

CATHOLIC VOICE



ARCHDIOCESE OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN

Priesthood calls

Trenton van Reesch ready to complete his vocational journey

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One family

Diversity celebrated at special Mass

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Papuans celebrate

PNG community honours Blessed Peter To Rot

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Auxiliary Bishop of Brisbane Joseph Oudeman OFM Cap., Aboriginal elder Marjorie Liddy and Archbishop Christopher Prowse at the NATSICC Assembly held in Darwin last month.

PHOTO: TONY ROBERTSON

NATSICC Assembly brings Australian Catholics together in a

Celebration of Indigenous faith

BY MATTHEW BIDDLE

MORE than 300 people attended the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC) Assembly last month in Darwin.

Held at Kormilda College from July 2-6, the event brought together people from around the country to discuss faith, culture and spirituality in contemporary Australia.

Throughout the Assembly various workshops and addresses were presented by respected and influential

speakers – most notably artist and writer Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann.

Charnwood parishioner Benny Hodges was one of 12 representatives from the ACT who attended the Assembly. He said he was impressed with several aspects of the event.

“The thing that really stood out for me was the way cultural elements were incorporated into the Catholic Mass,” he said. “For example, before we started we had a smoking ceremony. You don’t have that at your normal Catholic conferences.”

During his homily for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday on July 5, Archbishop Christopher said many Indigenous people could identify with the experience of Jesus.

“Many of you have experienced, like Jesus, non-acceptance,” he said. “You too have experienced patronising sentiments in attitudes, in statements or in actions by others.”

There is a great need, the Archbishop added, to bring the two traditions of Aboriginality and Catholicism together.

“It’s an enormous challenge to bring Aboriginality and Catholicism together in Australia,” he said. “It is the work of inculturation.

“The essence of the meaning of the word inculturation is summarised in the theme of our National Assembly, ‘The heart of Jesus beats within us all’.

“That is, the encounter with Jesus - the spirit of the living God - leads us on our journey and is in fact the destination of our journey.

“It is Jesus himself, who is the perfect unity between

Aboriginality and Catholicism. The closer we come to Jesus the closer we’ll be able to move forward in the challenges that beset us all, but especially our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander friends.”

According to 2011 statistics compiled by the Pastoral Research Office, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics number more than 120,000 and are the youngest and fastest growing group within the Church in Australia.

The next NATSICC Assembly will be held in Perth in 2018.

ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHER'S DIARY



August 2nd
9am Confirmation Mass - St Joseph's Parish, O'Connor

August 4th
7pm Guinness and God talk: Human Virtue of Temperance - King O'Malley's Pub, Civic

August 6th
10.45am Visit to Confirmation students and staff - St Thomas Aquinas Parish, Charnwood

August 7th
5pm Man Overboard - Archbishop's House

August 8th
6pm Confirmation Mass - St Patrick's Parish, Gundagai

August 9th
9.30am Confirmation Mass - St John the Evangelist Parish, Jugiong

August 14th
6pm Confirmation Mass - St Michael's Parish, Kaleen

August 16th
9am Confirmation Mass - St Thomas Aquinas Parish, Charnwood

August 20th
4pm ACU 25th anniversary celebrations
5.30pm ACU Chapter meeting

August 21st
6pm Confirmation Mass - St Mary's Parish, Crookwell

August 23rd
11am Mass - St Christopher's Cathedral

August 25th
8am Opening Mass, CHA National Conference - St Christopher's Cathedral

August 26th
2pm Visit to Confirmation students - St Monica's Parish, Evatt

August 27th
9am Council of Priests meeting

August 28th
7pm Ordination to the Priesthood of Deacon Trenton van Reesch - St Christopher's Cathedral

August 30th
9.30am Confirmation Mass - St Joseph's Parish, Pambula

Learning from Pope Francis



ARCHBISHOP'S MESSAGE
ARCHBISHOP
CHRISTOPHER PROWSE

DEAR people of God in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn.

Our beloved Pope Francis has published two significant documents in recent times. The most recent is the encyclical letter:

1. *Laudato Si*, On Care for Our Common Home

Clearly, issues regarding care of the environment have been commented upon by previous Popes. Also, the references to St Francis and his well-loved prayer, *The Canticle of the Creatures*, draws our attention to our Franciscan Catholic spirituality. However, the originality of *Laudato Si* is that an entire Papal encyclical has been devoted to this controversial topic. In time, this major encyclical may be regarded as a 'Magna Carta' document by the Catholic Church on care of the environment and the poor, just as *Rerum Novarum* (1891) is considered monumental for the

Church's relationship between the industrial revolution and its impact on the poor.

Laudato Si reminds me of a kind of concrete slab placed on level land with the wooden frame of an emerging structure placed on top. A basic frame regarding theological, ethical and moral perspectives has been constructed in the encyclical. It is an interdisciplinary and integrated approach. Scientific, economic, political and financial approaches have been introduced. There is an 'unfinished' tone to the docu-

We are to scrutinise our responses in mercy of our evangelisation of the world.

ment. Many topics have been commented upon without comprehensive commentary. There is the hope that future magisterial documents will add and complete that which has been prophetically begun. This is the characteristic of Catholic social doctrine.

The key question seems to be: What light can Catholic social doctrine shine on the present global challenges regarding care of our common home?

Pope Francis proposes persuasively that the answer to

this seminal question must start with the human dimension from the perspective of the poor, the light of our Scriptures and Tradition, an integrated ecological approach, wide-ranging dialogue, and an ecological attitudinal conversion that is supported by global education and enduring action.

Let us take time to read this important encyclical. Perhaps this can be done best in small groups. I am sure our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander friends would have much to offer us from an Australian perspec-

tive. Let us plan to respond in practical ways. The well-known maxim comes to mind: 'Think globally, act locally'.

2. *Misericordiae Vultus*, the Year of Mercy

The other significant Papal document is the 'Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy' (April 11) in which Pope Francis announces a Jubilee Year of Mercy (December 8, 2015 - November 20, 2016).

Arising from our shared contemplation on the face of God, (the face of mercy in Jesus), we

are to scrutinise our responses in mercy of our evangelisation of the world.

Our Cathedral parish of St Christopher's is to be conspicuous in offering pastoral leadership in this Year of Mercy. Also in next year's Lenten season our parishes are to have heightened awareness of the God of all mercies, especially in the Sacrament of Penance and Eucharistic devotion.

I respectfully ask all parishes, schools and communities to begin planning now for this Jubilee Year of Mercy. Some pastoral resources and suggestions will be available in the months ahead. At this stage, however, let's all read the Papal document on mercy.

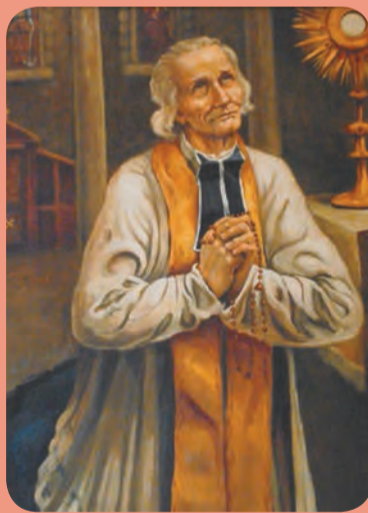
At the same time, let us pray for the upcoming Extraordinary Synod on Family and Married Life. So many of the themes we introduced in our March Archdiocesan Assembly will be discussed in this Roman Synod. Let us follow these discussions carefully. We seek the Holy Spirit's guidance for our Church in the modern world. May the Holy Family bless us all.

Archbishop Christopher Prowse
Catholic Archbishop of
Canberra and Goulburn

SAINT OF THE MONTH

St John Vianney August 4

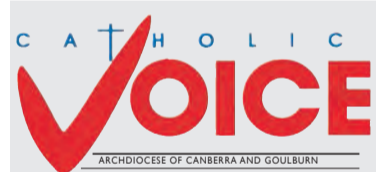
Universally known as the 'Cure of Ars', St John Vianney was ordained a priest in 1815. Three years later he was made parish priest of Ars, a remote French hamlet, where his reputation as a confessor and director of souls made him known throughout the Christian world. His life was one of extreme mortification. Accustomed to the most severe austerities, beleaguered by swarms of penitents, and besieged by the devil, this great mystic manifested an imperturbable patience. He was a wonderworker loved by the crowds, but he retained a childlike simplicity, and he remains to this day the living image of the priest after the heart of Christ. He heard confessions of people from all over the world for up to 16 hours each day. His life was filled with works of charity and love. It is recorded that even the staunchest of sinners were converted at his mere word. He died on August 4, 1859, and was canonised on May 31, 1925.



- CATHOLIC ONLINE

August Feast Days

1 August St Alphonsus Liguori
3 August St Dominic
4 August St John Vianney
6 August The Transfiguration of the Lord
8 August ST MARY OF THE CROSS
10 August St Lawrence
11 August St Clare
14 August St Maximilian Kolbe
15 August THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
20 August St Bernard
21 August St Pius X
22 August The Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary
24 August St Bartholomew
27 August St Monica
28 August St Augustine
29 August The Passion of St John the Baptist



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'The happiest day of my life'

Bishop Pat Power celebrated his Golden Jubilee of priesthood on July 17, and still remembers his ordination day fondly...

BY MATTHEW BIDDLE

FAMILY, friends and parishioners came together to celebrate retired Bishop Pat Power's Golden Jubilee of ordination to the priesthood last month.

To mark the occasion, Bishop Pat celebrated three Masses in his home parish of St Raphael's Church in Queanbeyan, on July 17, 18 and 19.

The 73-year-old said there has never been a day since his ordination when he hasn't thanked God for the gift of priesthood.

"I have never doubted God's love for me or for the people in my life," he said during his homily on July 19.

"I have had a few bad days over the past 50 years, but not many, and I have never regretted the decision to become a priest and remain within its ranks."

In memory of his ordination on July 17, 1965, Bishop Pat wore his original ordination vestments for the Golden Jubilee Masses. He said the day of his ordination was the happiest day of his life.

"It was the pastoral role of the priest which sparked my vocation even as a very young lad," he said.

"I could see that as a priest I would have the opportunity to bring God's love to the people I would be called to serve.

"These days, I often say that a true call to the ordained priesthood demands three basic qualities - that the candidate be a normal, well-grounded human being, with a pastoral heart and a genuine relationship with the Lord.

"There will be other qualities as well required for an effective ministry, but they need to be built on those three solid foundation stones."

The first Queanbeyan local to be ordained a priest, and the first native born Bishop of the Archdiocese, Bishop Pat paid tribute to the priests and religious who have served the Queanbeyan region with distinction in recent times.

"One of my most joyful experiences as a Bishop was eight years ago ordaining to the priesthood another native son of Queanbeyan, Tom Renshaw," Bishop Pat said.

"I feel no shame when I hear Queanbeyan referred to as 'Struggletown' because I believe that nickname says so much about the character of this great community."

Bishop Pat said he has been "thoroughly blessed" in his



Above, Bishop Pat Power after his Golden Jubilee Mass on July 19 mingles with members of the congregation. Below, showing his support of the South Sydney Rabbitohs during a presentation at his former school, St Edmund's College; and bottom right, the young Pat Power (left) during his time as a seminarian. PHOTOS: MATTHEW BIDDLE; LOUI SESELJA; SUPPLIED



Left, Bishop Pat Power on the day of his ordination, July 17, 1965, with his parents Olga and Ken. He was ordained at St Raphael's Church in Queanbeyan by Archbishop Eris O'Brien. Below, Bishop Pat with Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta. PHOTOS: SUPPLIED



50 years as a priest, and has always felt at home advancing the cause of the marginalised.

"To be taken into people's homes, their hearts and their confidences is a very precious place to be," he said.

"I have had a few bad days over the past 50 years, but not many, and I have never regretted the decision to become a priest and remain within its ranks."

"I always say that ministry is a two-way street and that I have learnt so much from the good people I have been privileged to serve."

One of the highlights of the weekend for Bishop Pat

was baptising his grand-niece, Evelyn, on July 18, the youngest of his 46 grand-nieces and nephews.

Monsignor John Woods, who, with Fr Hilton Roberts, concelebrated the July 19 Mass, described Bishop Pat as "a man of the people".

"Bishop Pat Power has lived the call of his baptism and the call of ordained priesthood, and we are all surely better for it," he said.

"On behalf of all the priests of the Archdiocese... I say to Bishop Pat, thank you for who you are and how you have lived your ministry. You have been an inspiration to all of us."

Born in Cooma in 1942, Bishop Pat grew up in Queanbeyan and attended St Christopher's Primary School and St Edmund's College.

Twenty-one years after his ordination to the priesthood, he was consecrated as an Auxiliary Bishop on April 18, 1986. He retired on June 30, 2012 aged 70.



LOCAL NEWS

Social activist will be sadly missed

ST VINCENT de Paul Society national treasurer and former national president Anthony Thornton passed away in Canberra on July 11, aged 78.

Chief executive of the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council John Falzon said Mr Thornton was a great lover of humanity and a great fighter for social justice.

"Deeply respected not only in the St Vincent de Paul Society but throughout the not-for-profit sector and beyond, Tony was distinguished by his integrity," he said.

"He was the epitome of gentleness and kindness. His anger against injustice was part of something generous and expansive... it was always coupled with courage and in



Anthony Thornton died on July 11.

the service of hope.

"He always said that his greatest experience was the simple joy of working alongside ordinary Vincentians, young and old and in-between, in the service of the poor and excluded."

Mr Thornton is survived by his wife, Aileen, their children Mary, Peter, Philip, Kathryn, Michael, and Damien, 17 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Treasures galore in Church archives

BY MATTHEW BIDDLE

DENIS Connor might just be the happiest Catholic in Canberra when the administrative offices of the Archdiocese move to Manuka in 2017.

The move will enable the Archdiocesan archivist to bring together various items of historical importance into one location for the first time since the collection of archives began.

Currently, items are stored in several locations around the Archdiocese, limiting their accessibility, Mr Connor said.

“We don’t have one main storage area,” he said. “But the plan is that we’ll have everything in the one spot at Manuka. We’ll have an archivist office, an archivist work area, and a reading room facility so people can come in and use the collection.”

A professional archivist, Mr Connor worked at the National Archives of Australia for more than 30 years, before agreeing to a part-time role with the Archdiocese three years ago.

“I’ve always had a love of Australian history, right from my school days,” he said.

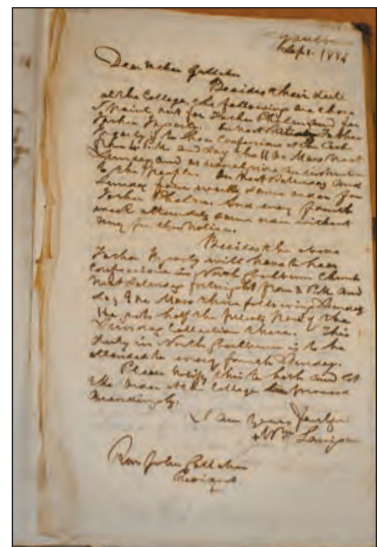
“This is a very different collection to a Commonwealth Government collection and I’m learning all the time. I have a passion to make sure that the records are safely kept and looked after.”

The collection of archives includes letters written by the first Bishop of Goulburn William Lanigan and his successor John Gallagher, various records, documents, and a number of historical objects.

“We’re very lucky, we’ve got



Archdiocesan archivist Denis Connor and Fr Julian Wellspring examine some of the items collected in the Church's archives, including one of Bishop William Lanigan's letters to his successor Bishop John Gallagher in 1884, top right. PHOTOS: LOUI SESELJA



quite a good administrative collection,” Mr Connor said.

“We’ve also got framed photographs, we’ve got statues, there are some collections of vestments, and there are port-

able Mass kits which priests would have had when they travelled on horseback in the early days.”

“We’ve got framed photographs, we’ve got statues, there are some collections of vestments, and there are portable Mass kits which priests would have had when they travelled on horseback.”

“From a more strict business notion, it’s also the evidence of the legal existence of the Archdiocese, the evidence of the way it’s conducted itself.”

“It’s the memory of the Archdiocese and the former Diocese of Goulburn, and that’s what archives are all

about really,” he said.

“One of the really important, valuable collections for this Archdiocese that’s coming into our custody is the research collection of Fr Brian Maher,” he said.

“As he’s ready, he’s passing us his research notes and his

work that he’s done... we regard that as a really valuable and important reference resource for this Archdiocese.”

In June Mr Connor and Archdiocesan Chancellor Fr Julian Wellspring attended the national gathering of Catholic Diocesan archivists in Sydney.

The group meets each year to promote contact and support among the archivists, giving them a chance to share ideas with those doing similar work.

Fr Julian said that at this year’s meeting, the idea of making the feast day of St Lawrence – August 10 – a ‘Diocesan Archives Day’ was proposed.

“St Lawrence was responsible for looking after the temporal goods of the Church and the archives are a part of that, so he’s been regarded as the patron of archivists for some years,” he said.

According to tradition, St Lawrence, a third-century martyr, was responsible for the written archives and records of the early Church.

Tireless pro-lifer recognised for decades of work

BY BEV CAINS

ACT Right to Life councillor and life member Denis Strangman has been made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for the general division in the recent Queen’s Birthday Honours’ List.

Mr Strangman received the award for his work in support of brain tumour patients and their carers nationally and internationally.

Mr Strangman and his late wife Margaret were early members of the St Thomas Aquinas Parish, Charnwood in 1975, where their five children also attended the Catholic primary school. Mr Strangman was an acolyte in the parish for more than 20 years and continues to be involved in the parish.

Following Margaret’s death in 2001 from a malignant primary brain tumour, Mr Strangman helped establish the first national support group for brain tumour patients and their carers and went on to be the founding chair in 2005 of the International Brain Tumour Alliance from which he retired last year.

In that role he met with patients and advocates in more than 25 countries, and last year he received the public service award from the US-based Society for Neuro-Oncology, the worldwide professional organisation for brain tumour specialists.

Mr Strangman was also involved in palliative care and cancer work in the ACT and nationally and was a member

of the Executive Reference Group for the new Cancer Centre at Canberra Hospital.

As well as being an active member of the ACT Right to Life Council, Mr Strangman is the secretary of the ‘Friends of Palliative Care’ group which is supported by ACT Right to Life and regularly sends pro-life news items to all Federal MPs and Senators. Mr Strangman was an advisor to the late Senator Brian Harradine for the first 16 years of his lengthy Parliamentary term.

He joined the ACT Right to Life Council in 1976 and was made a life member in 1993 after serving as Chair for several years.

*Bev Cains is the president of the ACT Right to Life Association.



ACT Right to Life’s Denis Strangman has been recognised for his efforts to help those suffering from brain tumours or in need of palliative care. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Rediscovering the essence of mission

BY MATTHEW BIDDLE

THE new director of Catholic Mission in the Archdiocese says she hopes to rediscover its foundational pillars and reawaken people's awareness of the work of missionaries.

Cathy Ransom took over the position at the beginning of this year, replacing Deacon Joe Blackwell and Kate Bartone, who had both worked for Catholic Mission for more than a decade.

In the six months since, Mrs Ransom has spoken at parishes and schools about the work of Catholic Mission, as well as hosting Indian missionary Sr Clara Devaraj.

A teacher by profession, Mrs Ransom told *Catholic Voice* her new role has two primary aspects.

"My job is to support the work of missionaries all over the world through appeals... and also to educate and let the Catholic community know how their support is being used," she said.

The mother of two said she was inspired to do something in support of missionaries



New director of Catholic Mission Cathy Ransom with Sr Clara Devaraj at Merici College earlier this year.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

after attending a conference in Manila last year.

"I felt like God put a call into my heart to support the missions," she said.

"The proclamation of the Gospel is something I've always felt passionate about.

Working in the Church and as a teacher, mission has always been a part of my life."

Founded almost 200 years ago by French woman Pauline Jaricot, Catholic Mission has a long history of identifying urgent needs and responding

to them. Rediscovering what the early founders of Catholic Mission wanted for the organisation is one of Mrs Ransom's goals.

"In a sense, my goal is to rediscover the three core pillars of what supporting missions is

all about – prayer, sacrifice and good works or finance," she said. "It's easy to focus on the financial needs as a priority, but that's not really what it ought to be.

"My vision is that we rediscover who founded this movement and make sure that we're more than a non-governmental organisation (NGO), that we're an authentically Catholic mission organisation based on these three pillars."

Although there can sometimes seem to be an endless number of worthy charities seeking support, Mrs Ransom said people are still incredibly generous.

"My personal philosophy is if people see a genuine need, they're very generous," she said. "My aim is to tell the story and present it to people for them to prayerfully decide whether this is something they feel drawn to support."

Catholic Mission, which is internationally known as the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith, supports the work of Catholic missionaries in more than 160 countries.

Twenty years of helping the homeless

IF PROVIDING accommodation to one homeless man demonstrates great charity, then the St Vincent de Paul Society's Samaritan House in Hackett must be one of the most charitable places in Australia.

The only crisis refuge for homeless men in the ACT has provided some 6,000 men with accommodation in the 20 years since it opened, according to the local St Vincent de Paul Society president Frank Brassil.

Speaking at the 20th anniversary celebrations of Samaritan House on July 1, Mr Brassil said the problem of homelessness in the nation's capital continues to be impossible to ignore.

"It would be really great if we were not here, but since we are, Samaritan House is much more than somewhere to kip for the night," he said.

"A vital part of the support at Samaritan House is the focus on addressing the reasons people are homeless and providing support to see people through.

"Every morning there is a house meeting for residents where we look at a range of problems people have... that lead them to have to call on us."



Canberra and Goulburn St Vincent de Paul Society president Frank Brassil with ACT Minister for Housing Yvette Berry MLA and Archbishop Christopher Prowse.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Mr Brassil said the 12-bedroom facility has operated at full capacity since it opened in 1995, with occupants typically staying for between six and 14 days.

While the type of people who take shelter at Samaritan House varies, Mr Brassil said they often have an "extraordinary range of life experience".

"The people we help at Samaritan House are no different from the broad range of people you will find in any community," he said.

"They are wonderful human beings whose humanity entitles them to the full respect and support we who have the capability to share with them can offer."

Samaritan House is funded largely by the ACT Government, which recently agreed to fund refurbishments of the premises.

Mr Brassil thanked the Territory government for its support and commended it for being willing to address the major shortfall of social and

affordable housing throughout Australia.

"We need real commitment rather than vague statements about 'innovative approaches' and high-profile projects that barely scratch the surface," he said.

"In the ACT we have a government that is interested and is willing to help but the problem of housing supply is a national one and calls for a national solution.

"If, as a nation, we are truly successful in providing sufficient housing for everyone in Australia then perhaps in 20 years we will not be here. And that would be an achievement."

Archbishop Christopher Prowse said the Catholic community was extremely proud to be involved in the work of Samaritan House.

He added that he believes the answer to homelessness will ultimately come from the homeless themselves.

"If they can really be setting agendas for us in the future on how best we can help people in this situation, then this will be an anniversary we'll never forget," he said.

There are almost 2,000 homeless men and women in the ACT, and more than 105,000 people without a home nationally.

LOCAL NEWS

Gungahlin music workshop a big hit

MORE than 50 people attended a music workshop led by Gina Ogilve, Amanda McKenna and Monica O'Brien from Willow Productions at Holy Spirit Parish in Gungahlin recently. People from as far as Moruya and Yass joined Catholics from various parishes in Canberra for the event, as well as teachers from local Catholic schools. The workshop included an introduction to some new hymns and a Mass setting composed by the three presenters. Their expertise also provided many tips for church choirs and congregational singing. The sessions included an explanation of why we have different practices during Mass and the role musicians are meant to follow in supporting and enhancing the liturgy. The musicians were supported in their work during the day by the hospitality extended to all participants with a plethora of home cooking provided by the Holy Spirit Care group. After the workshop, Ms Ogilve and Ms McKenna led the music at the parish's 6pm Mass, with most of the workshop participants making up a guest choir. The day enthused all and sent participants home with some very fresh ideas for their future liturgies.

Faiths unite to share Christ's love

BY MATTHEW BIDDLE

MEMBERS of the Catholic, Anglican, Uniting, Baptist, and Salvation Army Churches have been working together to take Christ to a group of people desperately in need of his forgiveness – prisoners.

Kairos Prison Ministry (KPM) has been ministering to prisoners and their families around Australia for 20 years, bringing hope to people in about 30 jails across Australia, including the Alexander Maconochie Centre in Canberra and the Goulburn Correctional Centre.

Tony Jurd, who has been involved with KPM since 1997, told *Catholic Voice* there are several aspects to the work of KPM.

'Kairos Inside' focuses on ministering to those inside jails, while 'Kairos Outside' provides support for those impacted by the imprisonment of a family member or friend.

A 'Kairos Outside' program for men and another program for youth in detention centres have also been established recently. Mr Jurd said the youth program is set to commence at Bimberi Youth Justice Centre in the near future.

The Weston Creek parishioner, who has spent time visiting both the Goulburn and Canberra jails, said he's never felt afraid while ministering to prisoners.

"Prior to the first time going to the jail I had a bit of nervousness about what could happen," he said.

"But in the many times I've been to both Canberra and Goulburn jails there's never been a moment when I had any fear of the guys in there. Most of them are just normal, average people who made some unwise decisions."

Nevertheless, the offences committed by the prisoners he has met in the jails vary considerably.

"A few programs back we had a guy who's doing life for murder. He was a perfect gentleman to us," Mr Jurd said.



In July, Kairos Prison Ministry celebrated 20 years of ministering to prisoners and their families in Australia.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

"They range from that to guys who are only doing two or three months because they drove too many times without a licence. Involvement in drugs is a very common factor among a lot of them."

The ministry to the male prisoners begins with a three-day intensive program introducing them to the Christian faith and to the reality of a

"We can only fit about 15 prisoners in the room they give us, and there's always a waiting list to join the group.

"A lot of people think guys in jail wouldn't be interested in [Christianity], but we've found there's a real thirst."

While there have been some incredibly inspiring stories of prisoners who have done the Kairos program, been released,

ask about it... they end up being pretty isolated, and the rest of the community – friends, family, their parish members – don't know how to handle it, so they avoid it.

"The Kairos program helps them to feel that there are others in the same boat who understand what they're going through."

Mr Jurd said new members

"A lot of people think guys in jail wouldn't be interested in [Christianity], but we've found there's a real thirst."

forgiving, loving God.

This is followed by fortnightly visits from two or three members of the Kairos team, who lead discussions and Bible studies with the prisoners.

Mr Jurd said demand from the prisoners to be a part of the program is often overwhelming.

"We're never short of volunteers to fill up the space that the jail can give us," he said.

and then joined the Kairos team, Mr Jurd said the work of the female members of Kairos in ministering to families is far more powerful.

"It has a huge impact on the family to have mum, dad, a son or daughter in prison. There can be loss of income if it's the breadwinner of the family," he said.

"There's the shame of the wife and kids, and their friends who are too embarrassed to

of any age are always welcome to join the Kairos team.

"Anyone whose Christian faith is real to them, who has a prayer life, and a common sense, open attitude to other people, and a desire to help can help with this ministry," he said.

"For me personally, it's been a blessing in that it's been one of the most powerful faith building experiences that I've had."

Advertisement

HOME BASE



Gerard Heffernan

Gift vs Guarantee

It's understandable that parents want to help their children financially when purchasing their first home.

But what is the best way to assist your child to secure their first home loan?

Do you gift them funds or do you follow the route of providing a family equity guarantee?

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China-bound Darren farewells St Vincent's

AFTER 20 years of teaching in Catholic schools, St Vincent's Primary School teacher Darren Roberts farewelled staff and students last month to take up a position in China.

For the next two years, Mr Roberts will be teaching at the International School of Tianjin – a city 150km east of Beijing with a population of 12 million.

He told *Catholic Voice* the opportunity came about when he visited an International School fair in Melbourne in January.

"I was offered a few different places around the world but China was a great opportunity to see how their culture works in education and to advance my teaching skills," he

said. "I start later in the year but will be taking some leave first and then traveling over to get used to all the people, culture and language."

At a special assembly on July 2 St Vincent's staff and students paid tribute to Mr Roberts' work at the school and presented him with several gifts of appreciation.

Principal Marg Koenen said Mr Roberts had made a "wonderful contribution" to the school since arriving in 2013, as an "innovative teacher, a great community person and a friend to all".

"Darren has worked in Catholic education for nearly 20 years where he has excelled as a classroom teacher and a valued leader due to his fine

organisational skills, enthusiasm, energy and a love of fun and learning," she said.

Mr Roberts has spent time teaching at several Catholic primary schools in Canberra, including St Michael's in Kaleen, St Bede's in Red Hill, Holy Trinity in Curtin and Sacred Heart in Pearce.

He has also taught in England, Canada and the USA previously.

Mr Roberts said he would be happy to return to Catholic education in Canberra in 2018.

"I will see what options are out there before making that decision," he said. "If I do come back, St Vincent's would be on top of my list as it is such a great school with plenty of wonderful things happening."



St Vincent's teacher Darren Roberts with wife Samantha (bottom right) mum Michelle (top right), sister Amanda (top left), niece Alice and nephew Patrick. Mr Roberts will take up a teaching position in China later this year.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Multicultural Mass a show of unity in diversity

THE diverse range of cultures that make up the Catholic population in the Archdiocese gathered on July 12 for a special Multicultural Mass at St Christopher's Cathedral.

Representatives from the Vietnamese, Filipino, Spanish, Indian, Korean and African communities attended the Mass, performing various roles in the liturgy.

Archbishop Christopher Prowse was the main celebrant of the Mass, and was assisted by Monsignor John Woods, Korean chaplain Fr Paul Yoo, and Fr Varghese Vavolil.

During his homily, the Archbishop urged the congregation to be grateful for the gifts God has given to the people of Australia.

"One of the great gifts he has given us is our multicultural dimension," he said. "We have people from all over the world here in Australia.

"We all have so much to learn from each other."

While acknowledging that integrating cultures into Australian society has its challenges, Archbishop Christopher said the nation was making some progress in its embrace of multiculturalism.

"Because we are still a young country in an ancient land, we can often be confused how the coming together of the different cultures should take place," he said. "Now we're starting to move towards what multiculturalism really means in Australia."



Members of the Vietnamese, Filipino, Spanish, Indian, Korean and African communities took part in the Multicultural Mass on July 12.

PHOTOS: LOUI SESELJA

For this to happen, he said, two particular attitudes are required.

"We are not to laud it over each other or to dominate each

other... is all about being humble missionaries of peace and love and dialogue in Australia and the world.

"To be a true Christian mis-

"We are missionaries of bridge building, and not the building of walls between communities or individuals."

other," the Archbishop said.

"We are to be of service to each other in the Lord Jesus. I think this is where the word 'Common-wealth' is best understood.

"The second needed charac-

terist... is all about being humble missionaries of peace and love and dialogue in Australia and the world. "To be a true Christian missionary there is to be no form of violence. We are missionaries of mercy, we are missionaries of love, we are missionaries of bridge building, and not the building of walls between communities or individuals."



Protect marriage, revere the Eucharist

Bishop Athanasius Schneider encouraged families and pleaded for greater reverence during his recent Australian visit...

BISHOP Athanasius Schneider visited Australia for the first time over two weeks in June and July.

The Auxiliary Bishop of Astana, Kazakhstan, spoke at several events around the country, including the Australian Catholic Students Association (ACSA) conference in Melbourne and the Australian Confraternity of Catholic Clergy (ACCC) conference in Hobart.

Bishop Schneider said his main message for Australian Catholics centred upon two main topics – the family and the Holy Eucharist.

“We are facing and experiencing a general attack of the un-Christian world against family, marriage and human sexuality,” he said.

“I would like to encourage especially the Catholic families to be courageous, to be generous, to be large families, to be domestic churches. And this will renew the Church.”

As part of his Australian visit, Bishop Schneider celebrated a Solemn Pontifical Mass at St Patrick’s Church in Albury, with a crowd of about 200 attending.

During his homily at the June 27 Mass, he compared the battle between Catholic families and the secular world to the Old Testament duel between David and Goliath.

“There are families, young people, priests and bishops who are marginalised and ridiculed, even sometimes in some ecclesiastical environments, because of their fidelity to the integrity of the Catholic faith,” he said.

“But the gift of fortitude from the Holy Spirit will make us capable to defeat this Goliath of our day.”

Families also need to remain faithful to prayer and to their vocation, Bishop Schneider added.

“The Catholic family has a vocation which is in our day sometimes forgotten - it is the vocation to be the first priestly seminary,” he said.

“What a beautiful vocation it is to fight for the integrity of the faith and the divine commandments. What a beautiful vocation it is to be a Catholic family, to be a domestic church.”



Bishop Athanasius Schneider of Kazakhstan with Sydney Catholics during his recent visit to Australia, where he spoke on topics related to the family and the Holy Eucharist. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

While encouraging families in their mission was one of the Bishop’s aims during his visit, he also spoke about the need to restore Catholic belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

Having written the books *Dominus Est* (It is the Lord) and *Corpus Christi* (The Body of Christ) – both of which deal

The majority of Catholics have been “deprived”, Bishop Schneider said, because they never received a sufficient catechesis on the Real Presence, on transubstantiation, and the sacredness of the Eucharist.

“Over time, they are losing their fullness of their Eucharistic faith,” he declared.

Bishop Schneider said his

that a renewal of reverence in all facets of the Church is well underway.

“In the midst of these confused situations – doctrinally, morally and liturgically – the Holy Spirit is awakening new forces, new lives of authentic faith, authentic divine worship, in the souls of the little ones, the youth, and the young clergy,” he

“In the midst of these confused situations - doctrinally, morally and liturgically - the Holy Spirit is awakening new forces, new lives of authentic faith.”

- Bishop Athanasius Schneider



with the reception of Holy Communion – the topic is something of great concern to Bishop Schneider.

“The exterior manner of how we receive Holy Communion has to be expressed with gestures of adoration, veneration, respect and sacrality,” he said.

deep concern for the Eucharist stemmed from his experience growing up in the Soviet Union at a time when Mass had to be celebrated in secret, giving him a deep appreciation of the gift of the Eucharist.

Despite his concerns, the 54-year-old is firm in his belief

said.

“I am seeing the springtime of the Church. We don’t know exactly the time, but it’s already starting.

“No one can stop this movement of the Holy Spirit. And this is our hope and this is our joy.”

Report reveals complex, entrenched disadvantage experienced in Australia

A SMALL number of communities across Australia have disproportionately high levels of unemployment, low family income and education, housing stress, domestic violence and prison admissions, severely limiting life opportunities and placing significant social and economic costs on the broader community, according to a landmark national report released on July 21.

Dropping off the Edge 2015, produced by Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia, maps disadvantage across the country based on 22 social indicators including long-term unemployment, criminal convictions and domestic violence.

The report was authored by Professor Tony Vinson and Associate Professor Margot Rawsthorne from the University of Sydney.

Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards said the report showed disadvantage is entrenched in a small number of communities across Australia, most of which have remained similarly disadvantaged for more than a decade.

“While our social support structures work for many Australians, this report shows clearly that there are a small but significant number of communities that we have failed and that a new structure and a new approach is needed,” she said.

Catholic Social Services CEO Marcelle Mogg said current policies are not working for these communities.

“*Dropping off the Edge 2015* outlines that residents in these communities aren’t just dealing with one form of disadvantage but multiple, complex barriers to individual wellbeing and community participation,” she said.

“What we need now is for Government, the business and community sectors and the communities themselves to develop and implement tailor made, long term and sustainable solutions to build better futures.”

Pope praises the faith and love of South Americans

BY ANN SCHNEIBLE
CATHOLIC NEWS AGENCY

POPE Francis entrusted his recent tri-nation voyage to South America to Our Lady of Guadalupe, praising the deeply-rooted Christianity in the countries, but also noting the social and economic challenges.

“To the maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary, whom the whole of Latin America venerates as patron by the title Our Lady of Guadalupe, I entrust the fruits of this unforgettable apostolic journey,” the Pontiff said.

He made his remarks on July 19 to the large crowds who had gathered in St Peter’s Square for the weekly Angelus, despite the heatwave currently sweeping through Rome.

It was the Pope’s first Angelus address since returning from his July 5-13 trip to Ecuador, Bolivia, and Paraguay.

Drawing from the Gospel reading, the Argentine-born

Pontiff said he had asked the Good Shepherd to accompany him on his recent trip to the continent of his birth.

“I thank God with all my heart for this gift. I thank the people of the three countries for their affectionate and loving welcome and enthusiasm,” he said.

“I thank the people of the three countries for their affectionate and loving welcome and enthusiasm.”

Pope Francis extended his gratitude for all those who took part in his visit, including Bishops, priests, and consecrated persons.

He said that, alongside those who participated, he praised God “for the wondrous things he has worked” among them, as well as for the natural beauty of these countries.

The Holy Father then acknowledged the social and economic challenges which exist in these countries, and stressed the Church’s role in bringing about their resolutions.

“The Latin-American continent has great human and spiritual potential,” Pope Francis said.

“It protects deeply-rooted Christian values, but also lives with serious social and economic problems.”

The Church has worked to offer spiritual and moral strength throughout the communities, working with all members of society, Pope Francis said.

In the face of these challenges, the Pope said he prayed for the supernatural grace which saves and which gives strength to the commitment of Christian witness, to develop the spread of God’s Word, so that the strong religiosity of those populations may always be faithful witnesses of the Gospel.



Pope Francis embraces children before celebrating Mass at the Bicentennial Park in Ecuador on July 7, during his trip to South America. PHOTO: L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO



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Honouring Blessed Peter To Rot

In July, Papua New Guineans celebrated the feast day of a young man considered by many to be a national hero. Sanjay Bhosale reports...

THE feast day of Blessed Peter To Rot, the Papua New Guinean catechist and martyr, was celebrated with great joy and enthusiasm in Canberra on July 11.

About 200 people, mostly from Papua New Guinea, braved the winter chill to gather at St John the Apostle Church in Kippax to remember and honour the life and martyrdom of Blessed Peter.

Blessed Peter was killed for his faith by the occupying Japanese army in East New Britain towards the end of World War II. He was beaten and executed by lethal injection in a Japanese prison camp in Rakunai in June or July 1945. He was 33.

A group of about 30 Papua New Guineans from Sydney made the trip to Canberra for the feast day, which actually falls on July 7, but was celebrated at the weekend.

They included a cultural group who performed a traditional Papuan dance from the Mekeo area of Central province, much to the delight of the Canberra parishioners.

Fr Isaac Koi MSC, from the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, was the main celebrant of the Mass. Fr Isaac hails from Papua New Guinea's Southern Highlands province but is based in Sydney and works among homeless people there.

In his homily, Fr Isaac reminded parishioners of the ultimate sacrifice of Blessed Peter, who remained true to his faith to the end despite the risk to his life.

He highlighted Blessed Peter's opposition to polygamy after the Japanese legalised the practice in an attempt to win the support of local chiefs and sow division between the Church and the local population.

Despite warnings from the Japanese, Blessed Peter urged his fellow Catholics not to marry more than one wife as it was against the teachings of the Bible – a stand that ultimately cost him his life.

To illustrate Blessed Peter's supreme sacrifice, Fr Isaac drew on St John's Gospel: "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit," (Jn 12:24).



Above, one of the Papua New Guinean dancers who performed as part of the celebrations in honour of Blessed Peter To Rot on July 11 at St John the Apostle Church in Kippax. Right, members of the Papua New Guinean communities in Canberra and Sydney after the Mass. Bottom right, two dancers wearing traditional Papua New Guinean tribal costumes.

PHOTOS: LOUI SESELJA

"Blessed Peter was a person whose death yielded a rich harvest, just as the death of Jesus continues to bear fruit even today," Fr Isaac said.

He cited a long list of Catholic leaders who hail from East New Britain, Blessed Peter's own Archdiocese, as being a result of the martyr's faith and example.

"He is one person who made a big difference to people's lives; without him we would not be here," he said.

Fr Isaac pointed to the presence in the congregation of Christians from many denominations – Catholics, Anglicans, Uniting Church members, Pentecostals – all coming together in unity to honour Blessed Peter. He likened the gathering to Papua New Guinea's own unity despite its amazing diversity – a nation of almost 800 different peoples and languages.

He expressed his appreciation

that the ongoing South Pacific Games in Papua New Guinea were opened and blessed by a pastor – a sign of the people's faith, he said.

Fr Isaac said it would soon be 40 years since the country gained Independence, and it continued to grow and develop. "I was 16 years old at Independence and I've seen so much development

"Blessed Peter was a person whose death yielded a rich harvest, just as the death of Jesus continues to bear fruit even today."

in Papua New Guinea. Yes, development is not the same everywhere, some areas still need to be developed, but we don't have the wars and violence like some other places," he said, while urging the congregation to "pray to Blessed Peter To Rot to continue to bless Papua New Guinea".

Blessed Peter was beatified

by Pope John Paul II during his visit to Papua New Guinea in January 1995. At the beatification in Port Moresby, the Pontiff declared: "When the authorities legalised and encouraged polygamy, Blessed Peter knew it to be against Christian principles and firmly denounced this practice. Because the Spirit of God dwelt in him, he fearlessly proclaimed

the truth about the sanctity of marriage.

"He refused to take the 'easy way' of moral compromise. 'I have to fulfill my duty as a Church witness to Jesus Christ,' he explained. Fear of suffering and death did not deter him. During his final imprisonment Peter To Rot was serene, even

joyful. He told people that he was ready to die for the faith and for his people," the Pontiff said.

The feast day celebrations were a labour of love for Francesca Deklin, a long-time Canberra resident and mainstay of the local Papua New Guinean community. Fr Isaac and Kippax parish priest, Fr Gerard

McCormick MSC, praised Ms Deklin's devotion to Blessed Peter and her efforts in organising the successful celebrations.

Papua New Guinea Consul General in Sydney, Sumasy Singin, and Vice Consul Leo Oaeko, made time from coordinating Foreign Minister Rimbink Pato's visit to Sydney for

the Pacific Islands Forum meeting, to travel to Canberra to take part in the celebrations.

Also in attendance were veteran pastor John Gwilliam of the Uniting Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, and his wife Laka, who now reside in the Canberra suburb of Wanniasa.

Pastor Gwilliam prayed for "a Church that will not be afraid to stand for the truth and never settle for second best". He said there were many temptations for Church and political leaders of both Papua New Guinea and Australia, but he prayed that "the Lord would help them to do their best".

After the Mass, the congregation was treated to a scrumptious feast of Papua New Guinean delicacies that had been cooked by various parishioners – a taste of home that was thoroughly enjoyed by all present.



Papua New Guinea's first Catholic martyr

PETER To Rot was born in 1912 in a village named Rakunai in what is today Papua New Guinea. The region had for some time been visited by Christian missionaries, but Peter's father, Angelo To Puia, who was chief of the village, and his mother, Maria la Tumul, were baptised as adults and were among the first Catholics in the country.

Peter was one of six children and from an early age he was very interested in his faith. Because of this, he was trained to be a catechist, a teacher of religion. So when Peter was 18 he became a student at St Paul's Mission School. He was a very good student and became a catechist within three years, the youngest of all the catechists in Papua New Guinea. He worked with the people of Rakunai and was known to be an excellent teacher. Peter always carried a Bible with him and knew much of it by heart. In 1936 he married Paula la Varpit, a Catholic from a nearby village. They had three children, but only his daughter, Rufina, survived past childhood.

World War II changed the lives of the people of Papua New Guinea forever. The Japanese forces occupied the island nation, and all missionaries were imprisoned. This left Peter as the only spiritual leader of all Catholics in the area. He provided prayer services, instruction, and Baptism for people and helped the poor. He built a church for Catholics from tree branches – the only material available. When people were afraid, he reminded them that God was with them.

In 1942, the Japanese forbade all Christian worship and any type of religious gatherings, even those in homes. They wanted the local chieftains to cooperate with them and tried to push the tribes back to their pre-Christian forms of life, including such practices as having several wives. Peter's older brother supported this. But



Peter did not, and when he became loud in his protests and was known to hold Catholic prayer services in caves, he was seen as a problem for the Japanese. In 1945 he was arrested and sentenced to several months in prison.

But the Japanese leaders had no intention of allowing Peter to leave prison, because his catechetical work and the support people had for him was too dangerous to their cause. At one point he told his visiting wife and mother that a Japanese doctor had been called to give him medicine, even though he had not been sick, and he believed he would be killed. He told his family that he would die for the Church.

He was praying when men came for him. Witnesses say he was given a drink and an injection, and his mouth was covered. The next morning, Japanese authorities acted very surprised to find Peter To Rot dead. But marks on his body and other signs made it clear he had not died of natural causes.

He was given a chief's funeral in the Catholic cemetery, but the funeral was held in silence because people feared the Japanese. From the day of his funeral, he was seen as a martyr for the Catholic faith.

On January 17, 1995, Pope John Paul II visited Papua New Guinea to celebrate the beatification of Peter To Rot.

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An unlikely PRIEST

For Fr Michael Lim, the call to priesthood was something he never expected. Raised in a Buddhist family in Singapore, Fr Michael's journey to the priesthood required an incredible transformation, as Matthew Biddle explains...



Fr Michael Lim says it's still surreal to think about the transformation in his life over the past 20 years. PHOTO: LOUISE THROWER

A RADICAL conversion, a miraculous healing, a late vocation. It would be fair to say that anyone who experiences just one of these things in their lifetime would have an amazing story to tell.

Which is why Bega parish priest Fr Michael Lim – a man who has experienced all three of the above life events – has a story that words simply cannot do justice to.

Twenty years ago, he was a devout Buddhist, living and working in Singapore. Today, he's a Catholic priest in rural Australia. His physical environment, his occupation, and his religious belief system have been completely overturned.

Born into a Buddhist family and raised in Singapore as the youngest child in a family of five, Fr Michael says he was curious about the meaning of life from a young age.

"When I was in my teens, I read books about Confucianism, Taoism, Islam, and Hinduism," he recalls. "I was very curious about life, and that never went away.

"At the age of about 21, I decided to be a Buddhist because I found that was the best form of life that appealed to me. I even told myself that... at the age of 40 I would be a Buddhist monk."

Soon after definitively adopting Buddhism, Fr Michael's older sister, Violet, was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, which made him question suffering and the

After suffering from the condition for the next decade, Violet developed deep vein thrombosis, a cyst in her womb, and soon couldn't walk without crutches.

to take up the offer.

"Reluctantly on that day, June 14, 1995, I brought my sister to this church... called the Church of St Michael," Fr Michael explains. "I was so

"So I said, 'Well Jesus, I think you forced me to come to this church and I believe you want me to be a follower of yours. I'm a very simple man, if you make my sister walk, I'll believe in you'. I struck a bargain."

Eventually the priest reached Fr Michael's sister Violet, asking her what she was suffering from before praying over her.

"He managed to get my sister to stand up," Fr Michael says. "I was surprised.

"The priest said [to Violet], 'Hold my hand and try to walk'. My sister did, she took one step, two steps, three steps, four steps, and after that she began to run from there to the sanctuary.

"It's a good 80 to 90 metres from the foyer to the sanctuary. I was blown away.

"The first thing that came to my mind was 'This Jesus is real, and he is alive'. The years of frustration that I had, the years of doubts and all the questions I had – the joy that went through me totally wiped out all these things, there was no single question left.

"That was it. I had found him. I was in tears."

After the healing, Fr Michael says he deeply desired to know more about Jesus Christ and his Church, a desire that was initially filled with reading Scripture.



The Grand Buddha Tooth Relic Temple in Singapore, once a place of importance for Fr Michael Lim. His journey to Catholicism and priesthood has now taken the 55-year-old to Bega, in rural New South Wales. PHOTO: ONLINE

existence of an all-loving God.

"For someone in tropical Singapore to be stricken with an illness like that, the chance is about one in 100,000. She happened to be the one," he says.

Fr Michael says his family was "devastated", and desperate to alleviate Violet's suffering. So when a Catholic family friend invited Violet to attend a healing Mass, they decided

uncomfortable.

"After Holy Communion, the priest started the healing service. People were being healed, and I said to myself, 'This is a set-up, this is a hoax.'

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“When I touched the Bible, I could never put it down,” he says. “I finished the whole Bible in less than 60 days. I was like a sponge, so hungry for the truth, I was just absorbing it.”

Within a year after the healing, Fr Michael had been baptised, and in 1998 he decided to join the diocesan seminary in Singapore as a 38-year-old.

“I was reading 1 Peter, ‘You were once in the dark and I called you into the light, a royal nation, a royal priesthood’, and I was shocked,” he says.

“I felt God was speaking to me, and I could not believe that. Of course, I had to pray, and to search and to ask if it’s real. It took me a while to realise that and to accept that.”

By the time he joined the seminary, Fr Michael’s parents, who had come from a strong Buddhist upbringing, had gradually accepted that Jesus Christ had miraculously healed their daughter Violet.

Both his father and mother were baptised into the Catholic Church before passing away in 1996 and 2000, respectively.



From left to right, siblings Richard, Jenny, Violet and Peter (with wife Helen) after Fr Michael Lim’s ordination. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

“There was no resistance at all, they gradually accepted it, and when I said that I wanted to journey to be a priest in the seminary, my mum and siblings gave their blessing,” he says. “They were very supportive.”

After completing his studies for the priesthood in Singapore,

Fr Michael was invited to the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, where he was ordained on March 25, 2011. Several family members and friends travelled from Singapore to attend the ordination.

Priesthood, Fr Michael says, has been an opportunity to

bring Christ into the lives of others.

“One of the greatest joys is to see people, after ministering to them, coming back to the Church of their own accord,” he says. “Once after Mass someone came to me for confession, and the fellow came back to the Church after 40

years. That brought me a lot of joy. It’s very humbling.”

Reflecting on the incredible transformation in his own life still brings the 55-year-old immense joy, and he says it’s still surreal to think about what took place.

“Sometimes I have to pinch myself and ask if this is real,” he says. “Never in my wildest dreams would I have thought I would be a Catholic priest in a foreign land. God has given me a lot of surprises in my life.

“I thank him. I can only say this is a very humbling experience. I am not worthy, but yet I am called to minister.”

His sister’s illness, her healing, his own conversion and priestly vocation – Fr Michael says without such a chain of events his life would not have changed at all.

“I would still be working, I would still be a Buddhist, I would still be living in the dark, the life of a non-believer,” he says.

“It was a gift for me, to change my entire direction and to see what the message of salvation is all about.”

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Deacon Trenton van Reesch with sister Brigitta and parents Jeanette and Chris after his ordination to the diaconate in Rome last year. The former Corpus Christi parishioner will be ordained to the priesthood on August 28. PHOTO: FR MICK MACANDREW

Trenton set to realise his childhood calling

BY MATTHEW BIDDLE

DEACON Trenton van Reesch says his ordination to the priesthood in less than a month will be the final realisation of a calling he first heard as a child.

The 26-year-old returned to Canberra from Rome on July 4, and will be ordained at St Christopher's Cathedral on August 28 at 7pm.

He is currently assisting at his home parish of Corpus Christi, where he will remain briefly after his ordination, before returning to Rome in September to finish his licentiate in Dogma.

Deacon Trenton said he is excited about being able to offer himself entirely to serving Christ and his Church in the priesthood.

"I first felt called to the priesthood when I was quite young, and to be able to say yes and... become who I am called to be, it's a realisation of an identity," he said.

"It's an extraordinary grace and an extraordinary privilege to be called to be a priest and to have the freedom to be able to say yes."

After spending three years at the Seminary of the Good Shepherd in Homebush, NSW, Deacon Trenton has been studying at the Pontifical North American College (PNAC) in Rome since 2011.

"My time in the seminary has been wonderful," he said. "I entered when I was 18, and I can see the growth as a man and in my faith that I have made."

After his ordination to the diaconate, Deacon Trenton

served as a chaplain to students at the University of Mary in North Dakota, USA.

"I really enjoyed it. I was preaching, socialising with them, and serving as Deacon at Mass," he said.

Reflecting on his journey to the priesthood, Deacon Trenton said there have been some challenges along the way.

"These last seven years haven't been an easy road," he said. "There have been times when I've sat back and realised that this is harder than I thought. But it's those moments you share with Christ that you remember that make you take the next step forward."

The former Marist College student said he would like to be a priest that is "approachable and compassionate".

"I've been shown extraordinary mercy from God through priests I've encountered," he said. "I pray that I'll be a priest who's transparent, that people won't be afraid to approach me, and that they're actually going to find Christ in me, particularly in things like confession."

Having now gone through the process of discernment and responding to God's call in his life, Deacon Trenton encouraged young people to have the courage to trust in God.

"A relationship with Christ is an adventure, but the key is to trust," he said. "So often we think that in giving something, something's got to be taken away. That's true in every case except for Christ."

"Answering a call from Christ or even just giving Christ a go is never going to end in a loss."

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From Archbishop Christopher

DEAR Friends in Christ,

May I invite you to the ordination to the priesthood of one of our Deacons: Trenton van Reesch. This will take place at St Christopher's Cathedral at 7pm on Friday evening, August 28 (the memorial of St Augustine).

His ordination will give us an opportunity to once again pray for vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life from the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn. As Archbishop, this is one of my most fervent prayer inten-

tions. In a particular way, I invite any young man who is considering a vocation to the priesthood in the Archdiocese to join me at the Cathedral on this night. During this beautiful and ancient liturgy, the gentle whispering of the Holy Spirit deep within can surely be heard.

Please join me in praying for our dear brother, Trenton, as he approaches the priesthood in total surrender to the Jesus, the High Priest.

God bless you and your families always.

Archbishop Christopher Prowse

Historian by trade, Jesuit by vocation

BY MATTHEW BIDDLE

SAINT Francis Xavier, Fr Gerard Manley Hopkins, Pope Francis, Fr Peter L'Estrange.

Each of these individuals comes from a different time and place and has been known for different things, but they all have one thing in common – they're all Jesuits.

An Order with a long and intriguing history, Jesuits have achieved great distinction in a variety of fields, including poetry, astronomy and art.

As such, it's no surprise to discover that Canberra's Fr Peter L'Estrange is an historian by trade who has served in several distinguished academic roles around the world.

These include spending 15 years as the rector of Newman College at the University of Melbourne, working as an assistant to the president of Georgetown University in Washington, and, most notably, serving as the Master of Campion Hall at Oxford University.

Now serving the community at St Peter Chanel's Church in Yarralumla – part of the Cathedral parish – Fr Peter says the variety of work that Jesuits did was one of the things that attracted him to join the Order.

"They taught in schools, they worked in parishes, they worked in the mission fields, they were very committed to the social apostolate, and they ran university colleges," he says.

"They were competent in many fields, and they impressed me as committed, dedicated, good people."

Raised in Sydney with his six siblings, Fr Peter was taught by Jesuit priests at St Aloysius' College – a school founded in 1879.

He entered the Order immediately after completing his schooling as an 18-year-old and says several other school friends did the same.

"We were probably about the last generation of people to enter religious life or enter the seminary straight from school," he says.

"A few years later the pattern was very different, people would go to university or work for a while and enter later. I entered the Jesuits in 1967 with 10 others, and nine of us were straight from school."

The years prior to his ordi-



Fr Peter L'Estrange is an historian by trade, but serves in a variety of roles, including working as an attaché at the Apostolic Nunciature as well as holding positions on several boards, including the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. PHOTO: LOUI SESELJA

nation in 1979 involved studies in philosophy, history, and theology, as well as two years of teaching.

Once he was ordained, Fr Peter served as the chaplain at

the University of Queensland for three years, before heading to Oxford where he completed a doctorate on 19th century British Catholic Church history.

"It's good being an historian because you know where the skeletons are," he says with a smile.

"It really gives you a good sense of perspective, because

you're not just a prisoner of the few years that you know.

"You can see the Church in its glory and you can see the Church in its wretchedness, and it just helps you be ground-

ed."

As an historian, Fr Peter has a remarkable knowledge of the history of the Jesuits, and indeed, the history of religious life.

"There are two traditions of ministry in the Church," he explains.

"One is the Bishop and the Bishop's clergy, the diocesan priests, and they have the cure

of souls, the care of souls, so they look after the ordinary pastoral life of the people.

"Religious Orders were founded for special needs, for the people who were falling

through the cracks – the unlettered young, or the dying, for example.

"The Jesuit need was very broad... it was to be of help to souls. It became educational pretty early, but they weren't founded for that reason, and they weren't founded, as is often believed, to counter the Protestants."

One aspect of Jesuit history

discussed widely is the suppression of the Order in 1773, which remained in place until 1814.

"The Jesuits didn't die out because they kept on existing in Russia and parts of what's now Poland," Fr Peter says.

"But it took about 100 years for them to get back to the numbers they had when they were suppressed.

"In the 19th century while they were growing back and also expanding into the United States and a lot of mission countries, including Australia, I think there was a fear that they would be suppressed again, so they were a little bit different but the spirit was much the same."

Today, Fr Peter says one of the biggest challenges facing the Jesuits is dealing with an increasing number of people turning away from religion.

"The Church is very different these days, there are a lot of people who are brought up Catholic who not only don't practise or practise very seldom, but also don't want to be called Catholic," he says.

"But I do find there's a real hunger for God among the people who do come to church.

"It's different times but you can see people are looking for a liturgy which is prayerful and beautiful and where they can find God."

A further challenge for the Order is the ongoing need for new vocations.

"Some people are joining us, but nothing like replacement rates," Fr Peter says.

"When I joined the Order there were probably about 350 Jesuits in Australia, now there are about 150.

"In some countries, particularly in India, Africa, and parts of Asia, there are large numbers coming in, but not like the way it used to be."

Nevertheless, the 66-year-old believes there is still an attractive element to priesthood and religious life.

"I think the main thing that attracts people is not the idea, but just seeing committed people, seeing a brother teaching in a school, seeing a priest or sister in a religious order who just happens to be working with the homeless or in a parish or teaching," he says.

"I think people are attracted by the personification of religious life rather than just reading about it."

Catholics and ecology: Pope challenges us all



GOING DEEPER
BY SHANE DWYER

“HUMAN beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator,” (*Laudato Si*, s. 83).

Most people dislike hypocrisy. In fact, accusing someone of being a hypocrite is among the most damning things we can say about a person in a civilised debate. Once things become uncivilised, more colourful language comes to the fore.

Sometimes the accusation of hypocrisy is justified, but often there is more to it than meets the eye. The Church, for example, is often accused of hypocrisy, but the motivations behind that accusation are at times unclear. An act of hypocrisy is more than just someone, or a group of someones, evidencing human weakness and inconsistency. As lamentable



Laudato Si challenges Catholics to take responsibility for caring for those in need.

PHOTO: ONLINE

as that is, the reality is that we all show evidence of that. The accusation of hypocrisy in this circumstance tends to be motivated by something other than the desire for consistency and truth from the so-called hypocrite. The accusation is intended to render ‘the hypocrite’ silent and as irrelevant to the debate. It is not about the pursuit of what’s true, but about the desire to avoid the

truth as presented by the one conveniently accused.

One of the many things I admire about Pope Francis is that he is not allowing the Church to be rendered silent. He is fighting a battle on two fronts. He is striving to reform the Church from within, seeking to ensure that in its structures and practices we conform more closely to the Gospel ideal. At the same time, he takes seriously

his role to proclaim the truth to the whole world, even as his detractors seek to silence him with that most damning of all accusations: hypocrisy.

We are all challenged by the Pope’s latest encyclical, *Laudato Si*. I’ve been inspired by a number of the observations that he makes, particularly his application of the Gospel requirement that we care for the poor. Scientific arguments and

political expediency aside, the Pope seeks to have us focus on a very simple point: the poor and the earth are suffering. Indeed, the earth is suffering because the rich make decisions based on a sense of entitlement that blinds them to the needs of the poor. The political will to address this problem is almost non-existent. Our leaders lack the ability to come up with any real solutions because they’re afraid that if our lifestyle is in any way affected, we will consign them to political oblivion. So multinationals get richer while the poor die in heat waves in Pakistan.

The encyclical is worth a read. Take it slowly and don’t get too bogged down in the first chapter where he seeks to describe the current situation. Instead, just keep coming back to the thought that each of us needs to take responsibility for our care of those in need: our brothers and sisters and, increasingly, the earth upon which we live. If you don’t like everything you read there, don’t worry. Just think and pray about the points that he makes, and resist the temptation to simply dismiss it on the grounds of hypocrisy. That’s much too convenient.

Pontiffs show us the power of prayer



FOLLOWING FRANCIS
BY DEACON MATT RANSOM

“KNOWLEDGE, wisdom and prayer enlarged his (Pope Benedict’s) heart and his spirit. Let us thank God for the gift that he gave the Church and the world,” (Pope Francis).

Amidst the great excitement among so many with what Pope Francis is saying and doing, there has been little reflection upon the fact that we have a Pope praying for a Pope! That’s surely worthy of a mention.

When Pope Benedict XVI made the historic decision to resign as Pope, the very first thing he said was that he would devote himself to prayer for the Church. So we now have a good, holy and prayerful Pope dedicating himself to intercession, to beseeching God for Pope Francis, his ministry and

the wider Church. This is surely significant.

In our Catholic tradition, we have a strong understanding of the power of prayer. In the life of Jesus, we see him spending long hours in prayer and at times fasting prior to ministry and important decisions (Mk 1:35). I love Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, who, when asked what her ministry was, replied that it was simply to pray. From this deep communion with Jesus came the incredible ministry of the Missionaries of Charity. Regarding the importance of intercession, Mother Teresa said: “The fruit of silence is prayer; the fruit of prayer is faith; the fruit of faith is love; the fruit of love is service; the fruit of service is peace”. Notice that it is silence and prayer that leads to action.

Perhaps this is partly why we are seeing such great abundance in the life of Pope Francis, it is because we have another Pope spending considerable time in silence and prayer. When Pope Benedict resigned, he said: “With regard to myself, I wish to also devotedly serve the Holy Church of God in the future through a life dedicated

to prayer”. A Pope praying for a Pope.

I wonder if Fr Benedict, as he now prefers to be known, read the quote by Lord Alfred Tennyson, who said: “More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of”. We can certainly see the effects of prayer in the extraordinarily fruitful life of dairy farmer, turned Pastor, turned evangelist, Billy Graham who claimed that, “to get nations back on their feet, we must

“Studying without prayer is no use. We must pray to Jesus to get to know him better.”

first get down on our knees”. These comments certainly show the importance of prayer, intercession and supplication.

And then there is the prayer life of Pope Francis, which doesn’t get a lot of attention. The Holy Father has said that he prays the Rosary continually. When there is space, some quiet, while he is waiting, the Rosary is a constant companion. And of



Pope Francis and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI pray together in March 2013, just weeks after Pope Francis’ election to the papacy.

PHOTO: L’OSSERVATORE ROMANO

course central to Pope Francis’ life, is Jesus. He says, regarding prayer, that “the first door is praying to Jesus. You must realise that studying without prayer is no use. We must pray to Jesus to get to know him better. The great theologians did their theology while kneeling. Pray to Jesus”.

What a tremendous blessing

to our Church and the world. We have a Pope who speaks so clearly about the importance of prayer and intercession. Whilst Pope Francis does this, we have a retired Pope, praying for him. A Pope praying for a Pope!

“One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God,” (*Lk 6:12*).

The family and the Church's call to mercy



THE FAMILY VOCATION
BY SHAWN VAN DER LINDEN

AT THE end of June, the official English translation of the *Instrumentum Laboris* (working document) for the upcoming Ordinary Synod of Bishops on 'The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and the Contemporary World' was released.

If you are curious about the issues that are going to be discussed at the upcoming Synod then I would strongly encourage you to read this document, and not just rely upon mainstream media reports about the Synod. The working document serves as a guide to what will be discussed at the Synod and is available from the Vatican website.

The document summarises the worldwide discernment process which has taken place since the 2014 Family Synod,

including input from hundreds of people from our own Archdiocese via responses to the recent online survey (incorporated within a report from the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference).

The document is divided into three parts:

1. Considering the challenges of the family – this requires us to listen so that we can understand the reality of the family today, in all its complexity;

2. The discernment of the family vocation – this requires us to look to Christ and his revelation to us about the beauty, role and dignity of the family as communicated to us through his Church; and

3. The mission of the family today – this requires us to confront the situations present to us today, discerning a way forward.

The theme of 'Mercy' will no doubt be a big area of reflection at the Synod, and also throughout 2016 as we enter the Year of Mercy (Extraordinary Jubilee) announced by Pope Francis in April. The document states that it is fundamental that as a Church we take care of wounded families and allow them to experience the "infinite mercy of

God" (107). However, it also explains that people differ on the approach that should be used. It tells us that we need to begin from the concrete situation of today's families and progress from there – noting that mercy does not detract from truth, but rather is truth.

Despite our limitations, I am deeply aware of how our own Archdiocesan Church cares for wounded families, through our parishes, school communities

It is fundamental that as a Church we take care of wounded families.

and through our social service agencies. The Synod process and the Year of Mercy will challenge us to enter more deeply into this attitude and action of mercy.

Pope Francis further illuminated this theme of mercy and the family in his general audience of March 25, when he made the following comments about the role of the Church towards the family:

"The Church, for her part, is solemnly committed to care

for the family that is born, as a gift of God for her life, in good times and in bad: the bond between the Church and the family is sacred and inviolable. The Church, like a mother, never abandons the family, even when it is downhearted, wounded and humiliated in so many ways. Nor when it falls into sin, or moves away from the Church; she will always do everything to try to care for and heal it, to call it to conversion and to reconcile it to the Lord."

The Pope then gave the following challenge to pray for the Synod and he also invited the audience to use the accompanying prayer. As an Archdiocese we have practically contributed to the working document and we too are also now being invited by the Pope to pray for the Synod:

"Everyone – Pope, cardinals, bishops, priests, men and women religious, lay faithful – we are all called to pray for the Synod. This is what is needed, not gossip! I also call to prayer those who feel distant or who are no longer used to it. This prayer for the Synod on the family is for the good of everyone," Pope Francis said.

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY SYNOD

Jesus, Mary and Joseph in you we contemplate the splendour of true love, to you we turn with trust. Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that our families too may be places of communion and prayer, authentic schools of the Gospel and small domestic churches. Holy Family of Nazareth, may families never again experience violence, rejection and division. May all who have been hurt or scandalised find ready comfort and healing. Holy Family of Nazareth, may the approaching Synod of Bishops make us more mindful of the sacredness and inviolability of the family, and its beauty in God's plan. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer. Amen.



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They have left everything in order to follow the One who has called them. They can be found wherever Jesus is to be found - in silent adoration before the Tabernacle, and in the slum quarters and refugee camps of the Third World; in bombed out cities, at the bedside of the sick and dying - in short, wherever their fellow men and women are alone and despairing. But they are also to be found engaged in building a better future. Millions of children have them to thank for the opportunity to go to school and benefit from some form of vocational training. And many initiatives for reconciliation have come about thanks to their involvement.

The Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) has always supported these religious men and women - for the formation of their new vocations and ongoing work; by providing vital support for their life and ministry and ensuring that in their freely given service they at least have the barest minimum to live on. It is vital that the indispensable work of consecrated men and women in Christ's Holy Catholic Church and throughout the missions worldwide continues. ACN is therefore proud to help them in their efforts to make the world a better place.

The average grant ACN gives to support consecrated religious is between \$200 - \$500 but whatever you can afford will be enormously appreciated. ACN forwards the donations directly to the religious superiors in charge of the religious communities and congregations.

A beautiful 'Year of Consecrated Life' rosary designed by the Vatican rosary makers and blessed by Pope Francis, will be sent out to all those who donate to this cause and tick the box below.



A priest in the Andes anointing the sick



The Centrepiece of the Year of Consecrated Life rosary, is inspired by the Gospel passage "He said to them, Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men". Matthew 4:19-20. Peter, drops the nets and follows Him.

The Cross of the rosary is inspired by the word "YES" in faithfulness to His Call and to His Mission.

The different languages represent an answer to the Love that knows no boundaries. The centre of the Cross depicts the Annunciation where Mary answers "YES" and from that moment Mary's faith receives new light. The heart is inspired by the words of St Augustine: "You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you".

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Written entries are invited for the September issue to: Catholic Voice, PO Box 7174, Yarralumla, ACT 2600, or email ed.voice@cg.catholic.org.au by August 15. Entries which are accepted are free, courtesy of sponsorship by the Catholic Development Fund.

Archdiocesan Coming Events

ST GREGORY'S QUEAN-BEYAN: The 175th anniversary of the inauguration of the Queanbeyan Mission by Archbishop Polding will be celebrated with Mass and morning tea on Sunday August 9 at 9.30am at St Gregory's School Hall in Queanbeyan. Among the events for the day there will be free family entertainment from 10.30am to 2.30pm, face painting, rock climbing, petting zoo, jumping castle, balloon making, and historical displays. A light morning tea will be served in the parish centre after Mass. St Gregory's School Council will be running a fundraiser sausage sizzle and there will be food and coffee for sale. For more information contact the parish office on (02) 6299 4611.

AMICUS: Sunday, August 9, at the Rose Cottage, Tuggeranong. Meet at 12pm for lunch and music of Jimmy Bear. Contact Enid: (02) 6296 5592. Saturday, August 22, meet for dinner in the Star Buffet at the Burns Club, Kambah at 6.30pm for 7pm dinner. Contact Enid: (02) 6296 5592. AMICUS is a support and friendship/social group for widowed, separated or divorced Catholics; regular activities on second and fourth weekends. New members welcome.

SERRA CLUB OF CANBERRA: Rosary and Mass, 6.10pm on Thursday August 13, at Holy Trinity Church, Curtin, followed by dinner at Southern Cross Club, Woden.

Inquiries: John Malycha, (02) 6251 2912.

CLASSICAL PIANO CONCERT: Pianist Robert Schmidli will present music from Beethoven, Scriabin, Mozart and Liszt on Sunday August 16 at 3pm, at Wesley Music Centre, 20 National Circuit (entry at Fitzroy Street) in a concert to raise funds for L'Arche Genesaret. Tickets available: online at www.trybooking.com/EOGR or from L'Arche Genesaret on (02) 6282 9066 (credit card facilities available). Adult \$25; concession \$20; student \$15; child \$10. Tickets will also be available at the door – adult \$30; concession \$25; student \$20; child \$15. Inquiries: (02) 6282 9066.

BATEHAVEN AND BEYOND: Presentation on 'The Cup of Our Life', August 20 with Sr Carmel Drew RSJ at Southern Cross Village, Temora, from 10am-3pm. BYO lunch, cost by donation. Presentation on 'Forgotten at Our Peril: The Real Story Behind the Creed we Pray on Sundays', August 22, with guest speaker, Sr Virginia Bourke RSJ at St Joseph's House of Spirituality and Hospitality, 12 David Ave, Batehaven, NSW from 10am-3pm. Cost \$25, lunch provided. Inquiries: Sr Mary Murphy: mary.murphy@soj.org.au.

PARKINSON'S WALK IN THE PARK: 11am, Sunday August 30, Rond Terrace, Commonwealth Park East. Walk, roll or



EXPLOSION: Registrations for the Explosion Youth Conference are now open. The Conference will be held from September 29 to October 2 at St Francis Xavier College in Florey, and is open to all high school aged young people from around the Archdiocese and beyond. This year's theme 'Is God Responsible for This?' will explore the common mentality of modern times that was captured by Fr Robert Barron when he said: "If God exists, if God is all good, and if God is the governor and order of the universe, why is the universe such a mess?" Register now for your chance to explore the Catholic faith through seminars and workshops, experience Christianity, the Church and the Sacraments as never before, and enjoy the week with other young people through sports, games and free time. For more information, visit explosionconference.org.au.

stroll to raise money for research and support services for those in our community living with Parkinson's. All amounts are tax deductible. Sponsor a person by going to www.parkinsonswalk.com.au and follow the links. Contact Michael Dwyer (02) 6258 3258 for more information.

CLASS OF 1975 REUNION: A 40-year reunion will be held for students from Catholic Girls High School Braddon and Daramalan College who finished Year 12 in 1975 (including those from that group who finished before Year

12) on Saturday September 12 at the Mercure Canberra. For more information find us on Facebook: Dara-Braddon 1975 or email mcollopy@bigpond.net.au.

CENTREING PRAYER MEDITATION RETREAT: 'Liberation from our human condition and false self arrangements'. Renowned Trappist monk, Fr Thomas Keating, will journey with us through his DVDs. Facilitated by Sr Lorraine Cupitt RSM, an experienced retreat leader, teacher and practitioner of Centreing Prayer. Opportunities for personal Centreing Prayer on this silent retreat. Tuesday, October 20 to Thursday October 22 at St Clement's Retreat Centre, Galong NSW. Further inquiries to info@stclements.com.au or phone (02) 6380 5222.

REGULAR EVENTS

HOLY SPIRIT SECULAR FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY: Third Friday of the month, 7.30pm, St John Vianney's, Waramanga. Secular Franciscans try to follow Christ in the

footsteps of St Francis. Inquiries: Tony 0407 072 139, Frank 0400 793 260, email sfo@fastmail.fm.

GOOD SHEPHERD PRAYER GROUP: Meets Wednesdays from 7pm-9.30pm at the parish room, St Peter Chanel's Church, Yarralumla, ACT. Rosary, charismatic praise and worship, teachings, testimonies, prayer ministry, intercession and fellowship. Inquiries: Susanna, phone 0419 902 293, Neda 0415 266 019, Gabriel 0432 082 642.

MINISTRY TO THE NEWLY MARRIED: A mentoring program for newly married couples, just married, or soon-to-be married. Contact Catharina and Graham or Debbie and Brian, phone (02) 6231 3389 or 0414 878 167, email: mnm@grapevine.com.au.

ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT: St Benedict's, Narrabundah, Monday 8am-10pm, Tuesday 12pm-10pm, Wednesday and Thursday 1pm-10pm and Friday 7am-Saturday 8am. All welcome.

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Members of the Cardinals soccer team before their July 18 match: Back row, left to right, Thomas Ringrose-Voase, Richie Dantas, Nathan Galea, Phil Belcher, Liam Mackay, Justin Carrick, Gerard William (manager), Kieran Kirk; front row, left to right, Jonathan Lee, Nathan Mullins, Dave Camp, Greg Jeffery (captain), Mick Campbell, Samuel Mullins. PHOTO: LOUI SESELJA

A group of young Catholic men are taking part in a unique competition

Where faith and sport meet

IF SOCCER is indeed Pope Francis' favourite sport, then perhaps the Pontiff could direct some prayers to Canberra's only Catholic soccer team, which is halfway through its first season in the ACT Churches Football League (ACT CFL).

Named the 'Cardinals', the team has struggled so far, managing only a draw in its first 12 matches of the season.

But in a competition where results are secondary to sportsmanship and fair play, the team remains upbeat and positive about the remainder of the season.

"It's more difficult than we had anticipated, but it's good fun," team manager Gerard William told *Catholic Voice*.

"We want to win a game, and that will be well deserved by the guys for their effort... but at the same time we're just trying to make sure that everyone's getting a good run and enjoying the game."

The ACT CFL was established in 1968, as a competition that aims to provide a place for Christian fellowship through sport and to encourage personal faith in Christ.

This season's competition involves 10 teams representing various Christian denominations.

Mr William, who has played in local soccer leagues for a number of years, said some of the negative aspects of playing in a secular competition are not present in the ACT CFL.

"There's no verbal abuse, and no one tries to break your

The competition aims to provide a place for Christian fellowship through sport and to encourage personal faith in Christ.

legs, so that's where the spirit of the game is at a high level," he said.

"On the whole, the attitude of each individual towards the other teams is very respectful."

About 30 players have taken to the field over the course of the season representing the Cardinals, Mr William said, each with various levels of experience and skill.

"Some guys have played

pretty high levels, for others this is their first season they've ever played in an outdoor competition," he said.

"We have players who play every winter season, and then

a competitive sporting match inevitably evokes passion.

"When you take a bunch of guys who are committed to seeking the good, and you put them in an aggressive football

Andrew James said there are a number of unique aspects to the competition.

These include the range of skill and age levels, commencing each match with a prayer, and the fact that the competition seeks to engender friendships across teams.

"The competition is designed to be fun and competitive, with self-control important to how the competition is played and managed in the spirit of Christian fellowship," he said.

"Over recent years participating teams believe they have had a very enjoyable culture in the competition, and some advances have also been made in the quality of refereeing and the arrangements for administration."

Regardless of how the rest of the season pans out in terms of results, Mr William said the Cardinals' participation in the competition would continue to be a source of enjoyment for all the players.

"It's basically a chance for Catholic men to be men – taking their faith seriously, living their professional life well and looking after their physical well-being," he said.



Phil Belcher in action for the Cardinals during the match against St Matthew's on July 18, played in Kambah. PHOTO: LOUI SESELJA

we also have players who haven't played in 14 years since school."

While the matches are generally played in a good spirit, Mr William said the nature of

game, it's a different kind of challenge," he said.

"But there will always be handshakes at the end of the game."

President of the ACT CFL