



21 February 2019

Issue No: 193

From +John...

Kia tau te rangimarie ki a koutou,

Last Saturday I celebrated Mass for the Sisters of Mercy who were gathered in Wellington for a pre-Chapter meeting. After Communion the Sisters sang a hymn based on the well-known piece of Scripture from Ecclesiastes 3: 1-18, which has been turned into songs and hymns, known as *“There is a Time for Every Season Under Heaven.”*

The refrain for this particular hymn went:

“But there’s never a time to stop believing, there’s never a time for hope to die, there’s never a time to stop loving, these three things go on.” I loved it when the Sisters sang these words and found myself reflecting on them, and especially on the words *“there’s never a time for hope to die.”* Two days before this Mass I had returned from Rome where I had attended three different meetings. The major meeting was with Pope Francis and the Presidents of Bishops’ Conferences, and Heads of Religious Orders from all over the world on *“The Protection of Minors in the Church.”* That meeting was very hard, but I knew that I was held in prayer by so many people here in New Zealand, and I am deeply grateful for that. It could have been very easy to give in to despair, especially at the end of the meeting when the news came out about the sentencing of Cardinal George Pell. These have been, and are, hard times for the Church, but – *“there’s never a time for hope to die.”*

All around the world the Church has been subject to media attention, it has not been good. However, I believe we must first of all acknowledge that first and foremost we are a community of disciples, of people who follow and learn from Jesus Christ. The community of disciples we all belong to makes up the Body of Christ. These are not just words, it is a fact, we are the Body of Christ, we are a Body made up of saints and sinners. Pope Francis has often spoken of the Church as a *“field-hospital.”* In doing so he reminds us that we cannot escape the messiness of life, and he challenges us to be realistic and not get caught up in some idealised future or romantic past.

In the midst of the difficulties the Church faces, the embarrassment we all suffer, we can do no more than look to the Suffering Servant, our Lord Jesus Christ. It is Jesus who invites us to put our faith in him, to trust in him. Now that we have begun the Season of Lent, this *“season of grace”* we turn to Jesus with full confidence. In this time which can seem to be nothing more than darkness,

crisis and perhaps even despair, we are powerfully reminded that Lent is the time to pay closer attention to the Word of God and to become more Christlike. This is not a time to be negative, or to give up on our faith. Lent is a positive time for each of us to grow personally, and for us as the Body of Christ to become stronger, knowing that *“there’s never a time to stop believing, there’s never a time for hope to die, there’s never a time to stop loving, these three things go on.”*

Naku noa. Na + Hoane

NEWS . . .

RIP— Our prayers and sympathy to Msgr John Carde and family at the death of his brother Fr Peter Carde SM, who died on Monday 4 March. May he rest in peace.

The first **Ministry Formation Day** for 2019 is next Tuesday 12 March at Our Lady of Grace Church, Heretaunga. Closing day for registrations is today, please contact Mary-Ann Greaney, 04 496 1784 or m.greaney@wn.catholic.org.nz if you have not yet registered.

Date Saver

- 15th April Day of Prayer and Reflection for South Island Clergy at St Mary’s Blenheim and South Island Chrism Mass, St Mary’s Blenheim, 7pm.
- 16th April Day of Prayer and Reflection for North Island Clergy at St Thomas More, Wilton and North Island Chrism Mass, St Teresa’s Pro-Cathedral, Karori 7pm.

Invitations will be forwarded for the Day of Prayer and Reflection event in the coming days.

“In a world so torn apart by rivalry, anger and hatred, we have the privileged vocation to be living signs of a love that can bridge all divisions and heal all wounds.”

Henri Nouwen