

PASTORAL NEWSLETTER

Catholic Diocese of Dunedin

12th September 2020



Creative Life and Seasons

There is no denying that this has been a tremendously difficult year and we are all feeling the burden of 2020. People are tired and we don't know where we are at with Covid from week-to-week in our country, let alone the world. Many of us have family overseas whom we are worried about and miss dearly. We make plans to travel or have events, not knowing if we can go ahead because there could be another outbreak. We are very fortunate in New Zealand compared to the rest of the world, but times are still wearisome and uncertain. Words like 'unprecedented' and 'new normal' are now part of our daily language. Living in limbo can be exhausting. This Sunday's Gospel is about lightening the burden with patience, compassion and forgiveness. In these unsettled times it can be hard to find space for generosity. There is an underlying stress that we all feel from the current world climate. We cannot change what is, so how can we live into it? Perhaps all we can do is live daily in gratitude for what we have been given while trying to lighten the burden where we can. In this issue we will read about different ways to help in our diocese by caring for humanity and creation. We are in the midst of the Season of Creation which encourages us to think about how we can lighten the load on our earth. Perhaps one lesson we can take from this era of Covid is doing less of what is stressful to focus on what brings energy and light. What draining activities can we let go of, making room for life and joy that we can share with the earth and those around us? We are never indebted to God, rather God is constantly offering to lighten our load. This is the generosity of God; God loves us so completely that we cannot help but share this love with others and creation. We need only look up to see the blossoms and bellbirds, to know the blessings of our bountiful God.



~Amy Armstrong, Pastoral Ministry Coordinator

COVID PRAYER

~ Fr. James Lyons

The Herod Virus

Jesus, Mary, Joseph.

To escape the wrath of Herod, you isolated yourselves in Egypt, far from the support of family and friends.

We, too, are separated from many loved ones.

Our "Herod" is a virus putting all at risk.

Border closures prevent travel, making reunion impossible.

You know the anguish of separation & how the unknown gives birth to fear.

Strengthen the *aroha* that binds us, the *wairua* that holds us close.

Gentle us in this time of uncertainty to believe, to trust, to hope. Amen.

[Matthew 2:13-15]



[Click here](#) to listen to The Blessing Aotearoa and hear more than 200 people from churches across Aotearoa joining in the global movement of praying God's blessing over our nation and peoples in this time of pandemic.

Prison Chaplaincy

I began attending the Church services at OCF approximately 10 years ago and initially I was nervous about what it would be like to worship within the prison walls. Each time I have attended a Sunday service I have been impressed with the willingness of the men to listen to God's word. When I was given the opportunity to become a companion for the Seasons for Growth program I wasn't sure I had the confidence to be able work with the men, but I am so pleased that I went outside my comfort zone and did the training. This program, which focuses on grief, really gives participants the knowledge about how grief can affect people and how to handle their reactions to loss in a healthy way. Watching the participants work through their own stories of grief and loss and seeing the difference their new knowledge makes to their outlook on life always fills me with a sense of pride that we companions, in a very small way, have helped them gain those new skills.



I have been the Catholic Chaplain at the Invercargill Prison now for four years, and I have to say that I have really enjoyed the role. Like any work place things don't always run smoothly. My work at the prison is to look after the interests of all the prisoners, in an ecumenical and positive way, and to bring Holy Communion to our Catholic men. I also do a program called Seasons for Growth. This program is amazing, in how it brings so much honesty and trust into the group. There is a mixture of laughter and some sadness as you listen to their stories, and believe me they share. This position gives me a lot of satisfaction, and it is a real comfort to know that you can help some people to turn their lives around. Overall if anyone was thinking about volunteering, I am sure that you would find it very rewarding, and find these guys are not all bad. Trust is the basis of good success - I learnt that early on.

~ Paul Colvin,
Invercargill
Prison Chaplain



Bishop Michael baptising a prisoner

Being involved as a prison volunteer was, for a long time, something that interested me. I think this interest came partly from my sheltered and privileged upbringing - I somehow knew there were good people in prison who deserved better, despite what the media told me. In going to the Otago prison for the ecumenical church services and interacting with the men through worship and conversation, it quickly became apparent that I would be shown the face of Christ, rather than me bringing Christ to the prison. The handful of prisoners that I've had meaningful conversations with have hugely impacted the way I understand my faith, my privilege, and how much our social and justice systems have failed. The men (and the staff) at the Otago prison are full of joy and humour and only desire to be recognised as such. And that is my job as a prison volunteer. My question to you is: what would it mean if we took Christ seriously when he says "I was in prison and you visited me" (Matt 25:36)?



If you are inspired by these reflections from our prison chaplains and volunteers and feel this is something you might be interested in, please contact Veronica Casey, Senior Catholic Prison Chaplain: vcasey@nzcbc.org.nz or 027 523 3983

Working for Justice

Prison chaplaincy continued...

Talitha Kum: addressing human trafficking

Talitha Kum Dunedin, is a group of people who are committed to playing their part in combatting human trafficking. We may think that trafficking, the exploitation of other human beings for profit, doesn't happen in Aotearoa New Zealand. Sadly, it does. New Zealand is both a source and a destination country for trafficking and exploitation. Areas of high risk are: vineyards, orchards, the fishing industry, bars and restaurants. At the moment our group's main aim is to raise awareness of the issue of trafficking / modern slavery in our church and community through the written word, public meetings and offering times of reflection and prayer. **We meet monthly via Zoom and would be delighted to welcome people from all around the diocese.** The more people that are aware of and alerted to the issue of modern slavery, the more effective Talitha Kum can be. Talitha Kum, Dunedin is part of an international ecumenical and interfaith network which works with and alongside other likeminded groups worldwide. There are Talitha Kum groups in 92 countries, including three in Aotearoa New Zealand – Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin.

Find out more:

- to join our Zoom meetings, email Noreen McGrath: nora.c@xtra.co.nz
- Facebook: [@talithakum.uisg](https://www.facebook.com/@talithakum.uisg)
- www: INTERNATIONAL NETWORK AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS



Diocesan Reflection Day 28th November 2020

Burns Lodge@Holy Cross in Mosgiel

Following on the success of last year's gathering on synodal church, we will have our second annual diocesan gathering for all interested in parish and/or school ministries. Join us for a day of connection, reflection, sharing and listening.

[Click here to register for the day](#)



Working as a prison chaplain was one of the most rewarding jobs I've ever had. I found the key part of the role is to provide an encouraging 'Ministry of Presence' to all the prisoners. There are many challenges in this role as absolutely everything is controlled by schedules, separation rules and clocks. Every chaplain has to learn how to be patient and not succumb to frustration. As a volunteer, I now particularly enjoy working with the 'Seasons for Growth' program which gets prisoners to look at their lives to see where they have been hurt and gives them strategies for dealing with those hurts. Often prisoners express real surprise that people volunteer to be part of the program. They soon realise that those same people are not there to preach at them or to lecture them. The volunteers show through their presence and openness that they accept the prisoners as they are and there is no judgment. Everyone needs people as living signposts in their lives - people who bring light - especially prisoners who have had bad or no good role models as they grew up.

~Chris Mahoney,
former prison
chaplain and
current volunteer



***"I was in prison and
you visited me"***

~Matt 25:36

Caring for Creation

A Liturgy for the Season of Creation is being held at St Michael's Church in Lumsden at 2pm Sunday Oct 4th. This is to celebrate the success of the St Michael's Urban Forest project, which began 15 years ago as a restoration project to cut down on lawn mowing next to the Church and add native species to the area. The Lumsden Reforestation Trust says the Urban Forest is a key to their work of restoring native vegetation in the township and supporting the habitat of the rare native fish, Gollum galaxias, that lives in the stream at the foot of the forest. Everyone is welcome to the celebration. For more information email Mary Ryan: waimeamary@icloud.com

Drone view of St Michael's Forest on Forest St in Lumsden



Advocating for Care of our Common Home and Integral Ecology

The Dunedin group, Seniors' Climate Action Network (SCAN) was set up in Nov 2014, just prior to the publication of *Laudato Si'*. The group's concern is for the wellbeing of future generations, creation and social justice. It seeks to:

- Raise awareness of climate change and its many risks
- Encourage citizens to value resilience, and experience a low-carbon lifestyle
- Take action to put the planet and future generations ahead of profit
- Adapt lifestyles to new patterns of living by lowering our own carbon footprint at household, community and national levels
- Celebrate and publicise positive change that is already happening in our world.

'SCAN' members try to live by 'being the change we wish to see' (Gandhi). If you would like to find out more please contact: Donna Peacock at grapea42@gmail.com

Just Imagining

What a marvellous gift imagination is! Our 8 year old grandson is writing his own 'chapter book', creating a world filled with wonder and adventure. Fortunately, as we get older our imagination doesn't leave us and we are still capable of wonder and dreaming. We can dream about a world free from injustice and poverty, with our planet and all people thriving. Even better, we can live that dream and work alongside God to help bring about God's reign 'on earth as it is in heaven'. I'm only belatedly appreciating the huge amount of wisdom available to us in our Catholic Social Teaching (CST). It's a wonderful tool to help us live into God's merciful and loving vision for all people and creation. Caritas has done a great job, for Social Justice Week 2020, in presenting key CST principles in an easy to understand way. [Click here](#) to find 'any time of year' CST resources. I'm also grateful to Pope Francis for his bold and holy imagination - for his encyclical, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, in which he implores us to 'create a more caring, fraternal, peaceful and sustainable world', and for his invitation to Catholics to be part of the current ecumenical Season of Creation;

<https://seasonofcreation.org/>

Let's all join with Pope Francis and people around the world and use our imagination to create new ways of living which lovingly respond to the urgent 'cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor'.



~Lynne Toomey
Diocesan Social
Justice Coordinator