



Kia tau te rangimārie ki a koutou

Yesterday, as you all know was Ash Wednesday, the beginning of our Lenten journey.

Do we see these weeks as a gift from God, six weeks gifted to us, set apart to enable us to draw closer to God? It can be very easy to reduce Lent to the question, “what are you giving up for Lent?” it’s a good question but it doesn’t take us very far in bringing us closer to God.

The real question that we are able to ask, and should ask, ourselves is, “how will I repent and return to God with all my heart?” The really deep question before us in Lent is: “Where in my life have I drifted away from God and what will be the things that help me to find my way back?”

In 1970, it was my first year in the seminary and on Good Friday I discovered a poem by the Russian poet Boris Pasternak, entitled “The Garden of Gethsemane”. There was a line in that poem that I have never forgotten and continue to think about every Good Friday (now for 53 years). The line was: “God has granted you to live in my time, and yet you loll about like this”. They were the words of Jesus to his disciples who were asleep on the grass.

Lent is not a time for us to loll about, or just sleep our way through. It is a time gifted to us by God so that we can look deeply into our lives, see where our spiritual lives might be mediocre, and then ask ourselves what we need to do to renew our hearts.

If we were left to ourselves we probably would not choose to devote 40 days to pray, to fast, to be more charitable in the way we share our money and goods with others. God knows we need this time, we need that symbolic gesture of ashes being put on our foreheads to acknowledge that we are human, that one day we will die and we will face God.

We do live in God's time. These Lenten days are God's gift to us so that we might seek God with all our hearts. It is also a time of great hope as we continue to experience God's enduring love for us, even in the midst of our frailties and sinfulness. It is a time to experience the mercy of God and to be reminded in the words of the late Brother Roger of Taizé: “Mercy is the only climate in which we meet God.”

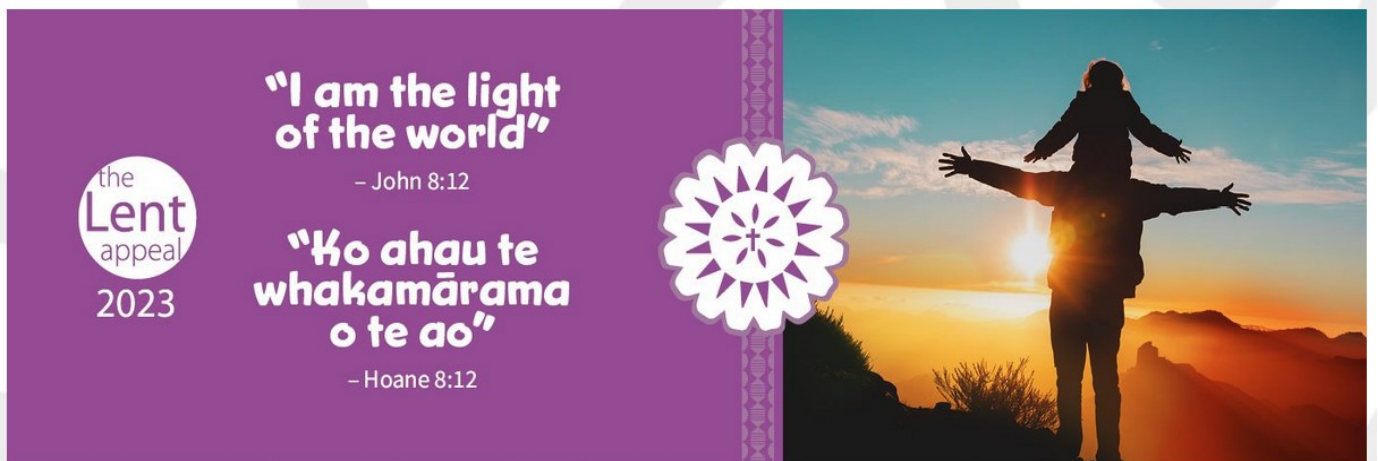
Nāku noa. Nā

+ John



NOTICES

- Please keep in your prayers all our clergy. The frail and those who are experiencing ill health at present are Frs Frank Maguire, Peter O'Connell and Maurice Carmody. We also pray for our clergy who have tested positive for COVID and are now isolating. We wish them a speedy recovery.
- We pray for all those who have been effected by the devastation of Cyclone Gabrielle. The Caring Foundation, Auckland have set up a donation page for those able to financially support the people of Hawkes Bay and Tirāwhiti/Gisborne region. No donation is too small. Donations can be made [here](#) or online to the Foundation's bank account: **BNZ 02-0100-0242648-00** (Please use your surname and initials as reference, and Cyclone as a particular.) To receive an emailed receipt please email info@caringfoundation.co.nz to let them know you have made your donation.
- **North Island Commissioning Mass** - this rescheduled Mass is now taking place on Tuesday 14 March at 5.30pm at St Mary of the Angels, Boulcott Street. All are welcome



Our journey through Lent centres on the life of Jesus and his call for us to draw closer to God and look to be love and light to others. Every Gospel story has Jesus as the main driving force overcoming challenges, providing life, and restoring hope. During Lent this year it is our hope that we all are challenged to reconnect with THE Light of the World as we are inspired to bring light in the world at the same time.

Lent is a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving in preparation for the Resurrection of the Lord at Easter. Each year the Lent Appel is run by Caritas on behalf of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference (NZCBC) to support our work of advocacy, Education, Aid and Development. Envelopes can be collected from parishes or to make an online donation click the link [here](#)

Jesus' love asks us to let ourselves be touched by the situations of those who are in difficulty. I think especially of Syria and Turkey, of the very many victims of the earthquake, but also of the daily tragedies of the dear Ukrainian people and the many populations who suffer as a result of war or because of poverty, the lack of freedom or environmental devastation: many peoples... *In this regard, I am close to the people of New Zealand, struck in recent days by a devastating cyclone. Brothers and sisters, let us not forget those who suffer, and let our charity be attentive, let it be real charity!*

From the Angelus Message of Pope Francis, Sunday 19th February