

Passionist Family Group Newsletter for 17 May, 2026



Reflection for the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord

At times, I find myself gently reflecting on our life together as a church and on what lies at the heart of who we are. When I read the Gospels and the letters of Paul and others, I am always drawn back to their clear invitation to live with faith, purpose, and loving action.

The post-Easter readings have been drawing our hearts toward what Jesus has entrusted to us. Through his life and ministry, lives are renewed, and we are called into a mission shaped by welcome, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness.

It can be easy for us to become caught up in outward things and lose sight of the deeper call of following Jesus. Yet God, in love and mercy, continually meets us with grace and gives us the gift of beginning again. The early church was filled with this sense of purpose: prayer, worship, and fellowship were never ends in themselves, but ways of being formed and sent out into the world to serve with the gifts God has given, and to welcome all who come among us.

William Barclay, the Scripture scholar, offers this helpful reflection: *“We often call the Holy Spirit the Comforter. This comes from Wycliffe, but in his day the word had a different meaning. It comes from the Latin word fortis, meaning brave. The Comforter is the one who fills men and women with courage and strength.”*

The Gospel reminds us that, like the disciples, we too can sometimes find ourselves standing still, waiting for Jesus to return. But even as we gather in prayer, song, and worship, we are lovingly called to move in the Spirit and to follow Jesus in lives of faithful action. We are the Church, the body of Christ, and even in our weakness and struggle, we are held by his presence and strengthened by his Spirit.

Paul, like the early Church, gives us a living example of faithful witness through trial. We too are called to nurture a true sense of belonging, setting aside individualism so that together we may grow into a community of faith where each person’s gifts are cherished and shared for the good of all. This is what we extend to our Passionist Family Groups to be a ‘Family for All’ - All are welcome!

God go with you, regards, Paul.



Scripture reflection: Feast of the Ascension Year A, 17 May 2026.

Go, make disciples of all nations



Gladden us with holy joys, almighty God, and make us rejoice with devout thanksgiving, for the Ascension of Christ your Son is our exaltation, and, where the Head has gone before in glory, the Body is called to follow in hope.

LECTIONARY READINGS

First reading: Acts 1:1-11

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 47

Second reading: Ephesians 1:17-23

Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20

Readings: click on link <https://universalis.com//Australia/20260517/mass.htm>

Forty days after the Resurrection, Jesus ascends to heaven. He ascends triumphant to sit at the Father's right hand. For the disciples, their time of formation with him is over. How is their relationship with him altered?

The **First Reading** from the Acts of the Apostles gives an account of the Ascension. Jesus promises to send his Holy Spirit to be with his disciples, to fill them with his power, so that they can witness to him 'to the ends of the earth.' The **Psalm** emphasises Jesus's triumph in his Ascension, and the whole Church sings in praise of the Lord who reigns over all. The **Second Reading** also stresses Christ's power. His Father has 'put all things under his feet.' That power is exercised for us, not only in the gifts of his grace, but also in the promise of eternal glories.

Matthew's **Gospel** account of the Ascension focuses on Jesus' authority and his sending forth of the disciples to witness, baptise and teach. He promises to be with them 'to the end of time.' This week, we pray that all those who are struggling may find peace, and know God's presence in their heart.



Safeguarding: “Working Together for a Safe Church”

Any complaints should be directed through the National Office of Professional Standards (NOPS) or reported directly to the New Zealand Police or Oranga Tamariki.

Phone: 03 365 1993 or 0800 114 622. **Email:** prof.standards@nzcbc.org.nz

www.safeguarding.catholic.org.nz

Formation (Adult Faith Education & Spirituality)

The Theme for this year’s Formations is Nurturing and Nourishment. Hugh McKay prefers the term "kindness" because it is the only form of human love that does not depend on affection. It is a response to a need, and it draws on our compassion – the quality that stands out most in Jesus’ life. Jesus chose to mix with and meet outcasts, inviting them to share his table. His fellowship included everyone – a family for all!

PJ Harding defines nurturing as what fills your cup, whether that is laughter, fresh air, good food or time with loved ones. In Passionist Family Groups our reaching out and being family to each other brings joy, understanding, service, care and support. It’s not just about ‘me’ but the welfare and nourishment we can give to each other through our love, concern and compassion. This nurturing leads to nourishment of the heart.

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Formation Bookings: Dunedin Parishes 13 & 14 June; Palmerston North 28 June `St Hellier’s 26th July and 35th Anniversary; East Coast Bays 28th July 2026. Ashburton 8 August Christchurch parishes August 9th

Belong, Behave, Believe



Prayer



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1. We pray for Pope Leo and thank him for his truth-telling regarding the war in the Middle East and elsewhere. His stance has been one of integrity, and his leadership provides a stark contrast to the quest for power and domination. Let us walk the path of peace with him.
 2. We pray to be like Jesus, spending ourselves in the service of others- welcoming, guiding and leading people through care, compassion and forgiveness.
 3. We pray for all struggling to live due to the constraints globally impacting our world
 4. Let us take up the call of Pope Leo to foster a sense of belonging in our communities. Also to be united in Christ – united in Mission
 5. We remember that God calls on us, as people of faith, to offer our voices to help those who have none.
4. Keep in mind all those who continue to struggle with mental health challenges, and their families who support them in their daily lives.
1. *Please remember in prayer Fr Robert Steele PP in Pukekohe – his brother died recently and now he is expecting his brother Bruce to die, Leonie Christian, Margaret and Graeme Armstrong, Jocelyn Kev Bryant and family, Tim Walsh, Debbie Cotter; Christine and Derrick Scott; Paul, Deb and Nick Kelly, Norma Bellamy and family and Lindsay Penman in your prayers*
 6. *Also, please remember, Pat Carson, Graeme Matthews, Di Buckley, Adrian van de Pas and her son Robert, Tim Bartells & family, Linda Darbyshire and family in your prayer, Christine Geoghegan's daughter Kate and extended families, Pauline Prendergast, Robyn Burns (Hill)*
 7. *Keep in mind all those who are struggling with decisions made by leaders that are causing harm, fear, injustice and separation of families.*

8. Your own intentions



Humour:

- My resume is a list of things I hope I never have to do again.
- Why did the social media manager break up with her boyfriend? **Lack of engagement.**

- My wife always complains that I have no sense of direction. **So I packed up my stuff and right.**
- I threw a boomerang months ago. **Now I live in constant fear.**
- "I'm sorry" and "I apologize" usually mean the same thing...**but not at a funeral.**
- I haven't spoken to my wife in years. **I thought it would be rude to interrupt her.**
- A woman passed out on the merry-go-round. **She's coming around.**
- There was a break-in at the wig factory. **Police are combing the area.**
- I once submitted 10 puns to a joke competition. I really thought with that many, one was sure to be a winner. **Sadly, no pun in ten did.**

Have a great week everyone.....

"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these... you did for me." — Matthew 25:40

