

To city with love

Message from
southern seniors – pg 16



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On the front cover: An expression of hope in a window at Sacred Heart Home and Hospital in Dunedin.

NZCatholic

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- See regular updates on our college website under COVID19 latest update.
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- Staff and students upskilling in online learning.
- We pray for families affected by the pandemic in any way, and by Cyclone Harold.

www.stdoms.ac.nz

Note from the Editor

Welcome to another edition of NZ Catholic. This edition is being printed for subscribers and is being sent out electronically to parishes and to other people since churches are closed and restrictions on parish life apply. Yet again, this edition has been produced by NZ Catholic's staff from their homes. I have nothing but praise for the staff of NZ Catholic. Producing a newspaper remotely presents a set of unique challenges, but I believe those challenges have been met well.

The first two electronic issues of NZ Catholic have been very well received. Some of the feedback is listed on page 7. I believe the paper has played an important role, alongside many other initia-

tives, in helping sustain Catholic life and community across the nation at this unprecedented time. As *Communio et Progressio*, written on the order of Vatican II stated: "The Church looks for ways of multiplying and strengthening the bonds of union between her members. For this reason, communication and dialogue among Catholics are indispensable." (CP114)

During alert level 3, NZ Catholic has a limited administrative capacity. But we have started processing subscriptions and renewals received since we left our office on March 23. A new set of renewal letters has been issued and sent. The two free digital-only issues produced during alert level 4 do not count against subscriptions.

In order to cater for subscribers who were not able to access the free digital editions, we put some selected stories from those editions in a special feature in the middle of the printed edition.

These are extraordinary circumstances. In normal times, we sometimes give away printed copies of NZ Catholic in some parishes as a promotion for the paper. At present, we also see the digital issues as an aid to Catholics when they are unable to access normal parish life. We ask print subscribers to view the digital editions sent to parishes and elsewhere in this light.

We hope you enjoy this edition of NZ Catholic — both print and digital.

— Michael Otto, Editor.

Priest provides opportunity to 'tell your story'

by ROWENA OREJANA

Missionary of Mercy Fr Richard Shortall, SJ, is offering "lockdown conversations" to people who may be missing the opportunity of talking to their priests about their worries and concerns.

Fr Shortall, who is currently living in Rotorua, said these conversations are similar to the ones he had with people in the Australian Catholic diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, where he served as a missionary of mercy in 2016, except that this will be done under the present circumstances over communication apps or over the phone.

"I thought, given that experience (in 2016), perhaps people in this diocese [Hamilton], missing the opportunity to talk with their priest, might appreciate the opportunity in a different context, to have a conversation about the worries and concerns they are experiencing now in this time of lockdown leading into level 3, and hopefully to level 2 whenever that would happen in the future," he said.

He said people might want to talk about "their own fear about would our lives ever be the same, will we get our lives back again as a result of what happened in China at the end of December".

The project started on April 27 and will end when the lockdown is lifted.

"It will be their conversation. They will have the opportunity to speak to an experienced and qualified spiritual director, retreat director and missionary of mercy," he said. "The conversations will be gentle, easy, very respectful of whoever wants to talk, just as they were in the jubilee year of mercy. The difference is that we will not be sitting in the same room, because we cannot do that."

Fr Shortall said, when he was a missionary of mercy in Maitland-Newcastle, he went around different communities in his motorhome, celebrating the Eucharist and sitting inside a church to give people the opportunity "to tell their story".

He said it was the time of the Australian Royal Commission of Inquiry into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. And so while



Fr Richard Shortall, SJ

Pope Francis thought those conversations would be more about the Sacrament of Reconciliation, this wasn't the case.

"What happened was over that year, I listened to person after person telling me their stories, and many of those stories were stories of abuse in one form or another in their lives. And I realised on more than one occasion when they told me the story, they were telling it for the very first time. And sometimes those people were in their 60s or 70s," he said.

Fr Shortall had just finished a Holy Week retreat which was livestreamed through the Hamilton diocese's website. He did this at the request of Bishop Stephen Lowe.

He was surprised at how popular that retreat was, with more than 1400 people from this country and overseas participating.

"I then began to think, well, we still have more time of lockdown and we will move hopefully to level 3 and we'll still be in this situation of incarceration," he said. So he decided to offer this service.

Fr Shortall is currently isolating at the Rotorua parish with Frs Eamon Kennedy and Prakash Somu, CMF. He was at the end of a three-week retreat at Cambridge parish when the national lockdown happened.

"This meant that I could not go back to Australia to my home with my Jesuit community in Melbourne. I was happy not to do that because, in fact, I felt much safer being here in New Zealand. So, like everyone else, I had under 48 hours to find a place to stay during the lockdown. And so, I came to the presbytery in Rotorua," he said.

More information about arranging a talk with Fr Shortall can be found through the diocesan newsletter on the Hamilton Catholic diocese website. www.cdh.org.nz

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Several NZ dioceses join wage subsidy scheme

by MICHAEL OTTO

Several New Zealand Catholic dioceses have taken up the Government's Wage Subsidy Scheme to help pay staff.

As of April 24, at least three New Zealand dioceses had joined the scheme, with the total support being given amounting to \$1.22 million.

According to a public register with some search capacity on the Ministry of Social Development website, Auckland Catholic diocese had received \$625,368 for 95 employees, Hamilton diocese had received \$165,880 for 24 employees and Wellington archdiocese received \$428,628 for 65 employees.

Christchurch diocesan general manager Andy Doherty told *NZ Catholic* on April 21 that Christchurch diocese had not applied for the subsidy at that point.

This was "firstly because we didn't meet the criteria initially and secondly, ideally, we will survive without using this generous offer".

"We will reassess this position as a diocese month by month."

Mr Doherty added that individual parishes in Christchurch diocese "have applied directly, and that has proven to be very beneficial to each parish and was processed promptly by the government organisation, which is appreciated".

Many parishes throughout the country have done likewise.

Palmerston North diocese general manager

Tony Murphy told *NZ Catholic* on April 22 that his diocese had not applied for the subsidy up to that point.

"We are constantly reviewing our current position and may still apply," Mr Murphy said.

"I am aware a couple of our parishes have made application, but the numbers are very small."

Auckland diocese general manager James van Schie told *Stuff* that the wage subsidy helped provide "certainty for staff during this uncertain time".

He said the diocese was topping up the subsidy so that staff received their full pay.

Dunedin's Catholic diocese was not on the register, but the Dunedin Anglican diocese was.

The Anglican Diocese of Auckland had received \$718,123 in subsidy for 109 employees.

According to a Radio New Zealand article on April 17, the total bill for the wage subsidy scheme across all qualifying organisations had reached \$10 billion. Some 85,000 businesses had been processed up to that stage and 1.6 million people were receiving this support.

The scheme is open to all businesses (including the self-employed, contractors and sole traders), registered charities, incorporated societies and post-settlement governance entities, that are adversely affected by Covid-19.

The scheme subsidises full-time employees at \$585.80 gross per week and part-time employees at \$350.00 gross per week. The employer must keep paying at normal rates or at least 80 per

cent of income where reasonably possible. The subsidy is paid in a lump sum and employers are required to keep staff on for the 12 weeks of work that the scheme subsidises.

Businesses are eligible for the subsidy where they have experienced a 30 per cent decline in actual or predicted revenue related to Covid-19.

Before receiving a subsidy, they must take active steps to manage the implications of Covid-19 on their businesses.

Mr van Schie told *NZ Catholic* that several measures have been put in place to help parishes in Auckland diocese.

Parishes were told that they were not obliged to make payment of their 15 per cent levy / allocations (diocesan tax) from parish and house accounts for a three-month period (March, April and May).

Also, in consultation with the chair of the Parish Finance Committee, parish priests and administrators in Auckland diocese parishes are granted the authority to transfer funds from the parish account / Catholic Development Fund (CDF) to the house account if the house account is running out of money.

And Bishop Patrick Dunn can provide support and assistance in Auckland diocese to needy parishes and priests that become financially distressed during this period. Parishes have been told that they or the priest should be in touch with the bishop or diocesan general manager if they need help.

Online messenger scam prompts caution

by ROWENA OREJANA

Two Catholic bishops have become victims of an impersonation scam on Facebook messenger and have warned people not to fall for this dishonest scheme. Auckland Bishop Patrick Dunn and Hamilton Bishop Stephen Lowe both had people inform them that scammers were asking for money on Facebook messenger pretending to be them.

"A person has copied this Facebook page and is asking for money to buy iTunes cards. This is clearly a scam," Bishop Dunn said on his Facebook account. "If you have received this message from me, please do not reply, and delete it."

Bishop Lowe stressed he has not and would not make such a request.

"I do not use messenger as Bishop Steve Lowe," he said. "If in doubt, try a video call with the person, . . . you will see it is not me."

The facebook message asks a person to buy \$300 worth of iTunes gift cards for someone supposedly sick with cancer.

Netsafe New Zealand senior marketing and communications advisor Angela Boundy said those who receive this message should immediately report it to whoever owns the platform, in this case, Facebook.

"Unfortunately, we don't have the ability to track reports related to Facebook Messenger as we don't capture that level of detail. The situation . . . appears to be a variation of a common impersonation scam," she said.

"With this scam, the scammer takes or creates a fake account and impersonates a public figure. They often contact people claiming to need urgent help and money. Sometimes they might claim there is a prize or grant they are eligible for."

Ms Boundy advised people to ignore the scammer's message. "If you're unsure if an email is from a legitimate person, you may want to contact them to ask. If you do contact them, make sure you go through their official contact channels," she said.

She also suggested doing an Internet search of the exact wording of the message as many scams can be identified this way.

She said the best way to avoid a scam is to:

- Be alert to the fact these types of scams exist
- Be wary of any requests for money or your personal information
- Contact Netsafe for advice.

"Netsafe can't open investigations or track scammers, but we can offer support for people. This includes letting you know the steps you can take, depending on the scam, and giving you advice about how to stay safe," she said.

To report an Internet scam, go to www.netsafe.org.nz/report.

Bishops outline restrictions under alert level 3

by MICHAEL OTTO

New Zealand's Catholic bishops have asked priests to observe the same restrictions under Covid-19 alert level 3 that applied in alert level 4, with one exception.

In a letter written to priests on April 24, the bishops wrote that "funerals and marriages may be allowed in our parish churches with no more than 10 people present".

But it is important that churches are cleaned appropriately after any use by people for funerals or weddings, the bishops added.

Those present must observe Ministry of Health guidelines listed at www.Covid19.govt.nz. These include maintaining two-metre social distancing where possible and refraining from shaking hands, kissing hello or doing hongi. There are also instructions about hand washing, and cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces and objects.

For alert level 4, the New Zealand bishops cancelled Masses with congregations and churches were closed. This remains the norm in alert level 3.

Given the advice from the Government about people staying in their "bubbles" if possible until the end of level 3, the bishops asked priests to do that.

It was acknowledged that some schools and early childhood centres will be opening during level 3 for those whose parents must work and cannot care for them at home. But the bishops asked priests not to "enter schools during this time".

"It is going to be difficult for schools to manage as it is and, for the sake of non-transmission of any virus, we would ask that you too stay away."

The letter noted that the bishops had written to the Prime Minister "seeking definitive information about being able to minister to the sick and dying in homes and hospitals and visit the faithful".

"We are waiting to hear back and we will provide more information when we can," they noted.

The bishops wrote that they are "very aware of the challenges that this brings for us all as priests, and the frustration that we feel at not being able to be amongst our people and celebrating the sacraments of the Church".

"However, we have been struck by how effectively you have provided spiritual support to your parishioners and others during these last four weeks, and we would ask that you continue in this same way for the next two weeks."

The letter concluded: "Let us all continue to use this time for prayer and reflection, and especially praying for our people in their various needs. There will continue to be much pastoral support required now and into the future and, once we are cleared to move around, we know you will be doing that with the pastoral zeal that marks your lives as priests."

NZ Catholic understands that the Day of Prayer for Vocations and the Seminary Collection scheduled for May 3, and the May 3-10 National Vocations Awareness Week, have been postponed until some future date.

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Steep increase in demand for food parcels in Hamilton

by ROWENA OREJANA

Demand for food parcels in Hamilton have quadrupled in the past few weeks, but the Society of St Vincent De Paul Hamilton said they have not seen demand peaking yet.

SVDP Hamilton manager Mike Rolton said they are seeing an increase in new clients.

"We've still got our base customers, which are generally low income, beneficiaries or the working poor. But now we've got a whole new range of clients coming to us," Mr Rolton told *NZ Catholic* in a phone interview.

He said he definitely does not see the demand slowing down. "Not in the immediate future. I think this is the new normal," he said.

In a report he gave to Hamilton Bishop Stephen Lowe, Mr Rolton said that, from April 8 to April 20, they have given out 443 food parcels. This was 300 more than the 100 they distributed in the whole of April last year.

Mr Rolton said their new clients include those who have lost their jobs, those who can't go back to work because someone has to take care of the kids, and those who find the \$583 wage subsidy from the Government may cover rent but cannot cover food as well.

When the country goes down to alert level 2, it is possible that people will go back to work and find they have lost their jobs or had their hours reduced.

"The second problem I see is, all these organisations that have popped up to help fight the food battle is a one-off. When they stop feeding all those people they are currently feeding, then all those people will come to organisations like ours," Mr Rolton said. "We'll have that flood."

Mr Rolton said SVDP Hamilton spent \$24,000 in the first half of April to provide food to their clients. And while they are bleeding funds, they are not in a dire situation due to the help they are getting from central and local government, as well as donations from businesses in Hamilton and abroad.

"I'm working out now whether I'll open (in level 2) all the (SVDP) shops or some of the shops, the more profitable shops that need to open. I've got rent holidays on 3 of my 4 shops. We are current with all our creditors, so that's great as well. And I have used the wage subsidy for my staff," he said.

Mr Rolton said they also received a very large financial donation from the Australian corporation he used to work for - Tetrapak.

"It would be tight, but we should be OK. If it

(this situation) goes beyond late June, I'll start to be a bit concerned. I'm still going to lose \$120,000 with no income. That's just the facts," he said.

The \$120,000 he was referring to is lost revenue from the closure of the SVDP shops during the lockdown.

"What will happen, in my view, is that a lot of smaller charities or charities that rely on that sort of income stream won't survive," he added.

Mr Rolton said the smartest thing they did was to apply to be an essential service.

"As soon as we got wind that this (lockdown) could happen, we applied to the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) to be an essential service, and submitted a complete working plan on how we're going to handle this . . . which they really liked. Two days later, we were approved. Then we could move forward and take advantage of the facilities that were available. MSD helped us," he said.

Civil Defence took four weeks to process their request, so it started delivering food parcels to SVDP only on the last week of the level 4.

"Hamilton City Council, knowing we were an essential service approved by the MSD, also supported us financially as well, and we could go back to ask for more if needed," he said.

Greenlea Meats donated about six to eight tons of meat.

One recipient of the food parcel told SVDP that she almost cried after seeing the meats in the pack because they had not eaten meat in three days, he said.

Mr Rolton said stories like this give the volunteers and staff inspiration to carry on.

"They understand why we do things a certain way, why we're here, which is to help the public," he said.

Mr Rolton said they still need cash donations to cover operating costs.

"We've minimised everything else. We've started taking a cut on our pay ourselves just to make sure that everyone will survive," he said. "When we open shops, there's no reason for me to think that they are going to go back to that level of sales



Mike Rolton

straightaway. It's going to take time to build that up again."

If you would like to make a financial contribution to St Vincent de Paul Hamilton, you can donate by direct credit to:

Bank account of Society of St Vincent de Paul
03 1355 067033 00

Overstayers' plight prompts plea to PM

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

A committee of Auckland diocese's Justice and Peace Commission has written to the Prime Minister requesting an unconditional amnesty for overstayers during the Covid-19 emergency so they can receive financial assistance and other support.

In a letter to Jacinda Ardern, the commission's Peace and International Justice Committee stated that thousands of overstayers are ineligible for many forms of Government support, although they do qualify for health care during the crisis.

While the committee's letter affirmed that they did not condone overseas citizens remaining illegally in New Zealand, it pointed to overstayers' families and children being particularly vulnerable during the current crisis. Issues such as job losses, impact on families, housing vulnerability and health consequences were cited. Therefore, the committee made two specific requests in its

letter to the Prime Minister.

"We therefore ask the Government to offer an unconditional amnesty to New Zealand's overstayers while our borders are closed, so that they can receive financial assistance and the full range of other support during the crisis.

"We also ask that, once New Zealand's borders are re-opened, and international travel is again possible, that the Government establishes an amnesty subject to defined criteria which would allow overstayers to either regularise their immigration status or, otherwise, be repatriated home."

The letter cited overseas examples from California and Portugal where assistance was given to illegal immigrants during the crisis or residence visas were permitted under certain conditions, respectively.

The letter also praised the Government's "rapidity, clarity and directness" in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.



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If you have any questions about NZ Catholic during Alert Level 3, please email: admin@nzcatholic.org.nz or call 09 360 3067

Catholic agencies continue to serve in NZ

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

Catholic agencies and individuals around the country were busy working from home and providing still-open "essential services" supporting communities in need during the Level 4 Covid-19 coronavirus lockdown.

Ingenuity was used at a time when essential Catholic spiritual work such as attending to the sick and dying was severely restricted by Level 4 rules.

Fr Maurice Carmody of Plimmerton, north of Wellington, said kerbside prayers for the dead as funeral directors paused their hearse outside his home, which is close to St Theresa's church, where he is parish priest.

Fr Carmody met the funeral directors - at the required social distance - by the roadside. Standing near the open rear door of the hearse, he said the prayers of final commendation while the family watched and prayed over a phone video link.

"I was able to pray the prayers and bless the remains of their loved ones knowing they were there," Fr Carmody said. "It was a beautiful experience, and it was something I felt graced to do."

Archdiocese of Wellington Vicar for Maori Deacon Danny Karatea-Goddard has been using technology to remotely accompany whanau in their tangi.

"Even though we are not able to be there kano hi ki te kano hi [face-to-face], we are reaching out using alternatives. It's not the best way of doing things, but it's what we can do."

Deacon Karatea-Goddard said he is able to train younger whanau members to offer words of farewell and prayer: "Families themselves are drawing on their own resources."

Technology could not help with all funeral lockdown problems, but grieving families were asked to contact parishes to link with the support available. The Government has said the intended change to Alert Level 3 scheduled for April 28 would allow ten people to attend a funeral, though families will need to decide who the ten would be.

With churches closed by the lockdown rules, online Mass has been extremely popular. Daily Mass is streamed live in each of the country's six dioceses and from many parishes, with priests and bishops celebrating Mass within their "bubbles". The National Liturgy Office regularly updates its list of online Masses. See www.nlo.org.nz/news-and-events/media-releases/celebrate-mass-online/

Work

Work that is less visible nationally, but very important locally, is happening everywhere. In Dunedin, two Society of St Vincent de Paul staff have continued to work providing food parcels. Because the usual donations of food at parish Masses has not been available, food has been bought with donated money, including with a grant from the Tindall Foundation.

The Dunedin and Central Otago Catholic Social Services (CSS) counselling and social work teams are keeping in touch with people using Zoom and phone calls, providing support, counselling, information and helping people get food



Volunteers Clara, Rose, Louise and Sister Ruth keep the Compassion Soup Kitchen going in Wellington.

parcels, technology support and financial help when needed.

Mike Tonks, CSS Dunedin director, said life for some people has been a little easier under lockdown, with some having less anxiety and reporting they are coping better.

In Christchurch, Catholic Social Services manager Jon Brian said team members are working from home to support parishioners via phone and video link. People have been pleased to "unload" to a professional counsellor outside their "bubble", he said.

"Almost all the people reached didn't expect to be contacted or to be able to contact counsellors; they were pleasantly surprised and grateful for that," Mr Brian said.

Catholic hospital chaplains have been working from home, connecting with patients and hospital staff by phone and other devices. Wellington hospital chaplain Lizzie Wootton said chaplains are learning to adapt to new rhythms and routines, at a time when face to face contact is not possible. But she is able to talk to and pray with people in hospital using their own and hospital phones.

"I try to be present to them, because human presence in any form helps with mental health and healing," she said.

Wellington's Compassion Soup Kitchen has doubled its meal production to more than 150 a day since the lockdown started. Operating under Level 4 as an essential service for the city's most vulnerable people, the kitchen has closed its communal dining area, instead distributing meals at the door.

In Auckland, Catholic Social Services, Catholic Caring Foundation and St Vincent de Paul's foodbank in Newton are working together to get



Fr Maurice Carmody praying by a hearse stopped outside his home near St Theresa's church in Plimmerton.

food parcels out to the elderly. Parishes are also responding to the crisis by setting up phone groups to call elderly parishioners to see who needs help.

One parish is forwarding fresh produce to Vinnies, while another is ensuring that protective gear is made available to the volunteers and staff at the foodbank. Another parish programme is being set up to help the elderly receive their flu vaccinations.

NZ Catholic understands that, as of April 27, the Auckland Vinnies had also helped more than 2000 families with food boxes since the start of the lockdown.



"I see the Church as a field hospital after battle."

POPE FRANCIS

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The Spiritual Legacy of Covid-19

Commentators are beginning to speculate on what our world will be like when the Covid-19 pandemic is over. What will the “new normal” look like? They agree that, although many would like all to return to the way life was before, that will not be the case. Such commentators are focusing on economic and social scenarios. In this reflection, I want to begin a discussion concerning how the same questions will also be true for people of faith. This could be a time of renewed vision for the Church. I will highlight four areas I see as critical — but there could well be more.

Priests and People Make Eucharist

Over this most sacred time of the liturgical year, we have not been able to gather and celebrate as parishes and congregations. Many have followed online services from local churches, cathedrals or even from Rome itself. Some felt a new sense of personal commitment in this; for others it has accentuated the need to come together to share belief and belonging. What we do know is that vastly increased numbers have tuned into services from the Vatican, many not Catholic or even religious.

When churches open for Mass once again, those who gather will be a different mix. Some, for various reasons, will not return. There will be others who return, perhaps after many years of absence; yet others will be drawn to taste something they begin to perceive as missing from their lives.

Common to all this group will be an implicit awareness that people need a priest as focus and celebrant on their behalf, but equally for priests there is the realisation that they are there for the people; they are there to serve the people by being the focal point. Any idea that the priest performs while the people watch on must disappear. All must embrace the reality that celebrant and people make a unity in Christ, re-embodying him in the world.

This will not happen unless clergy, parish councils and liturgy committees dialogue deeply and honestly about how to create this environ-

ment in the particular communities in which they live.

The Elderly are a Precious Heritage

This time has highlighted the vulnerability of those in rest homes. Many have died without family or loved ones to support them. They have been buried anonymously.

Most parishes have at least one residence for the elderly within their boundaries; some have many. We know that Pope Francis has repeatedly stressed that Eucharist must spill out into mission, especially to the isolated, alone and unloved. For many in rest homes, their families are

Neil Vaney

scattered or do not come any more. What better outreach than being surrogate family, to bring cheer and comradeship to threadbare lives.

Just as it was outsiders who brought the deadly virus, let it now be a new group of outsiders to bring a sense of belonging and significance to those who are physically bound to solitude.

Who are the Pillars of our Community?

One of the significant learnings of this time has been the importance of many invisible people in our societies. They are the essential workers: doctors, nurses, paramedics, transport and electrical workers, garbage collectors; many have emerged not just as doing critical tasks, but also as self-effacing, self-sacrificing, but superbly generous men and women, going far beyond the often low wages that are paid for their labours.

One positive dimension coming out of the pandemic has been the way in which media, especially newspapers, have begun to hold up and underline the importance and value of such people. Likewise, we can see that the czars of publicity: celebrities, sports stars, CEOs of huge multinational firms afforded easy press, are less central to our well-being than their status portrays. It may be their vast salaries seem inflated homage in

such times of need, while many low-paid workers can be seen as the true champions of this age.

Science and Technology do not Create Community; Only Love Does

The last month has underlined the value of online connections such as Skype, Zoom and WhatsApp and other applications in linking bubbles and cementing friendships, breaking the barriers of isolation. This is a subtle, but critical, shift. Such technology has often served to isolate individuals, to feed their addictions and lock them into a virtual world. What this trend also underlines is the nature of technology as a wondrous servant and tyrannical master. Surrounded by the shield and wonders of science and its technological offspring, it is easy to drift into the uncritical belief that contemporary science has given us unparalleled mastery over all the earth. This ignores the insistence of both Popes Benedict and Francis that we humans are also part of nature, creatures of earth. Just as humans and society evolve, so too does nature, including animals and viruses. As *Laudato Si'* insists, this planet is our home, not our storehouse or bank deposit box. When we treat it with reverence and respect, it will honour us; when we think we can use it as we want, it will eventually punish us. Ecology is not just about management, it is also about worship.

Conclusion

In proposing these ideas, I hope that they may serve as a stimulus for many discussions, even disagreements. I would love to see them bandied about around family dinner tables, RE classes, parish councils and even gatherings of bishops!

This crisis has come upon us at the centremost part of the Christian passover, when we observe Jesus' agony, death and rising to new life. It is by entering deeply and fearlessly into what has died in our churches during this time of lockdown that we will be able to welcome a resurrected life, in which a renewed community will emerge to see the world and society with new eyes and hope.

Fr Neil Vaney, SM, is pastoral director of the Catholic Enquiry Centre NZ.

Ronald Rolheiser

Huge stones and locked doors

Soren Kierkegaard once wrote that the Gospel text he strongly identified with is the account of the disciples, after the death of Jesus, locking themselves into an upper room in fear, and then experiencing Jesus coming through the locked doors to bestow peace on them. Kierkegaard wanted Jesus to do that for him, to come through his locked doors, his resistance, and breathe the peace inside him.

That image of locked doors is one of two particularly interesting images inside the story of the first Easter. The other is the image of the “large stone” that entombed the buried Jesus. These images remind us of what often separates us from the grace of the Resurrection. Sometimes for that grace to find us, someone must “roll away the stone” that entombs us, and sometimes the Resurrection must come to us “through locked doors”.

First, about the “stone”.

The Gospels tell us that, early on Easter morning, three women were on their way to the tomb of Jesus intending to embalm his body with spices, but they were anxious about how they would remove the large stone that sealed the entrance of his tomb. They were asking each other: “Who will roll away the stone?”

Well, as we know, the stone had already been rolled away. How? We don't know. Jesus' Resurrection happened with no one there. Nobody knows exactly how that stone was rolled away. But what Scripture does make clear is this: Jesus didn't resurrect himself. God raised him. Jesus didn't roll away the stone, though that's what we generally assume. However, and for good reason, both Scripture and Christian tradition strongly affirm that Jesus didn't raise himself from the dead, his Father raised him. This might seem like

an unnecessary point to emphasise; after all, what difference does it make?

It makes a huge difference. Jesus didn't raise himself from the dead and neither can we. That's the point. For the power of the Resurrection to enter us, something from beyond us has to remove the huge, immovable rock of our resistance. This is not to deny that we, ourselves, have goodwill and personal strength; but these, though important, are more a precondition for receiving the grace of the Resurrection than the power of the Resurrection itself, which always comes to us from beyond. We never roll back the stone ourselves!

Who can roll back the stone? Perhaps that isn't a question we're particularly anxious about, but we should be. Jesus was entombed and helpless to raise himself up - all the more so for us. Like the women at that first Easter, we need to be anxious: “Who will roll back the stone?” We can't open our own tombs.

Second, our “locked doors”.

It's interesting how the believers at that first Easter experienced the resurrected Christ in their lives. The Gospels tell us that they were huddled in fear and paranoia behind locked doors, wanting only to protect themselves, when Christ came through their locked doors, the doors of their fear and self-protection, and breathed peace into them. Their huddling in fear wasn't because of ill-will or bad faith. In their hearts, they sincerely wished that they weren't afraid, but that good will still didn't unlock their doors. Christ entered and breathed peace into them in spite of their resistance, their fear and their locked doors.

Things haven't changed much in 2000 years. As a Christian community, and as individuals, we are still mostly huddling in fear, anxious about

ourselves, distrustful, not at peace, our doors locked, even as our hearts desire peace and trust. Perhaps, like Kierkegaard, we might want to privilege that Scripture passage where the resurrected Christ comes through the locked doors of human resistance and breathes out peace.

Moreover, this year, given this extraordinary time when Covid-19 has our cities and communities locked down, we are inside our individual houses, dealing with the various combinations of frustration, impatience, fear, panic, and boredom that assail us there. Right now, we need a little extra something to experience the Resurrection, a stone needs to be rolled away so that resurrected life can come through our locked doors and breathe peace into us.

At the end of the day, these two images, “the stone that needs to be rolled away” and the “locked doors of our fear”, contain within themselves perhaps the most consoling truth in all religion, because they reveal this about God's grace: When we cannot help ourselves, we can still be helped and when we are powerless to reach out, grace can still come through the walls of our resistance and breathe peace into us. We need to cling to this whenever we experience irretrievable brokenness in our lives, when we feel helpless inside our wounds and fears, when we feel spiritually inept, and when we grieve loved ones lost to addictions or suicide. The resurrected Christ can come through locked doors and roll back any stone that entombs us, no matter how hopeless the task is for us.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, TX. He can be contacted through his website www.ronrolheiser.com Follow on Facebook www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser.

Initiatives deserve high praise

A media statement issued by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference in mid-April detailed some of the many pastoral works carried out by Catholic agencies and individuals during the lockdown.

Such initiatives are worthy of high praise. It is good that they are recorded and will in due course be remembered and reflected upon. Such recording has happened before and it has enabled reflection many years later. This is not the first time Catholic agencies have swung into action during a pandemic that has blighted our shores.

Examples of Catholic generosity and sacrifice during the terrible 1918 influenza pandemic that claimed some 9000 lives in this country were noted in articles and exhibitions held to mark 100 years since those dark days. To the fore in the Catholic response were religious sisters.

Some examples:

In Wellington, the Sisters of Compassion responded to the call for volunteers and nursed the sick at Island Bay, Berhampore and at a temporary hospital at St Patrick's College in Wellington, where two dormitories were used. According to a Compassion Sisters' account 100 years later, "the hospital was open for one month. There were 48 beds, and the sisters and volunteers nursed 91 men of every denomination. 54 survived and 37 died. Many of the sisters contracted influenza and during their illness meals were provided by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart." One Compassion Sister, a Sister Natalie, contracted influenza while visiting her brother. She died from the illness.

In Auckland, at the direction of Bishop Cleary, two schools on Vermont Street became temporary hospitals, fully equipped by Auckland Catholics. A recent article in the *Ponsonby News* stated: "By November, when the epidemic was clearly

on the wane, the Vermont Street hospital had admitted 254 patients, 85 of

whom died. The Sisters of Mercy worked calmly and cheerfully as long as there were sick to care for, and they were lauded by the secular press as an example to other women in a desperate request for volunteers. The sisters weren't concerned with public recognition, just continuing their work as long as they were needed . . ."

It has been observed that many of the patients in such places had never had contact with Catholic sisters before, and the experience did much to reduce the ignorance and religious prejudice that was widespread at the time.

Of course, there were losses in the Catholic community too. The most prominent was Bishop Michael Verdon, the Bishop of Dunedin, who succumbed to the disease which he had contracted after a visit to Auckland. He died in Wellington on November 22, 1918. Four years later, it is said that the same influenza claimed the life of Pope Benedict XV.

One bishop whose role was noted in New Zealand was Bishop Henry Cleary of Auckland, referred to earlier. The *Ponsonby News* article stated that it came to light later that Bishop Cleary had offered every Catholic school in his diocese for use as temporary hospitals.

"He himself was indefatigable," the article stated, "transporting the sick in his own car, assisting at their bedsides, taking a turn in the kitchen and reverently attending the dead."

In our time, the work of the Church will not come to an end when there are no more alert levels. Relations between individuals and communities are likely to come under strain as people feel the bite of hardship in the years ahead. The Church can play various roles here too, not only in giving assistance to those impacted by the economic downturn, but in helping improve relations between groups in our multicultural society.

A recent article in the UK *Tablet* noted that, in the 14th century, it was common to blame the Black Death catastrophe in Europe on Jews. Pope Clement VI condemned this — and the pogroms associated with it — and called on bishops and priests to protect Jewish people.

As the *Tablet* article concluded: "The present epidemic . . . reminds us that the announcement of the Good News and the call to love one another should be constantly renewed."

The Habit



Letters

Good Friday

Beside my wife, on the couch, laptop in hand to comfortably watch the Christchurch liturgy, to barely suppress a smile at the enthusiasm of so many throughout the country who popped up on the side bar chat box, and to feel the beautiful weather just outside our open doors, offered a surreal sense of Good Friday solace.

We listened to Isaiah's lament, feeling with him a glimmer of hope, and when our Lord himself breathed his last we bowed our heads in respect.

Across the Tasman, George Pell had just been released from prison but the century-long persecution of our brothers and sisters in Syria and in the whole of the Middle East — the very birthplace of Christianity — continued unabated.

Covid-19 was spreading exponentially; the number of dead growing; unemployment rising. In our native countries of the US and Italy things looked very bad, but in our adopted island nation our family was safe, even tranquil.

I wonder if we will remember lockdown 2020 with an almost guilty feeling of nostalgia.

Dan Stollenwerk, Auckland.

Obligation

Regarding Michael Vanderpump's letter (*NZ Catholic*,

Except for our own editorials, opinions expressed in *NZ Catholic* do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the newspaper or of its owner, the Bishop of Auckland, unless otherwise indicated.

olic, April 5) concerning the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. This is not a recent instruction from the Church.

The Church emphasises Sunday worship because the third commandment given by God to Moses is to keep holy the Sabbath Day.

The day of worship was changed from the Sabbath to Sunday, the day of the Lord's Resurrection, by the apostles. We can see this from the Acts of the Apostles and the writings of early saints and early Christians who wanted to meet in remembrance of the Last Supper. It has always been part of Church life and understood as a serious obligation.

None of the commandments given by God are to be taken lightly, though only God can judge in any particular instance whether a "mortal" sin has been committed. Yes, it is important to serve God by doing good works, but Christianity is also about community, sharing the Good News and meeting to celebrate the Lord's Supper.

How can one claim to be a good Catholic if one ignores a commandment given by God and if one's spiritual life is not nourished by regular attendance at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and reception of the Eucharist?

If we do not take seriously attendance at Sunday Mass, there is nothing that distinguishes us from the agnostics and atheists we live amongst.

Kathleen Kenrick, Dunedin.

Abortion

It is interesting how the New Zealand Government have not hesitated to start the process of massive damage to this country's economy to "save lives", especially among our elderly and infirm, when allowing and — if I may add encouraging — the slaughter of our most vulnerable and helpless in our society. Our unborn children.

B. Minnear, Inglewood.

Digital editions

This is some of the feedback received for the two digital-only editions of *NZ Catholic* published during the alert level 4 lockdown. It is always pleasing to receive such positive support. I have used descriptors rather than real names as the messages were sent to me personally. — Editor.

Another brilliant effort! Congratulations to you and all your clever team. — Pastor.

Ten out of ten. Congratulations on the online edition. As a first-time user I have to say how simple it was to use; the quality and functionality were also of a high quality. Well done team, appreciate your hard work at this time. — Pastor.

Thank you so much for all you did to make this possible. Fantastic. — Pastor.

Thank you for the electronic edition of the *NZ Catholic* which I have just

sent out to the parish by email. — Pastor.

Thanks for sending this . . . It is a tremendous piece of work to put together so professionally from people working at home. I congratulate them and wish you all the best for future editions. — Pastor.

Many thanks. This is a great service. God bless you as you navigate these demanding commercial times. — Pastor.

Huge congratulations and thanks for a very special issue of *NZ Catholic*. Please pass my thanks to all your team. On various Zoom meetings this week many, many people have said how impressed and grateful they are. — Lay person.

God bless you. Lovely to see photos of the Young Vinnies and all the volunteers who are helping and working very hard to deliver the food parcels to many of the families within the Auckland region. God bless them and love them. — Religious.

Thank you *NZ Catholic*. An awesome job you have done under very trying conditions. — Lay person.

Another great issue. Thanks so much for sharing the link. I found some of the articles very thought provoking and at this time really helpful to me to reflect on things. Also a time to think about what you are grateful for. — Lay person.

Thanks for the link. You've done a great job; everything is clear and easy to read. — Lay person.

NZ Catholic welcomes readers' letters, although receipt of a letter does not guarantee publication. No correspondence will be entered into concerning publication. Letters should be no longer than 220 words and should be topical, to the point, and include the writer's address and phone number. *Ad hominem* attacks are not welcome. Emailed letters should be sent as part of the text message — not as an attachment — to editor@nzcatholic.org.nz and include the writer's physical address. Pseudonyms are not accepted, except by special arrangement.

Pope creates coronavirus commission

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis has created a new commission that will confront the challenges the world is facing in battling the coronavirus pandemic and what it will inevitably face in its aftermath, the Vatican announced.

In a statement on April 15, the Vatican said the goal of the commission, which will be led by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, is “to express the Church’s concern and love for the entire human family in the face of the of Covid-19 pandemic”.

The dicastery will work with other Vatican offices to coordinate the work, which includes “an analysis and a reflection on the socioeconomic and culture challenges of the future and proposed guidelines to address them”, the Vatican said.

The commission is divided into five working groups focused on a specific aspect of the pandemic and has met twice with the Pope to discuss ways it can help local churches, especially in poor areas, Cardinal

Peter Turkson, prefect of the dicastery, said in an interview with Vatican News.

“The Pope is convinced that we are living through an epochal change and he is reflecting on what will follow the crisis, on the economic and social consequences of the pandemic, on what we will have to face and, above all, on how the Church can offer itself as a safe point of reference to the world lost in the face of an unexpected event,” Cardinal Turkson said.

The commission’s first working group, which is dedicated to “listening and supporting local churches”, will work in cooperation with Caritas Internationalis, as well as the office of the papal almoner, the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples and the Vatican pharmacy.

Cardinal Turkson told Vatican News that the first group has already “set up mechanisms to listen to the local churches to identify real needs and assist in the development of effective and adequate responses”, including coordinating with apostolic

nuncios and bishops’ conferences.

The second group will dedicate itself to research and the study of the pandemic and to reflecting on society and the world post-coronavirus in coordination with the Pontifical Academy for Life, the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences.

This group, Cardinal Turkson said, “has the task of night watch, like the sentry, to perceive the dawn. To do this, it is necessary to connect the best minds in the areas of ecology, economy, health and public security. We need the concreteness of science, and we need prophecy and creativity”.

Other working groups will focus on communication and relations with other countries, to assist and share valuable research information and financing the commission’s relief efforts.

Cardinal Turkson highlighted the need for the commission and the importance of looking to the future “so as not to be unprepared”.

“The health crisis has already triggered an economic one,” he said. “The risk is that a social crisis will be provoked if this economic crisis is not dealt with immediately. One crisis risks being followed by others, in a cycle in which we will be forced to learn slowly and painfully to take care of our common home.”

Unity, he added, is essential in confronting the pandemic, so the current crisis “is not the time for indifference, selfishness or division”.

He also called for the loosening of international sanctions, the reduction or forgiveness of the foreign debts of poor countries, and the end of conflict and arms trafficking. Instead, countries should use their wealth “to heal people and save lives”.

“We are rediscovering how much the destiny of each of us is linked to that of others,” Cardinal Turkson said. “We are rediscovering the value of the things that matter and the worthlessness of so many things that we once considered important.”

A RIO ‘THANK YOU’



The statue of Christ the Redeemer is illuminated with a doctor’s suit and the word “thank you” in Rio de Janeiro on April 12. The statue was lit in the attire of a doctor in tribute to health care workers who are fighting the Covid-19 pandemic. The word “thank you” was projected in several languages. (CNS photo)

Benedict turns 93 during lockdown

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Retired Pope Benedict XVI “is well”, although the coronavirus pandemic restrictions mean he received no visitors on April 16, his 93rd birthday.

“Thank God, all of us in the Mater Ecclesiae Monastery are well,” Archbishop Georg Ganswein, the retired Pope’s personal secretary, told *Avvenire*, the Italian Catholic newspaper.

The retired Pope, the archbishop and a group of consecrated women live in the former monastery in the Vatican Gardens.

Usually for his birthday, Pope Benedict is joined by his older brother, Msgr Georg

Ratzinger, who turned 96 in January, but Archbishop Ganswein told Vatican News that this year the two spoke on the phone. Msgr Ratzinger’s call was just one of many birthday calls the retired Pope had received.

Despite the lockdown, Archbishop Ganswein told *Avvenire* on April 16, the day would be “more festive” than usual in the monastery. And, he told Vatican News, it would feature the singing of Bavarian folk songs.

The day began, as usual, with Mass in the monastery chapel.

The retired Pope, the archbishop said, prays each day for the sick and for those suffering

because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

“He was especially struck by the many priests, doctors and nurses who have died while caring for those sick with the coronavirus, particularly in northern Italy,” Archbishop Ganswein said.

The archbishop also said the retired Pope received a special present, a pre-publication copy of “Benedikt XVI: Ein Leben” (“Benedict XVI: A Life”), an almost 1200-page biography written by Peter Seewald, who collaborated with the retired Pope on several bestselling books. The volume will be released in German in May.

“Seewald intended to give it to the Pope Emeritus in person,” the archbishop said, “but, unfortunately, the pandemic made that impossible.”

Vatican views

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Holy Week and Easter events broadcast and shared by Vatican media reached millions of people around the world.

Nearly 5.5 million users registered more than 14.5 million views on the vaticannews.va website in Holy Week, as against last year which saw 1.5 million users and some 3.5 million page views.

There were almost 18 million viewers watching the live video feeds of Holy Week events on the Vatican News Facebook pages in different languages.

In Holy Week, the @Pontifex Twitter accounts surpassed 50 million followers.

Pope postpones World Meeting of Families, World Youth Day

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis has agreed with a recommendation by the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life to postpone by one year the next gatherings of the World Meeting of Families and World Youth Day.

“Because of the current health situation and its consequences on the movement and gatherings of young people and families,” the World Meeting of Families in Rome will be pushed back until June, 2022, and World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, will be pushed back until August, 2023, the Vatican announced.

Cardinal Kevin Farrell, prefect of the dicastery, told the Catholic News Service on April 20 that now is the time his office would be signing contracts with hotels and airlines if the World Meeting of Families was still to be held in 2021, “but no one knows what will happen”, so it seemed prudent to push the meeting back a year.

The dicastery also would not hold two large gatherings during the same summer, so that was one reason World Youth Day was pushed back, he said.

The other reason, Cardinal Farrell said, is that although people are talking about “returning to normal” and government leaders are making plans for phasing out lockdowns and reopening businesses, “we do not believe travel will be that extensive” any time soon.

The dicastery has cancelled all international meetings until January 2021, although it is planning for a few young people from Panama, where World Youth Day was celebrated in 2019, to hand the World Youth Day cross to a few young people from Lisbon on November 22, the feast of Christ the King.

The handover originally was scheduled for April 5, Palm Sunday, but was postponed because of the lockdowns and travel bans in place.

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Readings for the fourth and fifth Sunday of Easter

The following Scripture passages correspond to those used as the readings on the fourth and fifth Sunday of Easter this year. As a service to *NZ Catholic's* readers during this time when Sunday Masses with congregation cannot be celebrated because of Covid-19-related restrictions, these texts, which have been taken from the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' website (New American Bible, Revised Version), are provided for devotional use and spiritual reflection.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

First reading: Acts 2: 14, 36-41.

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them, "You who are Jews, indeed all of you staying in Jerusalem. Let this be known to you, and listen to my words. Therefore, let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, "What are we to do, my brothers?" Peter [said] to them, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whom ever the Lord our God will call." He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand persons were added that day.

Second reading: 1 Peter 2:20-25.

But what credit is there if you are patient when beaten for doing wrong? But if you are patient when you suffer for doing what is good, this is a grace before God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was

found in his mouth."

When he was insulted, he returned no insult; when he suffered, he did not threaten; instead, he handed himself over to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you had gone astray like sheep, but you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

Gospel: John 10: 1-10.

"Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate, but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber. But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognise his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognise the voice of strangers." Although Jesus used this figure of speech, they did not realise what he was trying to tell them.

So Jesus said again, "Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came [before me] are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they

might have life and have it more abundantly."

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

First reading: Acts 6:1-7.

At that time, as the number of disciples continued to grow, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. So the Twelve called together the community of the disciples and said, "It is not right for us to neglect the Word of God to serve at table. Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom, whom we shall appoint to this task, whereas we shall devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word." The proposal was acceptable to the whole community, so they chose Stephen, a man filled with faith and the Holy Spirit, also Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas of Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid hands on them. The Word of God continued to spread, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly; even a large group of priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

Second reading: 1 Peter 2:4-9.

Come to him, a living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God, and, like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it says in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying a stone in Zion, a cornerstone, chosen and precious, and whoever believes in it shall not be put to shame."

Therefore, its value is for you who have faith, but for those without faith: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," and "A stone that will make people stumble, and a rock that will make them fall."

They stumble by disobeying the word, as is their destiny. But you are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises" of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Gospel: John 14:1-12.

[Jesus said]: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where [I] am going you know the way."

Thomas said to him, "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth* and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves."

"Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father."



Section of a fresco in the Niccoline Chapel by Fra Angelico, depicting St Peter consecrating the Seven Deacons. St Stephen is shown kneeling. (Wikipedia).

Pell speaks out for the first time since his release

SYDNEY (CNS) — Cardinal George Pell, whose conviction on five counts of sexual abuse was overturned by Australia's highest court, said in his first television interview that his knowledge that he was innocent and the prayers of thousands of people helped him during his 405 days in prison.

The cardinal spoke to Andrew Bolt of Sky News Australia on April 11. The interview aired on April 14, a week after the High Court of Australia unanimously said that, in relation to all five charges, of molesting two 13-year-old choirboys in 1996 and 1997, "there is a significant possibility that an innocent person has been convicted".

Noting the Christian teaching that suffering has value, Cardinal Pell said, "You can get meaning out of the most terrible suffering".

"You've never said, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'" Bolt asked.

"No, but I have said, 'My God, my God, what are you up to?'" Cardinal Pell replied with a chuckle.

The interview was interspersed with commentary by Bolt, who criticised Australia's national broadcaster, ABC; Victoria Police, "who charged Pell with a crime he could not possibly have committed"; and the Victoria Court of Appeal.

"This is an extraordinary case when neither the alleged criminal nor the alleged victim could have been at the alleged crime," Bolt said.

In the interview, Cardinal Pell said he had "no anger, no hostility toward my complainant".

"Something might have happened by someone else in some other place and its transferred into this impossible scenario," he said. He also said, "I wonder whether he was used."

He noted that 30 or 40 years ago, the pendulum swung massively against anyone who said they had been attacked by a priest. Now, "we don't want it to swing back so that every accusation is regarded as Gospel truth".

"I don't think that the Church has

got enough credit that we broke the back of this thing, that offending stopped - not completely . . . in the middle '90s," he said.

■ Vatican

In mid-2017, Cardinal Pell took leave from his position as prefect of the Vatican Secretariat for the Economy, which was investigating corruption in Vatican finances, so he could return to Australia to face the abuse charges. His term as head of the secretariat expired in 2019.

Bolt noted that, years earlier, when he interviewed Cardinal Pell in Rome, the cardinal talked about the corruption he had found, and expressed concern for the safety of his staff. He noted that the cardinal told him the Mafia might be involved, and that one cardinal had been found with a suitcase full of cash.

"Have you ever considered that the trouble you were causing to corrupt officials in the Vatican was related to the troubles that have since happened to you here?" Bolt asked him.

Cardinal Pell said most of the senior people in Rome who are sympathetic to financial reform believe the abuse charges against him were related to his investigations, but he had no proof of that. He said he was surprised that his theological opponents in Rome did not believe the accusations, and he said he felt supported by Pope Francis throughout the process.

Cardinal Pell's trial and appeal is estimated by lawyers to have cost millions of dollars, but he said the Church did not pay for it. He said it was paid for by "a lot of very generous people", some of whom were wealthy, and he dipped into his own retirement savings.

Asked if he had nothing left, the cardinal said, "I couldn't quite say that, but I've got considerably less than I had".

Asked what he would do next, the cardinal said he was 14 years past the retirement age in Australia. "I won't be commenting much at all on



Cardinal George Pell in a screen grab during an interview that aired April 14 on Sky News Australia. (CNS)

Australian Catholic life."

"I might have a little bit more to say internationally," he added. He said he would stay in Sydney to do some writing and reading, and "I might go to Rome for a while".

■ Lawyer

In a commentary in Catholic Outlook, publication of the Diocese of Parramatta, Jesuit Father Frank Brennan, a lawyer and rector of Newman College at the University of Melbourne, expressed some of the same concerns as Bolt: that police did not investigate the claims properly.

"Readers need to understand that all is not well with the system of criminal justice in Victoria," said Fr Brennan, who attended some of the court proceedings. "Cardinal Pell has been a major casualty in this clash and decline of institutions. The unsuspecting complainant who brought the case against him has had to suffer untold additional trauma because of the shortcomings of the Victoria Police and the Office of Public Prosecutions."

"Some Australians, including many victims of child sexual abuse, revile George Pell," Father Brennan wrote. "Others hold him in high

esteem. Last week's High Court decision is unlikely to change personal views of the man, but this judgement concerns the administration of the criminal justice system in Victoria as it impacts on everyone, both accused and victims, who deserve justice according to law."

He said the complainant in the case was "the hapless victim in this showdown between institutions" who had obviously "suffered serious trauma in his life".

"I am sorry for the added trauma he has now suffered through the processes of the law. Much of it was avoidable. These processes have also retraumatized many other people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse and who have placed hope in our legal system. Their situation would have been assisted if the police in this case had undertaken competent, objective policing," Fr Brennan wrote.

In a statement after the High Court ruling, the complainant in the case issued a statement that said he respected the court's decision.

However, he said he hoped the decision would not discourage abuse victims from reporting the crimes to police.



Family Matters

Helen Luxford

Spirituality in a lockdown

So how has everyone been keeping up their faith during the lockdown? It should be easier — we have more time on our hands, right? But people's experiences are varying considerably.

We have been trying different Masses to watch online and to see different parts of our Church in action. Our kids quite enjoyed watching an American Mass, for example, hearing different accents, but seeing the universality of the Church, because, after all, it is the same Mass anywhere in the world. We chose a shorter one — which turned out to be a good decision — because the kids found half an hour of just watching quite challenging. It was very strange to come to the Eucharist and not be able to partake physically.

For Easter, we really enjoyed Pa Peter Tipene celebrating the St Patrick's Cathedral Masses. I couldn't help but reflect on how very odd it must have been for priests to celebrate Mass with no congregation present.

In terms of prayer, I have been trying to get some Zoom rosary sessions going! I can pray the rosary any time by myself at home, but it feels so much nicer to pray with others, to be reminded we are not alone. Jesus, of course, says where

two or more of you are gathered in his name then he is there. We managed to get a family rosary going with some friends and it was lovely for my oldest boy to be able to pray with boys his age.

There is a lot of debate raging in New Zealand about the severity of our lockdown and the length of it and the effect on the economy. From a doctor's perspective, I have supported the level 4 lockdown after being bombarded with horrific stories of overwhelmed health care systems overseas. There is no doubt there is a terrible negative side to a lockdown — the economic impact (although I think nothing can truly protect us from that in New Zealand as we are too strongly linked with, and dependent on, the global economy), the increase in domestic violence, loneliness and isolation and worsening mental health, with self-harm and suicides likely to increase.

I struggle with the concept that we, as a nation, have so firmly embraced the concept of protecting our elderly and vulnerable yet, on the issue of euthanasia, we seem to have little regard for the elderly and vulnerable. This feels inconsistent to me, it seems incongruous. I think the sentiments and solidarity that we have shown as a country to protect

our elderly are admirable and humane and compassionate. We have seen with the deaths from Covid-19 within New Zealand that the elderly will be the most affected when they get the virus. So, where is this compassion when it comes to the issue of euthanasia? It is my fear that our vulnerable and elderly will be most at risk from the law change, should it be approved in the referendum later this year.

The most important activity we can do at the moment is pray, pray, pray. We all have our different fears and we will all cope differently with this situation. The unknown and the uncertainty in such situations is usually what really eats away at people. There is so much in life we can't control, and this situation in which we find ourselves really highlights that fact! Find ways to keep your faith alive in your bubble to help get you through.

Deuteronomy 31:8; "He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

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.

Making sense of lockdown

by NEVIL GIBSON

For many of us not in essential or “safe” occupations, the lockdown has been an enforced period of home entertainment.

It’s a matter of opinion as to whether that is too much of a good thing or has brought on a case of ennui.

Bolstered by some long-delayed reading, the latter resembles France in the leadup to and early part of World War II, when hostilities were at a low ebb.

Some called it the “phoney war”, and it coincided with the blossoming of a philosophical trend known as existentialism, notably in the works of Jean-Paul Sartre.

Its origins lay in phenomenology, and the philosophy was expressed as a feeling of “nothingness” — that life has no meaning other than experiencing the present as it was (“existence precedes essence”). It has parallels with today’s global lockdown and how to cope with the impending doom of a viral pandemic.

The normality of community life has been upended to one of isolation, and waiting for the return of a meaningful existence.

This, of course, is an oversimplification, but it identifies a strong theme in the arts that flourished during the post-war decades, and remains a force in contemporary movies.

These thoughts were prompted by the revival on Netflix of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), a joint effort by scriptwriter Charlie Kaufman and director Michel Gondry.

It’s a romantic drama in which a couple, played by Jim Carrey and Kate Winslet, try to end their relationship by having their memories of each other wiped from their minds.

Kaufman is noted for his fascination with mind-altering



August Diehl and Valerie Pachner star in a scene from the movie *A Hidden Life*. (CNS photo)

Movie Review

technology and the way people use multiple personalities. His earlier films as writer — *Being John Malkovich* (1999) and *Adaptation* (2002), both directed by Spike Jonze — explored similar themes, as did his more recent *Synecdoche, New York* and *Anomalisa*.

Netflix is due to release his latest, *I’m Thinking of Ending Things*, which gives a flavour of Kaufman’s bleak view of human existence.

He is not alone in this. Woody Allen used the title of a well-known existentialist text for *Irrational Man*, about a professor who decides he can get away with a murder.

Likewise, this title is echoed in the Coen brothers’ *A Serious Man*, also about a professor torn by a philosophical dilemma.

Existentialist themes are common in science fiction,

including the *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix* series, as well as another Carrey vehicle, *The Truman Show*, written by New Zealand’s Andrew Niccol.

American director Terrence Mallick spent some of his early years studying and translating the works of German philosopher Martin Heidegger.

He was controversial because he remained in Nazi Germany during the war when many of his colleagues fled. But this did not stop his exposition of phenomenology from being influential in the subsequent development of existentialism.

Mallick, a practising Catholic, expresses these ideas in his most recent films, notably *The Tree of Life* (2011) and *A Hidden Life* (2019), based on the real-life story of Austrian farmer Franz Jägerstätter, who sacrificed his own existence for his beliefs.

CLIPS

Tigertail (Netflix)

This low-key family drama from Taiwan resembles *The Farewell* in its examination of the social impact of migration to a foreign country, in both cases from Asia to America. The promised opportunities are not guaranteed and the break with those left behind is often irreconcilable. That can create lifelong regrets, despite the material gains. In this example, a factory worker drops his girlfriend and agrees to marry the boss’s daughter in exchange for emigration. Years later, in New York, they split after achieving modest comfort but little satisfaction. Their grown-up daughter attempts reconciliation with her now-retired father, who looks back on what an alternative course in his life could have produced. Writer-director Alan Yang has crafted a near-perfect visual gem that understates the broad relevance of its theme. Netflix rating: 7+. 91 minutes.

The Occupant (Hogar) (Netflix)

A middle-aged businessman (Javier Gutiérrez) loses his job, social status and luxury apartment after he is judged no longer relevant in his chosen industry, advertising. He is forced to downsize, but fails to gain new employment, as he is over-qualified. This is a common dilemma or fear among many professionals. But few take the path of becoming psychopathic. He befriends his successor (Mario Casas) at the agency and goes a step further by encouraging him to take over the former residence. The stalking intensifies as it includes illegal entry into the apartment and searches of personal material. Yet, at all times, you have no sympathy for his toxic personality. This makes it hard to empathise with the build-up in suspense. Writer-directors Alex and David Pastor miss an opportunity for a great thriller that could match Bong Joon-ho’s *Parasite*, which has many similar elements. Netflix rating: 13+. 103 minutes.

The Platform (El hoyo) (Netflix)

This second thriller/horror show from Spain suggests that that country is at the forefront of world cinema when it comes to breathing new life into old genres. Here, the concept is based on a hierarchical structure in which prisoners are placed in pairs on hundreds of floors in *The Hole* (El hoyo). Each day, a feast arrives at each level, starting at the top and moving down. Only minutes are allowed for consumption at each stop and any hoarding of food is punished. While there’s ample for all inmates, if they all took just enough to survive, most of it is consumed by those on top levels. The parable is amplified by regular shuffling of floors, literally shaking the hierarchy. But be warned, this is not a pleasant process. The horrors on the lower floors are visceral, while the use of Catholic imagery and, dare I say, existential angst, are far from comforting. Director Galder Gaztelu-Urrutia, from a script by David Desola and Pedro Rivero, doesn’t let up in a series of shocks and surprises. Coincidentally, *Parasite* director Bong’s *Snowpiercer*, also available on Netflix, has a horizontal version of haves and have-nots in its never-ending train journey. Netflix rating: 18+. 94 minutes.

Short book on God is well-delivered lecture for laity

GOD: What Every Catholic Should Know by Elizabeth Klein. Ignatius Press (San Francisco, 2019). 142 pp., US\$24.95 (hardback), US\$16.95 (paperback). Reviewed by KURT JENSEN.

You wouldn’t think it possible to get the Almighty compacted into 142 pages, yet this is what Elizabeth Klein has done, without presumption.

God is the second book from the assistant professor of theology at the Augustine Institute in Denver — her first was *Augustine’s Theology of Angels* in 2018 — and the third in the Ignatius Press series *What Every Catholic Should Know*. The first two covered salvation and literature.

The result is a well-delivered lecture for the laity that doesn’t simply cite the catechism and Scripture, but illuminates them as well. Klein isn’t out to invent any radically new paths to knowledge, but instead casts reassuring explanations.

She knows she’s tackling the seemingly impossible, so she explains the big picture thoroughly, without side-paths into arcane arguments. She’s also extremely calm, which should be a huge benefit.

Klein knows God cannot be debated into existence, but can be explained to those whose hearts and minds are open, taking the view of St Augustine that theology is “faith seeking understanding”.

“Let us not be discouraged by the fact that God is beyond our complete knowing,” she writes. But she knows what you’re thinking from all those movie images, too. She prefers to begin with God’s own description of himself in chapter 3 of Exodus: “I am who I am.”

This, she writes, “immediately banishes any thought of God as an old man in the sky, for even the oldest of men would not have a name like this one”.

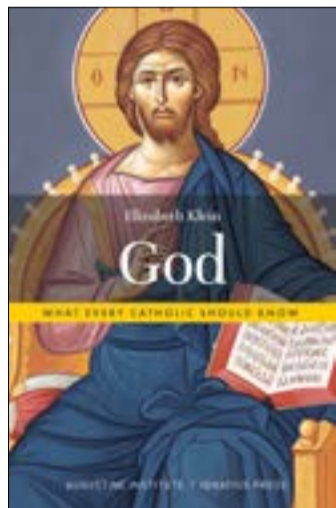
Equipped with an understanding of “God’s transcendence and immanence”, she adds, “we can come to appreciate the magnificence of God and yet his nearness to all his creatures.”

She brings in Sts Paul, Anselm and Thomas Aquinas to support her explanations, and also Athanasius, the third-century bishop of Alexandria who laid the foundation for the Nicene Creed. Four of the book’s 15 chapters are devoted to the mystery of the Trinity, which some may find a bit academic, but here, too, Klein

reminds the reader to drop the concept of God as a person and instead embrace that his perfection “consist[s] of complete relationality and love”.

“The doctrine of the Trinity,” she adds, “teaches us that God himself is the love that he gives.”

In the chapter on God’s suffering and death through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ, she also reminds the reader, “God can appear overly



Books

transactional or exacting if we think of him as a heavenly accountant, demanding a payment that he knows we cannot make. Rather, the ‘debt’ owed to God is something that works only as an analogy”.

God in heaven may be the most difficult concept to grasp, she writes, since “heaven in the modern world is often undersold”, and to some, it may even seem “rather boring” as a picture of “some eternal version of the worst church service they have ever attended”.

And that particular lack of “complete knowing” is difficult to put into words. Klein acknowledges: “Perhaps it can be hard to whet the appetite of those who think that heaven is no fun or that heaven is an endless chocolate bar.”

She finally concedes that descriptions of what’s called “the beatific vision” have been a challenge for centuries, quoting a 2008 homily on the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary from Pope Benedict XVI: “Today’s feast impels us to lift our gaze to heaven; not to a heaven consisting of abstract ideas or even an imaginary heaven created by art, but the heaven of true reality, which is God himself.”

Klein has produced a useful work that can direct readers to more detailed theological explanations in order to build their faith.

Kurt Jensen is a guest reviewer and freelance writer for the Catholic News Service.

THE CHURCH YEAR

Advent

Christmas

Ordinary Time

Lent

Easter-time

Ordinary Time

▼ We are here: Fourth Sunday of Easter

Protected and guided by a divine shepherd

Scripture

by Fr Kevin Waldie sm

These readings have an air of authority about them. In each one, that authority manifests itself through the message voiced by the key figure's words.

So in Acts, Peter commands the attention of his audience. He directs his message to the residents of Judea and Jerusalem - that is, to his own people. And what he says champions the crucified Jesus as their Messiah and Lord. His call to join the newly-formed faith community is issued so that they might accept his words as a universal message of salvation.

Their dramatic response confirms that the Good News he preaches has genuine depth and

sway.

Peter's voice is also to the fore in 1 Peter today. This time, though, his words are addressed to a situation of difficulty for the early Church. It is a time which calls for stamina, so that faith in Christ's example may inspire even greater faith. And that is an encouragement given in order to bind together a flock of believers who have a shepherd whose extraordinary sacrifice gives confidence and assurance of communal well-being.

In John, Jesus' own words speak of the shepherd and his sheep. This serves to cap off the Liturgy of the Word with a seal of lordly

May 3: Fourth Sunday of Easter. **Readings:** 1. Acts 2:14.36-41; **Psalm:** 23; 2. 1 Peter 2:20-25; **Gospel:** John 10:1-10.

authority. Jesus and his words are therefore to be held in high regard. By adding his testimony to the relationship he has forged with his community of followers, his down-to-earth figure of speech makes a big impression. The image of the shepherd with his sheep summons up a keen awareness of being called into what John elsewhere indicates is eternal life.

This set of readings offers us a sharply focused insight into what we believe ourselves to be as a Church that remembers and celebrates its identity, being a people protected and guided by a divine shepherd.

Honour the Word of God that enlivens daily life

This Sunday, like last week, has for its focus the church of God and the various roles played by its members.

The picture of the Church Luke paints in Acts is one of service, organised and ordered according to roles that serve the good of a young, rapidly growing community of believers. Its leadership and commitment to diakonia (a Greek word simply translated as "ministry" or "service") characterise it as a body of people tending to one another's needs and ensuring unity.

Fundamental here is consistent preaching of the Word of God. And it is "the faith" that is being preserved and handed on through this ever-increasing assembly of disciples.

The assorted descriptive phrases in 1 Peter combine to illustrate precisely how we are to understand the Church and its foundations. Such phrases as living stones, a holy priesthood, a spiritual house, a chosen race, and God's own people variously picture the nature of what we are called to be, and how we should always honour the Word of God that enlivens daily life.

John's verses add to this sense of church. Jesus' words of instruction to his disciples begin with the image of God the Father's house and its many dwelling places.

It is following the Lord in order to occupy a place in this house that becomes necessary for everyone who hears Jesus' words and then

May 10: Fifth Sunday of Easter. **Readings:** 1. Acts 6:1-7; **Psalm:** 33; 2. 1 Peter 2:4-9; **Gospel:** John 14:1-12.

believes in them.

So, looking to the Lord as the way, the truth and the life must become life's focus within God's household. But that is not all. For, in living this way, every believer duly performs works that continue Jesus' mission.

Rightly understanding our role within the Church is greatly helped by these readings. Each one throws light on what the Lord intends us to become by truly hearing the inspired message.

SAINTED GLASS



The Gospel this Sunday is about Jesus as the Good Shepherd.

Today's shepherds in New Zealand have big flocks and there are no wild animal predators.

In Jesus' day, it was quite different - the shepherd knew every one of his sheep and they knew him and came at his call. The sheep were penned up at night to keep them safe.

The Good Shepherd is a popular subject for church windows. Possibly the best I have seen is this one in Notre Dame Chapel, Rocamadour, France. The sheep obviously love the shepherd, as he loves them.

Let us love Jesus our Good Shepherd, as he loves us.
— Glen McCullough

Half of Americans say Bible should influence U.S. laws

NEW YORK (Agencies) — About half the people in the US believe the Bible should have at least "some" influence on US laws, according to a new survey.

Research carried out by the Pew Research Center showed 23 per cent of Americans said the Bible should have "a great deal" of influence on laws.

An article on the Pew website noted that the US Constitution does not mention the Bible, God, Jesus or Christianity. The First Amendment to the Constitution says: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion."

The survey did not ask people what they had in mind when thinking of biblically-influenced laws.

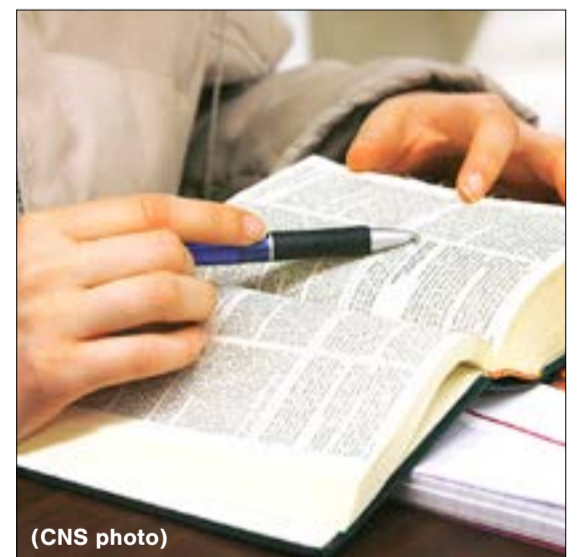
According to a report on the Christian Post website, Pew used data drawn from its American Trends Panel, which was conducted from February 4-15. The sample was 6395 people and the margin of error was plus or minus 1.6 percentage points.

In terms of the US Catholics surveyed, their results were in line with those of the wider population. Some 51 per cent said the Bible should have some or a great deal of influence on laws, but 48 per cent of Catholics responded that the Bible should have not much influence or none at all.

Among US Christians, 68 per cent want the Bible to influence US laws to some degree and, among white evangelical Protestants, this figure rises to about nine-in-ten.

All survey respondents who said the Bible should have at least "some" influence on US laws were asked a follow-up question: When the Bible and the will of the people conflict, which should have more influence on US laws?

Bible News



(CNS photo)

The Pew website article stated that the more common answer to this question is that the Bible should take priority over the will of the people. This view is expressed by more than a quarter of all Americans (28 per cent). About one-in-five (19 per cent) said the Bible should have at least some influence, but that the will of the people should prevail.

Among Catholics, about 25 per cent said the Bible should take precedence over the people's views. This is lower than the percentage of white evangelical Protestants (68 per cent) and black Protestants (50 per cent) who say the same.

Local Diocese News

Priests promote vocations during the lockdown

by MICHAEL OTTO

Whanganui's two Catholic priests have put together a vocations promotional video titled "Priests in Lockdown".

The 40-minute video, featuring Catholic Parish of Whanganui — Te Parihi Katorika Ki Whanganui parish priest Fr Vaughan Leslie and assistant priest Fr Nathaniel Tat Brazil, was streamed on Facebook and on the Whanganui Catholic YouTube channel on April 12, Easter Sunday.

At the start of the video, Fr Leslie said: "Rather than just see us and hear from us during the celebration of the Mass [online], we thought we would share a little bit about ourselves, our own families, our backgrounds, our histories and our vocational stories, to offer you a little bit of insight into our lives, to get out of the presbytery chapel — we actually do have other rooms in the presbytery — and just to share a little bit about ourselves and maybe encourage yourselves to encourage vocations or if somebody is watching [who] in themselves maybe feels called to the priesthood, [they] could perhaps relate to some of what we are sharing with you tonight."

Fr Leslie told *NZ Catholic* that "parishioners were delighted to be able to learn something about the clergy and our vocational stories — that which they would never have heard of it wasn't for the lockdown".

As of April 22, the video had had 394 views on YouTube and 1400 on Facebook.

Fr Leslie said he and Fr Brazil decided to make the video "because we knew vocations could still be promoted, even in lockdown, and [in] particular as people had more time to watch such a presentation".

Fr Leslie added that he decided that the video would be done in one cut and "any mistakes would simply add to the flavour".

He added that online streamed Masses from the parish every day had had good viewership and feedback and had allowed participation by some people who might have been unable to get to Mass normally because of age or illness. He added that it had also helped reconnect some "resting" Catholics with the Church.

"The challenge for some will be making the transition from sofa to pew — but I'm sure the



Above: Fr Vaughan Leslie (left) and Fr Nathaniel Brazil in a screenshot of their vocations promotion video.

Holy Spirit is working hard on reconnecting many souls during this time of lockdown," Fr Leslie said.

Fr Leslie added that "we had drive-through confessions before we went into lockdown and

it worked surprising well — it was a very powerful experience for those who turned up because people knew the sacrament wouldn't be offered again any time soon".

Whanganui walk for mercy

by ROWENA OREJANA

Armed with the image of the Divine Mercy and the relics of St Peter Chanel and Venerable Mother Suzanne Aubert, Whanganui assistant parish priest Fr Nathaniel Brazil walked through the city on April 6, the Monday of Holy Week, praying for an end to the pandemic.

"I saw videos from other parts of the world where they processed the Blessed Sacrament around parishes. I thought of doing this to ask God for mercy and for him to spare the country, especially the parish," Fr Brazil told *NZ Catholic*.

In the video, Fr Brazil jokingly said many parishioners have urged him to do more exercise and so he was going for a walk, but was putting a religious twist on it.

He walked to the Whanganui River first, then to Taupo Quay, Ridgway Street, the Whanganui District Council, finally circling back to St Mary's Catholic Church.

He said the locations had particular significance to the parish. "I chose to stop at) the Whanganui District Council because they are governing us, then at the busiest part of the town and ended at the church which is the hub of our faith," he said.

At each stop, he prayed one decade of the chaplet of mercy offering it for the sick, the dead, those affected by the pandemic in other ways, the health workers and the Church.

"I prayed not only for the sick, but also for those who have emotional and financial worries cause by this pandemic," he said.

Fr Nick walked alongside people

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

Hamilton priest Fr Nicholas Hoogeveen passed away at the Atawhai Assisi rest home on April 15, 2020. He was 78.

Hamilton Bishop Stephen Lowe, who celebrated a live-streamed requiem Mass for Fr Hoogeveen on April 17, cited



Fr Nicholas Hoogeveen

the parallels between how Jesus ministered to the two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus and Fr Hoogeveen's priestly service.

"He (Fr Hoogeveen) had that ability to be able to get beside people, to journey with them just like Jesus did. Jesus, as he was walking [with] the disciples, was one who listened. Fr Nick was a great listener. He enjoyed hearing the stories of his parishioners and his people and getting to know them. And the more he did that, the more he wanted to serve them," Bishop Lowe said.

Bishop Lowe said it was only after Jesus listened to the disciples that he (Jesus) opened the Scriptures to them.

"Fr Nick was a great teacher. He had a passion for wanting to share the faith. And again, people have talked to me just about the wisdom of his words, the way he was able to open up the Scriptures for people," Bishop Lowe said.

The bishop remarked that Fr Hoogeveen had sparkling eyes and shared the messages he (Bishop Lowe) received from parishioners about Fr Hoogeveen.

A parishioner told of when he was a little boy, Fr Hoogeveen would bring a can of oil to the family's farm and would proceed to oil the chains of the boy's bike. Another recalled how Fr Hoogeveen gifted her husband with a cross made from a fence post.

Bishop Lowe said Fr Hoogeveen had a remarkable ability to journey with people, wherever they were in their lives.

"In all things, he looked to Christ. And in many ways, I think, that's how Fr Nick endured the suffering that he went through [in] the last few years. His eyes were always fixed on Jesus," the bishop said.

Bishop Lowe noted that Fr Hoogeveen died in the Octave of Easter, like his (Fr Hoogeveen's) brother, Fr Theo.

"I think those are beautiful signs about Fr Nick. Beautiful signs of just the way things work out. And we can see the providential hand of God even though these are strange days we are living through. The Lord has everything under control," he said.

Fr Hoogeveen was laid to rest at a private burial at Ohaupo Catholic Cemetery on April 17.

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Pray rosary to ask for end to pandemic, says Pope

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis has asked Catholics to make a special effort in May to pray the rosary, knowing that by doing so they will be united with believers around the world asking for Mary's intercession in stopping the coronavirus pandemic.

"Contemplating the face of Christ with the heart of Mary, our mother, will make us even more united as a spiritual family and will help us overcome this time of trial," the Pope said in a letter addressed to all Catholics, and released by the Vatican on April 25.

The month of May is traditionally devoted to Mary, and many Catholics are already in the habit of praying the rosary at home during the month, he noted. "The restrictions of the pandemic have made us come to appreciate all the more this 'family' aspect, also from a spiritual point of view."

"You can decide according to your own situations" whether to pray individually or in groups, he said, noting that "it is easy also on the Internet to find good models of prayers to follow."

Pope Francis wrote two prayers to Mary that can be recited at the end of the rosary, prayers he said he would be reciting "in spiritual union with all of you".

The text of the first prayer is:
 O Mary,
 You shine continuously on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope. We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick, who, at the foot of the cross, were united with Jesus' suffering, and persevered in your faith. "Protectress of the Roman people", you know our needs, and we know that you will provide, so that, as at Cana in Galilee, joy and celebration may return after this time of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love, to conform ourselves to the will of the Father and to do what Jesus tells us. For he took upon himself our suffering, and burdened himself with our sorrows to bring us, through the cross, to the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.

We fly to your protection, O Holy Mother of God; Do not despise our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from every danger, O Glorious and Blessed Virgin.

The text of the second prayer is:
 We fly to your protection, O Holy Mother of God. In the present tragic situation, when

the whole world is prey to suffering and anxiety, we fly to you, Mother of God and our Mother, and seek refuge under your protection.

Virgin Mary, turn your merciful eyes towards us amid this coronavirus pandemic. Comfort those who are distraught and mourn their loved ones who have died, and at times are buried in a way that grieves them deeply. Be close to those who are concerned for their loved ones who are sick and who, in order to prevent the spread of the disease, cannot be close to them. Fill with hope those who are troubled by the uncertainty of the future, and the consequences for the economy and employment.

Mother of God and our Mother, pray for us to God, the Father of mercies, that this great suffering may end and that hope and peace may dawn anew. Plead with your divine Son, as you did at Cana, so that the families of the sick and the victims be comforted, and their hearts be opened to confidence and trust.

Protect those doctors, nurses, health workers and volunteers who are on the frontline of this emergency and are risking their lives to save others. Support their heroic effort and grant them strength, generosity and continued health.

Be close to those who assist the sick night and day, and to priests who, in their pastoral concern and fidelity to the Gospel, are trying to help and support

everyone.

Blessed Virgin, illumine the minds of men and women engaged in scientific research, that they may find effective solutions to overcome this virus.

Support national leaders that, with wisdom, solicitude and generosity, they may come to the aid of those lacking the basic necessities of life, and may devise social and economic solutions inspired by farsightedness and solidarity.

Mary Most Holy, stir our consciences, so that the enormous funds invested in developing and stockpiling arms will instead be spent on promoting effective research on how to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future.

Beloved Mother, help us realise that we are all members of one great family and to recognise the bond that unites us, so that, in a spirit of fraternity and solidarity, we can help to alleviate countless situations of poverty and need. Make us strong in faith, persevering in service, constant in prayer.

Mary, Consolation of the Afflicted, embrace all your children in distress, and pray that God will stretch out his all-powerful hand and free us from this terrible pandemic, so that life can serenely resume its normal course.

To you, who shine on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope, do we entrust ourselves, O Clement, O Loving, O Sweet Virgin Mary.

Amen.

Kit's Corner



Do you ever feel **lonely** or **frightened**? Do some things make you feel **scared**? Maybe you are frightened of the **dark** or **dogs** or **spiders**. You might not like being up very **high** or putting your head under the **water**, or get scared when there is a big **storm**. It can be scary when you or someone you love gets **sick**.



At **school** you can sometimes feel lonely or frightened when someone says something **mean** to you, or **bullies** you. What if you are at a **new school**, or in a **different classroom** from your friends?



Everyone feels lonely or frightened sometimes, but the **Bible** tells us **not to be afraid**. For all your fears and worries, there is always a way to **make it better** and have happy, safe feelings again.

When you are frightened of the dark, it helps to remember that God made the moon and the stars, the sun and the light. God is ready to listen to your prayers **all night** and **all day**. God will help to make it better.

Write some things that **frighten** you:

When you are scared about someone who is sick, remember that God made sure there are doctors and nurses and medicine. When a person is being mean to you, or being a bully, you have grown-ups to help you.

Write what you can do to **make it better**.



Can you learn this verse off by heart? Isaiah, chapter 41, verse 10:
"Do not be afraid – I am with you!"

Maintain routine, stay connected and rely on prayer, counsellor advises

by MICHAEL HORNE

ARLINGTON, Va. (CNS) — With the rapid changes brought on by Covid-19, there is an incredible level of stress for everyone in the US.

We have worries about our families, our work, finances and loved ones living in areas that may be experiencing an even greater impact than in my diocese.

We have seen widespread effects that are unprecedented in our lifetime, such as all Masses being suspended and the cancellation of major sporting events. So how can we cope with the chaos of the pandemic?

■ Make the healthy choice

Three key things — eat well, stay physically active, get a good night's sleep. While this seems simplistic, sticking to these core points will improve health, strengthen the immune system, and are good for preventing anxiety and depression.

When we are worried or depressed, we get away from all three of these activities. We tend to eat junk food because it's easier than cooking, but eating high amounts of carbs, sugars and fats can lead to blood sugar and insulin spikes. When blood sugar and insulin lev-

els crash, this causes the release of stress hormones. A balanced diet leads to better mental health.

Similarly, when we are depressed we're less likely to be physically active, but exercise leads to the release of endorphins which improves mood and reduces stress.

Finally, when stress throws our routine off badly, the temptation is to distract ourselves by watching TV or being online late into the night. But not getting a sufficient amount of sleep, or even unintentionally shifting to a more nocturnal schedule, is taxing on the body, which stresses our immune system and mental health.

■ Maintain routine

When faced with chaos, keep the normal structure of your life as much as possible. Ask what you would normally be doing and do as much of that as possible.

Obviously, there will be disruptions, but try to keep continuity in key areas. If you are working from home and would typically arrive at the office at 8am, make sure to get up, eat breakfast, shower and get dressed so you are ready to start working at 8am.

If you go to the gym after work, try to exercise at home after your



A health care worker in New York City sits on a bench near Central Park March 30, 2020, hunched over and embracing herself. (CNS Photo)

work-day is over. If your kids have a snack and watch TV after school while you make dinner, let them have a snack and watch a show while you're busy in the kitchen.

The routine can be a stabilising factor and can help reduce feelings of anxiety, or the feeling of being out of control or stuck that often accompanies depression.

■ Stay connected

Social distancing has — and will continue — to lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness. We're used to seeing our friends and interacting with people at work or school.

Fortunately, the same technology that can allow us to telecommute or participate in distance education can be used to stay connected to our friends and loved ones.

Use technology creatively. Consider virtual coffee dates, game nights on webcams or karaoke on a videoconferencing platform.

While it may not be the same as really being there, the creative use

of technology can help bridge the gap until the crisis passes and we're able to be with those we care about.

■ Prayer as an anchor

The inability to attend Mass and receive Communion is an incredible hardship for the faithful. But we can still rely on our faith during these challenging times.

Take five minutes to read the Gospel of the day. Take 10 minutes for a Divine Mercy chaplet. Take 20 minutes for a family rosary. Take 30 minutes to watch one of the many live-streamed Masses from parishes around the diocese.

Strengthening our prayer life and remaining engaged in our faith reminds us that we are not alone, but are part of a widespread community, praying daily with each other and for one another.

Michael Horne is director of clinical services for Catholic Charities of the Diocese in Arlington in the US. (This appeared in the *Arlington Catholic Herald*, the diocesan newspaper.)

WIT'S END

Given the current circumstances of social distancing, the following seemed apt.

At a remote monastery deep in the woods, the monks followed a rigid vow of silence. This vow could only be broken once a year at Christmas, by one monk, and the monk could speak only one sentence.

One Christmas, Brother Thomas had his turn to speak and said, "I love the delightful mashed potatoes we have every year with the Christmas roast!" Then he sat down. Silence ensued for 365 days. The next Christmas, Brother Michael got his turn, and said, "I think the mashed potatoes are lumpy and I truly despise them!" Once again, silence ensued for 365 days.

The following Christmas, Brother Paul rose and said, "I am fed up with this constant bickering!"

One of the benefits of being a hermit: You're always the best dressed person in the room.

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BARFOOT & THOMPSON

Keeping rest home residents safe and happy

by JEFF DILLON

"Making the elderly happy, that's what counts."

That quote from St Jean Jugan, foundress of the Little Sisters of the Poor, is of paramount importance at the Sacred Heart Home and Hospital at Brockville in Dunedin during the current Covid-19 pandemic.

The facility went into a voluntary lockdown on March 22, a few days before the national lockdown was declared. Just prior to that, management had required that only one visitor at a time from a resident's family could visit. Also, anyone coming into reception had to answer a series of questions, and were admitted only if their answers were deemed satisfactory.

The move to a full lockdown meant adapting to many changes, with the emphasis on providing the social, psychological and morale support to the residents, many of whom are frail and in their nineties.

One of the big changes has been the cessation of daily Mass. The last Mass was celebrated in St Joseph's chapel on the site on March 20. To compensate for that, YouTube presentations of daily Mass have been projected so that residents can watch in their respective areas.

A rosary is said each day in the chapel with a small group of five residents observing social distancing. This is part of the global effort to ask a million families to say a daily rosary, praying for the intercession of Our Lady for a rapid end to this pandemic.

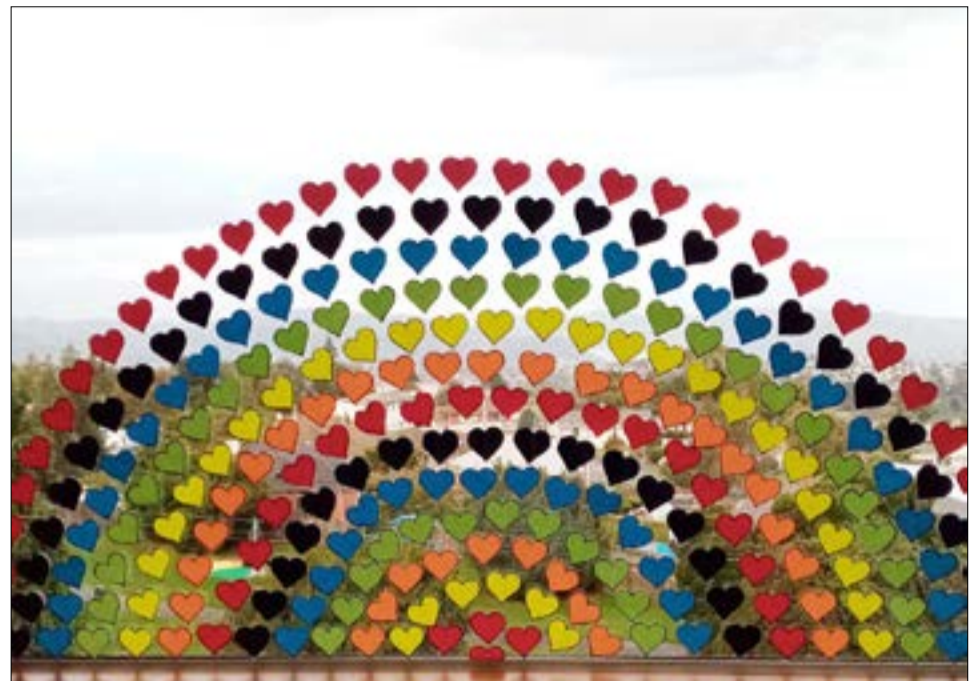
Sr Rita Mary Nedunthally, LSP, noted that the spiritual needs of the seven Little Sisters at Brockville were largely catered for by their "Rule of Life", but they certainly miss the daily Mass and Holy Communion and fortnightly confession. However, "the prolonged fast has deepened our appreciation of the sacraments and our longing for their return", she said. As a consolation, each evening there is an hour of adoration with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

Another common feature of the sisters' routine has ceased at the moment. It was normal for two of the sisters to be seen sitting near the entrance to a supermarket and to be accepting donations to the home. That would happen at different Dunedin supermarkets four or five times a month. The generous assistance often given has ceased at the moment.

The facility provides care for 24 residents in the rest home and 28 in the hospital section. Care is provided with a roster involving 11 registered nurses, 27 carers and 23 auxiliary staff.

With restrictions imposed by the lockdown, some of the usual outside services have not been permitted to come in. So that has meant the Little Sisters visiting residents and providing personal care such as haircuts. Access to residents' families can be met through modern technology such as smartphones, skype, and the like, or even just a normal phone call.

It was recognised that maintain-



Decorations in a window overlooking Dunedin.

ing the morale of residents was of prime importance in the lockdown. This has been aided by an increased focus on art and craft activities. For example, special little Easter bunny baskets cut from paper and painted had several small chocolate eggs put in them before they were put on all the breakfast trays. That was a great success.

Another effort saw heart-shaped items produced in various colours and attached to two of the large windows looking out over Dunedin. One of those windows is festooned with the different coloured heart shapes

to make a rainbow, while the other window contains the simple message of "Have Hope", surrounded by red cut-out heart shapes.

Much endeavour went into the production of poppies for Anzac Day. Other activities include exercise classes, quizzes and the highly popular bingo sessions.

The rest home and hospital have been fortunate that there have been no deaths among the residents during this lockdown, so they have not had to deal with the distress of families being unable to attend a dying family member.

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PANDEMIC APPEAL

Help us support vulnerable communities as they prepare for and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Local communities in Pacific are empowered for action

by NZ CATHOLIC staff

The threat of introducing Covid-19 in the Pacific has to be considered in humanitarian efforts to get support on the ground in areas impacted by natural disasters. Local communities must be empowered to take action and make decisions based on their needs and capabilities. For Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand, the principle of subsidiarity in the foundation of their work enables them to respond to Cyclone Harold through the continued support of their partners in the Pacific.

"While we can't be physically present with those who have been affected, we still retain the ability to respond," said Caritas director Julianne Hickey. "Our long-term relationships with local communities provide direct avenues for us to contribute our support to those most in need." In Port Vila, Caritas has enabled a local warehouse to dispatch emergency stock to the areas in Vanuatu which were hit hardest by Cyclone Harold. Over \$100,000 worth of essential supplies — including

food, water, tarpaulins and kitchen sets — are now ready to send out to local communities.

Caritas Humanitarian Coordinator George Fa'alogo had visited Port Vila in October 2019, to review the emergency supply stock and deliver training on the use of water filtration systems. The relationship Caritas has developed through long-term communication and close co-operation with the Diocese of Port Vila has enabled a quick and effective response to the most urgent needs of those impacted by the cyclone.

"The width and depth of our relationships is our strength," said Mr Fa'alogo. "We rely on the concept of subsidiarity to build the capacity of our partners in times of peace so that we can work together to launch effective programmes in times of crisis."

These efforts are supported by funding raised through Caritas' Lent Appeal and their Pacific Relief Fund. Caritas has been able to accept donations through their website and by direct credit during the lockdown in New Zealand.



Papal Prayer

The Pope's universal prayer intention for May: For Deacons

We pray that deacons, faithful in their service to the Word and the poor, may be an invigorating symbol for the entire Church.