



WelCom

Newsletter of the Catholic Archdiocese of Wellington, New Zealand

ISSUE 3 - August 2025

Papal honour for Agnes Kulatea

Cardinal John presented a rare papal honour on Sunday, July 20. At the 10am Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral, he instituted Agnes Kulatea as a Dame of the Order of St Gregory the Great.

Agnes provided administrative support in the Archdiocese of Suva until 1979. In 1983, she took up the role of providing secretarial support to the rector at the Pacific Regional Seminary. On moving to New Zealand, Agnes provided secretarial and administrative support to the Archbishops of Wellington, including for Cardinal John.

"Martha and Mary welcomed Jesus into their home," said Cardinal John in his homily following the Gospel reading about Mary and Martha.

"I saw Agnes very, very busy at times, but never complaining as

Martha did about all the work she had to do. Agnes never fretted or panicked. She calmly went about her work."

He praised Agnes as "efficient, discreet, patient, alert to our needs and calm, well-organised and professional". He added: "She was a balance between Martha and Mary, and a very good balance."

Cardinal John said: "St Paul told us, 'The mystery is Christ among you, your hope of Glory.' When we meet and work with people like Agnes, we know that Christ, our hope of glory, is among us."

The Order of St Gregory the Great (*Ordo Sancti Gregorii Magni* in Latin) was established in 1831 by Pope Gregory XVI. One of the five



orders of knighthood of the Holy See, it is bestowed upon Catholic men and women who have served the Holy See through faithful and extraordinary labours and have set good Christian examples to their communities.

Past recipients include the American entertainer Bob Hope, Roy E. Disney (a nephew of Walt Disney) and humanitarian James Joseph Norris.

Congratulations Agnes on a well-deserved award.

Outgoing Vatican Observatory director visits Wellington

The famed astronomer Galileo remained a devout Catholic, even after he was persecuted and his infamous trial. Far from being anti-science, the modern study of astronomy even began in medieval church universities.

These were just two of the fascinating insights heard in Wellington as Vatican Observatory director Br Guy Consolmagno SJ gave a free public talk as part of his visit to Aotearoa New Zealand.



Delivered to a packed lecture theatre at Rutherford House at Victoria University of Wellington's Pipitea campus – not far from the Beehive and train station – on a clear but brisk winter evening, Br Guy's hour-long talk focused on how science and spirituality work together to answer questions about the universe.

"The way we understand the universe depends upon the assumptions we make about the universe," he said, latter adding "Science and faith can only be bridged as equals."

Titled "From Galileo to *Laudato Si'*: Why Science Needs Faith", Br Guy's talk was easy to understand for people without science backgrounds and highly engaging. The regularly self-deprecating Br Guy – director of the Vatican Observatory since 2015, who is stepping down in September – encouraged audience members to continue asking questions.

That's exactly what happened during a Q&A after Br Guy's talk. Tackling

thorny questions such as how the Vatican would react to the discovery of intelligent extraterrestrial life (a subject he pointed out he covers extensively in his book *Would You Baptize an Extraterrestrial?*), Br Guy said it's OK to not understand things, and to consistently challenge assumptions, just like Galileo did.

Br Guy also left attendees with much to think about philosophically.

"Technology always has costs," he said. "But no technology also has costs."

Following his Wellington talk, Br Guy headed south to Kaikōura, before other South Island events to conclude his New Zealand visit.

Watch a YouTube interview with Brother Guy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PX1IcUBKNEQ>

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From Archbishop Paul

Tena koutou katoa,

One of the privileges of being the archbishop is that I get to visit the parishes around the archdiocese. It is a great joy to meet you and to partake in the liturgies and events there.

One of the things that has struck me for several years is that we as Catholic people have not really grasped well the great gift that singing is in our liturgical life. St Augustine said that to sing is to pray twice. I have been to many liturgies where people have gathered and sang enthusiastically and well, and it has added a great joy and prayerfulness to the Mass.

I would love to be able to say that this was the experience all the time, that when we gather we enter into singing wholeheartedly because we know that the hymns we are singing are indeed prayers to God. We are singing his praises, recognising his generosity, entreating his help.

But often people stand seemingly enduring the hymn or lips closed shut. I know that some say they can't sing; music teachers would say that is in fact very rare. Sometimes people blame the choice of music, or the quality of the musicians. But in fact

if we all sang together that wouldn't matter so much.

Liturgy committees in parishes work hard to ensure that the hymns reflect the readings of the Mass. They also try and choose hymns which fit the guidelines for liturgical music, as well as give some variety for the community. It isn't an easy task and our musicians put in a lot of time preparing so that we, the community of faith, can join together to sing and pray.

So I encourage you to think of your own attitude and approach towards singing at Mass or on other occasions. If all of us gave it our best, it would make a significant difference to the sense of being together, and participating fully in the great liturgical action which is the celebration of the Mass.

I hope that the month of August, reflecting on the nature of our gifting, has been a fruitful time for you and your parish. Sometimes we talk about 'the Church' as if it exists outside each one of us. But together we make up the body of Christ, the Church. The participation of each of us with our time, treasure and talents means we

can function effectively as a parish and archdiocese and fulfil our mission of bringing Christ to our world.

Many parishes are beginning to prepare for RCIA programmes that will culminate at Easter 2026. Do you know people who might be waiting for someone to ask them if they have ever thought of becoming a Catholic? We have to be courageous to ask that question and we have to trust that God, who may be working through us, will touch the heart of the person we approach. We know that belonging to the community of the Church gives us the strength and grace to live this life with Christ and part of that is about inviting others to join us. I encourage you to take this to prayer and to see if there are people who you can invite to join our RCIA programmes.

Blessings to you as we begin this season of spring.

Yours in Christ

+Paul Martin SM
Metropolitan Archbishop

Celebrating the gift of priests

The Jubilee of Priests was celebrated throughout the Archdiocese on Tuesday, July 15. Several events took place, including a special Mass. Catholic schools also took part, with St Joseph's in Nelson celebrated their priests and seminarian.

Part of this special Jubilee year, the Jubilee of Priests was meant to celebrate and renew the spiritual lives of priests.



(L-R) Biju Xavier (25 years), Frank Twiss SM (65 years), John Rae SM (70 years), Tony Kearns (25 years), Michael Gormly SSC (60 years), Peter Frizzibbon (60 years), John van der Kaa AA (60 years)

It was also a reminder what a blessing it is to have priests who give themselves to God and work to help us come closer to Him.

The Jubilee of Priests invites us to pray for priests that they may continue to do this important work in the Archdiocese, across the motu and around the world.



Generosity Expressing Faith

By Chris Duthie-Jung

I remember growing up in Otane in Central Hawke's Bay through a time when my parents were discerning a call to take a big step in faith. They felt that God wanted them to start a local counselling service and, to help fund it, a Catholic/Christian book and gift shop. I was 14 years old and becoming more aware by the day of the value of a dollar!

Nothing could have been more impactful than watching my parents put their faith and their conviction ahead of what might otherwise seem sensible financial security. By watching, I learned that when one gives with trust and selflessness, the fruits are real and God really does provide.

This was a spirituality of generosity before we ever thought in those terms. Mum and Dad had a "pastoral plan" before we ever knew they existed! And accountability, absolutely! They formed a charitable trust with trustees to monitor things and ensure all funds were spent as intended.

“It's not about giving beyond our means, but giving with a generous heart that reflects the love of God.”

Was money talked about openly in your home growing up? Where did you learn how to handle money? Who taught you? It's a strange topic – we can't live without it and yet somehow it can seem a "dirty", or at least very secular topic. But don't forget, it was the "love of money", not money itself, that St Paul described as the root of all evil (1 Tim 6:10). Money is neutral, a helpful means of simplifying trading! The challenge we all face is the choice between a generous or self-centred approach to what we have.

Our parish communities today are made up of God's people from all over the world. Cultural and ethnic background and experience vary hugely, and patterns of contributing can sometimes not fit easily into a Catholic parish in Aotearoa New Zealand. And yet, if we value our faith communities and want them to be there for us and our children, we all know we have to find ways to support them. In effect, we are supporting our own future.

In recent days, we have seen how the money we give is being used. Our contributions help fund everything from ongoing parish expenses, the costs associated with clergy provision (formation, operation and retirement) and, to a lesser extent, costs at the diocesan and national level. How we choose to contribute is a personal choice, but keep in mind how much easier it is for planning when it is a regular committed amount. It helps the parish to budget, and it is easier for us as well because it takes away that need to ponder every week how much we will give. This is why weekly, or fortnightly, bank transfer is encouraged. Talk to your parish office if this is new to you or you wish to set it up.

Be assured that no one is being asked to give beyond their means. No family, couple or individual should be going without necessities because they feel the weight of expectation. We are invited to give according to our means, and to reassess annually because circumstances do change. Be assured that God never asks us to neglect our families nor ourselves out of a sense of pressured duty.

If you find yourself in a better place financially, consider giving more. This helps to offset those who may not be able to give much. Looking at our Scriptures, the concept of tithing fits within the Old Testament understanding of meeting the requirements of God's Law (much like the Ten Commandments).

In the New Testament, Jesus takes us further – to move beyond simple rule-following. He speaks of generosity, a cheerful willingness to share what we have with our community (2 Cor 9:6-8). The Beatitudes (Lk 6:38) push us beyond rules and targets speaking instead of a spirit – a spirit of generosity. This, he tells us, is where true happiness is to be found.

And here's the thing: when we support our parish, we are supporting its apostolic work in our wider community. We are, essentially, responding to the call of Jesus to share the joy of the Gospel.

In his message to us earlier this month, Archbishop Paul invited us to look into our own hearts and ask, "is my giving reflecting what I am able to give?" and "do I recognise my giving as an important expression of my faith?" Keep discerning how you will respond, knowing that it is a generous heart that best reflects the love and generosity of our God.



Archdiocesan Marriage Preparation – How does it work?

by Simone Olsen, Marriage Ministries Co-ordinator

For many generations, the Archdiocese of Wellington has provided excellent marriage preparation – and that legacy continues today. Our preparation continues to evolve to the realities of modern life.

So how does it work in 2025 for our couples preparing to marry? A good place to start is for a couple to speak to a priest in their local parish about their wedding plans, even if the plan is to have their wedding overseas. The priest will help them to prepare the necessary papers, depending on their situation. The priest and

hopefully others around the couple will urge them to participate in our marriage preparation programme.

If the couple both reside in Wellington, they can enrol for our course “Love is a Decision and Commit”. These are our in-person courses designed for couples to attend together. They are a unique opportunity to set aside precious time without distractions to focus on talking about their relationship, what makes them unique individuals and their ideas around marriage and their plans for the future.

For couples in the South Island part of the Archdiocese, or couples who reside in different cities or countries while preparing, they can use the online programme called SmartLoving.

We urge couples to think of the online programme much like a joint project – making time in their diary and being intentional in their approach to working through the material together. Think of it like a weekly date night, preparing food and surroundings like a little ritual that can make it enjoyable and less like “homework”. If time zones allow, we really encourage couples to work online together.

If you or someone you know is preparing to marry or you think



an engagement is on the horizon, please let them know about our courses. The courses have a Catholic underpinning. For many couples, one partner is not Catholic, but they're welcome and find it an interesting insight into their partner's Catholic faith. We always encourage couples to complete their preparation course well in advance of the busyness of the lead up to their wedding date!

Any questions can be directed to Simone Olsen, Marriage Ministries Co-ordinator in the Church Mission Team at the Archdiocese: marriage@wn.catholic.org.nz. Please note there are four in-person courses held in Wellington each year.



St Mary's Preschool celebrates 50 years

St Mary's Preschool in Blenheim celebrated its 50th anniversary in July.

Among those who joined in the festivities were current and former staff and students, including the first child to attend when the school opened in 1975. One of the youngest children currently enrolled, Delano Fidow, joined Jenny McElhinney – the first teacher when the school opened – to cut a cake.

What a blessing to celebrate such a wonderful milestone.

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Caritas Opens Disaster Relief Warehouse in Tonga

A supply warehouse in Tonga built with support from Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand will ensure that emergency provisions are on hand when the island nation's next disaster strikes.

The Caritas Tonga Disaster Preposition Stock Warehouse was blessed by Cardinal Soane Mafi last month. Among the guests at the blessing were Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand chief executive Mena Antonio, Mafua Maka, director for the National Disaster Risk Management Office of Tonga, and Msgr Lutoviko Finau, vicar general of the Catholic Diocese of Tonga.

Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand was a partner with Caritas Tonga on the project.

The warehouse will be stocked with items such as hygiene kits, buckets and jerry cans, kitchen supplies, face masks, soap, blankets and water



purification kits for rapid distribution.

The warehouse has taken several years to complete. It is a response to the lessons learned from the 2022 Hunga Tonga – Hunga Ha'apai eruption and tsunami, which displaced thousands of families from their homes. The disaster affected 84 per cent of the population.

Like many Pacific nations, Tonga is prone to disasters. This has been exacerbated in recent years by climate change. The warehouse will help Tonga to manage disaster risk. It will help to save lives and speed up the road to recovery when the next humanitarian crisis hits.

Bishop Addresses Parish Renewal Audience

Christchurch Bishop Michael Gielen has spoken about the need for parish renewal in a webinar that had viewers in more than 50 countries.

Bishop Gielen and Cardinal Pablo Virgilio David from the Philippines shared their insights during an online event titled "Hope on the Horizon: A Global Celebration of Parish Renewal".

The webinar, organised by Alpha International and Divine Renovation, also featured testimonies from people in different nations who have seen their parishes come alive.

Bishop Gielen reflected on his experiences as a priest, saying that he had always been less accepting of "maintenance" mode in a parish, and had always tried to ensure there was outreach.

Referring to the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand, Bishop Gielen said "We are a small bishops conference, and we often challenge each other about that . . . questioning is this about maintenance or is this about mission?"

While maintenance is important, it is not at the centre of the Gospel call, he said.

The webinar emphasised many times that hope comes from an encounter with the person of Jesus. Asked how parishes can become places of hope for people at every stage of life and faith, Bishop Gielen said: "We have the Good News and the Good News is the truth that Jesus is Lord and that our first call [is] to introduce them to the person of Jesus."

Priests and parishioners have to work together in parish renewal, Bishop Gielen added. The Church is at her best when people's gifts are shared and put at the service of the Gospel, and when clergy and laity learn from each other, he said.

Lay involvement has grown in the Church in New Zealand and it has been a gift, Bishop Gielen added.

"I'm very hopeful about what our parishes can offer for the future," he said.

To view the webinar, visit: tinyurl.com/BishopGielenDR

Holy Family Porirua Youth Ministry Runners Up – Wellington Airport Regional Community Awards 2025

Gemma Vailahi and Albert Le Reh, representing the Holy Family Porirua Youth Ministry, were honoured to receive the runner-up in the Education and Child/Youth Development category of the Regional Community Awards. Anita Baker, the Mayor of Porirua, and Jo Maxwell, Wellington Airport Manager, presented the award at the Porirua ceremony on 22 July.

The award acknowledges the work done by the youth ministry to provide a welcoming and safe space for young people aged 13 to their 20s to come together, build meaningful relationships and grow in their faith. By learning together and forming strong bonds, young people are empowered to take what they gain at Holy Family and positively impact the wider world.

Volunteers play a vital role in the success and impact of our youth-led community group. A dedicated team of 12 core volunteers from the parish works closely with the young people to coordinate and run events, ensuring everything goes smoothly and meaningfully. They support collaboration within the group and assist in planning activities alongside the parish priest, helping to shape a programme that reflects the needs and interests of the youth. Additionally, parents and whānau provide essential support through food contributions and moral encouragement, creating a strong, nurturing environment that empowers our young people to thrive.



One of the group's main achievements has been building a strong and committed team to lead the ministry, creating a foundation for lasting impact. A key milestone was the successful gathering held in January 2025, which brought together 30 to 50 young people over two days during the summer holidays. This event featured inspiring speakers from the community who led sessions on how youth can confidently share their faith, explore the connection between faith and cultural identity in Aotearoa New Zealand, and understand the role of faith in social responsibility. This gathering not only strengthened the team but also empowered young people to live out their beliefs in meaningful and culturally grounded ways.

Youth ministry leaders are now planning future youth gatherings and are grateful for the support of the of the Wellington Airport Regional Community Awards.

Support for special collections strong, but more help is needed – Archbishop Paul

Parishes throughout the Archdiocese of Wellington are continuing to support the Holy See despite a deepening cost of living crisis and challenging economic conditions across the motu.

A total of \$30,932.90 was raised throughout the Archdiocese on June 28-29 for Peter's Pence, which goes towards the Holy See's philanthropic work in helping people around the world.

Msgr Giosuè Busti, deputy head of mission of the Apostolic Nunciature of the Holy See – the Vatican's diplomatic embassy in New Zealand – wrote to Archbishop Paul on July 29, thanking the faithful from throughout the Archdiocese for their financial support.

Other special collections have also raised large sums this year. The special collection for the Holy Places,

held on Good Friday, raised \$26,330. The collection supports Christian communities in the Middle East, with money raised also used to look after holy sites (such as the Church of the Nativity, where Jesus was born, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where Jesus was buried and rose from the dead).

Special collections are important in supporting Catholic causes and making the world a better place. Some of these causes include international relief efforts, supporting and looking after retired priests, seminarian education and more.

Archbishop Paul says it's important to continue supporting special collections so the Catholic Church can look after the faithful and take up the call to be followers of Christ and good stewards of what God has given us.

Special Collections for the rest of 2025

31 Aug	Māori Pastoral
19 Oct	World Mission Sunday
Advent	Archbishop Christmas Appeal



God Doesn't Call the Equipped, God Equips The Called...

"Called & Equipped" was the name given to a pilot formation programme for lay people that began in February this year. Applicants came from as far as Levin, Masterton, Blenheim and Motueka – people from a range of backgrounds, ages and ethnicities coming together for a journey of faith, learning and fellowship.

This new programme confirms the Archdiocese's commitment to continually explore new ways of forming the laity for missionary discipleship, in line with recent Synod outcomes:

"The holy People of God require proper formation so that they can witness to the joy of the Gospel and grow in the practice of synodality... (which) implies a profound vocational and missionary awareness..."

(Final Document, For a Synodal Church, 141)

The programme begins with the Alpha Course, offering participants the opportunity to deepen their personal relationship with Christ and experience the power of the Holy Spirit. Fortnightly seminars and monthly workshops follow, covering topics in Faith and Spirituality, Pastoral Ministry, Community Building and Mission. Speakers who are specialists in their field give input on a topic and facilitate discussion on its practical application.

A combination of face-to-face and online learning means that people from all our parishes can participate. A mid-year retreat weekend, which brings the whole group together, provides a beautiful experience of prayer and faith in community.

"One of the great joys of the course is developing friendships/fellowship with other people in our diocese, knowing that we are all on this journey of faith together..."

(Helen, Holy Family Parish, Nelson)



Were you to ask any of the Class of '25, they will tell you it's a truly enriching experience. Thirty-one individuals from 11 parishes have become brothers and sisters as they've prayed, learned and journeyed together. They have delved into Scripture and Church teaching, gaining a better understanding of their baptismal call to holiness and mission. They have discovered that faith grows when shared with others, and that ministry and service arise from a life of intentional discipleship. They learned that to be followers of Christ means a lot more than going to Sunday Mass.

We are all called to serve, to be light to the world and salt of the earth. How do we go about that? What is our place in the Church? How can we grow in synodality and become collaborators in ministry? And how do we put our learning into action to help make our parishes vibrant hubs of community and mission?

If these are some of the questions you ask, consider joining us! Applications are now open for the next Called & Equipped formation programme. Get in touch and find out more!

Contact Lucienne Hensel at
l.hensel@wn.catholic.org.nz
04 496 1715.



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CALLED & EQUIPPED '26

February 3 - November 14, 2026

Church Mission
Archdiocese of Wellington



Farewelling the Marist Brothers

It was an emotional evening on Friday, July 25 at Sts Peter and Paul Church in the Hutt, as the Wellington Catholic community said farewell to the Marist Brothers after 149 years of continuous service in the region.

Archbishop Paul and Cardinal John celebrated Mass in a church full with hundreds of people, giving thanks to all the work the Brothers have done over the years. Following the Mass there were speeches from others whose lives the Brothers have shaped, as well as a shared evening tea.

In 1850, eight Marist Brothers accompanied Bishop Philippe Viard from Auckland to Wellington. Most Brothers later travelled further on with Marist priests to parishes in places such as Napier and Nelson. More Brothers came in 1876, and

were a constant presence in the Wellington region, particularly involved with helping run Catholic schools.

The last two Marist Brothers in the Wellington region are moving up to Auckland. Please keep them in your prayers.



Summary history of the Marist Brothers in Wellington

Early history

Eight Marist Brothers accompanied Bishop Viard from Auckland to Wellington in April-May 1850. This was before full separation from the Society of Mary, which happened in 1852. Three of them built most of the first convent for religious women, near St Mary's Cathedral, in 1850. Most of the early figures went with Marist priests to new parishes, such as Nelson and Napier. Brother Claude-Marie worked with Fr Garin in Nelson, remaining there for most of the next 43 years until his death in 1893.

Boulcott Street School 1876-1911

Bishop Viard was raising funds for a Marist Brothers school in Wellington in 1872. He was promised three Brothers, but he died that year. Bishop Redwood arrived in 1874 and reminded the Brothers of this promise. They arrived in May 1876, and in July began teaching at St Mary's Boys School, near the cathedral. This school was closed in 1911, replaced by the Tasman Street and Hawkestone Street schools.

St Joseph's, Tasman Street 1911-1983

Often referred to as the Newtown Marist Brothers' School, it was in St Joseph's Parish, near the Buckle Street church. It opened in 1911 and was amalgamated with St Anne's parish school, Newtown, in 1983.

St Francis', Hawkestone Street 1912-1968

Thorndon Marist Brothers' School opened in 1912. It closed in 1968, for motorway construction. In 1969, it was housed in Church properties in Ecclestone Hill, including Viard House – which was empty because Archbishop McKeefry lived in the Sacred Heart presbytery.

Miramar School 1937-1983

Opened in Para Street, Miramar, in 1937. Initially staffed from Tasman Street. Amalgamated with Holy Cross School in 1983.

St Bernard's, Lower Hutt 1946-

Fr Leo Daly had bought six acres on Waterloo Road in 1926, later expanded to 11 acres. St Bernard's

began classes in two houses on site in 1946, for pupils in standards three to six. A new primary school was opened in 1951, and St Bernard's College in February 1952.

Cardinal McKeefry School 1970-

The new school was opened in February 1970. This was one of the first two Catholic schools to be integrated. At the time of integration only two of the nine staff were Marist Brothers.

WelCom

- *Have an event coming up in your parish?*
- *Something you're proud of, or would like to get the word out about?*
- *Need volunteers or help with something?*

Please let us know!

Info can be sent to

b.mack@wn.catholic.org.nz

We look forward to hearing from you!



Catholic Archdiocese of Wellington
Level 2, 204 Thorndon Quay, Wellington 6011
PO Box 1937, Wellington 6140

☎ 04 496 1777
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