



FOOTPRINTS



**A Christmas Liturgy at the Marian Centre Catholic Kindergarten
(See pages 20-22)**

MAGAZINE OF ST. MARK'S PARISH PAKURANGA AUCKLAND

**What does 'evangelise' mean?
"To give witness with joy and
simplicity to who we are and what
we believe in."
Pope Francis**



October-December 2018

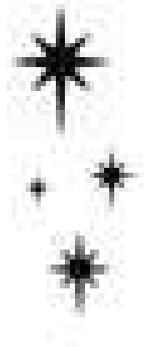
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**Online Edition:
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A Word from our Parish Priest

Nativity of Our Lord



The Christmas story reached its culmination during the nativity of the Holy Child Jesus. What is Christmas? What is the real meaning of Christmas in a world that speaks only of the commercial value of this great feast day?

I believe that Christmas is the meeting of lovers initiated by God, the Great Lover. He searched for his children who were lost by sin, pride and disobedience. He won't count the cost of searching even if the life of His Only Begotten Son is at stake.

Christmas means "God is looking for us, through His Son, Jesus the Christ." Jesus enters our world as a helpless infant starting his lifelong crusade of leading us back to the Father's merciful and forgiving heart.

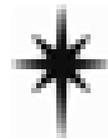
As the year 2018 comes to an end, we soon experience another Christmas. It is my wish that all the parishioners of St. Mark's Parish, will experience His presence in their homes and lives. Let us not lose our hope and trust in God, even though we are confronted with challenges.

I also believe that this is the opportune time to thank you for your support in my ministry in this Parish - your gesture of co-operation with our Church's activities, your willingness to support the various endeavours to keep our Church going. Serving this multicultural parish is amazing. It made me reflect on my journey of faith and it has deepened my commitment to the missionary priesthood.

God has found us, His search will be over when we surrender to Him our lives and allow Him to be with us.

Merry Christmas and a grace filled 2019!

Fr Oliver Aro.



In this issue....we celebrate all the Parish activities from September to December 2018. This includes Solemnities and Feast Days, the Advent Season and the climax of Advent....the birth of the Holy Child, Jesus. His humility, vulnerability, mission of forgiveness and humanity in divinity....lead us to try and imitate Him. He became human to lead us to the Divine! May we all share in the peace and joy of His birthday!



THE MEANING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES



Week 1
Hope

Reminds us...
Jesus is coming

Bible verse
Romans 15:
12-13

Bible verse
Luke 2:10

Reminds us...
The joy at the coming
birth of Jesus



Week 3
Joy

Week 2
Faith



Reminds us...
To prepare the way of
the Lord

Bible verse
Luke 3:4-6

Bible verse
Luke 2:14

Reminds us...
"Glory to God in the highest
heaven, and on earth
peace for those he favours"

Week 4
Peace





Martin Wu Celebrates Another Milestone - Ordination to Transitional Deacon



With thanksgiving to God

Holy Cross Seminary and the Catholic Dioceses of
Auckland, Palmerston North and Hamilton

joyfully celebrated the

Ordination to the Sacred Order of Deacons

of

Martin Wu, Vui Hoang and Matthew Gibson



on

Saturday 29th September 2018

Sacred Heart Church, Vermont Street, Ponsonby, Auckland



Deacon Martin's Message

***".....and they left everything and followed him."
Luke 5:11***

This was a very challenging bible verse for me when I was first discerning priesthood and even after I entered the seminary. But now this verse of Luke has another meaning for me. Jesus doesn't want me to look back because He knows that I love what is ahead of me. 'Pastoral Charity' calls me to be free because what greater joy is there but to be as what Pope John Paul II said to the young people in 2000: 'Young people be watchmen of the morning.'

As I reflect on my life now my dream of happiness has always been to help people, there is something very, very joyful about this from when I was a child. Now I see that my dream and desire comes from Jesus. His invitation of 'come follow me' was hard to say 'yes' to at first because I didn't allow Jesus to enter fully to be 'the way, the truth and the life'.

Continued on Page 6



Above: Each of the candidates went to Bishop Lowe and, knelt before him, and placed his joined hands between those of the Bishop as a sign of humility, respect and obedience.



Left: Bishop Lowe invited those present to pray for God's blessing upon the candidates who prostrated themselves lying face down before the altar as a sign of their unworthiness for the Office that were about to assume and their complete dependence upon God.





Continued from Page 5

But since I entered the seminary to discern this vocation, He has always encouraged me even in the toughest and most challenging times because He loves me and wants me to take courage to 'be not afraid'. To say 'yes' was the best decision I have made in my life, leaving behind was not losing something, but gaining something greater.

Not being bound but being set free. I wanted to leave behind my nets because I was now given nets to catch people. I was encouraged to be the morning watchman. God inspired me and said: 'I see in you the morning watchman.' From a human formation point of view - this was an important part to trust in God's providence more and more.

Not only that but being able to understand this; 'Freely you have received and freely you are called to give, Go in my name, because you have believed... offer Hope to those who have yet to know that I am the Lord your God.'

Martin Wu

"Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding."

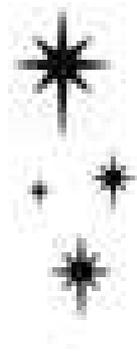
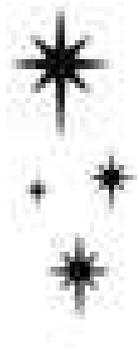
- Jeremiah 3:15



Above: Bishop Patrick Dunn lays his hands on Martin' head... a gesture which dates from the time of the Apostles.



Above: Bishop Stephen Lowe places the Book of Gospels in Martin's hands and says, "Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach".



Above: From left to right, Deacons Martin, Matthew and Vui pray their first Mass as Transitional Deacons.



Martin's community join with (from left) Rev. Msgr. Bernard Kiely, Vicar-General of Auckland Diocese, Deacon Martin Wu and the Chaplain to the Chinese community, Rev. Peter Choy.





Christmas Boxes: The Power of a Simple Gift

Once again the parish got behind this charity. Maureen and I took the boxes to Henderson where they were very welcome at the Operation Christmas Child headquarters. In total 178 boxes were returned and are on their way to these children.

Thank you to Father Oliver, Father Austin and the office staff for your support. And to everyone of you who filled and returned your boxes. You have made a difference.

When these boxes are handed out to the children each one has a book about Jesus placed on the top. Please continue to pray for these children that they will invite Jesus into their hearts. Thank you and a very happy Christmas to you all.

Megan McColl.



Above: Maureen Bell (left) and Megan McColl delivering many boxes from generous parishioners at St. Mark's Parish for distribution to the needy.



Above: The happy recipients.



Friendship Group Christmas Luncheon

We had a lovely Christmas lunch at the Howick RSA on 29th November. It's always a lovely way to finish the year. Our group is a very small one but we do have extras join us for this luncheon.

If you would like to join this group please know you would be very welcome. We meet on the last Thursday of the month from 11am in the parish centre. It's a social group where we have guests entertain us and we enjoy a game of bingo. We bring lunch to share. By 1pm it's all over.

Thank you to Naomi for all your help in organising these luncheons. This year's Christmas hamper was won by Henriquetta who is a great supporter of our group.

We will be up and running again in February and everyone is welcome.

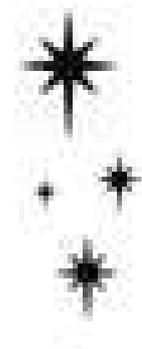
Happy Christmas to you all. Megan





White Chocolate Rocky Road

2 x 180g blocks White chocolate
60g pistachios
110g macadamias
250g marshmallows
100g dried cranberries
1/3 cup coconut



Roughly chop macadamias and marshmallows.
Add pistachios and cranberries. Mix all together.
Carefully melt chocolate.
Fold everything in together to cover with chocolate.
Spread into lined 30 x 15cm tin.
Refrigerate then cut into squares with a warm knife.
Enjoy this Christmas treat

With thanks to Megan McColl





All Saints Day

by Fr Austin Fernandes

Today we are called to be saints. In the book of Revelations, John gives us sufficient amount of hope when he is shown the beautiful image of the heavenly Jerusalem where countless people are worshipping our Lord in front of the throne and John says that these are the ones who have endured great trials and persecutions and have washed their robes white again in the blood of the lamb, indicating a life that is required of us to fulfil our deepest longing, the deepest desire of our hearts where we can face to face worship and praise God. In his letter too John says that God has lavished his love upon us by letting us be called children of God and as children of God we must strive hard to purify ourselves by being one.



We are all in the process of becoming saints and we need to purify ourselves and the way to purify ourselves is given to us by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew on the Sermon on the Mount. These are the beatitudes. Just as Moses was given the Old Law on the mountain, Jesus too takes his disciples on the mountain and gives them and to us the beatitudes - the new way of living. These beatitudes can help us on our journey of life to become saints. It helps us to understand Jesus and the requirements for entering the kingdom of God. Beatitudes is derived from the Latin word, *beatus* meaning 'blessed,' or 'favoured by God.'

Everyone of us struggle to become saints but the most important thing to know is that we are the ones who are 'favoured by God,' that means, God's grace is there with us and God is the one who helps us to live these beatitudes because it is living a life contrary to worldly values and therefore we all struggle. There are 9 beatitudes in Mathew's Gospel and each begins with a blessing and these blessings will be bestowed on all those who make a sincere effort to live by these beatitudes.



All Souls Day

by Fr Austin Fernandes

In our first reading today we see how God passionately loves us. The prophet Isaiah tells his people that God is preparing for them a banquet of rich food on the holy mountain; the holy mountain represents Zion, the New Jerusalem, every shame and disgrace, every veil of mourning that surrounds them will be taken away, tears from every cheek will be wiped away. Death itself will be destroyed. To sum it up there will only be joy and happiness. This is the beautiful image that Isaiah portrays which each of us hopes and longs for. Jesus in the Gospel demonstrates what Isaiah foretold by rising from the dead and reconciling us back to the Father. This hope is not deceptive as St Paul tells us in our second reading today.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that hope is a theological virtue that is infused by God in our souls to make us capable of acting as God's children. The object of hope is eternal life - the vision of God and moves us to seek God. It is the promise of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in us. It is a theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

This hope inspires our actions so as to order them to the kingdom of heaven; it keeps us from discouragement; sustains us during times of abandonment; and opens up our hearts in expectation of eternal beatitude. Filled with this hope we are preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity. This hope is deeply rooted in the beatitudes - Jesus' teachings on the Sermon on the Mount; it's a new way of living contrary to the worldly way.

When our hope is strong our life and our lifestyle will change. So, let us hope in every circumstance, with the grace of God to preserve it to the end and obtain the joy of heaven, as God's eternal reward for the good works done here on earth that at the end of our lives we too can confidently pray like the psalmist and say, 'the Lord is my shepherd there is nothing I shall want.'





Kids Fun Day Out 2018

To celebrate and support special kids, that was what the Interfaith Friendship Group (IFG) and St Marks, along with many other faith groups had once again achieved last Saturday 6th October at the free Fun Day Out.

St Marks had decided on three activities this year. Andrea would organise and make play dough, while Preston would organise 10 pin bowling, golf and magnetic fishing for the event. For food, Adelyn and Noelyn had purchased a large quantity of fruit thanks to our parishioners donations.



The Kids Fun Day Out would be held once again at the North Shore Event Center. The location was vast, with numerous stallholders providing information for various activities and support for families with special needs children.

The main attractions was the many activities provided by the event, most notable was the new ice skating rink from the Kaipatiki Trust. There was also Face Painting, Giant Jinger, Bubble Machines, Magic Puzzles, and Circus Trainers from the Sathya Sai International Organisation, and Henna Tattoo Painting from the NZ Muslim Association. The event was also filled with splendid Costumed Characters from different children's shows.



An event would not be complete without spectacular stage performers. Performances included African Drums, TZU Chi Buddhist sign language dancers, and Pacific and Indian themed dancers.





Thanks to the efforts of each faith group, the food court housed a plethora of muffins, fried rice and noodles, chips, sausages, and of course fruit. This buffet was completely free for our guests. Our fruit stand was very popular and quickly emptied out.

In the end, the event serviced over 1000 guests attendees. The hall was filled with positive atmosphere with many smiling faces. Thanks to all our donators and volunteers. This a very lively and joyful event, and we are very happy to have contributed to its success.



St Mark's Catholic School
Pakuranga

40th Jubilee
30-31st March 2019

Former staff, pupils, friends welcome

For more information phone 576 5296
or email admin@stmarks.co.nz

www.facebook.com/events/801455726909171/



GIFTS THAT DON'T COST A CENT



THE GIFT OF LISTENING

Listen without interrupting.



THE GIFT OF A SMILE

Give a smile to those around you.



THE GIFT OF LOVE

Give a hug, a compliment or a loving detail.



THE GIFT OF GRATITUDE

Say "thank you" to the people in your life.



THE GIFT OF FAVOR

Every day try to do someone a favor.



CatholicLink

Advent is a journey to Christmas...



Let us prepare "the Manger of our Soul" with the Sacrament of Reconciliation.



Pope Francis Speaks: Gossip Kills, God is Truth

In his continuing catechesis on the Ten Commandments, the Pope during his General Audience reflects on the eighth commandment: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour".

In his Catechesis devoted to the eighth commandment, Pope Francis told pilgrims in St Peter's Square on Wednesday that Christians are called to be "truthful not only in our words but in our entire way of acting towards others." Speaking at his weekly General Audience, the Pope said that, "our ultimate model in this regard is Jesus himself. He is the truth in person who, at his trial before Pilate, revealed that he came into this world to testify to the truth."

Where there is a lie there is no love. When a person is not communicating authentically, underlined the Pontiff, it is a serious matter because it inhibits relationships and therefore inhibits love. **"Where there is a lie, he continued, there is no love."**



Beware of Gossip

Gossiping, Pope Francis pointed out, kills. It kills, he explained, "because the tongue kills, like a knife." Be careful, the Pope added, the gossip "is a terrorist because he or she throws a bomb and leaves." "Christians are not exceptional men and women, said the Pope, "we are, however, children of our heavenly Father, who is good and does not disappoint us, and places in our hearts the love for our brothers and sisters."

God is Truth

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour" he stressed, means living as children of God, acting in accordance with his will and trusting in him. "It bids us live this new life to the full, and thus to bear true witness to God's saving love, made incarnate in the humanity of Christ our Lord. "I trust God", concluded Pope Francis, "this is the great truth."



Blessed Moments

Left: Gerry and Clrita Dela Rosa celebrated 53 years of Marriage on the 8 December 2018. In 1965, they were married in the church of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Cebu City, Philippines.



Right: Mothers' Prayers Group celebrated a Christmas Lunch prior to their last prayer meeting.



Above: St. Mark's Couples for Christ Choir.



Above: Fr. Oliver Aro M.S.P. Pakuranga, Auckland Diocese; Fr. Freddie Permentilla, M.S.P. Dunedin; Fr. Jaime Lalaguna, M.S.P. Queenstown, Dunedin Diocese; Fr. Richard Cortes, M.S.P. Panguru, Auckland Diocese; Fr. Fernando Alombro, M.S.P. Matamata Hamilton Diocese.

All of the above priests gathered for morning Mass at St. Mark's Church on the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 21st November 2018. The Missionary Society of the Philippines was meeting together to discuss their work in New Zealand in preparation for a Chapter of their Order next year.

*Roses are red
Forty years true
Love is warm fuzzies
And daily "I Do's!"*



Right: On the 2nd of December, Albert and Josephine William celebrated their Ruby Anniversary with a Chinese banquet. They are seen here with Fr. Aro, some friends, and family at the Rose Table.



Left: Our Parish Priest celebrated his Birthday on Wednesday, 10th October and then on Sunday the 14th October with the Parish after 10.00am Mass.



Marian Centre, Catholic Kindergarten

Catholic Diocese of Auckland, Catholic Special Character Review

Highlights

The Marian Early Childhood Centre has a shared understanding of their spirituality which is based on their Marian Charism. The qualities of Mary, such as nurturing, kindness, gentleness, love, joy, patience and faithfulness are embodied in the staff and in their dealings with the children in their care. Children are greeted by name when they arrive in the morning and are welcomed into the Centre as a second home.

The parents see the staff as being role models of Catholic Christian values, as can be witnessed through their words and actions.

"Teachers show a real love of God."

"There is a calm warmth about the staff." (Parents)

The lived spirituality is also evident in the way that everyone relates to others - staff, children and parents - and how visitors are welcomed by everyone. It is also reflected in their logo of a Maori Madonna and their motto *"Let the Little Children Come to Me"* which is also written in te reo.

The Management Committee, Supervisor and staff ensure that the Catholic ethos permeates everything that happens in the Centre as can be seen in the Strategic and Annual Plans where they have goals, strategies and actions for the Catholic Special Character.

All staff see their role as an important ministry as they nurture the faith of their students and their families. They are aware of their importance of being good role-models so that the children and their families experience what it is to belong to a loving Catholic environment.

"We accept each child as a child of God and guide them to discover that God loves them, no matter what."

"We sow the seed." (Staff).

The core strategy 1.3 of the Annual Plan is to encourage parents and whanau to join with the staff to experience the celebration of special events of the Liturgical year at St. Patrick's Parish and other neighbouring Parishes.

- ☒ Prayer is an integral part of the daily programme
- ☒ Staff are proud of the way children take prayers and Gospel stories they have learned into their homes to share with their families.

Throughout the buildings and grounds, there are symbols of the Catholic faith and the values that are espoused.

- ☒ Around the outside veranda, there is wood and coloured Perspex which resembles stained glass. The panels depict some of the well-known stories of the Old and New Testament, as well as stories of the people and land of Aotearoa and the culture of the Centre.



- ✘ Fish hooks in three of the panels are symbolic of how the children are drawn into the Centre from the wider community. This toanga is a very visible reminder to the children and to all who enter the Centre that they are entering a Centre, which at its heart, is Catholic.
- ✘ Inside there are some very visible reminders that this is a Catholic Centre, including formal photographs of Pope Francis, Bishop Patrick Dunn, Mary, Suanne Aubert and other holy people who are significant to the Centre.
- ✘ There is also a prayer table which reflects the liturgical season.
- ✘ Some staff members are Catholic and belong to local Parishes and they all take seriously their role of evangelisation. The Supervisor gave the example of a non-Catholic student teacher who became so interested in the Catholic faith during her time at the Centre, that she joined the R.C.I.A. programme at a neighbouring Parish and she was received into the Church with the Supervisor as her Godparent for Baptism and her Sponsor for her Confirmation.
- ✘ The Supervisor tries to have regular contact with the Parish Priest. He is invited to attend functions at the Centre and he makes an effort to attend these. The staff at the neighbouring St. Patrick's Primary School are also invited to attend and the School and the Centre join together for various activities. Just prior to the visit, the Centre had joined with the School for the All Saints Day Mass.
- ✘ The Supervisor has been on the staff for eleven years, of these three and a half have been as the Supervisor. He is a man of very deep faith, which is manifested in many very meaningful ways. He has a good rapport with the children.

The Supervisor is a very active witness of his faith. This comes through in his dealings with staff, students and their parents. He presents the face of Christ to others - this was commented on by parents and the Management Committee....





As a practising Catholic and a father of six children he says,
"I want to transfer the faith that I've lived and learnt to all the children, staff and whanau of the Centre."

The Centre welcomes children with special needs and provides the appropriate assistance to help them to realise their full potential. On the day of the visit, personnel from the Ministry of Education visited the Centre to assess the needs of a child before starting school.

One mother spoke with gratitude about the care given to her son,
"My son has special needs and it was this Centre who helped to identify his needs, get us support and accepted him for the person he is."

The Centre recognised Maori as Tangata Whenua and they have a strong commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi. Great emphasis is also placed on recognising the importance of each child's cultural identity to boost their self-esteem. Children's birthdays are celebrated. The Marian Centre's birthday is also celebrated in Term 4 each year.

The Centre acknowledges that *"Parents are the first educators of the children and the Centre supports the faith learned at home in the family."* (Values arising from the Mission Statement.)

Parents of the Centre are very affirming of the staff and acknowledged that the staff were one of the strengths of the Centre and the reason they decided to enrol their children there.

"The teachers share a real love of God." (Parent).

They know that their children are safe and loved.

CONCLUSION:

The Marian Early Childhood Centre is ably led by the Supervisor and the Chairperson of the Management Committee. Along with the staff and Committee members, they work tirelessly to provide an excellent Catholic pre-school education for the children enrolled. They all see their work as a ministry within the Church.

Under the patronage of Mary, the Mother of God, the Centre continues to provide an all-encompassing family environment that nurtures the holistic development of young children.

"This Centre is unique in its prayerfulness, the love of God and Our Lady and in the teaching of the faith." (Parent)

Signed:

Colleen Gleeson

Review and Development Officer

Catholic Schools Office, Auckland

and

Neil Laurensen

Reviewer.

November 2018.



RCIA

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults



Above: (From left to right) Paul Evans, Cory Leung and Lewis Hogg.



Above: Naomi Deng

*Please pray for these
Catechumens who are
journeying towards
Easter...*



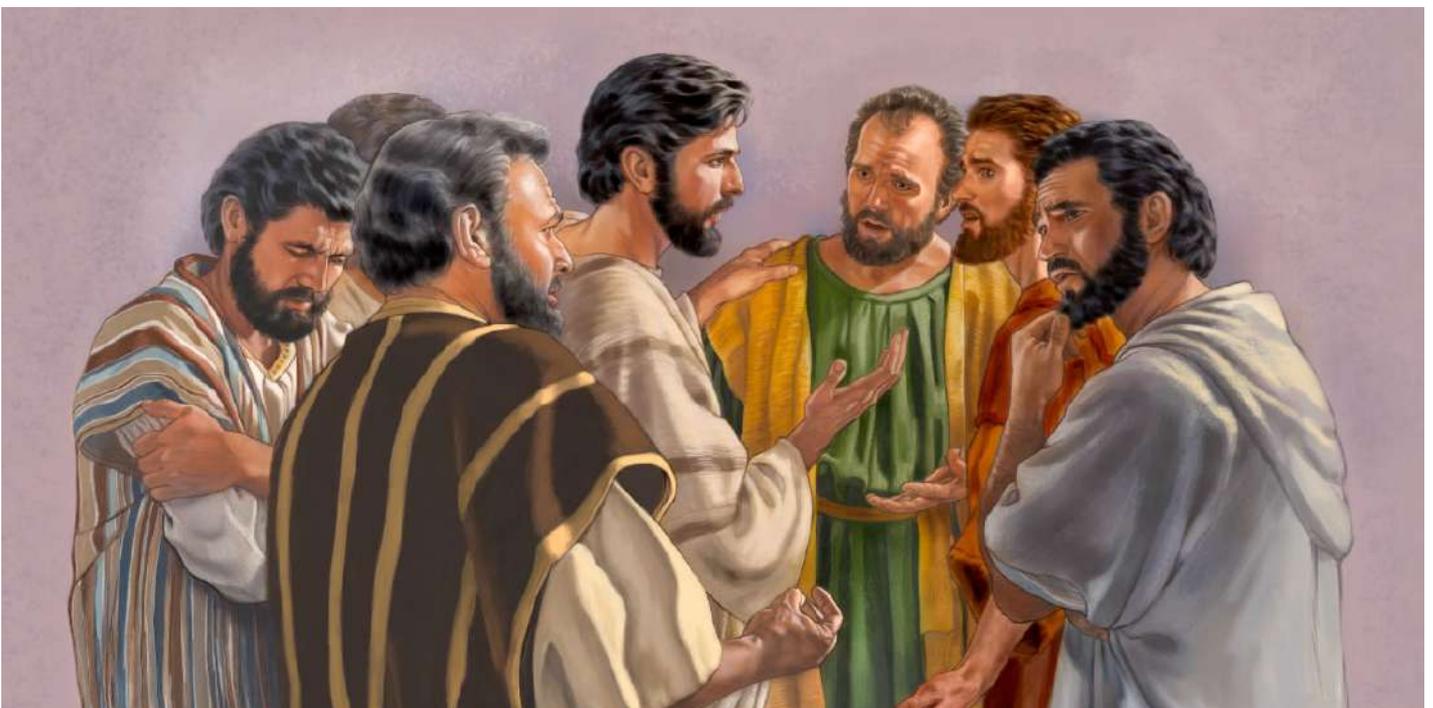


How important is it to be spiritually conscious, spiritually aware of what is happening in life?

In one of the chapters in the Gospel, we see the disciples arguing about who will be the greatest in the kingdom of God. The disciples were so pre-occupied by their worldly way of thinking that their minds were clouded; they were not hearing of what Jesus was telling them but they were busily engrossed in their selfish ambitious ways. They had very high ambitions and thought that Jesus would set up an earthly kingdom, and so each wanted to get the top position in his kingdom.

The thinking of the disciples reminded me of my own life journey. As soon as I graduated as an engineer my ambition was to get a job, earn lots of money, buy a house, get married and have at least more than 4 children, because my Dad had 4 and I wanted to beat him at that and settle down in life. I wanted to grow in my job and my dream was to become, one day, the CEO of the company. So, I worked for different companies; I worked towards my ambition. Every year I would set a goal for myself, if this year my annual income was x amount, then next year it should be x + something and that's how I would gauge my achievements and performance. I worked hard toward my set goals. At one point in my life, I even worked at two jobs, a full time job as an engineer and a part-time job at 'Subway'.

As the years passed by, those dreams and ambitions changed, as I started to become more spiritually conscious, spiritually aware about life itself and the meaning of it. During those years that I worked I never neglected going to Church; my prayer life was pretty much average but the spiritual side of my being was still undeveloped. It was, I would say, on a par with the disciples in the Gospel.





In the Gospel, Jesus sought solitude with his disciples, to instruct them about his mission and what that mission involved. He tells his apostles that he will suffer bitter humiliation and death, and on the third day, rise again. This was the second time he predicted his passion to them and ties well with our first reading from the book of Wisdom.

The first reading portrays the struggle between the godless and the virtuous man, a struggle between good and evil; a struggle between virtues and vices. It immediately reminds us of Christ, the virtuous man. The Scribes, the Pharisees and the elders all plotted against him. He was an innocent victim, the Lamb of God, put to a shameful death on the cross. And even at His death, the godless said to Him, “come down from the cross, save yourself and we will believe that you are the Son of God,” displaying utter humiliation and torture at its peak.

Yet, we see Jesus persevere despite the opposition from sinners and He kept on fighting to the point of bloodshed. And this is what Jesus was trying to convey to his disciples, to make them spiritually aware, spiritually conscious of what His mission was all about. But the disciples did not understand because they were consumed by selfish ambition; consumed by false ambition. Their minds were clouded.

Ambition is not a bad thing. It is good to have goals, to want to succeed in business or career but it should not become an obsession. Many successful people sometimes have left a chain of broken relationships behind them; they have neglected family life, relationships and even their own health because they wanted to succeed at all costs.

Jesus on the other hand, teaches the apostles the true meaning of greatness, the meaning of true ambition. It is found in serving others, especially the weaker members of the community. He redefined ambition as a desire to serve, and to display it concretely. So that it would go into the head of the disciples, He sets a child in front of them, puts His arms round him and says to them, “....anyone who welcomes one of these little children in My name, welcomes Me; and anyone who welcomes Me, welcomes not Me but the One who sent Me.’

In the first century, Mediterranean world children had the lowest status of all. Being 'servant of all' meant being servant of the least, of which the child was an example. When we serve the least, in Jesus' name, we clearly act as His disciples and also we act out our relationship with Jesus; we transcend ourselves and our own interests and we become 'peacemakers' and that is what St. James, too, tells us in our second reading today.

Jesus set the example Himself. He gave His life in the service of others. The just One who was faithful, suffered at the hands of the wicked. God did not save Jesus from suffering and death at the hands of those who rejected His teaching, but God did raise Jesus to new life. May we too follow in the footsteps of the Master, constantly being aware of the Holy Spirit working in and through our lives.

By Fr Austin Fernandes



St. Mark's School - Review Highlights

This year, St Mark's Catholic School has had two external reviews which have been very positive and highlighted the wonderful teaching and learning environment and the Catholic Character of our school. Both teams of reviewers were impressed with the culture of our school, the values which were evident in the way staff and students interacted at all levels. This feedback is the result of the collaboration of all staff, our senior leadership team, PTFA, our Board of Trustees and Community working together for the good of all students. The following are statements taken from both reviews.

Catholic Special Character Review

The following are quotes taken from the Catholic Special Character Reviewers report.

St Mark's School is an authentic Catholic community whose vision is "To provide a Christ-centred, challenging, safe, happy learning environment where self-confident children achieve success in all areas of the curriculum."

St Mark's Catholic School has a shared understanding of their Catholic Spirituality which is based on the Charism of the Sisters of Our Lady of The Missions. The school's spirituality can be seen in the way staff and students relate to each other and how visitors are welcomed initially by the staff in the front office and then by all staff and students.

In their prayers, students include those in need, both nationally and internationally, and were sincere in their intentions.

St Mark's School is evangelising to the staff, students and their families, forming a link between the school and the parish.

The Principal, staff and the BOT work to build strong relationships with families and the parish. The Director of Religious Studies (DRS) meets regularly with the Parish Priest and members of the Board are rostered to attend the monthly Parish Council meetings. Both Parish Priests are invited to attend all school celebrations and events and their visits are enjoyed by both staff and the students.

A number of the staff, including the Principal, one of the AP's and the DRS are active members of the parish as are members of the Board.

St Mark's has a positive environment where all are included and encouraged. All staff members are positive role models who live the school's values and in whom students see the face of Christ.



All classrooms were attractive and vibrant learning environments and reflected the work being done on the current strand. It was very obvious to the reviewers that these were classrooms in a Catholic School.

The school and parish personnel work closely together to share resources and facilities.

The school provides many opportunities for students to contribute actively in the life of the school, taking responsibility as monitors and leaders in the classroom or in the wider school.

The reviewers meet with the school leaders and House Captains and were impressed with their knowledge of the school and its charism and their very great pride in it.



Parents spoken to were proud of their children and expressed their gratitude for what the school does when families are in need. They acknowledged that the Principal's door is always open and that she, and other staff members, as well as parents, take the initiative to reach out when it is most needed.

The BOT and the staff work well together and know that they play large part in safeguarding and strengthening the school's Catholic Special Character.

The Board are diligent in their annual self-review of Catholic Special Character and their annual report to the Proprietor.

Education Review Office

The following are quotes from the Education Review Office who gave us a top 4-5 review (which only the top 5% of schools are given).

School leaders and teachers strongly support all children to meet the schools valued outcomes. Most learners can:

- o Demonstrate and talk about their ABC's (Attitude, Behaviour and Care) and the 3 R's (Respect for Self, Others and the Environment)
- o Are articulate and respectful
- o Are continually building self-confidence and the skills necessary to lead their own learning



The school effectively supports students whose learning needs to be accelerated. This includes support for children with additional learning needs and those who are learning English as an additional language.

The school has a well-established and highly inclusive school culture. This forms a solid foundation for motivating learners to participate, contribute and progress. A respectful and welcoming environment is evident and supports children to build a strong sense of belonging and ownership of the school.

Children benefit from highly responsive teaching and learning.

School data information show that most children achieve the expected New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) in reading and mathematics. School data also shows that the majority of students achieve at their expected NZC levels in writing. This achievement has been consistent over time.

A collegial staff take a shared approach for all children's learning and wellbeing.

There are many diverse opportunities for children to learn, lead and build their experiences and skills for learning.

Teachers engage children by using high quality intentional teaching strategies. These support students, and grow their ability to take risks with their learning within a safe and positive environment.

Key Strengths

- o Collaborative, cohesive leadership that effectively fosters a professional and culturally responsive learning community.
- o A highly inclusive school culture that supports all children to engage with learning.
- o High quality teaching that encourages children to challenge themselves and think creatively.
- o Leadership that pursues strong partnerships across the school community to support equity and excellence.
- o Collective responsibility for teaching and learning that focuses on improving outcomes for all learners.

Naturally we are very proud of the feedback from both review offices and thank our dedicated teachers who are supported by an excellent team in our front office, our hard working teacher aides, cleaner and caretaker. We thank all staff, PTFA, Board of Trustees, our Parish Priests and the School/Parish community for their continued support over time.



Theology of the Body with St Mark's Youth

By Donamae Dela Cruz

YOU: Life, Love, and Theology of the Body (ToB) cuts through the noise of our egocentric world to present an authentic view of the human person. The course presents young people as unique and unrepeatable individuals who have an extraordinary story to share. YOU also introduces the truth that life is not just about them. Instead, it is about them being a gift for others.



ToB in St. Mark's occurred over two weekends during the Term 3 school holidays. About 20 youth attended and were exposed to this catechism for the first time. Ranging from 14 to 22 years old, they were deeply immersed in every session. There were ten lessons to explore, each starting with a prayer and scripture reading. Then, the teaching video presented by world-renowned catechists was played to unpack the topic.

After the clip, members were selected to read out the core teaching from the YOU manual. Each session was capped by having small group discussions. Senior youth leaders facilitated the conversation with questions regarding the session. All the members were actively participating that the allocated time was never enough.

The highlight of the course was the adoration and reconciliation provided by four priests, including Fr. Oliver and Fr. Austin. During this time, the members and leaders were unmasked and expressed raw emotions in front of Jesus. We were all able to have a dialogue with Him as He blessed us with His presence.

The satisfaction, spark of curiosity and thirst to learn more about Theology of the Body displayed by the attendees was admirable and I hope that ToB will be established within the Church to have a bigger audience. No words can describe the experience of unpacking ToB. It is life-changing. I strongly recommend everyone of all ages to explore the message St. John Paul II has left in the form of the Theology of the Body.



**20th Year of
the Candle
light Rosary
with some of
the
St. Mark's
people that
make it
happen....**



**... to pray for vocations to
the Priesthood.**





Wedding



of



Hata and

Louise

Left: Akuhata William Nahi married Ofaligi Palua Louise Semulana - Tamauka on Tuesday 27th of November 2018 at St. Mark's Church and our Parish Priest celebrated the wedding. We wish them every blessing in their new life together.

Erica's Poem for her Dad



Left: Erica and her father, Mervin Lim

To changing nappies and 16 years going,
I've learnt poetic writing from the seeds you've been sowing,
A wonderful father the strongest I know,
I see that smile after a full meal you show;
The hero with the invisible cape is my dad indeed,
The limits of an amazing human you sure do exceed;
A kiss at night to a cuddle in the day
With you a cup of love is never far away;
By my side you are there, day in and day out,
You support me through everything with absolutely no doubt;
Your selfless heart never fails to take me back in awe,
You'll get up with no question, even if you're deep in a snore;
Your abundance of knowledge inspires me everyday
With your love for the details of life making no moment ever grey
Your commitment to this family is commendable for sure
Your loving tender kindness is something we all endure
Your faith in the Lord shines through you so bright
In you I do see Jesus alight
Thank you to my Dad! You're the best I must say;
I loveeee so much, have an amazing Father's Day!
And to all fathers, grandfather, great grandfathers or father
figures out there I thank you for the endless love you all provide!
And for always being our rock!
So I wish all fathers a joyfilled day of laughter and fun and a
Happy Father's Day!



ST. MARKS' FIA FIA NIGHT 2018

by Kurt Meyer



On Saturday 3 November the St. Mark's community, together with many family and friends once again had a night of fun, food, entertainment and music at the annual Fia Fia Night hosted by the St. Mark's Pasifika Group. This year's function targeted the Sound System Project for its fund raising, and with the continued support of parishioners a net amount of over \$4,100 has been handed over to the Finance Committee.

The entertaining floor shows provided by the Young Taupou, The Samoan Divas and the STTNTT Group added to the night of exceptional dancing talents being displayed by everyone who chose to demonstrate their skills on the dance floor. Generous cash donations were made during each of the floor shows.

Prizes were awarded to those in all age groups who showed that age was no barrier to keeping up with music of the 1960s through to the 2018. Appropriate recognition was also given to the Best Pacific Island outfits worn by a non-Pacific Islander.

With the great attendance of many of the St. Mark's youth it added to full community participation and enabled a true mix of all ages to a successful social occasion.

As in previous years the Pasifika Group is most appreciative of the wonderful support given to the Fia Fia Night and the generous comments and compliments made of the evening and its organisation. The encouragement provided by Father Oliver and Father Austin was very much appreciated.







*On the 25th of October 2018,
our Parish Priest,*



and our Assistant Priest



*gave Parishioners the
Sacrament of Anointing
in a Mass*





Parish Council Report

Dear All,

On behalf of St. Mark's Parish Council, "Blessings to you All". It has been another very busy time for our Parish Council. Some of the main items we have covered off recently are as follows:

* Youth Conference/YFC - Regional Synod - Catechism of the Church Youth Conference; this was successfully held from July 6 to 8 at YMCA Camp Adair Hunua.

* Rest Home Masses - this has been initiated to focus on our parishioners who are now permanently residing in local rest homes.

* 50 Years Celebration - 50 years celebration 2021...a dedicated group is to be set up and to include members of our parish and will be focused on pastoral year of scripture, enrichment of scripture, a speakers group of discernment, youth lead preparations, and the Year of the Family to enrich family life. There will also be social aspects of our celebration with a triduum of events to take place on Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday. The official dates have been set for Friday 30 April through to Sunday 2 May 2021, so there is no clash with Anzac Day or School Holidays/Easter and first Sunday after St. Mark's Day. A Committee will be established in early 2019, as a lot of planning and fundraising will need to occur over the next 2 to 3 years.

* Euthanasia Speaker - Simon O'Connor MP, presented in the Parish Centre to update our parishioners regarding this very important piece of legislation.

* Ramp Handrails have been proposed for the steps outside the church doorways to help improve access in relation to Health and Safety.

* Columbarium - the next stage is being offered to parishioners, all current plots have been sold and we will have a gate controlled entry installed, and a cross is now in place.

* Parish Centre Chairs - new chairs to be introduced into our Parish Centre...some fundraising has occurred already.

* 40 Years St Mark's School Celebration - plans are well underway for this celebration, details are currently displayed in our newsletter re dates etc. Past Pupils and Teachers have all been invited and Bishop Patrick Dunn has been confirmed as our Mass celebrant on Sunday 31 March 2019.

* Fun Day for Kids - A very successful Kids Fun Day was held at the North Shore Events Centre in November with 16 volunteers assisting in various activities from our Parish.

* The 'Paul the Apostle' movie event, was a great success with 196 participants;

* The Healing Mass - this was held in our Parish in October and a very successful day was had with attendees from various local rest homes;

* The Eastern Diocese Event was held at our Parish on 14th November;

* The Christmas Party for all Volunteers/Youth/Altar Servers-held on Sunday 2 December;

* A Christmas Novena of Masses - There will be nine Masses to run from Saturday 15 December through to Sunday 23 December - details re this will be detailed in the weekly newsletter.

A Very Happy Christmas and New Year to all St. Mark's parishioners and thank you for your ongoing support and we as a council will continue to keep you updated as we progress throughout 2019.

With God's Blessings, Paul Oliver - St. Mark's Parish Council



Above: On the 5th of August, Agnes, daughter of Emon and Rita Gomes was baptised.



Above: Lucas and Angela, son and daughter of Bozidar and Snjezana Kalinic were baptised on the 19th of August 2018.

Baptisms at St. Mark's



Above: Noah, son of Andrew and Laura Tuyay was baptised on the 5th of August 2018.



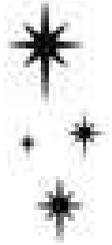
Above: Bivon, child of Chandika and Dona Adhikari was baptised on the 5th of August 2018.



Above: Rahiri, son of Vincent and Kirsten Nahi was baptised by Fr. Oliver on the 19th of August 2018.

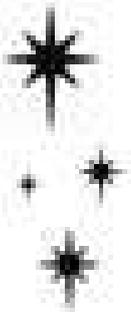


A big thank you to all the families who participated in bringing joy and music to the residence of Metlifecare at Highland Park especially Mary Hou and the Lai, Anthony, Pereira, Urlich and Petch families.



St Mark's Community Outreach

Christmas Carols at Metlifecare, Highland Park





Mini - Evangelist



This is Pope Francis as a child on the left. He lived in Buenos Aires with his family and is the eldest of five children.



How would they have celebrated CHRISTMAS?

In Argentina the weather is warm at Christmas. Preparations for Christmas begin very early in December. Many people in Argentina are Catholic and they also celebrate Advent.

Pope Francis' home would have had a "pesebre" or "nacimiento" and baby Jesus would not be in the manger. The Three Kings would be placed far away from the stable and moved closer each day. Mary and Joseph wait for the birth of their precious baby. The figure of baby Jesus is placed on the hay on Christmas Eve.

Christmas Cards aren't common in Argentina and although some people give

and receive presents, it's normally only between close family and friends. The main



Christmas celebrations take place on Christmas Eve. Pope Francis would have gone to Mass, in the late afternoon, with his family.

The main Christmas meal is eaten during the evening of Christmas Eve, often about 10pm or 11pm. It might be served in the garden or be a barbecue!

Some popular dishes include roasted turkey, roasted pork (in northern Argentina, some people will have goat), 'vitel toné' (slices of veal served with a creamy anchovy and tuna sauce), stuffed tomatoes, salads and lots of different sandwiches like 'pan de

atun' (special tuna sandwiches), 'sandwiches de miga' (sandwiches made of thin white bread without the crusts. They can be single, double or multi-layered!) and 'torre de panqueques' (a sandwich 'cake' made from several layers of tortillas with different fillings).of thin white bread without the crusts - they can be single, double or multi-





layered!) and 'torre de panqueques' (a sandwich 'cake' made from several layers of tortillas with different fillings). Dessert can be Christmas bread and puddings like 'Pan Dulce' and Panetone as well as fruit salad, ice cream and different sorts of pies. There will also be sweets like chocolate raisins, sugar-coated peanuts or almonds, mantecol (a semi-soft nougat made from peanut butter) and different kinds of turrón (hard nougat).

At midnight there will be the sound of lots of fireworks. People also like to 'toast' the start of Christmas Day. Some people like to go to midnight Mass, but other prefer to stay at home and let off fireworks and then open their presents. Another Christmas Eve night tradition are 'globos', paper decorations with a light inside that float into the sky (like Chinese Lanterns). The sky is filled with them on Christmas Eve after midnight.

In Argentina the main language spoken is Spanish, so Merry Christmas is ...

Some people stay awake all the night chatting and seeing friends and family and then spend lots of Christmas Day sleeping. Some people may go to Mass again in the morning or late afternoon on Christmas Day and there will be lots of yummy leftovers to eat!

The Day of Kings (El Día de los Reyes Magos) on January 6, marks an exciting end to the Christmas season for children in Argentina. This day marks the day of the Christian Epiphany on the twelfth day of Christmas. The event commemorates the visit of Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar who followed a star to Bethlehem from the east to bring gifts and celebrate the birth of Jesus.

In keeping with Argentina's Catholic tradition, children write a letter to the Three Wise Men, with their list of wishes and then leave their shoes by the door on the Night of Kings (Noche de Reyes, January 5). They also put out some water and grass for the three kings' camels before they go to bed.

In the morning, children who have been good all year discover that the camels ate their rations and the Three Wise Men left gifts.

.A special "Rosca de Reyes" is shared on that special day. It is a delicious, sweet bread filled with crystallised fruit and nuts.

"Feliz Navidad"





A Poem by Luci Shaw

Down He came from up,
and in from out,
and here from there.

A long leap,
and incandescent fall
from magnificent
to naked, frail, small,
through space,
between stars,
into our chill night air,
shrunk, in infant grace,
to our damp, cramped
earthy place
among all
the shivering sheep.

And now, after all,
there He lies,
fast asleep.



The first Christmas Crib was created by St. Francis of Assisi. This photo by parishioner, Evie-Irwin Green-Thompson, was just taken in Assisi.