "Prior to the inquiry, the Catholic Church had generally not attempted to collect or analyse information about reports of abuse, including about the prevalence of abuse. Poor record-keeping, a culture of secrecy, and an apparent lack of interest or inclination to understand the nature and extent of abuse, has meant the Church leaders had limited insight into systemic issues impacting the safety of those in its care."

"The Catholic Church has generally not proactively sought out those who were abused in the care of the Church," the report stated.

The very limited attempts at having a unified national approach to allegations of abuse until the 1980s were noted.

*Te Houhanga Rongo* — A Path to Healing was introduced in 1988, but not all religious institutes have accepted the role of the National Office of Professional Standards and the Complaints Assessment Committee.

The royal commission report noted that one of the four principles of *Te Houhanga Rongo* - A Path to Healing, is fairness and natural justice. But it added that this principle states that "in any inquiry the quest

for truth will be paramount and will be based on the principles of natural justice". "In practice", the report stated, "the 'quest for the truth' translates into an investigative response dominated by the search for corroboration of a survivor's account, in the context of most abuse occurring in secrecy. Survivor's interests were not paramount. More emphasis is placed on investigation rather than treating the survivor with empathy and compassion. Survivors' interests are not paramount in the Catholic Church's redress policy or in its redress process generally."

The Catholic Church still does not have a consistent approach to addressing reports of abuse that do not include sexual abuse by the clergy and religious, the report also stated.

Among other aspects of the Church's approach that were criticised was the degree of autonomy of Church bodies, the review/appeal process and deficiencies therein, and the degree of incorporation, if any, of Tikanga Māori and the worldviews of Pacific peoples and Deaf and Disabled people into the processes. Also criticised was a perceived view of redress processes and responses to survivors as separate to safeguarding responses.

## Vatican editorial defends Benedict XVI after release of abuse report

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — A Vatican editorial defended retired Pope Benedict XVI's record in fighting clerical sexual abuse after the release of a report that accused him of mishandling four cases during his time as archbishop of Munich.

Andrea Tornielli, editorial director for the Dicastery for Communication, said a report on the handling of cases in the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising was an important contribution to "the search for justice in truth, and to a collective examination of conscience on the errors of the past".

However, he warned, "the reconstructions contained in the Munich report, which — it must be remembered — is not a judicial inquiry nor a final sentence, will help to combat paedophilia in the Church if they are not reduced to the search for easy scapegoats and summary judgements".

The 1900-page report was released on January 20, and looked at the handling of cases in the archdiocese between 1945 and 2019. Then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger led the Archdiocese of Munich from 1977 to 1982.

The report identified 497 victims and 235 abusers over the more than 70 years covered by the investigation, but the lawyers who conducted the study said they are convinced the

real numbers are much higher. In the report, the lawyers said that, on four occasions, then-Cardinal Ratzinger mishandled abuse allegations.

In his editorial, Tornielli noted that, during the initial phase of the investigation, Pope Benedict "did not evade the questions", and provided an 82-page response regarding his time leading the Munich Archdiocese.

"Predictably, it was (then-Cardinal) Ratzinger's four-and-a-half years at the helm of the Bavarian diocese that monopolised the attention of commentators," he said.

Although the retired Pope is expected to issue a statement after examining the report's findings, Tornielli said the steps taken by the Catholic Church to fight clerical sexual abuse can be retraced "starting from his pontificate".

"Child abuse is a horrendous crime. The abuse committed against minors by clerics is possibly an even more revolting crime, and this has been tirelessly repeated by the last two popes," Tornielli wrote.

He also noted that, as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, then-Cardinal Ratzinger "promulgated very harsh norms against clerical abusers", as well as "special laws to combat paedophilia".

During his pontificate, he continued, Pope Benedict paved the way



Pope Benedict XVI gives Communion to a young man during Mass at Westminster Cathedral in London in this Sept. 18, 2010, file photo. (CNS photo/Reuters pool)

for a change of mentality in how the Church treats survivors of abuse who, instead of being welcomed and accompanied, were often "distanced and even pointed to as 'enemies' of the church and its good name".

"It was Joseph Ratzinger the first pope to meet several times with victims of abuse during his apostolic journeys. It was Benedict XVI, even against the opinion of many self-styled 'Ratzingerians', who upheld, in the midst of the storm of scandals in Ireland and Germany, the face of a penitential Church, which humbles itself in asking for forgiveness, which feels dismay, remorse, pain, compas-

sion and closeness," Tornielli said.

Recalling Pope Benedict's assertion that "the sufferings of the Church come precisely from the inside of the Church, from the sin that exists within the Church," Tornielli said that the former Pope emphasised the need for the Catholic Church to ask forgiveness from victims and from Jesus, "who has always been on the side of the victims and never of the executioners".

"These words were preceded and followed by concrete facts in the fight against the scourge of clerical paedophilia," he wrote. "All this can neither be forgotten nor erased."

## Retired Pope Benedict corrects statement for Munich abuse report

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Amending a written statement made to a panel investigating clerical sexual abuse in his former Archdiocese of Munich and Freising, retired Pope Benedict XVI said he was present at a 1980 meeting to discuss the transfer of a priest accused of misconduct.

"He did attend the meeting on January 15, 1980," said a statement issued on Pope Benedict's behalf by his secretary, Archbishop Georg Ganswein.

"The statement to the contrary was therefore objectively incorrect. He would like to emphasise that this

was not done out of bad faith but was the result of an oversight in the editing of his statement," the archbishop said.

The law firm Westpfahl Spilker Wastl, conducted the investigation for the archdiocese; the retired Pope had sent an 82-page statement to the investigators while they were doing the investigation.

Particularly regarding the case of repeat offender Peter H., a priest sent to Munich from Essen in 1980, lawyer Ulrich Wastl described Pope Benedict's original statement as "not very credible".

In the statement, the former Pope had said he did not take part in a decisive meeting on the case of Peter H. But, at the news conference where the legal report was presented, Wastl read out the minutes of that meeting. In it, then-Archbishop Ratzinger is mentioned in several places as a rapporteur on other topics.

Once the retired Pope has had the time to thoroughly read the Westpfahl Spilker Wastl report, Archbishop Ganswein said, "he will explain" how the editing error occurred.

"He is very sorry for this mistake and asks pardon," the archbishop

said.

At the same time, Archbishop Ganswein said, the retired Pope's assertion that "in this meeting no decision was made about a pastoral assignment of the priest in question" remains "objectively correct".

The 1980 meeting, he said, dealt only with "the request to provide him (Peter H.) with accommodation during his therapeutic treatment in Munich", a request that was granted. Later the priest was assigned to provide pastoral care in Bavaria and continued to sexually abuse minors.



# NZCCSS support in principle for health reform bill

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) has expressed its support in principle for the aims and objectives of the *Pae Ora* (Healthy Futures) Bill currently before a parliamentary select committee.

The bill was drafted after an independent Health and Disability System Review found consistently poor outcomes for some groups, in particular Māori, Pacific peoples, and people with disabilities, and significant unwarranted variation in service availability, access and quality between population groups and areas of New Zealand.

The review found that the health system had become fragmented and complex, leading to unclear roles, duplication, misalignment, and a lack of a common whole-system ethos. The health system was also found not to meet the Crown's obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi).

The *Pae Ora* (Healthy Futures) Bill repeals and replaces the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000 in its entirety. The Government proposes replacing District Health Boards with a single agency, Health New Zealand, as well as creating a Māori Health Authority to address health inequities among tangata whenua, and a stand-alone Public Health Unit to lead public health strategy.

The NZCCSS, which includes Catholic Social Services, represents more than 250 organisations providing a range of social services throughout the country.

In its submission on the *Pae Ora* (Healthy Futures) Bill, the NZCCSS expressed its support "in principle" for the purpose and objectives of the bill.

"We look forward to more details on how the new health entities, strategies and locality plans will interact, and on the level of funding needed to adequately resource each part of the new system."

The submission backed the proposal to replace DHBs with a single agency, and to have a Māori Health Authority and a Public Health Unit.

"We agree that this will provide consistency in health services around the motu (country). All New Zealanders should experience equitable health outcomes, but it is clear that this is not the case. It is unacceptable that Māori and Pacifica health outcomes are significantly poorer compared to other ethnicities. Data shows on average Māori live seven years less than non-Māori (Independent Health and Disability Review, 2020). This is a clearly a breach of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and a morally unacceptable situation which must end. Inequities in health however sit within a wider system of structural inequality underpinned by racism and stereotypes," the submission stated.

"The inter-generational damage of colonisation and institutional racism across education, the justice system, social welfare and employment, is

widely acknowledged as social determinants of poor health outcomes.

"Our member services see every day the impact of these structural inequities playing out in communities: poverty and deprivation, poor nutrition, social exclusion, high rates of incarceration, transience and poor-quality housing, addiction and mental health problems, and barriers to access health and social services and government supports. The health system reforms on their own will not address health equity without broader structural change within our society," the submission stated.

Among other comments in the submission on various aspects of the bill, the NZCCSS expressed support for a proposed statutory requirement for Government to undertake public consultation on all health strategies, to ensure interested parties have an opportunity to comment, and for a public health campaign to provide clear information on the health reforms and what changes to expect at the local level.

# Prominent lay Catholics, Indigenous leaders to head Canadian healing fund

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (CNS) — Three prominent lay Catholics and three prominent Indigenous leaders have been named to the board of the Canadian bishops' new charity to promote Indigenous healing and reconciliation initiatives.

The board will help manage the Indigenous Reconciliation Fund, which will accept contributions from 73 dioceses across Canada to fulfill a financial commitment of 30 million Canadian dollars (US\$23.6 million) made by Canada's bishops in September. The fund will publish annual reports and will be subject to an audit by an independent accounting firm each year.

The three lay leaders include Barbara Dowding, chancellor of the Archdiocese of Vancouver and a former National Catholic Women's League president with a long history of lay leadership in Canada; Natale Gallo, former supreme director of the Knights of Columbus, who represented Canada on the International Board of Directors; and Claude Bédard, national president of the Society of St Vincent de Paul in Canada.

Dowding said that the bishops were looking for individuals with an understanding of the Church across Canada, and she hoped "our lay-led focus from the grassroots will help continue to promote healing and reconciliation".

Indigenous members named to the board included:

- Cree Chief Wilton Littlechild, a residential school survivor and lawyer who served as a Commissioner for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Littlechild has been a member of Parliament, vice-president of the Indigenous Parliament of the Americas, North American representative to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and a chairman of the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as the Commission on First Nations and Métis Peoples and Justice Reform.

- Giselle Marion, who holds a law degree from the University of British Columbia, and passed the bar in the Northwest Territories in 2008. She worked for the Department of Justice. She is a Tlicho citizen and is the director of client services with the Tlicho Government — a First Nations organisation representing the Tlicho Nation, Dene people of the Northwest Territories — out of the

Behchoko office.

- Rosella Kinoshameg, an Odawa/Ojibwa woman from the Wikwemikong Unceded First Nation Territory. She is a registered nurse with more than 50 years of nursing experience, mostly working with First Nations communities doing community health, maternal child health, immunisations, home and community care. She was one of the original members of the Canadian bishops' Indigenous Council and continues to serve as a member of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle.

Dowding told *The B.C. Catholic*, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Vancouver, that the women's league "has a long history of supporting and reaching out to our Indigenous sisters".

"I believe in its mandate to promote Indigenous healing and reconciliation initiatives with transparency and care," Dowding said. She added that the importance of moving forward partnering with Indigenous peoples across Canada "cannot be emphasised enough".

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops said the board members and its directors "will collectively bring a strong financial acumen and deep commitment to the healing and reconciliation journey".



Cree Chief Wilton Littlechild, Justice Murray Sinclair and Commissioner Marie Wilson unveil the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report in Ottawa, Ontario in 2015 (CNS Photo)

## ■ Promise

The promise to raise \$30 million for reconciliation came after a series of unmarked graves were discovered at former Indian residential schools, many of which were run by the Catholic Church or Catholic religious orders.

Administrative costs for the fund will be on top of the \$30 million being raised, and will not be deducted from the principal amount, the bishops said in a statement.

"The bishops of Canada are fully committed to addressing the historical and ongoing trauma caused by the residential school system," said Bishop Raymond Poisson, president of the CCCB. "In moving forward with our collective financial commitment, we will continue to be guided by the experience and wisdom of Indigenous peoples across the country."

The fund will be managed with measures put in place to ensure transparency and good governance, the bishops said. It will prioritise healing and reconciliation for communities and families, culture and language revitalisation, education and community building, and dialogue for promoting Indigenous spirituality and culture.

Indigenous partners will provide input on how the funds will be spent on these priorities.

Regional and/or diocesan granting committees with Indigenous and Catholic members will be established across the country to identify projects that further the fund's priorities, review applications, and request funds to support such projects. The bishops are recommending the committees be chaired by local Indigenous partners.

The establishment of the new national framework builds on existing voluntary fundraising efforts already under way by local Catholic entities.

The bishops said that they recognise there has been considerable disappointment with a previous Catholic fundraising campaign tied to the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement.

"While the CCCB was not party to the agreement, the bishops have recognised the shortcomings of that campaign, and learned critically important lessons to ensure that the Indigenous Reconciliation Fund is fully funded and well managed with appropriate oversight," said the CCCB statement.

# 2022 Santo Niño festival scaled down, but still popular



A statue of the Santo Niño, with devotees in the background, at St Patrick's Cathedral in Auckland

by ROWENA OREJANA

Devotees of the Santo Niño in Auckland had a toned down but meaningful celebration of the feast of the Holy Child Jesus this year.

Oscar and Miriam Batucan, founder and organisers of the NZ Filipino Devotees of the Señor Sto. Niño, said that the feast day was celebrated with a Mass at the St Patrick's Cathedral on January 15. The celebration was usually held at the Eventfinda Stadium, as attendance would normally exceed 5000.

"We had the Santo Niño Fiesta . . . at St Patrick's Cathedral, thinking that it will be easier to manage Vaccine Pass Verifications and QR Code tracing, knowing it will be held in a smaller venue compared to Eventfinda Stadium," Mr Batucan said.

A nine-day novena from January 6-14 was also held at the cathedral.

"Initially we thought we would not get a good attendance or participation because people were still worried [about] the Delta virus, even though we were already in [the] Orange traffic light setting of the Covid Protection Framework since the 31st

of December 2021," Mrs Batucan said. "To our amazement, the church pews were full each night, and people were still doing the Sinulog dance offering after Mass each night, even if it meant they had to stay at their pews."

The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Michael Gielen. Devotees packed the cathedral and spilled outside to the cathedral square.

Mr Batucan said they had to strictly implement the "No Vaccine Pass — No Entry" rule.

"We were so happy to see all our kababayans (countrymen) follow the protocol without any hesitancy or resistance. It is because they already have the devotion to Santo Niño ingrained in their hearts since their childhood days," he added.

Mr Batucan said they deferred the Santo Niño@500 Thanksgiving Sinulog Celebration to May 1, 2022. This will be held at the Eventfinda Stadium.

The main theme of that celebration will be "Thanksgiving for the faith received 500 Years ago and fulfilling the obligation of being called to share".

# Largest cathedral in Persian Gulf region consecrated

MANAMA, Bahrain (CNS) — Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, head of the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, consecrated Our Lady of Arabia Cathedral in Bahrain, the newest and largest cathedral in the Persian Gulf region, on December 10.

Until then, Church officials said Bahrain only had one church in the capital, Manama, and a chapel in the suburbs to serve the country's more than 90,000 Catholics. This necessitated 25 weekend Masses to be celebrated in the Manama parish from Friday through Sunday.

"Dear family of God, please come home often to this church, to meet and converse, talk with our merciful Father. God eagerly awaits you. It would be a pity to have a beautiful house with no one living there," Cardinal Tagle told international congregants during his homily.

"But with your frequent spiritual gatherings here, anyone who enters will feel, breathe, and touch the love and warmth of God's family. . . . While the construction of a building comes to an end, the construction of the church as a community never ends," the cardinal said.

He encouraged parishioners to care deeply for one another, listen intently to God's Word and apply it,

and provide charitable services to those in need.

Bahrain, a tiny, predominantly Muslim island nation — smaller in area than London — and a key US ally in the Persian Gulf, built a significant monument to the Christian faith in response to the Gulf region's increasing Catholic population, now estimated at 2.5 million.

Catholics in Bahrain hail mainly from the Philippines, India, and Sri Lanka. South Americans, Europeans and Arabs from the Levant region account for the rest of the island's Christian population.

The ark-shaped cathedral seats 2300 worshippers and serves the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia, which includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and formally, Saudi Arabia. Located in Awali, 16 miles south of Manama, the 2.2-square acre plot of land was donated by Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa eight years ago. Two chapels and two other large rooms with places for confession and spiritual formation are part of the complex.

In 2011, the Vatican officially proclaimed Our Lady of Arabia as the Catholic patron saint of the vicariate. One of the chapels in the cathedral is dedicated to the crowned Mary holding a rosary and the Christ



People attend a liturgy for the consecration of Our Lady of Arabia Cathedral in Awali, Bahrain (CNS Photo)

Child. The cathedral's apse displays biblical iconographic scenes from the Nativity of Jesus Christ to the Last Supper and Crucifixion.

Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al Khalifa, representing his father, Bahrain's king, inaugurated the ca-

thedral on December 9.

Due to existing coronavirus restrictions, only a small number of people could participate in both the solemn inauguration and consecration events, but more than 1400 followed the consecration Mass online.

# Pope sends aid to victims in Philippines, migrants on Belarus border

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis is sending thousands of dollars in relief aid to the Philippines after a devastating typhoon struck the Southeast Asian archipelago in December.

In a statement released on January 18, the Vatican said that, in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Rai, the Pope sent "an initial contribution of 100,000 euros (US\$113,868) for the relief of the population, through the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development".

The distribution of the money, the Vatican said, would be coordinated through the apostolic nunciature in the Philippines and "will be sent

to the local church and allocated to the dioceses most affected by the disaster, to be used in works of assistance".

"It is intended to be an immediate expression of the Holy Father's feeling of spiritual closeness and paternal encouragement toward the people and territories affected," the statement said.

The Vatican announced that the pope also will send 100,000 euros to help migrants stranded on the border of Belarus and Poland and to Caritas Poland, which has been working to assist them.

In late December, the United Nations' Office of the High Commis-

sioner for Human Rights called on both countries to address the crisis along their border, where hundreds of migrants and asylum-seekers, primarily from the Middle East, have been unable to move.

The crisis has resulted in a dispute between the two countries, with one accusing the other of manufacturing the crisis. Nevertheless, the United Nations expressed concerns of human rights violations on both sides.

In a video message sent to the Geneva-based International Organization of Migration in November, Pope Francis seemingly referred to the crisis when he denounced the

use of migrants "as bargaining chips, as pawns on a chessboard and victims of political rivalries".

"How can suffering and despair be exploited to advance or defend political agendas? How can political considerations prevail when it is the dignity of the human person that is at stake?" the Pope asked.

"The basic lack of human respect at national borders diminishes all of us in our humanity. Beyond the political and legal aspects of irregular situations, we must never lose sight of the human face of migration and the fact that, beyond the geographical divisions of borders, we are part of a single human family," he said.

PROMOTION

# River Blindness – a debilitating Neglected Tropical Disease causing avoidable blindness in sub-Saharan Africa

by Dr MURRAY SHEARD

Imagine thousands of painful parasites crawling under your skin, making their way into your eyes, gnawing away at your optic nerve, slowly stealing your sight and eventually making you go blind.

This is the harsh reality for millions of people living in sub-Saharan Africa who are affected by a Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD) called Onchocerciasis, or commonly known as River Blindness. NTD's infect more than one billion people in the world's poorest communities of which Africa has the highest burden. They thrive in impoverished, tropical regions where there is poor sanitation, unsafe drinking water, numerous insects to spread disease and little access to health services and Government support.

River Blindness is caused by being bitten by the black river flies that infest sub-Saharan Africa, where more than 99 per cent of River Blindness occurs. Worldwide 36 million people are blind, yet 75 per cent of blindness is preventable or treatable.

In Nigeria, an estimated 31 million people are at risk of blindness, and a variety of debilitating and disfiguring skin conditions caused by River Blindness where the disease carrying blackfly parasites are still rife.

The parasites bloom into hundreds of thousands of baby worms. They knot up together into lumps you can feel just under your skin. Those infected rub and rip at their skin, until it becomes thick and rough. They call this Elephant Skin. Even worse is Leopard Skin, where you are suffering so badly, you cut at yourself with knives, hooks and sharp spoons. Deep into your flesh. You'll do anything to hook out whatever is biting through your nerves. It is torture. The scars leave you



Wajir and her great-aunt Mairige

looking mottled and blotched — so they call it Leopard Skin. Then the parasites go for your warm, moist eyeballs. Gnawing at everything, they chew through your optic nerves. Your eyesight dims and fades. This is blindness that cannot be reversed.

Approximately 90 per cent of NTD's can be treated with medicines. Pharmaceutical company Merck donates the worm-killing antibiotic Mectizan, which must be administered once a year to kill the black fly larvae and stop it from eating away at those affected. If an infected person receives a Mectizan tablet in time, it will kill only the young larvae. That is why it is absolutely crucial that everyone receives their tablets on time, at least once a year. If tablets are missed, the worms in their body may become mature enough to resist Mectizan. These worms will stay in the body, causing parasites, unbearable pain, and life-long blindness.

Through the generosity of **cbm** supporters, the crucial Mectizan antibiotics are able to be delivered by **cbm**-funded field workers to those at risk of being bitten by the blackfly and contracting River Blindness.

**cbm**, also known as Christian Blind Mission, is an international Christian development organisation, whose mission includes delivering life-changing medication, support and surgeries

to those disadvantaged by poverty and disability. **cbm** aspires to follow the teachings of Jesus in Luke 10:27 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself."

To find out more visit [www.cbmnz.org.nz](http://www.cbmnz.org.nz)



Mairige has been blinded by River Blindness



christian blind mission



— Dr Murray Sheard received his PhD in Ethics and Philosophy from the University of Auckland. He has worked in international development for over 15 years and is the Chief Executive Officer of **cbm** New Zealand.



Wajir (aged 10)

River Blindness is a devastating and isolating health condition.

In Nigeria the blackflies, that swarm down by the river, bite and inject dangerous parasites into your body which bloom into hundreds of thousands of baby worms. They cause unbearable itching under the skin, moving through the body to the eyes where they slowly and painfully destroy sight. This blindness cannot be reversed.

Adults and children, like Wajir, need sight-saving Mectizan medicine to kill the parasites and help protect their eyes from the unbearable itching and life-long loss of sight caused by River Blindness.



To learn more, scan the QR code using your mobile phone camera or go to [www.cbmnz.org.nz/mairige-wajir2](http://www.cbmnz.org.nz/mairige-wajir2)



christian blind mission

# Pope confers ministries of lector, catechist on lay women and men

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Highlighting the importance of the Bible in the life of faith and the role of lay women and men in sharing the Gospel, Pope Francis formally installed eight men and women in the ministry of lector, and eight others in the ministry of catechist.

During Mass on January 23, the Church's celebration of Sunday of the Word of God, the Pope used a revised rite for formally installing lectors, a ministry he opened to women a year earlier, and the new rite for the ministry of catechist, which he established in May.

In most countries, women and men have long served as lectors and catechists, and even have been commissioned for those roles. But those formally installed in the ministries are recognised as having a specific vocation to leadership in their communities, and will serve in what the Church defines as a "stable" manner.

Pope Francis installed six women - from South Korea, Pakistan, Ghana and Italy - and two Italian men, in the ministry of lector, telling them they were placing themselves "in the service of the faith, which is rooted in the Word of God".

As they knelt on the marble floor before the main altar, Pope Francis prayed over them and told them,

"You will proclaim that Word in the liturgical assembly, instruct children and adults in the faith, and prepare them to receive the sacraments worthily. You will bring the message of salvation to those who have not yet received it".

Three women from Spain, Brazil and Ghana and five men from Italy, Peru, Brazil and Poland were installed as catechists, and Pope Francis told them they were called "to live more intensely the apostolic spirit, following the example of those men and women who helped Paul and the other apostles to spread the Gospel".

They, too, knelt before the altar as the Pope said, "May your ministry always be rooted in a profound life of prayer, built on sound doctrine and animated by true apostolic enthusiasm".

Pope Francis gave each of the lectors a Bible, and the catechists a crucifix modelled after the crucifix on the crosier regularly used by St Paul VI and St John Paul II.

In December, the Vatican released the Latin text of the Rite of Institution of Catechists, and said the revised Latin text for the Rite for the Institution of Lectors and Acolytes would be published soon. Bishops' conferences will translate the texts



A new lector receives a Bible from Pope Francis during a Mass marking Sunday of the Word of God in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on January 23 (CNS Photo)

into local languages.

In his homily, the Pope said the 16 lectors and catechists "are called to the important work of serving the Gospel of Jesus, of proclaiming him, so that his consolation, his joy and his liberation can reach everyone".

But, the Pope said, "that is also the mission of each one of us: to be credible messengers, prophets of God's word in the world".

For that to happen, he said, Christians must devote themselves to reading the Bible, digging "deep within the word that reveals God's newness, and leads us tirelessly to love others".

"Let us put the word of God at the centre of the Church's life and pastoral activity," he said.

Jesus, through the Scriptures, "reveals the face of God as one who cares for our poverty and takes to

heart our destiny", the Pope said. "God is not an overlord, aloof and on high, but a Father who follows our every step."

"This is the 'good news' that Jesus proclaims to the amazement of all: God is close at hand, and he wants to care for me and for you, for everyone. He wants to relieve the burdens that crush you, to warm your wintry coldness, to brighten your daily dreariness, and to support your faltering steps," he said.

Faith, prayer and Bible reading, he said, also should prompt Christians to reach out to others with that same kind of care and consolation.

A spiritual life without care for others and work for justice may put a person "in orbit", but it touches no one, he said. "The Word of God became flesh and wants to become flesh in us."

## Covid restrictions removed in English, Welsh churches

MANCHESTER, England (CNS) — Catholic officials in England and Wales are scrapping restrictions to halt the spread of Covid-19.

Beginning on January 27, wearing of masks inside churches was optional rather than compulsory, and there was no social distancing. Parishes could begin using hymnals, the sign of peace was resumed, and holy water fonts filled for the first time in nearly two years.

On Ash Wednesday, which falls on March 2, priests will be able to administer ashes with their thumbs instead of a cotton bud, which also will no longer be used for anointing during the sacrament of the sick.

The relaxation of restrictions corresponds with the January 26 end of "Plan B" government restrictions introduced in response to the

arrival of the omicron strain of the coronavirus.

With the majority of British adults vaccinated against Covid-19, the death rate from the disease is now low, and there is little pressure on health services.

Father Christopher Thomas, general secretary of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, said in a statement circulated among churches and the media that the time had come for people to live with the virus.

"The scientific consensus is that society is moving toward the stage where the virus is transitioning from the pandemic phase to the endemic phase, but . . . there is still a risk associated with gathering for sustained periods in enclosed spaces and, therefore, there needs to be continued caution by all against

infection," he said in the January 26 statement.

"This, however, has to be balanced against the need to move forward safely toward a normal lifestyle, and these two positions will always be held in tension," he said. "This holding in tension is the key to living safely with Covid-19, namely keeping infections from a virus that cannot be eliminated to levels which minimise disruption to people's lives."

He added that, while the reduction of restrictions "brings about a more normal way of living, the Covid-19 virus is still in circulation, and this should be in the mind of those participating in the life of the Church as time goes forward, holding in balance the need for personal safety and taking responsibility for that safety".

Father Thomas said that the English and Welsh bishops supported vaccination, and encourage people to be vaccinated as the first line of defence against contracting the virus, and he said anyone with any infectious illness should stay at home.

He also advised that churches "should continue to ensure there is good ventilation, balancing this against the need for church heating, especially at this time".

Other precautions include eucharistic ministers continuing to sanitise their hands, and the regular replacement of holy water used by people for blessing themselves when they enter and leave churches.

At present, priests are being advised to administer Holy Communion only in the form of consecrated hosts rather than in both forms.

## Sri Lankan cardinal to seek global help

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (CNS) — Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith of Colombo said there is no other choice now but to turn to the international community to seek justice for victims of the 2019 Easter bombings in Sri Lanka.

"We tried our best to solve the issue within the country and do justice to our people but have failed," he said during an online forum with an international audience on January 24, ucanews.com reported.

"The legal system under the attorney-general does not consider the recommendations of the commission on the Easter attacks, therefore we have no option but to go international," the cardinal said.

Cardinal Ranjith hinted in April, 2021, of his intentions to not only approach the United Nations, but also countries with

global influence to seek prosecution of the people responsible for the attacks on three churches and three luxury hotels.

"We can influence those countries as the Church is an international organization. We have connections all over the world," he said.

A group of suicide bombers affiliated to local Islamist group National Thowheed Jamath was suspected to be behind the bombings that killed 269 people, including 37 foreign nationals, and injured about 500 more.

Catholics in Sri Lanka have not been happy with the investigations and, led by Cardinal Ranjith, have vowed to fight for justice until the truth behind the attacks is revealed.

## China forbids foreigners from spreading religious content online

HONG KONG (CNS) — On December 22, the Chinese government issued a new norm that proscribes all foreign institutions and individuals from spreading religious content online. China cited national security interests for enacting the new law, the first of their kind to monitor online religious affairs, reported ucanews.com. The new rules were made two weeks after Chinese President Xi Jinping attended a national religious work conference. In his address to that conference on December 4, Xi stressed making religions Chinese in orientation and developing them in the Chinese context.

# US pastor resigns after diocese learns he performed invalid baptisms

PHOENIX, Ariz. USA (CNS) — Bishop Thomas Olmsted of Phoenix said baptisms performed by a priest during years of ministry in the diocese are invalid, leading to the resignation of the clergyman on February 1.

In a January 14 letter to the diocese, Bishop Olmsted said diocesan officials learned from the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that the baptisms were invalid because of the form used during the ritual by Father Andres Arango.

"Specifically, it was reported to me that Father Andres used the formula 'We baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' The key phrase in question is the use of 'We baptise' in place of 'I baptise,'" Bishop Olmsted wrote.

"The issue with using 'We' is that it is not the community that baptises a person, rather, it is Christ, and him alone, who presides at all of the sacraments, and so it is Christ Jesus who baptises," the bishop's letter said.

The use of the improper form led Father Arango to resign as pastor of St. Gregory Parish in Phoenix. Bishop Olmsted said Father Arango remains a priest in good standing in the diocese and that he would be helping the diocese identify and contact

people whose baptisms are invalid. Diocesan officials did not disclose how many people are affected by the discovery.

Bishop Olmsted wrote that officials are working to identify as many as people as possible to inform them how to receive a valid baptism.

The Phoenix Diocese established a page on its website, [www.dphx.org/valid-baptism](http://www.dphx.org/valid-baptism), that explains Church teaching on baptism.

Baptism is a sacrament of initiation and in some cases, the diocese said, the reception of confirmation, marriage and holy orders may be invalid. If so, people will be faced with arranging for valid reception of those sacraments after baptism, the diocese said.

The reception of first holy Communion, or subsequent reception of the Eucharist, however, is not affected, the diocese said, "as you can only have one first holy Communion".

"If you have received the Eucharist, even when unbaptised, you have received holy Communion", said the response to one question on the webpage.

However, the diocese advised people whose baptism is invalid to not receive Communion until they can arrange for a valid baptism.

Father Arango, in announcing that



CNS Photo

he was resigning in a letter posted on the diocesan website, expressed that "I deeply regret my error and how this has affected numerous people" where he has served.

"With the help of the Holy Spirit and in communion with the Diocese of Phoenix I will dedicate my energy and full-time ministry to help rem-

edy this and health those affected," Father Arango wrote.

In June 2020, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith released a doctrinal note discussing the valid reception of baptism. It said that substituting "We" for "I" in the sacramental formula invalidates the sacrament.

## Lithuanian archbishop backs 'hard line of deterrence' against Russia

WARSAW, Poland (CNS) — The president of the Lithuanian bishops' conference warned that his country and its neighbours could be targeted if Russian President Vladimir Putin imposes his will on Ukraine.

Archbishop Gintaras Grušas of Vilnius, who is also president of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences, urged Western countries to maintain a "hard line of deterrence".

"We're in a precarious geographical and historical position — Mr Putin has reiterated his view that Russia's empire should not have collapsed and seems to have a claim on our three Baltic states," the US-born archbishop said on February 3. "But we have the guarantee of deterrence, with NATO forces here on the ground, and we are part of the European Union. So long as European countries stay united, I think the deterrence will work."

"Russia is tempting the West in various ways to see if its unity is intact," said the archbishop. "People who've been occupied and were part of the Soviet Union are keenly aware of the Russian mentality, and of Russia's desire to test the limits. That's where a hard line of deterrence comes in."

He spoke the same day Russia criticised a US decision to deploy extra troops in Eastern Europe to boost defences after the massing of 100,000

Russian troops on the borders of Ukraine.

Archbishop Grušas said the additional deployment of Russian forces in neighbouring Belarus had increased tension across the region. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said around 30,000 Russian troops were now in Belarus, the largest deployment since the Cold War.

The archbishop said Lithuanian bishops had asked Catholics to recite the rosary for peace each day in February.

Russia began massing forces in late October, prompting fears of an offensive against Ukraine, where pro-Kremlin separatists declared independent republics in Luhansk and Donetsk in 2014, triggering a war that has left more than 14,000 dead.

Archbishop Grušas said that, "while any new escalation in tensions should be met with diplomacy and an ability to talk, the more our churches also pray for peace the better".

He said that Western governments should listen to Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Poles and others with "closest contacts" with Russia, to "better understand the mentality they are up against".

"Standing one's ground in any dialogue is a necessity — those who stood up firmly 30 years ago were the ones who achieved independence,"

said the archbishop, referring to the breakup of the Soviet Union.

"At this point, we really need prayer and diplomacy to achieve a dialogue for peace. But dialogue has to combine with a thorough understanding of deterrence in maintaining peace. There has to be a very determined stance that we will not back down — that countries must be allowed self-determination regarding their own future."

## Cardinal says Church teaching on gays 'no longer correct'

BERLIN (CNS) — The president of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union said he believes the current Church teaching on homosexuality is wrong, not based in science.

In an interview with the German Catholic news agency KNA, Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg spoke about the public campaign by more than 100 Catholic Church employees who recently outed themselves as queer in Germany. Queer is a collective term for people who are not heterosexual and whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with their birth sex.

"I believe that the sociological-scientific foundation of this teaching is no longer correct," Cardinal Hollerich told KNA. He said it was time for a fundamental revision, and the way Pope Francis had spoken about homosexuality in the past could lead to a change in doctrine.

"What was condemned in the past was sodomy.

At that time, it was thought that the whole child was contained in the sperm of the man, and that was simply transferred to homosexual men. But there is no homosexuality in the New Testament. There is only the mention of homosexual acts, which were partly pagan ritual acts. That was, of course, forbidden. I think it is time for a fundamental revision of the doctrine."

The cardinal said it was important for the church to remain human. He added that he knew of homosexual priests and laypeople in the Archdiocese of Luxembourg. "And they know that they have a home in the Church. With us, no one is dismissed because they are homosexual, with us no one has ever been dismissed because of that."

Divorced and remarried people were also employees of the church in the Archdiocese of Luxembourg, he said. "I can't kick them out. They would become unemployed. How can such a thing be Christian?"

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# Pope to meet university students as part of synodal process

ROME (CNS) — Highlighting the importance of a Church that truly listens, Pope Francis will participate in a virtual meeting hosted by Loyola University in Chicago with students from North, Central and South America.

The February 24 virtual meeting, titled “Building Bridges: A Synodal Encounter between Pope Francis and University Students”, will be an opportunity to “address the salient challenges of our times”, the university’s website said.

“The Pope will dialogue with these university students who will share concrete educational projects that seek to justly transform environmental and economic realities,” as well as discuss the challenges of migration, it said.

Michael Murphy, director of Loyola’s Hank Center for the Catholic Intellectual Heritage, said he and several colleagues, including Emilce Cuda, an official at the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, discussed the idea of an event for university students in preparation for the upcoming Synod of Bishops on synodality.

In November, he said, while discussing possible speakers for the

event, “we kind of joked, ‘Hey, let’s see if Pope Francis is free.’”

Unbeknownst to them, Cuda presented the idea to Pope Francis who agreed to participate.

It was “not a whim on his part”, because it fits his vision and priorities, Murphy said. “We knew that so many universities have been asking him, ‘What is our role and how can we support’” the synodal process.

In preparation for the virtual meeting, students were divided into seven regional groups from North, Central and South America to talk about the thoughts, questions and dreams they would like to discuss with the Pope, he said.

“I think it accomplishes what Pope Francis is trying to do: to be a listening Church,” Murphy told CNS. “We want to make sure other students feel invited, too, and not be so exclusive in this.”

While the discussions will focus on issues ranging from migration to climate change, he said, bringing the young adults from different regions is important in itself, especially at a time of increased division, including because of the digital revolution.

He also hoped it would help build



A promotional image on the website of Loyola University Chicago advertises the university’s upcoming virtual meeting with Pope Francis and students from North, Central and South America on February 24 (CNS photo/Loyola University Chicago)

a bridge between the two continents where, often, colonial and indigenous “past and present collide”.

“What the Pope wants to do is look at boundaries, and see what we know and to remove as much as we can; to say, ‘Let us walk together’, conscious of the brokenness of the past, but hopeful in the present,” he said.

Murphy told CNS he hopes the meeting will address the increasing polarisation and “the sense of exceptionalism” that prevents one from

listening to the needs and wants of others.

“I’m not trying to dismantle everything,” Murphy said. “I’m just saying let’s get real. The Church is the living body of Christ. And it’s not some 16th-century enterprise, even though that is an important part of its tradition.”

“My dad always said, ‘You have two ears and one mouth for a reason’,” he said. “So, if we can unclog our two ears and listen better, I think that would be a good result.”

## NZCBC call for nominations for the 2022 Delargey Awards

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference is calling for nominations for the 2022 Delargey Awards, for significant and outstanding contributions made in the field of Catholic ministry with young people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The awards are named in honour of Cardinal Reginald Delargey

(1914-1979), Bishop of Auckland, then Archbishop of Wellington in the 1970s, who was noted for his work with young Catholics.

The awards aim to provide recognition for ministry workers and supporters of ministry with young people in New Zealand; to educate the community about ministry with young people; to raise the profile of Catholic ministry with young

people in New Zealand; to recognise the place of long-term involvement in Catholic ministry with young people.

The inaugural award ceremony took place in 2004, with awards presented biannually after that.

To nominate a person for an NZCBC Delargey Award, visit the NZCBC website ([www.catholic.org.nz/news/media-releases](http://www.catholic.org.nz/news/media-releases)) and open

the Delargey award section to find a link to the form required. A second person is required to write a letter of recommendation and provide a copy via email to [sdilly@nzcbc.org.nz](mailto:sdilly@nzcbc.org.nz)

The nomination is not eligible without the additional letter of recommendation from a second person. Nominations (with letters of recommendation) are due by close of business on April 7, 2022.

### Family Matters

Helen Luxford



## How much disruption will there be this year?

As we head into the eye of the Omicron storm, I am wondering how much disruption there will be this year? How much face-to-face school will the kids get? Will we be doing more online school this year? How many birthdays in our household will be in isolation?

The more people you have in your household, the longer you might find yourselves having to isolate. I’ve seen a few “preparation plans” circulating, the type that you use in civil defence emergencies. People are supposed to try to isolate in their own homes, which sounds fairly difficult to me with small children and six people in the household.

Trying to prepare the kids for going back to school and transitioning from holidays to the school term is harder than usual. Essentially, we have to take a “let’s see what happens approach”, and we will have to be aware that disruption can happen at any time. We can make plans, but we make them knowing they may not happen. We had a holiday planned for October, 2021, which we couldn’t go on due to travel restrictions. We did manage to go on this holiday in January, 2022. We were all in a bit of shock that it actually happened, as we have become used to things being cancelled now!

Worship at red is still limited to 100 if vaccinated. This is logistically difficult. There’s

also the thought that Jesus welcomed everyone, at every time. What would he have done in a pandemic? Would he have followed the rules of the leader? Would he have encouraged safety first, to protect the vulnerable? If Mass is celebrated for 100, how do you “choose” who goes? Our parish has used an online booking system, and many people — including us — missed out on Christmas Mass slots. Another parish we used to go to still isn’t having Sunday Masses in person at all, as it’s too hard to. They are doing weekday and Saturday Masses, as these tend to attract smaller numbers.

We have a child ready for the sacramental programme this year, and the facilitator is keen to keep this in person, rather than on zoom. I really want our child to become fully initiated in the Church and, at this rate, I fear this may not happen in 2022. Hopefully, it will happen later in the year? In the scheme of this child’s whole life, if he has to wait a year, so be it. His formation will still continue even without the sacraments, but we all know that the sacraments are a vital part of our faith, and I am worried that we are not getting them as often as our souls need in this current environment.

We have had quite a lot of freedom and normality over the last two years. In the red “traffic light”, I’m not sure that many of the

restrictions directly impact on us other than on our worship. That is a very important part of our lives, and there remains the issue of inconsistencies that plays on my mind. The Government has passed laws that afford a great deal of power to certain bodies. We all expect such provisions to be rescinded when the pandemic is over.

We have enjoyed focusing more on outdoor activities. We have enjoyed catching up with friends outdoors. Being outside changes our perspective, and can cultivate more gratitude and more connection with God’s creation. Thankfully, we have had a warm summer which has allowed easy access to outdoor entertaining. This also allows a turn away from screens, that are a constant, ever-present issue in many families these days. We are praying for an end to this pandemic in 2022, and return to easy access to the sacraments for all.

Isaiah 55:8-9; “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts higher than your thoughts.”

Helen Luxford is a physician, working part-time. She is a parishioner of St Michael’s, Remuera. Together with her husband Michael, they are raising their children in the Catholic Faith and reflecting on the challenges and joys that brings.

# Mothers lance Spain's guilt

by NEVIL GIBSON

Spain contributed only two of the big-name European directors who reigned over festivals and arthouse cinemas in the 20th century.

However, Luis Buñuel (1900-1983) worked mainly outside of Spain, having left during the Spanish civil war (1936-39), and rarely returned after the Franco dictatorship ended in 1975.

The other is Pedro Almodóvar, who wowed the festival circuit with enduring favourites such as *Matador*, *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* and *High Heels* during the 1980s, as Spain revelled in its status as a democracy, rather than its past.

Some 22 features have delighted his considerable fan base, and have also won critical acclaim. *Julieta* (2016) showed a change of pace, from frenetic screwball plots to a more contemplative style.

This took an autobiographical turn with *Pain and Glory* (2019), focused on his personal and creative tribulations, as he carried the burden of being the elder statesman of Spain's lively film industry.

Many of his contemporaries tackled the dark period of the civil war, its consequences, and the bitter memories that still blight Spanish politics and society.

Until now, Almodóvar had avoided these concerns. But the unmarked mass graves of a generation of fathers and sons during the civil war provide the bookends to *Parallel Mothers/Madres Paralelas* (Sony). Their womenfolk have led campaigns for recognised burials, and motherhood remains a key theme running through all Almodóvar's works.

Penélope Cruz, who starred in *Pain and Glory*, as well as carving out an international career in Hollywood, is one of two



Penélope Cruz and Asier Flores star in *Pain and Glory*

## Movie Review

mothers giving birth at a clinic on the same day (the other is played Milena Smit).

Cruz is a professional photographer, and is heading into her 40s. She becomes pregnant after a fling with a forensic archaeologist (Israel Elejalde), whom she is lobbying to open a mass grave site near her home village. Marriage is not part of the deal, as he is caring for his terminally ill wife and daughters.

She is happy with that, coming from a line of solo mothers. Nor is it an option for the much younger mother, who has been rejected by her parents. The two form a strong bond as their lives, and those of their children, become intimately intertwined in a plot full of surprises and twists (based on a novel by

Almudena Grandes).

Related and other characters also come and go, a trademark of Almodóvar's fondness for including generations, particularly female ones.

One is Smit's actress mother (Aitana Sánchez-Gijón), who wants to tour the provinces with a theatrical group that could give her the career break she has never had. Another is the memorable Rossy de Palma, an Almodóvar discovery in 1986, who plays a magazine editor, and is the main support friend for Cruz.

The extra layer of civil war accountability, with its strong political overtones, adds poignancy to an already complex exploration of emotions.

Rating: Mature audiences. 123 minutes.

## CLIPS

### Munich: The Edge of Power (Netflix)

In last year's *The Courier*, Benedict Cumberbatch was a businessman lured by MI6 to become a go-between for a Soviet informer. A similar secret mission is at the centre of Robert Harris's thriller about the pre-World War II pact signed by Hitler with three other European powers. The task for a member of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's personal staff (George MacKay, 1917) is to receive a document outlining Hitler's plans for European conquest. If Chamberlain (Jeremy Irons) had known this, he may have been less keen on signing the September 1938 agreement, giving the anti-Hitler resistance an opportunity to strike. This "what if" proposition is pitched against a case that, far from appeasing Hitler, Chamberlain was buying time for war preparations. A gripping drama that makes the counterfactual seem more than real.

### Nightmare Alley (Disney/Searchlight)

Sir Peter Jackson's first choice for *The Hobbit*, Mexican director Guillermo del Toro, had to bail because of production delays, but retained a co-writing credit. He went on to an illustrious career, including a best film Oscar for *The Shape of Water* (2017). This remake of a 1946 novel by William Lindsay Gresham (and filmed in 1947) is set in the world of carnival sideshows, which provided entertainment relief in the Depression. It then moves into Citizen Kane territory of big business, and the lure of easy money in high-society scams using dubious forms of hypnotism and psycho-trickery. The classy cast includes Bradley Cooper as an ambitious shyster, who meets his match in a standout performance by Cate Blanchett as a femme fatale shrink. Del Toro uses all the tricks in his trade to recreate the "noir" look of 1940s, with kaleidoscopic sets that would make Orson Welles proud. The low lighting makes this must-viewing on the big screen.

### Spencer (Roadshow)

Chilean director Pablo Larraín employs several "cheats" in his over-cooked comedy-drama about a low point in the life of Princess Diana: Christmas 1991, at Queen Elizabeth II's Sandringham House in Norfolk. The British royal family is presented as akin to the Habsburgs, or imperial power as it might be imagined by a Latin American republican. The exteriors for Sandringham vastly exaggerate reality by using Germany's version of Versailles, Schloss Nordkirchen. The royal household's catering division arrives with military precision, while the stuffy family dinners and gatherings are staged in a manner that belies several decades worth of PR that play up their informality. *The Crown* did a much better job. But Larraín knows how to cast his lead lady – Natalie Portman in *Jackie* (2016), and Kristen Stewart as Diana. Stewart is the best by far, compared with Naomi Watts (2013) and the dozen or so TV depictions since Diana's marriage to Prince Charles in 1981. Fans of royalty may not approve of the liberties taken with history, but good acting in some minor roles, and the lavish costumes make it a treat for the eyes. Rating: Mature audiences. 116 mins.

# Book on creation helps Catholics consider variety of core questions

**CREATION: A Catholic's Guide to God and the Universe** by Christopher T. Baglow. Ave Maria Press (Notre Dame, Indiana, 2021). 141 pp., US\$14.95. Reviewed by EUGENE FISHER (CNS)

This excellent book provides a sound introduction for general readers to Church teaching on a number of theological and moral issues, providing an easy-to-read overview of, and deep engagement with, a number of core questions that Catholics, from teenagers to elderly adults, will find both interesting and illuminating.

It can also spark deeper discussions for groups in dialogue together for better understanding of our faith and how we can best live it, individually and communally, in this complex world of ours.

The book has six chapters and a brief conclusion, corresponding to the six days of creation and a thoughtful divine rest on the seventh.

The first chapter delves into the Christian doctrine of creation, which the author rightly sees as an act of divine love.

The Trinity, properly understood, is a unity but also a community. So too is humanity, created as the image and likeness of God, composed of individuals who are called to come together. Coming together in love involves devoting oneself to working for the betterment of all.

So Baglow, following the thinking of St Thomas Aquinas, rightly defines love as a combination of justice and mercy, treating each other fairly, ensuring that offenders are stopped, but also forgiving them when they repent and seek to live better lives.

Chapter 2 raises the question of the interconnectedness of good and evil. Here the author cites the encounter of the French Catholic novelist, Francois Mauriac, when he was interviewed by a young man in 1956 for an article in an Israeli paper.

Mauriac speaks of how his wife watched the cattle cars filled with Jewish children being taken somewhere, and how she wept when she later learned where they were taken, to the death camps. The journalist,

Elie Wiesel, replies simply: "I was one of them". Mauriac's detailed response may make readers stifle their own tears.

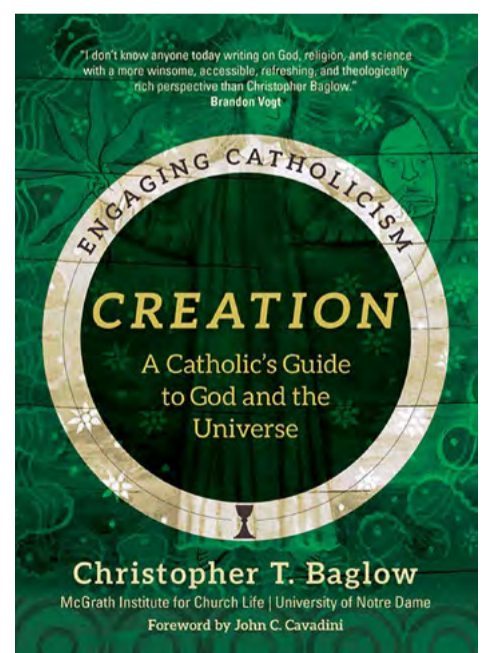
Mauriac encouraged and helped the young man to write his memoir of his time in Auschwitz, the short book, "Night", which Baglow rightly notes "would forever change the world's understanding of the Holocaust". The chapter ends with a quote from the Bible offering hope for a better world of love and justice for all.

Chapters 3 and 4 engage the issue of reconciling the biblical stories of creation in the first and second chapters of Genesis with the science of evolution.

Baglow notes that science helps us understand how humanity came to be what it is, while Genesis teaches us the why of who we are and what we can strive to be, again individually and communally.

Chapters 5 and 6 deal with good and evil, what it means to sin and how one can find mercy and love in the sacred heart of Jesus.

In Jesus' life, death and resur-



rection, all humanity can find a new hope, a new and renewed Adam and Eve. Jesus, he states, is "the final Adam".

Eugene Fisher is a professor of theology at St. Leo University in Florida.

We are here: ▼ Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time

THE CHURCH YEAR

Advent

Christmas

Ordinary Time

Lent

Eastertime

Ordinary Time

# Putting into action what we profess truly matters

## Scripture

by Fr Kevin Waldie sm

**February 13:** Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time. **Readings:** 1. Jeremiah 17:5-8; **Psalm** 1; 2. 1 Corinthians 15:12,16-20; **Gospel:** Luke 6:17,20-26.

By means of sharp contrast, today's biblical authors prepare us to view how well we fare in being the people God wills us to be.

Jeremiah speaks of two distinct scenarios drawn from familiar parts of the biblical terrain. The words that introduce each one signal a negative and a positive response to the Lord's ways. Thus, curse or blessing comes upon people because of their actions. In the first instance, there is a bad outcome because they have abandoned God's ways, having relied upon merely human resources. In the second instance, the outcome is pleasing because they have put their faith in God's laws. The message here is obvious.

Addressing the Corinthians, Paul's line of thought also presents a choice between possible faith stances. Everything here hangs upon a person's belief in, or denial of, the resurrection of the dead. To take the negative point of view is to deny that Christ himself is risen. And that clearly flies in the face of everything Paul himself has personally experienced and has preached since his Damascus Road encounter with the risen Lord. His point then is patently clear.

The way in which Luke's Jesus begins his Sermon on the Plain echoes the Jeremiah text, but it does so in a more carefully-crafted manner. Hearing the blessing formula repeated four

times stamps it with an emphatically positive opening note. That hope-filled message, therefore, stands in stark contrast to the fourfold woe announcements to those who presently enjoy life without a care for where their future may lie. The message here is a very sobering one.

In light of these readings, our personal commitment to the Lord comes directly into view. Putting into action what we profess truly matters. To be blessed for the sake of eternity must surely rank highly.

## Love that is absolutely boundless

At the core of these biblical texts, we find a fundamental principle of life. For each author, that principle is bound up with the sort of example we set when we act out of respect for divine teaching, and the life direction that teaching demands.

Despite the first reading's contextual circumstances, David's exemplary behaviour towards Saul reflects his deep sense of God at work, moving him to treat his so-called enemy benevolently and respectfully. The twice-stated reluctance of David to lay hands on Saul therefore identifies the pure graciousness of the one newly-chosen to sit upon the throne of Israel.

Paul's ability to express himself in beautiful-

ly-toned language is evident in the few verses from 1 Corinthians. The comparison he draws between Adam and Jesus draws us into the mystery of God's plan working to transform us all into a specific understanding of our likeness to both the human and the divine. This form of Pauline speech firms up the reality of the gracious gift we have received in and through Christ.

As the Sermon on the Plain progresses, the kind of love Jesus expects from his disciples is both amazing and demanding. Every disciple, as a true child of the Most High God, is called to live life according to what the Old Testament records is characteristic divine behaviour — love that is absolutely boundless. In a nutshell, therefore,

**February 20:** Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time. **Readings:** 1. 1 Samuel 26:2,7-9,12-13,22-23; **Psalm:** 103; 2. 1 Corinthians 15:45-49; **Gospel:** Luke 6:27-38.

we are being exhorted to become more and more merciful/compassionate, just as our Father is merciful/compassionate. Everything following upon verse 36 spells that out.

In today's readings, it is clear that everyone in God's family is being challenged to measure up to an exceptional standard of love and regard for our fellow human beings. This means that the strong bond between heaven and earth is destined to bring about great things.

## SAINTED GLASS



The Gospel on February 26 is a famous one, where Jesus said that anyone who did not accept the Kingdom of God like a little child would never enter it. This window from Galway Cathedral, Ireland, courtesy of my sister Sharon, illustrates the point. I take him to mean that we should accept what he said without hesitation, just as my children accepted what I said as gospel — that is, until they were old enough to argue with me. So, don't over-analyse heaven, just accept that it means being with God and his Son, and giving them glory for eternity. What more could you want?  
— Glen McCullough

## Preaching must awaken souls, not put them to sleep, Pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Preaching long, spiritually empty homilies can reduce the Word of God to a mere set of abstract concepts that fail to awaken one's soul, Pope Francis said.

"Even many homilies — I say it with respect but with pain — are abstract and, instead of awakening the soul, they put it to sleep. When the faithful start looking at their watches (and say), 'When is this going to end?', they put the soul to sleep," the Pope said on January 24 during his Sunday Angelus address.

"Preaching runs this risk," he said. "Without the anointing of the Spirit, it impoverishes the Word of God and descends to moralism and abstract concepts; it presents the Gospel with detachment, as if it were outside time, far from reality. And this is not the way."

After celebrating Mass for Sunday of the Word of God, the Pope addressed a crowd gathered in St Peter's Square for the midday Angelus prayer, and reflected on the Sunday Gospel reading from St. Luke in which Jesus preaches for the first time.

Jesus' proclamation that "today this scripture has been fulfilled" still resonates, and "indicates a 'today' that runs through all ages and always remains valid," he explained.

"The Word of God is always 'today.' It begins with a 'today'; when you read the Word of God, a 'today' begins in your soul, if you understand it well," he said. "It is not like ancient history, no. Today, it speaks to your heart."

While those who listened to Jesus' words were "clouded by prejudice", and didn't believe, the Pope said they still could sense "that there is more to Jesus",



Pope Francis greets the crowd as he leads the Angelus at the Vatican on January 23, 2022. (CNS photo)

because he has "the anointing of the Holy Spirit".

That anointing, which can move one's soul, is sometimes lacking in many sermons today, he added.

"Sometimes it happens that our sermons and our teachings remain generic, abstract; they do not touch the soul and the life of the people," the Pope said. "Yes, at times one hears impeccable conferences, well-constructed speeches, but they do not move the heart and so everything remains as before."

If those who preach want to give lectures or conferences, he added, "let them do so but elsewhere; not at the time of the homily, where they must give the Word in a way that rouses hearts".

Pope Francis thanked "preachers and proclaimers of the Gospel" who know how to awaken the hearts of those who listen, and he encouraged Christians to carry a pocket-size Gospel with them and read it, because "the Word of God transforms an ordinary day into the 'today' in which God speaks to us".



# Local Diocese News

## Donald Brebner, a man of Christian action, farewelled

by PATRICIA BROOKS

Donald Brebner, QSM, a Catholic layman who was noted for his many works for charity and social justice, was farewelled in the Bay of Plenty last month.

Mr Brebner died on January 19, at his home in Omokoroa, north of Tauranga. He was 89.

A requiem Mass was celebrated on January 24 at the Omokoroa Community Church, and handsome tributes were given about Mr Brebner, who was the loving husband of Jackie, beloved father of ten, grandfather of 38 and great grandfather of 22. Tauranga parish priest Fr Philip Billing and Auckland Auxiliary Bishop Michael Gielen were the celebrants.

Christian symbols were placed on the casket, as was a carved taiaha, representing Mr Brebner's fighting spirit for the Kingdom of God during his long life as a committed Christian and a man of Christian action.

In the homily, Fr Billing thanked the family for sharing Mr Brebner with others. "We have been truly blessed and enriched by the gift of his life among us," Fr Billing said.

Eulogies were given by two of Mr Brebner's sons, Mark and Matthew, and by his grandson, Sam Brebner.

Mark Brebner recalled a grace prayer that his father taught the family to say before meals, asking for blessings for those present, the food and those who prepared the meal,



Donald Brebner, QSM

and for food for the hungry. To which Mr Brebner always added: "And to the well fed give a hunger for justice."

Mark Brebner spoke of his father running the Tauranga food bank for 11 years, as well as being a director of Habitat for Humanity for 20 years, which saw 80 homeless families in the Bay of Plenty get housing.

Praising his father's generosity, Mark Brebner said, "To him the Catholic faith meant getting off your ... and actually doing real good for others".

Matthew Brebner noted his father's great love for his family, and

for God and God's Church.

"He was a mighty warrior for the less fortunate, a fierce advocate for the unborn child and the threatened elderly. Throughout his life journey, he demonstrated that strength is built through struggle, hard work and optimism. He shared that strength with tremendous compassion and empathy. Through his charitable works he touched the lives of thousands because he overflowed with energy, imagination and passion. A champion for social justice for the hungry and the homeless, he received the Queen's Service Medal [in 2013] for his humanitarian works."

Sam Brebner referred to his grandfather's autobiography, *Adventures of a Pilgrim*, in which he wrote: "God has been Number One in all my life, and I hope you know him for being as kind to you as he has been to me."

"For those present here," Sam Brebner continued, "I'm sure there is no doubt for any of us concerning the truth of these words. Grandad lived every day in such a way that it was clear that God was Number One in his life, and he seemed to make it his personal mission to reflect the kindness that God had shown him to as many people as possible."

"We've lost one of the greats, and I know many of us are grappling with the gap that has been left behind."

Reviewing *Adventures of a Pilgrim* for *NZ Catholic* last year, Pat McCarthy noted that Mr Brebner dedicated

the book to the memory of Cardinal Reginald Delargey, who mentored him and many others in the lay apostolate.

Mr Brebner became involved in the See-Judge-Act strategy of Catholic action in the YCS at Sacred Heart College, Auckland, in 1950. He then worked fulltime for the CYM in Auckland diocese (at 10 pounds a week), Mr McCarthy wrote.

In those days the CYM in the diocese had more than 2000 members, male and female, applying the See-Judge-Act process to workplace problems, boy-girl relationships, and a range of social issues, the review continued.

"Most of the book is devoted to Brebner's working life — much of it in marketing for a house-construction company — but he has also put his leadership skills and faith commitment into a surprising variety of church, inter-church, community and social service causes in the Rotorua and Tauranga areas, usually serving in the chair.

"Of all the charities I have tried to support in a hands-on way, Voice For Life has taken more of my time, energy and dedication than any other," Mr Brebner wrote. "To stand up for humanity in its most helpless and vulnerable form, the baby in the womb, is the test of our integrity and true worth."

Additional reporting by MICHAEL OTTO

## Akld diocese staff mourn much-loved colleague

by MICHAEL OTTO

Auckland diocese staff were saddened and shocked at the sudden death of one of their colleagues, Angela McKinstry of the diocesan finance team, over the summer holidays.

Ms McKinstry, aged 61, had suffered a critical medical event a few days before her death in Wellington on January 13.

A requiem Mass was celebrated on January 28 at Star of the Sea church in Howick, which is near where Angela McKinstry's mother still lives.

As well as a family tribute that was given at the Mass, two of her Pompallier Diocesan Centre colleagues spoke about Ms McKinstry after Communion.

Catholic Caring Foundation manager Ann Marie Parker said she had had the privilege of knowing Ms McKinstry for six years.

"Angela had a huge impact on her work colleagues at the diocese, and the many parishes, schools and other organisations that she support-

ed with her work at the finance department," Mrs Parker said.

"Everyone at the Pompallier Centre had an 'Angela' story — about her humour, her warmth, compassion and empathy, and her 'can do' spirit. If you needed something done, Ange would put her hand up and volunteer."

Ms McKinstry, a former student at Baradene College in Auckland, was a rare person who could connect with anyone, and she could fill a room with laughter and funny stories, Mrs Parker added.

Yolande Hunt, from the Auckland Diocese Property Group, paid tribute to her colleague's wisdom and compassion.

"I got to see how helpful and caring she was as a board member on the Liston Village Board. Everyone loved her, she took the time to carefully explain everything to them," Ms



Angela McKinstry

Hunt said.

Ms McKinstry was someone who "knew if a co-worker was going through a difficult time, and needed someone to talk to, or to arrange a care package for them".

"She did this quietly and without any need of acknowledgment, drawing on her many years of experience as a volunteer for Victim Support."

Ms Hunt also noted how Ms McKinstry always spoke affectionately about her own family.

Ms McKinstry also helped with *NZ Catholic's* accounts for several years, and she was always pleasant, helpful and generous with her time, said NZ Catholic editor Dr Michael Otto.

"With everyone else at the Pompallier Diocesan Centre, we at *NZ Catholic* will miss Angela," Dr Otto said.



Fr Adonis Rancho

## Stratford parish grateful for 'Fr Dondon'

by SUE SECONI

Sadness, appreciation and gratitude to God were common reactions when Immaculate Conception Parishioners gathered with their parish priest Fr Adonis Rancho, at his last Mass in Stratford on Sunday, January 30, before heading home to the Philippines.

At the conclusion of Mass, a slide show presentation recalled many occasions during his three years as their pastor.

When Fr Dondon, as he is affectionally known, left the sanctuary,

he was given a guard of honour as he walked down the centre aisle with prolonged clapping from the congregation.

"I have mixed emotions. Sad to leave New Zealand where I've served for 12 years, yet happy to be going back to my roots in the Philippines. My bishop in my home Diocese of Tagum in the Philippines has asked me to return, and I will be closer to my parents," he said.

He came to Palmerston North diocese in 2009, and served in St Patrick's Napier, Waipukurau, St Mary's, Taradale, New Plymouth,

Marton and Whanganui, before being appointed to Stratford in 2019. He is well remembered for his personal warmth, his melodious voice singing the Eucharistic Prayer, his encouraging lay ministry, and his simple and effective homilies.

Among his special memories of his time in New Zealand will be some wonderful occasions with his fellow priests, the ups and downs of serving in a different culture, and the beautiful scenery.

"Most of all it's the parishioners who moulded and shaped me to be a better servant of God," he said.

# How this family forgave the killer of their children and united a community

by MICHAEL KENNY

(Courtesy of *The Catholic Weekly*)  
Sydney couple Danny and Leila Abdallah were hoping to inspire people of faith across Australia through a dedicated community event, i4give Week (February 1-7), drawing upon their powerful witness to the love of Christ in forgiving a drunk and drugged driver who killed their children nearly two years ago.

Siblings Antony, Angelina and Sienna Abdallah and their cousin Veronique Sakr were killed on 1 February 2020 when an out-of-control ute mounted the footpath while they were walking to a shop to buy ice cream, close to their home at Oatlands in Sydney's north-west.

The Abdallahs invited faith communities to support i4Give Week. In the spirit of Jesus prayer for unity (John 17:21), the special event featured i4Give Sunday (February 6), aimed at engaging all Christian churches in a shared embrace of the Christ-centred call to forgiveness and its power to heal and restore broken relationships, starting within and among churches and going out from there into the wider community.

Danny and Leila Abdallah told *The Catholic Weekly*, they have been personally overwhelmed by the strong support they have received for the initiative, with members of the Jewish and Muslim community coming forward to also support i4Give prayers during their services that week.

"Forgiveness and love are at the centre of our Christian faith", explained Leila, who is expecting her seventh child in March.

"Through i4Give Week, we want everyone around the world to understand the power of forgiveness, love and patience and then may the Holy Spirit touch everyone's hearts with that message".

It's a message which is resonating well beyond church pews with the National Rugby League hosting an i4Give Cup match between the Parramatta Eels and the Canterbury Bulldogs.

Catholic, Anglican and Pentecostal church leaders were scheduled to speak about the healing power of forgiveness on i4give Sunday on February 6, Jewish leaders aimed to do so in synagogues on i4Give Sabbath on February 4 and 5, and imams in the Muslim community planned to lead i4Give Friday prayers on February 4.

Danny Abdallah said i4Give Day, now in its second year, has been an opportunity for his family to publicly share how important forgiveness is in the healing process after any personal tragedy.

"We're hoping that what we did will inspire others", Danny explained.

"We've paid the ultimate sacrifice, losing half our family. Yet as Catholics, we are taught to offer up our suffering to Christ on the Cross. We know that this life is not going to be better than the next life", he added.

"My kids are with Christ. My kids are saints: they're in heaven. As a father, that's the only thing I wanted to do: to get my kids to heaven," he said. "I cry all the time. I go to the cemetery and I miss my kids, but I'll be reunited with them. Everyday is a day closer to that reunion. They're not behind me, they're in front of me".

"What I've learned about forgiveness is that it takes more courage as a man to forgive than it is to seek revenge".

"I understand now that when you do forgive, you leave bitterness, anger and all those negative emotions behind you and you won't then pass them on to your children. So forgiveness can be a selfish act as well and you can certainly benefit from it because peace and freedom can come



Leila and Danny Abdallah and their three surviving children (Michael, Liana and Alex). Antony, Angelina and Sienna, who were killed with their cousin Veronique Sakr in February, 2020, are pictured behind them. (Photo: Alphonsus Fok, *The Catholic Weekly*)

directly from it."

Leila Abdallah said the family has found great comfort in prayer and regular Mass attendance.

"The Eucharist is what gives me the strength to keep going and our faith has taught us the meaning of suffering through Jesus' death and resurrection," she said.

"Turning to the Rosary and my faith in Jesus Christ is ultimately what's helping me to heal, to forgive and to be the woman I am today."

"Every day — my children are on my mind. I know that Antony would be turning 16 — he would be starting to learn to drive, that Angelina would be in Year 9 and Sienna wanted to receive her first holy communion this year.

"But since we're able to forgive, our family is healing together and we're grieving together peacefully. We carry our cross with dignity, instead of being full of revenge. So our suffering is like a blessing from God since I know I'm going to see my kids in heaven. I just have to be patient and stay devoted to serving Jesus."

Online resources were made available for parents and schools around promoting the message of forgiveness at home and in the classroom setting, as well as practical advice for anyone looking to restore a broken relationship through an act of forgiveness.

This article was first published on [www.catholicweekly.com.au](http://www.catholicweekly.com.au) It is republished here with permission.

## 40 YEARS AGO

### WAITANGI DAY TO BE REVIEWED

The Catholic Commission for Evangelisation, Justice and Development has been asked by the Church's National Commission on Ecumenism to research the implications of Waitangi Day "in depth".

The request has come in a formal letter, delivered recently, but decided upon at the last meeting of the Commission on Ecumenism in November last year.

The letter asks the EJD Commission to "research Waitangi Day in depth and in consultation with all interested persons of various cultures in New Zealand".

The EJD's executive director, Father John Curnow, will recommend that this be done, at the commission's next meeting in March.

"Certain private donations have been received to assist some of these groups, and these donations will be channelled to them

through the commission. The groups include Waitangi protest groups."

Father Curnow noted that, apart from any possible research by the national EJD Commission, diocesan groups had already been active on the issue. Wellington's EJD Commission had last year produced a paper on the subject, after setting up a task-force headed by Bernard Kernot. The Wellington commission, assisted by the national EJD body, had also funded last year an educational kit on Māori land rights.

The Auckland EJD Commission, under chairman Rob Cooper, himself a Māori, was also concerned about Māori land rights, said Father Curnow.

The Auckland commission had a representative of its Justice Committee on the Bastion Pt joint working group.

— *Zealandia*, February 7, 1982

## CAPTION CONTEST



Write the best caption for this photo and win a \$30 Countdown voucher. Send in your ideas by Tuesday, Feb. 22 to Caption Contest 630, NZ Catholic, PO Box 147000, Ponsonby, Auckland 1144. Or email: [design@nzcatholic.org.nz](mailto:design@nzcatholic.org.nz) Please include your postal address so that your prize, if you win, can be sent to you.



## Papal Prayer

The Pope's universal prayer intention for February: For religious sisters and consecrated women

We pray for religious sisters and consecrated women; thanking them for their mission and their courage; may they continue to find new responses to the challenges of our times.

# Australian Mercy sister who had gold records for Our Father recording dies

ADELAIDE, Australia (CNS) — Mercy Sister Janet Mead, who earned gold records for her 1974 hit version of the Our Father, died on January 26 in her native Adelaide. She was 84 and had been battling cancer.

In 1974, "The Lord's Prayer", set to an up-tempo rock beat, scaled up the charts, peaking at No. 4 in the United States and No. 3 in Australia, earning her gold records for the single.

Sister Mead was an unlikely pop star. The only other nun in US history to crack the top 10 in the United States was Soeur Sourire, better known as The Singing Nun, for her lively folk ode to St Dominic, 1963's French-language "Dominique". Sister Mead also was the first Australian to have a gold record in the United States.

The single was distributed to 31 countries, according to ABC, Australia's government-subsidised broadcaster, selling, by various accounts, 1.5 million, 2 million or 3 million copies worldwide.

Sister Mead was even nominated for a Grammy, but lost out to Elvis Presley. She declined an offer to tour the United States and donated all her royalties to charity.

But for those who weren't monitoring Top 40 radio in 1974, they might have heard her arrangement played during Masses at Catholic churches and schools.

Sister Mead pioneered the concept of the "rock Mass" in South Australia, and the Mass was celebrated regularly in St Francis Xavier Cathedral in Adelaide.

Yet despite this fleeting encounter with pop stardom, Sister Mead became even better known in Australia for her work helping the homeless, and teaching at St Aloysius College in Adelaide.

Sister Mead was named the South Australian of the year in 2004, not for "The Lord's Prayer", but for decades of caring for the homeless. The same year, she won the Yamaha Golden Gospel Award in recognition of her services to Australian Christian music.

St Aloysius College issued a statement of grief on January 31 over Sister Mead's death.

"Janet was an old scholar, past staff member and dear friend and supporter of St Aloysius College. Our staff and students join with the Romero Community and the Sisters of Mercy in their grief, and give thanks for a life that gave so much to many vulnerable members of our community here in SA," the statement said.

South Australia Premier Steven Marshall posted a tribute on Facebook, saying, "She touched millions of people worldwide with her inspired version of the Lord's Prayer".

Sister Liz Morris, a Religious Sister of St Joseph, who is vicar for religious in the Diocese of Adelaide, said that, while many would remember the cathedral youth Masses, "we also know of Janet's outstanding outreach and advocacy for the voiceless".

She worked with homeless people through the Adelaide Day Centre, which she helped establish in 1985. Until last year, Sister Mead spent countless hours and enormous energy on the Romero Company theatre performances that raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for overseas projects.

Sister Mead was an ardent supporter of Aboriginal rights in Australia. She also was actively involved in anti-war protests and support for refugees. In 1999, she raised money for stevedores who were fired in the midst of a waterfront dispute.



Mercy Sister Janet Mead (CNS Photo)

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## WORDS TO PONDER

“This joy in God is not like any pleasure found in physical or intellectual satisfaction. Nor is it such as a friend experiences in the presence of a friend. But, if we are to use any such analogy, it is more like the eye rejoicing in light.”

— St Augustine of Hippo

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sub630



The Pavitt Street site in Richmond, Christchurch, is blessed last month

# SSVDP housing project in Chch begins with donors still wanted

by ROWENA OREJANA

The Society of St Vincent de Paul Christchurch's (SSVDPC) \$2.25 million housing project for young and vulnerable families is expected to be completed by September this year, with the aim of having tenants moved in by the end of the year.

SSVDP Christchurch area president Mike Daly told *NZ Catholic* that they are still hoping to raise an estimated \$700,000 for the construction project, which is the first of its kind to be undertaken by their organisation.

"We had a block of land that was unoccupied. It was bequeathed to us many, many years ago, and it wasn't being utilised in any way. So, we basically investigated what was the greatest need in our community," Mr Daly said.

He said SSVDPC had a conversation with St John of God Haora Trust (SJG), a group active in the social services scene in Christchurch, and was told that "there is a real need for

this kind of housing for the families and the people they (SJG) help".

In Christchurch, housing for vulnerable young people, who make up the highest proportion of overall homelessness statistics, appeared to be the greatest need. Data from the Ministry of Social Development recorded a 68 per cent increase in clients aged 16-24 needing emergency housing special needs grants in 2020.

"That gave us the encouragement to go down that track," Mr Daly said.

The Pavitt Street Social Housing Project in Richmond is a collaborative project between SSVDPC and SJG, which will give up to seven families access to warm, affordable and secure housing.

"A lot of these young mums and families find it very hard to get accommodation because they don't have references, they are considered risky, and they find it almost impossible to be able to secure a flat," Mr Daly said.

"The idea is to get them on their

feet and for them to be able to show that they are good tenants, and to be able to get a reference from the organisation to allow them to go out into the community and to rent."

While they are renting there, these young parents will be given wrap-around support provided by SJG's HOPE programme (Housing Opportunities for Parental Enhancement).

"We'll be providing accommodation, and we'd also be helping some of the support around that wrap-around services . . . (like) cooking education or CV preparation," he added.

Mr Daly said the housing will be available to rent from six months to two years, with SJG determining who will be given the opportunity to occupy the housing units.

Mr Daly said this will be considered a special project of the SSVDPC, and they had set up the Ozanam Trust for this purpose.

"It is managed by a trust that was set up, which is connected to St Vin-

## WIT'S END

Two brothers go to a Catholic school and they are always getting into trouble. One day, the boys do something really bad, and get called to the headmaster's office. The headmaster asks Frank to come into his office. Henry looks petrified. The headmaster gets Frank to sit down. After a long period of silence, the headmaster asks Frank, "Where is God? You can take a while to think about it. Come back when you have an answer." Frank walks out of the office and Henry asks him, how did it go? "Seriously bad," Frank replied. "They've lost God and they're pinning it on us!".

**Q: How many Catholics does it take to change a light bulb?**  
**A: None. They use candles.**

**Q: Why don't skeletons play music at church?**  
**A: Because they don't have any organs.**

**In the February 27 issue: Bishop Stephen Lowe installation as Bishop of Auckland**

cent De Paul, but runs independently. It has a majority of Vincentians on the trust," he said.

Mr Daly said that the pandemic has indirectly affected the project in the sense that some of the donors' funds had dried up. One that he knows of depends on casinos for funds, but those had been closed during the previous lockdowns.

However, he said SSVDPC are confident they will be able to raise the remaining amount needed to complete the project.

Those who would like to donate can give through <https://givealittle.co.nz/cause/pavitt-street-social-housing-project> or email Mr Daly at [mike@svdpcch.co.nz](mailto:mike@svdpcch.co.nz)



Above: Construction is underway. Above right: Artist's impressions of how the Pavitt Street Social Housing Project accommodation will look. Photos supplied.