



# inform

ISSUE 69 June 2007

Newsletter of the Catholic Bishop of Christchurch

## We Have a New Bishop

Bishop Barry Jones D.D. succeeded Bishop John Cunneen D.D. on the 5th May. You can read more about this in Bishop Barry's letter to us printed below.

I am sure we all congratulate him and offer him our fullest support and assurance of our prayers.

## A Letter from Our Bishop

My brothers and sisters in Christ,

Early in May, Bishop John Cunneen was informed by the Holy See that his letter of resignation as Bishop of Christchurch had been accepted as from his 75th birthday with the consequence that I, as Coadjutor Bishop, simply begin where Bishop John has left off. This uncomplicated and foreseen transition is one aspect of the Church's life and reveals a further dimension of the pastoral care of Bishop John for our Diocese. He has borne the heat and burden of the day as a Bishop in our Diocese for fifteen years and, as we well know, the last few years have cost him greatly as his physical capacities have gradually deteriorated. With great determination and constancy Bishop John has continued to grace numerous gatherings with his presence and wisdom and words of faith, even though the exertions involved in getting to the various functions, alighting from vehicles, climbing steps and stairs and walking from one place to another were considerable. Over all his years as a Priest among us, his personality has been a happy and serene one but never more so than in his last few years - in spite of physical weakness he has been a great witness to joy and strong faith and I thank him for his example of a faithful shepherd in the service



*"...he has been a great witness to joy and strong faith and I thank him for his example of a faithful shepherd in the service of the Lord and his Church."*

of the Lord and his Church. He has carefully and cheerfully introduced me into some of the complexities of the life of Bishop over the last few months and I appreciate his kindness and thoughtfulness greatly.

In order to recognise this significant turning point in the life of our Diocese of Christchurch, a Mass

of Thanksgiving for the Episcopal Ministry of Bishop John Cunneen is to be concelebrated by members of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Priests of the Diocese. This will take place in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament on Thursday May 31st, at 7.30 pm. It is the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a day that is highly appropriate for this occasion as Mary is the first of all believers and Mother of the Church, and I invite you to come and give thanks to God for his grace at work in the life of the Church and of the one who has been Bishop amongst us for these past fifteen years.

For myself, I offer my greetings to you as I begin to pick up the load of office which Bishop John has put down. As I wrote to the Priests recently, I promise to serve them and the people of the Diocese in fidelity to the Lord and as best I can. Since my ordination last October as a Bishop, great kindness and support have been shown to me, especially in the matter of prayers for the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and I am both needy for these prayers and deeply grateful.

Yours sincerely,  
† Barry Jones



This was the catch cry of the Celebration Expo held at St Bede's College on Saturday, 5th May.

"Charity boasted about is charity diminished" is a statement few will challenge. Yet when good works are invisible, the opportunity to give example to others is lost. At the Expo, 22 organisations took up exhibit stands and explained what they did on a day to day basis.

"It is easy to become depressed over the negative media comment that appears daily regarding Christianity, however at the Expo it felt good to be a Catholic" says Murray Winder, acting chair of the Diocesan Welfare Council. The day was a celebration of Catholic welfare in the Diocese.



*Debating Team*



*Welfare Day Crowd*

Organisations were varied and included Armstrong Village, Catholic Maori Youth, Catholic Social Services, Catholic Women's League, Catholics on Air, Mercy Sisters, Parish to Parish Accommodation, Tertiary Chaplaincy, St Vincent de Paul Society, Korean Parish and Mercy Library.

A full page supplement in the Press expressed the theme of the Celebration to a wider Christchurch audience than was possible within the confines of St Bede's hall.

A highlight of the Celebration was the Debate between prominent Catholics Lindsay Freer, Joe Ryan, Megan Woods, Hayden Ryan, Charlotte Boyes, Tony Sewell and Clayton Cosgrove over 'Christchurch: the city that cares'. The standard of debate was first class. The outcome, not surprisingly, was a draw based on audience applause.

Fr John Adams commenced the activity with a beautiful Liturgy especially prepared by Sr Eleanor Capper. Pupils from St James School, Aranui, accompanied the Liturgy with singing.

Celebration is not over yet. Kits of suggestions have been forwarded to all Parishes in the Diocese with the request that Parishes acknowledge, in their own way, the theme of Celebration over the next few weeks.

"Hey, it's good to be a Catholic.

**Murray Winder,**

**Acting Chairman of the Diocesan Social Welfare Council.**

## **Brother Gerard Mills, 100th Birthday,**

Brother Gerard Mills, known as Rardy by irreverent generations of pupils, entered the Christian Brothers with twelve others from the Christian Brothers' High School in Dunedin. He trained in Australia and then was sent back to St Kevin's to be on the Foundation staff in 1927. He was 19 years of age. As it transpired, he was to spend most of his teaching life at St Kevin's, although there were appointments to other of the Christian Brothers' schools in New Zealand and Australia. He was to end his teaching at St Edmund's School in Sth. Dunedin in 1984.

His retirement years were spent in Christchurch at the Brothers' House in Riccarton, with much time spent looking after the gardens and grounds. He had been an outstanding teacher and proved to be the same with his gardening.

In June 2002, at the age of 96, Brother Mills moved into Nazareth House in Christchurch. This is a wonderful house of rest with a special atmosphere of love and peace.

On his 100th birthday a special celebration was organised by Nazareth Sisters, staff and friends.

Well done Brother Mills. A long life spent in the service of your Master - 84 years as a Christian Brother. An example of commitment for so many of us.

## **Dove Catholic Fellowship**

Christchurch provided a beautiful, warm autumn weekend for DCF for Women's first convention at St Bede's College on 4-6 May.

Ruth Clark from Tauranga was the speaker. Ruth is a wife, a mother, a professional counsellor, and has worked overseas in mission fields with her family. Her passion is to encourage women to have a confident and intimate relationship

with God and to enjoy healthy relationships with others. The theme of the weekend was "See, I make all things new" with emphasis on the restoration of relationships.

Five local Priests generously gave of their time to be available for reconciliation on Saturday morning. On Saturday afternoon Fr Jack O'Connor arrived in time to celebrate Mass and gave a very real, humorous and encouraging homily.

The Saturday evening session was a fun filled time celebrating

womanhood - being feminine and captivating. It is said that "every woman was once a little girl. And every little girl holds in her heart her most precious dreams."

We hope to return again to the garden city. Meanwhile, Christchurch Dove Catholic Fellowship meets on the second Saturday of every month at Christ the King Parish Centre, Burnside, for fellowship, praise and worship and teaching, and all women are warmly welcomed.

[www.dove.org.nz](http://www.dove.org.nz)

## SR PATRICIA CLARK FAREWELLED FROM CHRISTCHURCH HOSPITAL CHAPLAINCY



Bishop John, Bishop Barry, members of the Order, staff of the Christchurch Hospital, ecumenical Chaplains and others all gathered to recognise the 23 years of service that Sr Patricia Clark RNDM has made to the Chaplaincy at Christchurch Hospital. The celebration at the end of March acknowledged the dedication and

service of Sr Patricia who has walked numerous miles around the Christchurch Hospital wards and ministered to thousands of patients, families / whanau and staff. At the same time Sr Mary Hanrahan RSM was commissioned by Bishop John as the Pastoral Chaplain at Christchurch Hospital and Christchurch Women's Hospital.

## WELCOME TO FR THOMAS GRZEGORZEWSKI...

Fr Thomas is a Salesian Priest from Kielce, Poland, who now belongs to the province of Zambia. Prior to coming to Christchurch he worked at first in Uganda from 1987 to 1996 and from 1997 to the present time in Namibia. His missionary work has been in parish ministry as well as education and youth work.

Fr Thomas is with us in the Diocese for 12 months assisting in the Christchurch Central Pastoral Area, particularly in the Cathedral and St Mary's Parishes. At present Fr Thomas is undertaking a newly developed orientation programme for Priests new to the Diocese.

## ...AND FAREWELL TO FR KEVIN JONES

Fr Kevin Jones from the Portsmouth Diocese has been in the Diocese for six months visiting his uncle and assisted us in pastoral ministry in the Mid Canterbury Pastoral Area, Christchurch Hospital and being available for Sunday Mass in other Parishes. We thank him for his generosity...

## IN BRIEF...

- The Christchurch South Pastoral Area has formally begun the process with the Pastoral Area Council soon to meet. An evening for each of the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and Lectors has been held for the whole Pastoral Area.
- The Prison, Hospital and Tertiary Chaplains gathered for a day at Cathedral House for reflection and discussion about the Pastoral Plan.
- A course called Introduction to Catholicism which is part of the NZQA framework was held for our Pastoral Workers and others.
- The Mid Canterbury and Christchurch West Pastoral Area Councils have both completed Parish Profiles for their Parishes.

## OUR CHURCH OR GOD'S CHURCH?

Parishioners often comment about "our parish" or "our church". While this statement reflects strong personal commitment, it is more accurate to speak about 'God's church' and 'God's parish'. The language we use is a powerful teacher. When we acknowledge God's ownership of the Church we experience freedom: we no longer have to 'create' or 'build' this community. The community of faith is instead the fruit of our personal intimacy with God.

This means that we do not settle for making decisions about the life of the parish or diocese. Instead we know that since God's church is held in the loving embrace of God,

God will reveal the divine plan for the church to all who have ears to hear. We are then no longer happy with making good decisions in our parishes: instead we desire to hear the voice of God revealing his will for the parish, the diocese and the Church.

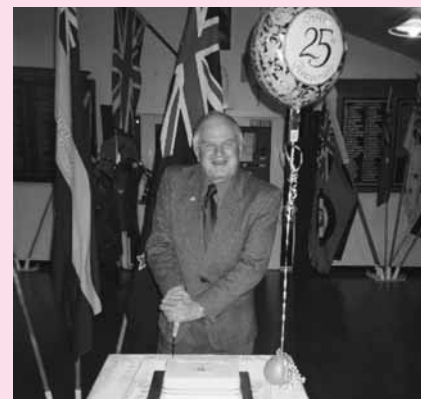
There is so much that prevents us from hearing God's will. Our fears and agendas might close our ears.

As we turn again to God we realise that the renewal of parish life can come only with our openness to God's desire for us.

*Mike Stopforth  
Bishop's Deputy for the Pastoral Plan*

## SILVER JUBILEE OF PRIESTHOOD

Fr Brian Fennessy has recently celebrated his 25th Jubilee of Ordination with functions in his Parish and in Christchurch. He was ordained on 19th February 1982, by Bishop Brian Ashby in Timaru. Fr Brian is currently Parish Priest of Temuka-Geraldine and a part-time Army Chaplain.





# Youth Team Report

9TH INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FORUM

**WORLD  
YOUTH DAY  
NEWS** ■■■



Prior to Easter, from 28 March – 1 April, I had the privilege of being one of two New Zealand representatives at the 9th International Youth Forum which was held near Rome. The Forum was organised by the Pontifical Council for the Laity and its theme was “Witnessing to Christ in the World of Work”.

During the days at the Forum, at which 80 countries were represented, various university professors, clergy and lay people addressed us on a range of topics including “The changing world of work in an age of globalisation”, “Christian witness in the workplace” and “Work as a vocation”. All sessions concluded with the opportunity for delegates to take the microphone and share their own experiences. It was during these times that my eyes were opened to the struggles and injustices faced by many young workers in parts of the world such as South America and Africa.

One day of the Forum was spent on pilgrimage in Rome, with Mass celebrated by a very engaging Indian prelate, Cardinal Ivan Dias (Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of People).

We were particularly blessed during the Forum to receive a letter written by Pope Benedict XVI. In writing to us he addressed many of the issues facing young workers today and offered wise words of encouragement and advice. He concluded by imparting a special Apostolic Blessing to the Forum and all young Christian workers.

It was truly a blessing to be chosen to go to this Forum.

*Submitted by Dominic Orr*

Our Diocese’s preparations for World Youth Day, Sydney, 2008 were officially launched at the Youth and Young Adults’ Mass at the Cathedral on 11 March. Special WYD candles were blessed and then distributed to each of the 50 Parish and school representatives at the end of Mass. The Catholic Development Fund (CDF) has also launched a scheme to fund the Diocese’s WYD costs. Over \$500,000 of deposits have already been invested in the CDF. The target is \$1.5 million in deposits.

The Diocesan Youth Team has recently relaunched our website: [www.cyt.org.nz](http://www.cyt.org.nz)

Also check out the World Youth Day websites: [www.worldyouthday.org.nz](http://www.worldyouthday.org.nz) and [www.wyd2008.org](http://www.wyd2008.org)

It is important that those thinking about attending World Youth Day in Sydney next year register their interest with the Youth Team Office. Some families have also expressed interest in attending – and this is also possible.

If you have any queries about WYD, please speak to your Parish contact person, or contact Edmund le Grelle, Diocesan Coordinator for WYD, on 366 9869.

## Schools



*Staff; Mary Firth, Ann Hough, Lynn Mischewski*

### **ST PATRICK’S SCHOOL, WAIMATE**

Staff at St Patrick’s School, Waimate, are walking the talk this term. On 10/11 March the staff and friends of St Patrick’s School entered a team in the Relay for Life, raising over \$900.00 for the Cancer Society in the process. Prior to that, teachers participated in Bikewise Week and completed the Hadlow to Harbour 10km walk. As well as improving their own personal fitness, staff are aiming at providing positive role models for the students by cycling and walking to school regularly.

### **ST BERNADETTE’S SCHOOL, HORNBY**

#### **Hei Flyer Model**



Last year the staff at St Bernadette’s,

in consultation with the children and the parents, developed a values and inquiry learning model called the Hei Flyer Model. (Hei spelt this way as our school is on Hei Hei Road.)

Our Hei Flyer Model is receiving National and International recognition.

We have had more than 250 principals, teachers and Board members from schools throughout Canterbury, the North Island and Australia visit our school.

Last year Mr Terry Gimpel, Principal of Guardian Angels’ Catholic School, a school with a roll of 700 students on the Gold Coast of Australia, visited St Bernadette’s. He was so impressed by what he witnessed at St Bernadette’s he returned to Australia and applied for and was granted a National Professional Development Study Award for Australian Catholic Primary School Principals. The Award recognizes principals in Australian schools who have submitted a proposal to

enhance the value of Australian Catholic Primary Education. Terry is going to use the St Bernadette’s Hei Flyer Model to develop a comprehensive school plan based on the development, understanding and acceptance of school value systems for Australian schools. Staff from St Bernadette’s will travel to Australia shortly to talk to schools and present the Model at a conference.

The success of our Hei Flyer model is a tribute to the staff and pupils in our school. As a school we are very, very proud of our achievements. More importantly the Hei Flyer Model has had a huge impact on teaching, learning and behaviour throughout the school. At St Bernadette’s we are all Hei Flyers. ■■■

### South Canterbury Men's Retreat

On 4 November the Knights of the Southern Cross organised a retreat day for men of the pastoral region. Over 20 men gathered at Roncalli College to reflect and pray together under the guidance of Fr. John O'Connor. The theme was 'How men establish a relationship with God and hear His voice in their life'.

We discovered that, in our weakness, we can be drawn much closer to Jesus and it is in Him that we will find our strength.

The general consensus on the day was 'a top experience that we strongly recommend to other men's groups.'

### SPECIAL PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS AND FOR PRIESTS

Every Thursday in our Diocese, is a day set aside to pray for Vocations to the Priesthood.

Each Parish will have been given information about this, so please make a point of finding out just exactly what your Parish is suggesting.

We have only two men training for the Priesthood in our Diocese. This covers a period of seven years, so there is a need and you are asked to respond in whatever way you can, but especially by prayer.

### The Diocesan Welfare Council

invites applications for the allocation of the Tindall Foundation grant funds received for distribution to qualifying applicants in the Christchurch Catholic Diocese.

For a preliminary application form and the Tindall Foundation funding guidelines please contact:

**Diocesan Welfare Council**  
C/-Jon Brian  
P O Box 4237  
Christchurch 8140  
Phone 379 0012

Preliminary applications close 15 June 2007. Successful applicants will be invited to lodge a full application with the Diocesan Welfare Council.

### LITTLE COMPANY OF MARY



Sister Philippine Cass and her nephew, Chris Cass

Sister Philippine Cass LCM celebrated her Diamond Jubilee of Religious Profession on April 27<sup>th</sup> at St Mary's Church, Manchester St. Father Denis Scully SM, Chaplain at Mary Potter Courts was the main celebrant at the Eucharist of Thanksgiving; concelebrants were Mons Bede O'Gorman and four Marist Priests. Afternoon tea was served in the Church Narthex; many LCM's, Sister's nephew from Sydney and friends joined in the very joyous occasion.

The extension to Mary Potter Courts in Durham St North is now completed and the 13 new Villas are occupied. Father Denis Scully SM celebrates Mass daily for the enlarged LCM family. Following the sale of the Mary Potter Hospital the Sisters wanted to share their resources with



New Mary Potter Villas

others, especially the elderly. The Villas are available as affordable rental accommodation for long term, independent persons over 60 years of age.



### PLEASE

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The Editor.



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# AROUND THE PARISHES

## HOLY NAME PARISH, ASHBURTON



*Mrs Margaret Reynolds,  
Mrs Noreen Tod*

At the March meeting of the Ashburton Catholic Women's League we presented Honorary Life Membership to Mrs Margaret Reynolds and Mrs Noreen Tod for their outstanding work for the CWL.

For over 40 years, Margaret has been running Euchre evenings in the Parish Centre to raise money for our mission stations in the Pacific, and Noreen has

been helping to do this for 35 years, every Monday night for nine months of each year. Together they have raised over \$60,000 for mission stations in Fiji and the Solomon Islands. This service deserved special recognition and was followed by a fun Euchre night with all the members present.

## ST ITA'S CHURCH, HINDS.

The Tinwald Parish Chaiman, John Farrell, writes, 'On closure of the St Ita's Church, Hinds, after 94 years of celebrating Mass as part of Holy Name Parish and in 1964 in the Tinwald Parish, it was donated to the Wild Life Trust, Christchurch, where it is now located.'

It has been decided to publish a history book of the Church.

The author is Pat O'Brien and copies of this book entitled 'Church of St Ita, Hinds' are available from the Ashburton Parish Office, priced at \$20.00.

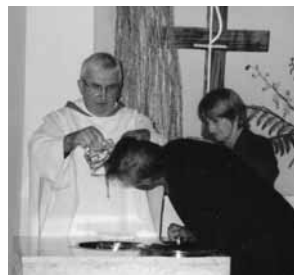
## CHATHAM ISLANDS

The Pitt Island Community was shocked at the sudden death of Eva and Ken Lanause, leaving a gap in their small community. Fr. O'Connor was there to conduct the Church's funeral rites with solemnity.

The Catholic Faith of the Chathams can be traced back to the evangelisation by Evangeline Prendeville and Annie Maata Gregory-Hunt. Our Priests have been present over much of this time, as well as Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions and the Missionary Sisters of Mary.

The Islanders have a great love of the Priests and Sisters who have served them so well and they look forward to the new challenges to their faith which come into reality with the introduction of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan.

## ST PATRICK'S PARISH, GREYMOUTH



*Fr. John Morrison P.P. baptising  
Richard Butcher*

Five people were baptised during the Easter Vigil ceremony in St Patrick's Church this Easter. They were joined by two people who were already baptised and so were received into the full life of the Catholic Church.

Preparing together through the RCIA programme, these seven people formed a strong bond with one another. Each instruction session finished with ten minutes of silent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

Congratulations to them all.

## OUR LADY OF FATIMA PARISH



*Vietnamese Catholic Community*

For the first time since its founding, The Vietnamese Catholic Community had the honour of welcoming Reverend Bishop John Cunneen to Sunday Mass (6 May 2007). Both the Bishop and Father Paul Duncan celebrated Mass, and the Bishop's Homily was translated into Vietnamese by Sister Marie Celine Do (RNDM). Women from the community wore colourful traditional dresses (for special occasions only) and everyone sang beautiful Vietnamese hymns as part of welcoming and appreciating the Bishop's visit.

The occasion coincided with Bishop Cunneen's 75th birthday. So after Mass, around 70 people gathered in the main hall to enjoy delicious Vietnamese food prepared by each family, and of course, a yummy birthday cake! A number of community members were impressed with the Bishop's care and friendliness. We wish him good health in his retirement.

## SACRED HEART PARISH, TIMARU.

On December 8th 2006, the parishioners bade farewell to the Society of Mary Order which had faithfully served the Parish for 137 years. A concelebrated Mass included Bishop Cunneen, Fr Brian Cummings, the Vicar Provincial of the Marish Fathers and members of the Parish community, Frs Earl Crotty, Peter Bradley, Vince Curtain and



Kevin O'Donoghue. Brother Luke Paget was also present.

On behalf of the parishioners, Ray Brosnahan paid tribute to the work of the Priests and Brothers over the years. He spoke of the contributions of the staff over the years and also the present staff. He also mentioned the great work done by the Society of Mary in St Patrick's High School and Roncalli College.

Mr Noel Murray, Parish Chairman, presented a gift to each of the staff members.

It was a really wonderful occasion, of course tinged with the sadness of losing such wonderful servants of the Lord.

### ST JOSEPH'S PARISH, PAPANUI



Members of the Marian Group

There is a newly installed, comfortable new seat outside St Gregory's Church. Earlier this year the Parish Priest, Fr. Simon Eccleton, blessed the seat that has been given for the convenience of parishioners.

It has been dedicated to the memory of the deceased members of the St Gregory's Marian Group. This Marian Group is a group of committed people who seek spiritual growth through prayer and active work within the Parish family.

The purchase was made possible by the generous donations from deceased members of the parish family.

### ST ANNE'S PARISH, WOOLSTON

Fr Chris Friel returned recently from leading a tour to the Holy Land. Mass was celebrated daily in the principal churches and shrines associated with the life and death of Jesus. The small group of 15 came away all the richer for their knowledge gained, and their hearing of the readings at Sunday Mass will never be quite the same. A pilgrimage tour

to Ireland is planned for April 2008 and the Passion Play at Oberammergau in 2010. For inquires please contact Peter Fleming at (09) 580 0472 - or Fr Chris.

### ST JOSEPH'S PARISH, TEMUKA



Liz Hewson and Bishop Jones

On Sunday 13 May, Bishop Barry presented Liz Hewson with her Benemerenti Medal.

Liz has given exceptional and varied service to the Geraldine Parish over many years.

After Mass, a large gathering of Parishioners and members of Liz's family sat down to a pot-luck lunch to celebrate the event.

### ST PATRICK'S PARISH, KAIAPOI

The Parish Council organised an evening of festivities and activities for St Patrick's Day, that commenced after the Saturday evening Mass. The Parish hall was the venue for the evening. This was turned out resplendent in green, thanks to the diligent efforts of several parishioners.

The event was well attended with around 150 parishioners and families attending. Of course, Irish songs were obligatory really. The Parish music group provided a musical backdrop for the repertoire of Irish songs to sing along to and printed up a song book so that anybody willing to sing had the words available. We had an Irish Dancing demonstration and those



St Patrick's Celebration, Kaiapoi

game enough, were invited to give it a go. The evening was well supported by several local businesses who donated goods that were used as door prizes and prizes for raffles during the course of the evening.

The highlights of the evening were the strongly contested "Wearing O' the Green" trophy,

during which a mention was made of bribing the Parish Priest!, and a traditional Irish game where coins were tossed at a bottle of Irish Whisky!

The evening was used to raise funds towards Parish activities associated with World Youth Day 2008. Almost \$500 was raised towards this cause.



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## PRIESTS FROM IRELAND



*Denis K. O'Sullivan, Pat Foley, John Murphy  
 (about 1951)*

The Diocese of Christchurch has been gloriously blessed by a number of secular Priests who have served here. They volunteered to leave their native land and their families to come to our part of the world so that they could be servants in proclaiming the Word of God. Let us always be grateful for their sacrifice and remember them in our prayers.

The following is a list of the names of those Priests. Only two remain in the Diocese, Fr. Kevin O'Sullivan and Finian Conway. Fr. Tom O'Donnell and Seamus Clenaghan are in Ireland, retired, and still helping in parish work.

Dean O'Donnell, Monsignors James Long, John Finerty, Thomas McKeon, Matthew Duggan, Thomas Daly, Fathers Patrick Timony, Matthew Fogarty, Thomas O'Reagan, Tim Creed, Owen Gallagher, Daniel Healy, Thomas Farrell, Patrick Foley, Joseph Kelly, Sean Daly, James Redmond, James O'Connor, Gerard Kane, Gerard Fahey, Patrick Joyce, Denis Leen, Patrick Madden, Michael Jones, Joseph Leonard, John Murphy, Michael O'Sullivan, Denis K. O'Sullivan, John O'Sullivan, Peter O'Hara, Finian Conway, Seamus Clenaghan, Larry McDonald, William Costigan, John McHale, Brendon Gibbons, Cornelius O'Brien, Ambrose Timon, Richard O'Connell, Laurence Haughey, Anthony O'Reilly, Patrick Doherty and Thomas O'Dowd.

For those who have died, we commend them to the mercy of God and for the living, we ask that God continues to be their guiding light.

## Reflection on the Saints



When I was young the Saints were my heroes. I read their lives, had their pictures on the wall of my bedroom and tried to imitate them. Our home, like most other Catholic homes had the crucifix, statues and pictures of the Saints prominently displayed. Sadly the pop stars now cover the walls of the children's bedrooms and statues have disappeared from our homes. Even St Mary, the greatest Saint, no longer finds a place of honour in our homes. Why then have the Saints lost favour over the last thirty years? There is a story told of a young administrator of a Catholic Church who was full of zeal to build up the congregation. He decided to refurbish the Church and the first thing he did was to take away all the statues and hide them in a back room. Some time passed and the congregation still didn't increase but sadly decreased. One day the Priest asked a faithful old lady what was wrong and she gently said, "Father, you have taken away all our friends!"

I notice here at Sacred Heart Parish how people of other cultures on entering the Church, touch the statues and say a prayer because they are their friends. Recently, when in England and Ireland, I noticed many churches had side altars for different Saints with candles to burn and prayers to say. We believe that the Saints are our friends and have the "Ear of God" so they are able to seek from God the gifts we need. The reason we give our children a Saint's

name is that we entrust them into the care of a Saint. Take for example St Joseph. St Teresa of Avila said, "It is amazing how many great favours God granted me through that blessed Saint for, just as Jesus was subject to Joseph on earth, so in Heaven He does whatever he commands." I knew a lady, widowed at a young age with four young children. Life was difficult, especially financially, but instead of finding another husband she chose St Joseph to be her help mate and he never let her down through all her difficulties. Our Holy Father, speaking at John Paul II's funeral said, "At that moment of his passing into the next world, Pope John Paul could call on the Saints from every age knowing they would form a living procession to accompany him into the next world and into the glory of God." Yes, the Saints are our friends and wonderful models to follow. If we read their lives, we will be challenged to do great things for God. I wonder how many of us still ask St Christopher to protect us while driving. Do we call on St Anthony to find lost things? Do we pray to St Joseph to get us a job or give us the gift of a happy death? The Little Flower said she would spend her eternity doing good on this earth and that is true of all the Saints. Next Sunday when you profess your Faith and say "I believe in the communion of Saints," show that you really mean it by again inviting your favourite Saints into your life.

*Fr Paddy Cahill*

## Inform

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