the joy of being a disciple of Jesus

The last couple of weeks of August each year have become a significant highlight for me in recent years. After spending some days in the Italian Alps as chaplain to 250 people from a couple of small Italian parishes, I again joined the annual Rimini Meeting which over the 30 years of its existence has become a gathering place for people who seek more from life than what the world can offer. While the gathering is Christian organised (ie the church) the week-long event attracts 100,000 people every day for a week and is truly catholic (ie universal) with exhibitions and lectures this year covering Mother Teresa, Islam, American saints, immigration, politics, education, terrorism, among many other topics.

Following the Rimini days I took part in a four day meeting of 200 people from 80 countries. This intensive formation seminar focussed on Pope Francis’ call to mercy, and our reflections wrestled with the challenge of living Jesus call to mercy in the complex and challenging circumstances that we find ourselves.

As we farewell each other early this week we were very aware of the challenges that face us in our home countries. Many of those I enjoyed long conversations with over good food and drink will return home to war zones where their friends are being executed simply because they profess Christian faith, they presume that they will be next. Others return to difficult work and family situations. In some parts of Europe the unemployment rate among young people nearing 50%. Recent earthquake destruction and loss of life faces a number of those returning home, and others return to the burden of poverty.

The situation is also difficult for many people in New Zealand. The mortgage commitments on homes and farms made in less challenging times are difficult and sometimes impossible to service when drought and economic downturn continues for yet another year. For some the burden of poor health and even terminal illness weighs heavily.

In our meetings we focussed on the fact that these circumstances are no obstacle to Christian joy. We may not feel “happy” but Christian joy is something that is much deeper than a feeling. It is the knowledge of stability in Christ even in the war zones of violence, poverty and drought.

This is the reason that we continue to come to Mass and celebrate the sacraments. This is why we take every day to pray: we know that we depend on Christ for everything. It is easy for us to retire into a nostalgia talking about the full churches of decades past. We forget that the beauty of Catholic faith cannot be measured in numbers attending Mass. Faith is something deeper and often much more subtle. It is found wherever people delight in the joy of being disciples of Jesus, even when our plans, projects and priorities are collapsing around us.

People of faith know that Catholic life cannot be reduced to rules and regulations. Catholicism is not about moralism and legalism. It is about life lived in relationship with Christ and (naturally flowing from this primary relationship) it is about life with others who have also found their meaning in Christ.

It is tragedy that the vast majority of those who have been baptised as Catholic in New Zealand, see the Church as an institution rather than a joyful life, a book of doctrine rather than a relationship with God who is alive in Jesus living among us. No method on our part is able to bring them back. In fact most parishes have given up on this task with many parishioners more likely to passionately debate the colour options for the meeting room than the tragedy that leaves many Catholics with little sense of living in relationship with Jesus.

It is our personal decision to live fully as disciples of Jesus in the Hurunui also transform the lives of those around us.

J.O'C

Why are you unhappy?
Because you are treating something that is less than God as God

Weekday Mass Timetable
Amberley Church
Mon, Tues, Thurs & Fri at 9.00am
Community of the Beatitudes
Wednesday at 12noon
Confessions
Tuesday 8.40am at Amberley
Wednesday after Mass at Beatitudes
Saturday 10.00am - 10.30 at Amberley & anytime by arrangement with a priest.

Lead, Kindly Light,
amid the encircling gloom,
Lead me Thou on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see the distant scene; one step is enough for me.
I was not ever thus, norpray’dthat Thou shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path, but now lead Thou me on!
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears, pride ruled my will: remember not past years.
So long Your power hath blest me, sure it still will lead me on, o’er moor and fen,
o’er crag and torrent, till the night is gone;
and with the morn those angel faces smile which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

Cardinal John Henry Newman

Let us continue to pray for the happy repose of the soul of Bishop Barry Jones.
Pray too that all those involved in the process of appointing his successor will be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Every day for a week, The Meeting is filled with lectures and exhibitions, conversations and great company over food and drink.
THE SINGLES FOR CHRIST (SFC) New Zealand, under the ministry of Couples For Christ, will be holding its 2016 National Conference entitled “CHRIST BOUND” anchored from Romans 12:2. With much excitement, the SFCs from the host city of Christchurch formally invites you to this year’s SFC New Zealand National Conference on 9th-11th September 2016 at Canterbury Horticultural Centre, 57 Riccarton Avenue, Christchurch Central, Additiong, Christchurch. This is open to all single, unmarried Man and Woman, ages 20-40, who wants to seek and find God through their LIFESTYLE, CAREER AND RELATIONSHIP. For registration, just log on to http://sfcnaton2016.co.nz/ or contact Hassan Colina: 0279409415 or Maricel Rula: 02108299991 for more information.

ST PETER CHANEL CHURCH 50th JUBILEE 10th - 11th September 2016 Gordon Road Hastings Please register on our website: Catholic Parish of Hastings or phone 06 878 7774

RENAISSANCE OF MARRIAGE CONFERENCE Bishop Michael Kennedy in Australia wishes to extend an invitation to the clergy and lay leaders/parishioners of New Zealand to the “Renaissance of Marriage”, a national Catholic Marriage Conference to be held in Sydney on the Friday 21st, 10am to Saturday 22nd, 6pm October 2016. The conference brings together over 20 local and international speakers (including Christopher West) to explore Amoris Laeltia. It features three streams and is suitable for marriage educators, clergy, counsellors, teachers, educational leaders, youth ministers and married couples. For more details email Emma Scarf emma@marriagerc.org

ROCHESTER LECTURE The 2016 Rochester Lecture will be given by Dr John Weir, S.M. The Lecture - “Walking in the Dark” – James K. Baxter’s Life, Lettering and Loveliness is to be held at Rochester and Rutherford Hall, 77 Ilam Road on Wednesday, 7th September at 7.30p.m. Dr Weir is not only the Editor of James K. Baxter: Complete Prose but a personal friend and the foremost scholar of his work. It is planned to have a small exhibition of Baxter’s works at the lecture.

GABRIEL KUBY distinguished German sociologist and author will speak on “The Gender Revolution” on Wednesday 21st September at 7.30pm, at Christ the King Parish Centre, 90 Greers Rd. Gender ideology is the latest sinster attack on the dignity of the human person. Gabriele is an expert on the strategies of the global sexual revolutionaries. Meeting convened by Right to Life in association with Family Life International, all are welcome.

ST PATRICK’S AKAROA AND THE YEAR OF MERCY Parishes and parish groups are most welcome to make a Pilgrimage to St Patrick’s which is one of the four designated Year of Mercy Churches. Exposition, Reconciliation and Holy Mass can be celebrated and hall facilities can be arranged. In September, Additiong and Woolston Parishes are make the Pilgrimage along with the Beatitude Community of Leithfield. Contact Fr Paul Shanahan sm (03) 304-7083.

THE ANSWER TO JOB And the Meaning of Life. Allan Bloore Jungian Analyst Saturday 10 September, 10.00am – 4.00pm. This seminar will address The Book of Job 3:20-26 using the insights of the two significant mystics of Jung, Durham Street North. Cost $60 or donation assists participants to apply it to their life insights of the two significant mystics of Jung, Duram Street North. Cost $60 or donation assists participants to apply it to their life.

ST PATRICK’S SCHOOL (Greymouth) celebrating 150 years and is publishing memories. We would like contributions of up to 500 words (approximately) by Monday 10 September. All contributions may be sent to the school office, 13 Puketahi Street, Greymouth 7805 or office@stpatriksgm.school.nz

In every age O Lord, you have been our refuge.

GOOD SHEPHERD HURUNUI CATHOLIC YOUTH GROUP: Calling all young people 10+ years of age (and their parents) who would like to participate in a Catholic youth group in our parish. We would like to know: The names, ages and locations of your keen young people so we can establish a programme that suits everyone. Send an email or text message with your child’s Name, Age, Location e.g. Amberley, Waiau, Culverden, Hamner, Cheviot, Hawarden and a day that suits you best. Send this info to simon@amuri.school.nz OR 027 422 0183

The SACRAMENTS OF RECONCILIATION & FIRST HOLY COMMUNION. Preparation classes have begun. Keep these children and families in prayer over these months.

PARISH MEETINGS: Finance Committee & Parish Council meet on Tuesday 6 September. Please keep these committee members in your prayer.

Good Shepherd Parish Treasurer Our parish seeks expressions of interest from a parishioner, or other interested person who would have the skills necessary to serve as Parish Treasurer for two to three hours each week. This would require some accounting knowledge, with an ability to use XERO to set up payments etc. If you are interested, or know of someone else who would have the skills needed to serve in this role, please let the parish office know by Monday 5th September by contacting Jim Martin (Parish Finance Committee Chair)