



ARCHBISHOP OF WELLINGTON

6 September 2023

Tēnā koutou katoa

I am writing this on the day of my 30th anniversary of being a priest. I was ordained in Hastings at St John's College in the Barry O'Connor Auditorium on a very wet Saturday afternoon. Our parish church of Sacred Heart had been burnt down two years previously. Bishop Peter Cullinane ordained me. He was very unwell at the time with heart issues, and it was touch and go whether he would be able to celebrate the ordination.

I was ordained as a member of the Society of Mary, and I felt called to the apostolate of teaching. It was what I did for the next twenty years. When I began teaching I was one of over 40 Marists teaching in schools across the country. When I finished at St Patrick's Wellington in 2013 there were two Marists still teaching in the classroom.

On this day I am reflecting on what God has asked of me over these 30 years. It hasn't been what I thought it would be. These have been years of much change. Most of what was familiar has gone, be it apostolates, buildings, or people. It reminds me that what lies at the heart of this life is my relationship with God and all else fits around that.

I give thanks for all the wonderful people I have met over these years, those whom I have had the privilege of ministering to and with and those who have done so to me. I feel very blessed to have experienced all I have in these 30 years.

Like all lives there have been moments of great joy, some of just ordinary and mundane work, and times of struggle. That is totally normal and to be expected. We each have different mixes of those elements in our lives. What I do know is that this is a life that has given me real purpose and that being in relationship with God, being nourished by his Word and Sacraments, being supported in the community of faith has enabled me, thus far, to continue to say yes to what is asked of me.

If I have any regrets over these last 30 years it is that so many I have known and worked with and loved haven't had that same experience of God's presence in their lives, or found that support or place in his body, the Church. I ask myself is there more that I could have done, or can do now, to show what a joy it is to be living this Christian life within the Catholic community? That is something that I continue to ponder and ask myself, along with placing it before the Lord in prayer.

I do know after 30 years that I need God more than ever. I have come to discover more and more the power of prayer and contemplation. I am struck by the fact that you can't give what you don't have, so if I want to share the Good News then I have to let it touch and shape my heart and my life. I appreciate much more now my dependence on God and his grace and the importance of other Christian people for support in living this life.

Each one of us will have a different journey of faith. I am very grateful to God for the plan he has had for me and what that has meant in my life. I pray for each of you in your journey that you will know the power of God in your lives, that you will find in your faith community a place where you are able to praise and worship God and find support in living this life.

Catholic Archdiocese of Wellington

Level 2, 204 Thorndon Quay, Pipitea, Wellington 6011 - PO Box 1937, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

T: 04 496 1766 E: abp@wn.catholic.org.nz W: wn.catholic.org.nz

Blessings and God's peace and grace to you.

In Christ

+ Paul SM

+ Paul Martin SM
Archbishop of Wellington

Notes

I will be away from the 15th of September until 5 November. I am going to the International Conference on Catholic Indigenous in Washington DC and then on to Rome for the Synod on Synodality. I would ask your prayers for these two events.

We welcome to the Archdiocese Fathers Uili (Willie) Uvea and Fr Akuila Taliauli of the Missionaries of the Divine Word. They join Fr Raja Kommareddy and Fr Marlon Maylon in forming the SVD community in the Hutt area. Fr Ravi Kumar arrived this week from India to work here. He will be residing in the Wellington South Parish for the remainder of this year. We wish these priests every blessing as they begin their ministries here.

We pray for the repose of the souls of Sisters Rose McAloon and Brendan Ward of the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary and Sister M Marcia Wilson RSM. Our sympathies go to the members of their religious congregations.

On the 13th of September the Clergy Jubilees will be celebrated at St Anne's Church Newtown at 10.30am. You are most welcome to attend if you are free. Fathers Frank Maguire and Kevin Purcell are 25 years ordained and Owen Sinclair and Jim Dooley SM 60 years.

The Church Life survey is beginning next Sunday for three weeks. This is a chance for us to get accurate data on the members of our parish communities. I would encourage you to let your parish and school communities know about this as it will help us with our planning.

Please remember Fathers Peter O'Connell, Frank Maguire, Denis Collins and Maurice Carmody in your prayers as they have not been so well lately.

We continue to pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life. I encourage you to talk with our young people about this calling from God and whether this is what God is asking of them.

Bishop Elect John Adams will be ordained as the third Bishop of Palmerston North on 30 September. We rejoice in his appointment and pray for him and the people of the diocese as they begin this next phase in their history.

The Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary and the Missionaries of Faith congregations are having their General Chapters in Rome this month. I know that they would appreciate your prayers for their members who are meeting for this.

We pray for our Dead September

- 1 Michael Faherty (2009)
- 6 Patrick Quealy (1958)
- 7 Lawrence Hickey SSC (1979)
- 9 John O'Brien (1995)
- 10 Michael Cahill (1995)
- 11 Desmond Moosman (2017)
- 12 Cronan Fahey OFMCAp (2006)
- 15 Matthew Doolaghty (1964)
Patrick Minogue (1979)
Philip Tuohy (2001)
- 16 Eric Urlich (2017)
- 17 William Walsh (1954)
Patrick Carmody (1979)
- 19 Nicholas Moore (1985)
- 21 Brendan Kenny (2013)
- 25 John Griffin (2014)
- 26 Albert Heavy (1974)
- 30 Michael Brennan (1980)
Peter Dunn (2009)

Anniversary of Ordination September

- 1 David Dowling (2007)
- 4 +Paul Martin SM (1993)
- 24 Alfred Tong (2022)

*One of the resources I use for prayer and reflection is the **Magnificat** magazine, which I get as an app on my phone. On the 4th of September, the Gospel was about Jesus coming to the temple in his hometown and being questioned because they thought they knew him. The reflection for the day came from Pope Francis and I thought it poignant and helpful. I hope you do too.*

We should not consider the hidden life of Jesus as a preparatory stage to the public life. Rather, it is the very synthesis of the whole life of the Lord. Whoever wants more action needs more contemplation. Whoever has to make more decisions in Christ needs more formation in Christ. Saint Luke insists on the mystery that the child grew (Lk 2:40) and he affirms this again in the Acts of the Apostles: *the word of the Lord spread more and more widely* (19:20). We who began our journey years ago, are we still inhabited by the hope that filled our sails in the beginning? Are we convinced that the Word can still grow stronger and deeper within us? Do we still believe that the Lord has many more spiritual treasures to reveal to us in contemplation? Do we still have the fervent desire to grow day after day in service to the Lord?

We know from experience that, at this stage in our lives, temptations are no less numerous, and that our original ideals have a tendency to wane: *Nevertheless, I have this complaint to make, you have less love now than you used to* (Rv2:4). Similarly, our memory of the ‘great things the Lord has done’ might get a little hazy. We are conscious of the combat that we must engage in to remain loyal in our service to Christ and in our belonging to his Church. Precisely for these reasons, contemplation of the hidden life is the place where we rediscover our first love, where we come in contact again with the source of salvation, with the love of Mary who conceived the Word, the love of Mary and of Joseph who take care of him and form him in Bethlehem, in Nazareth, and in Egypt. What better way to replenish our soul than to become a simple disciple again, to become a little child who needs to be cared for and formed anew. Let us draw close to the Lord, in whose presence we are always disciples, always children.

And so here we are, with our daily lives, our loyalties and our sins, our hopes and our temptations. We must approach the crib of Jesus with the desire to be touched by his grace, that it will help us continue to grow in his service. We renew our hope by contemplating that a Child has been given to us. [We] draw strength before the maternal warmth and fecundity of the Virgin. And we also turn our gaze toward Saint Joseph, the man who assumed paternal charge of the Child he did not sire. He inspires us to an ever-greater faith.

Pope Francis [from *In Him Alone is Our Hope: Spiritual Exercises Given to His Brother Bishops in the Manner of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, Fr Vincent Capuano SJ.]